

2018 PIE Network Member Priorities Survey Results

With state legislative sessions in full swing, PIE Network advocates have spent considerable time gathering intelligence and planning strategy. Through this survey, Network members share their priorities—along with insights, challenges, and resource needs—that they anticipate in the upcoming year. This annual survey began at the urging of Network members, who use it to connect with colleagues focused on similar issues.

This year, 59 leading advocacy organizations from 31 states and Washington, D.C. identified their areas of focus for the year ahead. During session, advocates both drive their priorities and respond to issues introduced by others. Therefore, priorities might move to the back burner in any given year if it becomes clear a defensive strategy must become an organization's priority. However, as the opening bell of legislative session sounds, members are prioritizing these issues.

FINDINGS: A PREVIEW OF 2018

Accountability under ESSA Remains a Top Focus

PIE Network members remain steadfast in their focus on accountability and transparency. In 2018, many state advocates will work to implement and defend accountability systems put in place under ESSA. 98 percent of Network respondents said they were at least watching this issue, with nearly 50 percent saying it is a high priority.

School Finance Advocacy Intensifies

Members are taking advantage of opportunities created by stable economies, improved transparency, and increased litigation on equitable school funding systems to actively engage on school funding reform. Network advocates are working to shift their outdated formulas to more student-centric and equitable systems, while also providing transparency on school-site expenditures. 20 organizations said this issue was a high priority for their upcoming year.

Focus on College and Career Readiness Increases

Compared to recent years, this issue has increased as a priority. Members engaged on this issue are advancing a suite of policy options to provide students with rigorous course options, including dual credit, advanced coursework, and laying the tracks for career pathways programs. 62 percent of respondents said they plan to engage with college and career readiness issues.

Expansion and Defense of Charters Continues

Similar to previous years, many charter advocates seek to expand charter school options in their state through more equitable systems—including fairer funding mechanisms and improved access to facilities and transportation—while simultaneously defending charter school systems against attacks. 48 percent of respondents said they plan to engage with charter issues.

Educator Policy Remains a Consistent Priority

Members consistently engage on this issue, continuing their work to improve educator quality by changing licensure structures, seeking to improve equity of teacher distribution, and diversifying the field. Only 4 organizations said this issue was not a priority at all.

School Choice Engagement Remains Steady

School choice continues to be an area of the Network where members respectfully agree to disagree, even as many members are engaged on the issue. Those who plan to engage on the issue will be working to create robust and innovative programs, expand existing programs to accommodate more students, or play defense against opponent attacks. 24 organizations said they plan to engage with this issue.

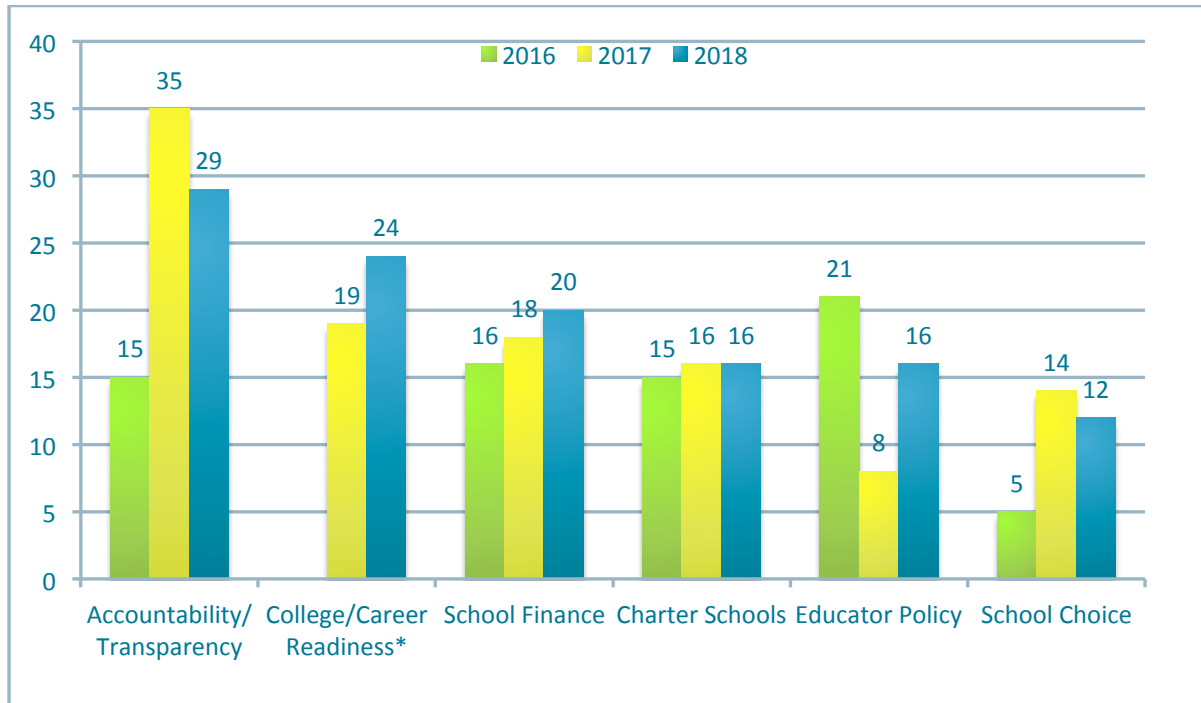
MEMBER ENGAGEMENT SPREAD AMONG MANY TOPICS

Advocates plan to prioritize accountability, college/career readiness, school finance, charter schools, and educator policy.

Topic	High Priority	To-Do list	Watching Carefully	Not a Priority
Accountability/ Transparency	29	15	13	1
School Finance	20	18	16	4
Charter Schools	16	12	17	13
College/Career Readiness	24	12	19	3
School Choice	12	12	17	17
Educator Policy	16	13	25	4
Other Issues	13	10	18	17
Literacy	9	16	21	12
Standards/Assessments	12	15	25	6
Early Learning	8	11	23	16
Governance	8	12	25	12

CONTINUED ALIGNMENT AROUND TOP PRIORITY ISSUES

Priorities fluctuate from year to year. This display shows the amount of Network members who said these issues were top priorities over the last three years.



*In 2016, though we did not survey members about work on college and career readiness, a few members listed the issue in the miscellaneous category, and the topic has quickly grown.

MEMBERS WORK IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS BUT FACE SIMILAR BARRIERS

State-based advocates work in unique contexts that can either help or hinder success. As advocates described their states, these trends surfaced.

- **New Governors.** With 24 member states poised for a gubernatorial election, many advocates are working to develop inroads with potential candidates and are conscious of how “lame-duck” executive leadership impacts legislative efforts.
- **Changing State Legislatures.** Currently many state legislatures are shaded red, but advocates are preparing in case that changes.
- **Federal Administration.** On the flip side, advocates are finding that the current administration’s emphasis on choice is making it more challenging to work with Democrats in their state.
- **Budget Shortages.** Advocates in many states noted how budget shortfalls will hinder their ability to pass legislation.

MEMBERS USE THE NETWORK FOR POLICY SUPPORT AND POLITICAL STRATEGY

Advocates often use the Network to find thought partners and resources for their work, and the survey helps foster these connections. This year, the most cited topics among members seeking policy support were ESSA implementation, funding formula reform strategy, charter and choice policy, broadening political will, improving communications strategy, and capacity building within their own organizations. Here are a few examples:

“Teacher retention; data privacy; monitoring implementation of ESSA plans.”

“We would be interested in thought partnership on the issues of access to rigorous coursework and educator equity.”

“We are hyper-focused on college and career readiness, specifically policies around 9th-grade on-track as well as school funding reform. Resources in those two areas would be most helpful.”

The Network also encourages members to build relationships with national partners around specific topics and policy areas. When asked which national organizations members go to for resources and advice, nearly every respondent listed at least one PIE Network partner organization, with many listing two or three.

LEARN MORE at pie-network.org/article/2018-pie-network-member-priorities/

On our website, you'll find pages for each of the 11 issues, which include information intended to help state advocates connect and think bigger. For each issue, you can:

- Find contact information for PIE Network advocates with expertise on a range of issues;
- See which organizations are working on popular policies within an issue;
- Learn about the outlook for 2018 for each issue area, including insight from leading state advocates; and
- View U.S. maps plotting where advocates are planning to actively engage on an issue, giving a bird's-eye view of the state education advocacy landscape.

Like many PIE Network resources, this annual survey began at the urging of Network members, who use it to connect with colleagues focused on similar issues. Please also reach out to the PIE Network team to gain more insights about the survey and for introductions to colleagues you don't yet know.