

NATAB Report:

2024 Survey on the Future of ATM® Teacher Training Programs

Introduction

Discussion and debate has occurred in the national and international Feldenkrais® community related to offering “ATM-only” teacher training programs, for over a decade. There have been viewpoints both for and against the concept.

The North American Training Accreditation Board (NATAB), and the Feldenkrais Guild of North America Board of Directors (Board) as NATAB’s governing body, decided it was important to gain some practical experience to help inform further discussions on this topic.

Between 2018 and 2020, NATAB delved into the question of what ATM teacher training might look like. Because the concept was new and untried and there were concerns in the community, NATAB intended to limit the proposal to being time-limited, a “Pilot”, with in-process evaluation and exit evaluation. Preparing this policy included a great deal of work and discussion with the FGNA educational community.

In addition, as part of NATAB’s work to help inform the pilot project policy, in January 2020 NATAB sent out a survey to FGNA members that included questions regarding the current ATM and FI® teaching practices of the respondents, as well as questions about how well they had felt prepared for ATM teaching by their original training program: [ATM Teaching: Practitioner Survey Report](#)

From all of this work emerged the overall intentions:

- To test the idea of providing training programs for people who only want to teach ATM lessons (and not Functional Integration® lessons), so that we can learn about how, and how well, that can work.
- To explore how to have high-quality ATM-specific training program options that result in more people teaching ATM classes, and thus expand the reach of this remarkable work.

And specific objectives were developed for the project:

- Increase public awareness of the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education
- Enrich the lives and health of more individuals through ATM lessons.
- Build a wider interest in the public to have Feldenkrais® ATM classes, and to take Feldenkrais training programs
- Have a path available for those who only want to teach ATM lessons
- Increase the skills of ATM teachers

NATAB reviewed the standard Training Accreditation Guidelines for the aspects which would apply. In addition NATAB considered ideas that have been requested regarding changes to the current Training Guidelines including new ideas on the composition of the training team, possibly more involvement of Assistant Trainers, and the utilization of competencies.

From this work emerged the policy which was approved by the Board of Directors in 2020: [Pilot Project Awareness Through Movement® Teacher Training Program Policy](#)

While up to six pilot projects were allowed, NATAB received only two pilot project applications, which were approved by NATAB.

The two ATM Teacher training program pilot projects took place from 2021 to mid-2023 in the United States, with eighty participants in total. The two pilot projects were different in structure (e.g., one had the traditional Educational Director (ED) model, and the other had an educational direction team comprised of an Educational Director in the role of the Program Director plus two Assistant Trainers), and they were also different in their educational plans and design of the learning process.

Once concluded, the pilot projects provided NATAB with final reports, and NATAB also completed a survey of the participants.

NATAB then prepared the [NATAB Report on Pilot Project ATM Teacher Training Programs: What We Learned](#).

Discussions then started within NATAB and the Board, as well as at the international level, about whether – and if so how – to support having ATM Teacher training programs.

- As a first step, NATAB organized two FGNA Zoom Cafés on July 24 and 30, 2024, for FGNA members, certified practitioners and trainees, to present key findings from what was learned from the ATM Teacher pilot projects, as well as possible next steps, and to hear reflections from members.
- Associated with the Zoom Cafés, NATAB conducted a survey of all FGNA members and certified teachers to learn about their thoughts relating to ATM Teacher training programs.

This report summarizes what we learned from the survey.

About NATAB surveys

In conducting surveys, NATAB recognizes that survey results provide a rough indicator of directionality, for the group that is being surveyed. We are fully aware that the methodology does not provide a

statistically robust answer that is reliably representative of everyone who was sent the survey (which only a random sample would provide).

Surveys are just one tool that NATAB uses to form recommendations for policy. As a volunteer body, NATAB takes steps to seek input and feedback in many manageable ways, throughout the various policy work projects that we do.

NATAB conducted this survey in order to offer people an opportunity to indicate their initial interest to either see more work done by NATAB and the Board to develop the option of ATM Teacher training programs - or to NOT see more work done on this.

Each individual could choose whether to respond or not. NATAB thanks everyone who responded, and we will work with the responses received.

The Survey

The survey was developed to hear the thoughts of FGNA members, certified practitioners and trainees on three key questions:

- What excites you about possibly having ATM Teacher Training Programs?
- What concerns do you have?
- Generally, would you support the idea of NATAB and FGNA developing the option to have ATM Teacher training programs?

How we contacted members

Emails were sent to 1,221 members, certified teachers and trainees using SurveyMonkey, on July 24, 2024 (right after the first Zoom Café on the topic). Thereafter, follow-up emails were sent regularly to those who had not answered.

273 people completed the survey, for a 25% response rate. Overall, 1,092 opened the email (87%) and 316 opened the link to the survey (25%). 182 people answered all questions (17%) and 88 only answered the questions about their status in the Guild.

Is the survey representative?

The survey results provide a rough indicator of the direction of thinking of those who responded to the survey.

This survey was an opportunity for respondents to indicate their initial interest to either see more work done by NATAB and FGNA to develop the option of ATM Teacher training programs - or to NOT see more work done on this.

With a 25% response rate on the total survey, dropping down to 17% for those who gave their thoughts on the substantive questions, we can only refer to “those who responded”, without generalizing the results to “all members”.

Who responded?

The table at the right shows the surveys sent out split by percent into FGNA Guild status and the response. For example, GCFP^{CM} Members comprised 72% of the surveys that were sent; and 78% of the respondents. Thus the results reflect more thoughts from GCFP Members than those in other categories such as “Certified Only”, and “Trainees”.

Guild Status	All	Responded
GCFP Member	72%	78%
Cert Only	6%	3%
CFATMT Member	5%	6%
Trainee	15%	10%
Associate Member	3%	3%

Respondents were also asked about their status in the educational community. The results are shown at right.

Of 25 surveys sent to Trainers, 19 responded. Of 41 surveys sent to Assistant Trainers, 18 responded.

Status in Educational Community	Sent	Responded
Trainer	25	19
Trainer Candidate	5	4
Assistant Trainer	41	18

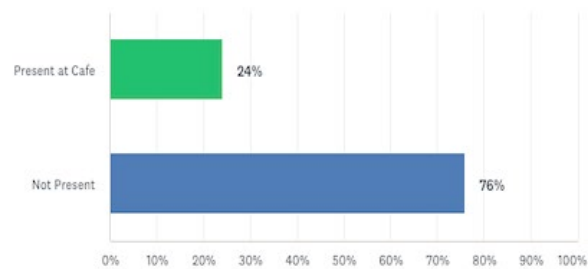
Knowledge of Respondents about ATM Teacher Training Programs

NATAB was interested in knowing whether those responding had informed themselves about the pilot projects and the possibility of future ATM Teacher training programs, whether from the recent Zoom Cafés or from the reports that NATAB provided.

Attending the Zoom Café. Few (24%) survey respondents reported having been present at (or viewed) a Zoom Café. Fewer people accessed the recordings than NATAB expected.

Were you present at a Zoom Café about ATM Teacher Training Programs?

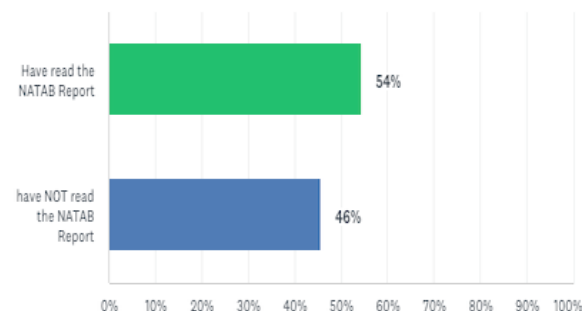
Answered: 186 Skipped: 87



Of the 188 respondents who answered this question, 101 (54%, or just over half) reported having read about the outcomes of the two Pilot programs summarized in the report, *“What we Learned from the ATM Teacher Training Programs”*.

Have you read the NATAB report on What We Learned from the ATM® Teacher Training Pilot Programs?

Answered: 186 Skipped: 87



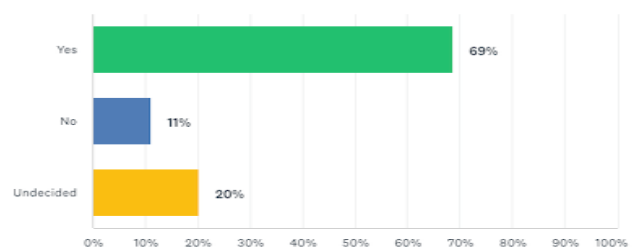
Support for the idea of developing the option to have ATM Teacher Training Programs

Of the 188 respondents who answered this question, 129 (69%) supported the idea of developing the option to have ATM teacher training programs, 21 (11%) were opposed, and 38 (20%) were undecided.

With the knowledge that we would look at various ways to offer ATM Teacher training programs, and various practical ways for ATM Teachers to be able to continue on to become full Feldenkrais Practitioners if they decide they want to do that...

Do you support the idea of NATAB/FGNA developing the option to have ATM Teacher training programs?

Answered: 188 Skipped: 85



This question is of primary interest, and we were curious about whether the different segments of our community who responded to the survey had differing support for the question of whether to continue. Thus, here are two views of the responses:

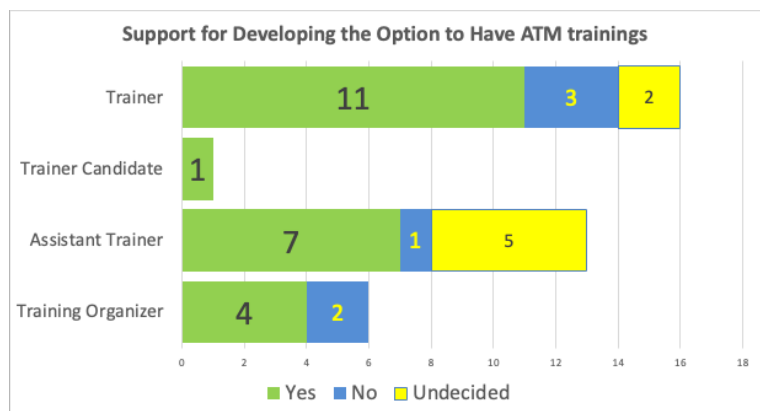
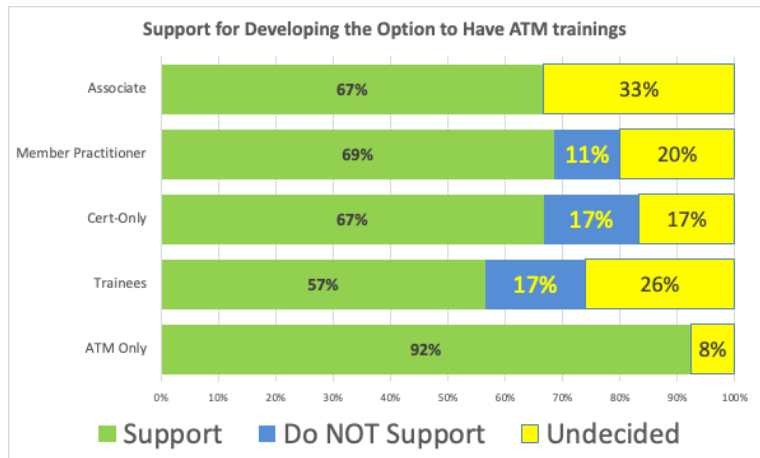
Support/Do Not Support/Undecided on the Question of ATM Teacher training programs

Those who replied in support of further developing the option to have ATM teacher training programs are in **GREEN**; those opposed show as **BLUE**, and those undecided are in **YELLOW**.

FGNA GCFP Members comprised 74% of the respondents. Of those, 69% were in favor of developing the option to have ATM Teacher training programs.

At right are the responses for those in the educational community.

Rather than percentages, we are showing the actual counts. Trainers comprised the largest group (16 in total). 11 (69%) of the 16 were in favor of developing the option to have ATM Teacher training programs. Among Assistant Trainers, 7 of the 13 (54%) were in favor, and 5 out of the 13 (38%) were undecided.



Commentary about the “numbers”

The results appear to indicate strong support for continuing to develop the option to have ATM Teacher training programs. However, as mentioned above, these are only the responses of those who chose to answer the survey (25% of the total sent) and who chose to share their thoughts on *this* question (16%). Thus, we need to also consider those who started the survey but did not respond to this specific question, and those who did not respond at all.

In our Feldenkrais way, we are always curious about the feelings or intentions of those who did not answer. Thus, from a different perspective, if we put the “yes” vote in terms of all who began the survey (including those who did not complete the survey once started), then the 129 “yes” responders constitute 47% of those 273 who answered the survey, and the 21 “no” responders constitute 8%. We don’t know the views of those who did not answer this question, or those who did not respond at all.

Comments from the Respondents

The survey included the opportunity to provide comments. These comments will be considered by NATAB and the Board and will help inform the policy development process.

Below is a synopsis of some key repeating themes that emerged in the comments provided by respondents, along with a few quotes as examples of what was said.

Comments In favor of continuing to develop the option to have ATM Teacher training programs:

1. Continuation of the Feldenkrais Method in view of the demographics

Comments noted the need to address the aging demographic in our profession by training more young and qualified Feldenkrais teachers. Offering ATM Teacher training programs, and Certified Awareness Through Movement Teacher^{CM} (CFATMT) certifications, could contribute to a viable solution.

“Quite simply, avoiding the aging-out demographic collapse of our profession. We simply must produce more qualified and younger Feldenkrais teachers, and ATM-only seems like a legitimate model, especially after reading the ‘What We Learned’ document. More affordable and shorter certification study is perhaps unfortunate, but nonetheless a necessary direction for us to go.”

2. Increased awareness of the Method, greater availability of ATM lessons

Comments expressed that an increase in the number of qualified ATM teachers will raise awareness of the Method and make it more available to the public in more varied settings.

“More people need to be made aware of what [the Feldenkrais Method] is and how it can benefit them and improve them.”

“That potentially leads to more interest in FI lessons.”

“ATM is the jewel of the Feldenkrais Method, with so many applications. I am excited to have ATM teachers in many more places, like schools, gyms, dance classes, art studios, theater departments...and more.”

“A fairly high % of participants in conventional trainings are there for their own development - which is very important. And this means that those people never intend to have a practice. However, an ATM training is focused and so there will be fewer graduates that won't be practicing. They can more directly bring ATM into schools, hospitals, nursing homes, sports training and longevity programs throughout the world.”

“If getting the Feldenkrais method out there is a goal of the Guild, this shorter program is definitely a way to do that.”

3. Greater access to training programs and advancement to Trainer status

Comments conveyed that to ensure the future of the Method, more training programs will be needed. Further, ATM-only teacher training programs offer a way for Trainer Candidates and Assistant Trainers to gain experience as educational leaders.

“Increased accessibility financially and demographically and culturally.”

“... more training opportunities for assistant trainers to get training experience.”

4. Economical portal to Practitioner status

Comments expressed that the reduced investment in terms of time and money will make ATM-only teacher training programs an attractive option for some people. This may enhance the diversity among teachers, possibly drawing younger people and those with less financial resources. Participants may be inspired to transition into a full training program to become a Feldenkrais Practitioner.

“Expanding the options for training, having more accessible programs for people with less time/money.”

“IF the ATM teacher trainings are designed with seamless multiple options to continue training to become a practitioner (for those who wish), and those new teachers reach and inspire new people to have interest (which is possible) I fully support the trainings.”

5. Development of creative pedagogy

Comments reflected the reports of the experienced Educational Directors involved in the two pilot programs that the two different staffing arrangements were both effective, and that they were stimulated by circumstances to explore the use of online instruction for ATM teacher training, which can now be replicated.

“The ATM trainings offer the possibility of new explorations into the teaching of the Feldenkrais Method, as Moshe did in the Esalen series and possibly Berkeley - from new ideas in program design and teaching to staffing options.”

6. More flexibility in what can be offered

Comments reflected support for opening more ways to offer training programs while keeping a focus on quality of practice.

“More flexibility in ways for trainees to train, while keeping a good standard.”

“Expanding the options for training, having more accessible programs for people with less time/money... There seems to be a need for it and expanded programming is good for everyone.”

“The Feldenkrais Method is about options and finding creative ways to work out solutions. This is definitely a time to put this idea into practice.”

“If atm continues to be taught the same old ways, without the upgrades, without the benefits of new learnings, the results are likely to be the same.”

“A more concise path for those with specific interests”

“Options! Aren’t we all about options? ... Options, options, options. 1. Someone who has taught ATM for a few years is in a great place to complete the second two years. Their observations skills and understanding of the Method will just grow as they teach. 2. The Method will more easily spread if we have lots of ATM only teachers teaching in diverse situations and roles.”

Comments opposed to, or expressing concerns about, continuing to develop the option of ATM Teacher training programs:

7. Dilution of the Method

Comments expressed concern about “dilution” of the Feldenkrais Method because ATM lessons and FI® lessons are complementary. There are opinions that: the experience of receiving and giving FI lessons is crucial for fully grasping and communicating the depth of the Method and informing ATM teaching; that Practitioners will miss opportunities for personal and professional growth; and that oversimplification could lead to a rigid teaching approach that resembles mere calisthenics or is co-opted by other practices such as yoga and Pilates. This was the most frequently voiced concern, accounting for about one-third of all concerns mentioned.

“...it’s hard to imagine teaching ATM without having the embedded hands-on physical experience of FI, both receiving and giving.”

“...dilution of the method and how it might be co-opted into and by practices such as Pilates, yoga, etc.”

“...graduates would not have a full enough understanding of the method to communicate the depth of it to the students.”

8. Curriculum, training, and transition issues

Some respondents focused their concerns on the number of training programs, the quality of the teaching, the consistency of the curriculum, and the ability to transition to a four-year program in order to become able to provide FI lessons. Concerns about training were the second most common concern mentioned, expressed by just under one quarter of those who noted concerns, and mostly expressed by those in favor of ATM-only teacher training programs.

“The competency of the trainers.”

“Sorting out how to make a full training viable, in the current environment with small training[s], and then contemplating a critical number leaving to become ATM only teachers and being left with students to whom they have promised a full training but too few to make it financially viable.”

“There should be more education about and understanding of anatomy, biotensegrity, etc.”

One current participant in a four-year training commented: “I wish there were a way to have the ATM's organized or explained at the beginning of the training, that knowing how to organize one's catalogue of ATM's could be most helpful and necessary.”

9. Inexperienced teachers

A few respondents voiced a concern, related to the “dilution” argument, that the ATM teachers will be too inexperienced after a training program of ~400 hours instead of 800 hours.

“As a participant in one of the trainings - I worry about not getting as firm of a foundation in the method before going off on our own and then it negatively impacting our confidence/ability to keep going while starting to teach.”

“That it will become like Yoga in that there are some teachers who are not trained well enough to notice when someone might hurt themselves...”

“Quality of teachers after only two years of training.”

10. Competition, marketing, and branding issues

Concern was expressed that the presence of ATM-only teachers in the marketplace may confuse or wrongly limit the public perception of what constitutes the Feldenkrais Method. Respondents reveal a tension between the benefit of greater awareness and availability of ATM lessons and the potential for competition and disunity among practitioners. Practical concerns were voiced about establishing a practice and finding teaching venues and students. About one-fifth of the concerns had to do with these issues.

“As a Feldenkrais Practitioner I love teaching ATM and do not like the idea of having to compete with those who only studied ATM. It's hard enough to earn a living at this work.”

“Creates confusion with the public as to who is a FP and who is an ATM teacher. GCFPs pay a lot of money for the right to use trade marks, and adding a two year accreditation to teach ATM dilutes our rights.”

“...the public will not make the distinction between a certified ATM teacher and a certified FP. This waters down the value of being a Certified FP.”

“I have concerns about the elitism of FI vs ATM practitioner.”

“Will graduates have a financially viable skill? I predict ATM-only teaching would not be financially sustainable on its own. (That isn't necessarily a deal-breaker.)”

11. Unqualified to provide FI lessons

Some respondents fear that ATM-only teachers may improperly give FI lessons without being trained or authorized to do that, and that enforcement by the Guild would be impracticable. Comments expressed the need for clear guidelines regarding what is permissible and impermissible in ATM classes.

“We don’t have the infrastructure necessary to make sure the ATM graduates are not giving FI under the FM trademark.”

“I’m concerned that ATM teachers will touch their students and even give private hands on sessions. I believe this will be problematic and wonder how they can have liability insurance that covers this.”

“ATM-only teachers or practitioners need to be fully aware that they are not certified to touch students in their ATM classes. This could do a lot of harm to individuals and to our wonderful method, as long as they have not taken the full program and learned the skills and sensitivities it takes to manually guide another person in movement.”

“How can the graduates teach ATM if they sign an agreement saying that they will -never- touch their students?”