



A Union of Professionals

## WHAT TEACHERS NEED TO HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED

*If you want to know what teachers need to succeed in the classroom, ask them.* The AFT uses a number of ways to hear directly from our members what they need to do their jobs well. Recently, we asked members what they need to help their students succeed. Not surprisingly, with members in urban, rural and suburban schools spread across the country, we got a range of answers. Some needed basic supplies, such as paper or more textbooks. Others asked for common planning time to consult with colleagues. Still others needed less tangible—yet just as crucial—supports, such as greater respect. These diverse responses all come down to three things teachers need to do a good job for their students: tools, time and trust.

### What our members say:

#### Tools

At the school level, teachers and their students need essential supplies, small classes, a safe teaching and learning environment, adequate facilities, current technology and opportunities for parental involvement. Teachers also need common standards for what students should learn, as well as solid curricular materials, pre-service training, professional development, and assessments designed to help students meet those standards.

Many children also need extra resources that help level the playing field, which is why the AFT has promoted the idea of community schools—of co-locating services—in schools.

Richard H., Los Angeles County, Calif.: “I need more general and career counseling for students, more mental health clinics, and health care for all students. Students have so many needs and all the social services are overwhelmed.”

Lee C., St. James, Minn.: “For me to do my job you need to heat my building, get those kids to school and feed them, demand that my administrators do not hide from their duties or opportunities, and demand the same from me.”

#### Time

Teachers spend hours outside of the school day grading papers, creating lesson plans, meeting with parents, and participating in school activities. They work late into the night, and get up in the morning to do it all over again. We can help them by giving them more time during the school day to come together to resolve student issues, share lesson plans, analyze student work, discuss successes and failures, and learn through high-quality professional development. With a team of teachers—not just one at the front of the room—we can help make sure students don’t fall through the cracks.

Abel M., Pajaro Valley, Calif.: “My colleagues and I need to be respected as professionals. We are often told that we should get paid less than others with similar educational backgrounds. My job never ends. Students e-mail me for help with entrance essays, homework, or sometimes just to get advice on homework. They call my home, visit me before school, during my “duty-free” lunch, after school and even on the weekend. My job is virtually non-stop. I am constantly preparing for lesson plans, grading, contemplating new strategies, inputting grades and answering e-mails.”

Jessica Q., Berkeley, Calif.: “All students deserve highly educated and highly qualified teachers. We need a society that prioritizes education by fully funding robust teacher education programs so that beginning

teachers aren't left to sink or swim. Teachers need more time in their day to plan and reflect, using their assessments of student learning to develop innovative lessons and ensure even more student learning."

### **Trust**

Teachers must be treated as partners in reform—with a real voice. When teachers are involved in decision making—from the very beginning and through the very end—students benefit. Whether it's a school district seeking a federal grant or an individual school seeking a safer environment for teaching and learning, classroom educators who work with students every day must be involved at every step in the process.

Melissa A., Parkersburg, W.Va.: "I have put my heart and soul into the education of these children daily for over 20 years. I know what works. Just respect me enough to ask."

David H., Volusia County, Fla.: "We need people to listen to the people who 'fight the fight' every day, and not to the people who come up with great theories but either have never set foot in a classroom or have not been in a classroom for many years."