

# PSRP Reporter

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF AFT PARAPROFESSIONALS AND SCHOOL-RELATED PERSONNEL



Mary DeTomaso, above, serves lots more fruit these days at Walberta Park. Breakfast at Salem Hyde, right. Keene Central School, top right, has its own kitchen garden.

## Food for thought

Cafeteria workers push hard to build healthier student bodies

**WHAT DO HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS** of the future look like? AFT members at school districts around New York state—urban, suburban and rural—illustrate how food service workers across the country are helping pave the way to better school meals.

“We’re doing a lot as far as fresh fruits and vegetables go—a lot more than we ever did before,” says Mary DeTomaso, a cook/manager and food service rep for the AFT-affiliated Westhill Employees Union in Central New York. DeTomaso says she and her fellow cooks at Walberta Park Primary School now incorporate applesauce into their hamburger, don’t deep-fry anything, and serve more rice, couscous and boiled potatoes.

“Actually, we’ve done a lot more than other school districts,” proudly adds DeTomaso. That’s because for more than two years, she and her community have been carrying out a detailed wellness policy so that students will feel stronger, think better and learn more.

The same thing is happening all over America, and not a moment too soon. One in three U.S. children is overweight, and outright obesity rates have tripled in 30 years, raising fears that the present generation of kids may be the first with shorter lives than their parents.

Many students whose families can least afford healthful food also happen to live in what are called “food deserts”—usually urban and

*Continued on page 4*



**Restoring the nation's main education law**  
PAGE 2

**2010 OUR Students Future Work**  
PAGE 6



**Healthcare reform**  
What's in it for you?  
PAGE 3



## The AFT's pathway to student success

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

"WE THE AFT." School employees don't have our own version of the U.S. Constitution, but I sometimes think we should have a similarly bold, substantive and specific document that lays out what constitutes a good education, and how we can ensure every student has access to such an education.

### AFT VOICES



**The AFT has laid out a vision for the kind of education students need to reach their full potential. What do you think every child needs to succeed?**

**IT'S YOUR VOICE** We want to hear from you on issues throughout the year! Visit [www.aft.org/voices](http://www.aft.org/voices) today where you can respond to this and other questions.

Too often, the policies governing public education read more like: "We the school board," or "We the Department of Education," or "We the administrators of such-and-such program." Don't get me wrong. In a democratic society, each of these entities has an important role and each can and should play a supportive role. But it shouldn't eclipse that of school employees, who are closest to the children and know them well, who understand what works in education and what falls flat, and who know how policies and mandates can directly affect what goes on in schools—for better or worse.

The American Federation of Teachers recently developed a document called "AFT's Pathway to Student Success: What Every Student Needs" ([www.aft.org/pathway](http://www.aft.org/pathway)). Building on what we know as frontline educators,

the AFT Pathway details the conditions for student success—everything from a well-rounded curriculum to school environments conducive to learning, to high-quality, well-supported educators, to strong home-school connections and to the specific needs of children at every stage of their learning, including those with disabilities or who are not yet fluent in English. I hope it will be a living document, informed by the wisdom and experience of our members, and improved when practice and research show us more promising ways to carry out our work.

As Congress prepares to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), we are reminded that school employees aren't the only ones with ideas about how to educate our children. But we are the ones charged with carrying out education programs and policies in real schools, with real kids. That's why we gave our members opportunities to weigh in on the planned reauthorization of ESEA, and why the AFT submitted detailed comments on the Obama administration's ESEA blueprint.

Our union's priorities for ESEA stem from our members' insights. I have had literally thousands of conversations with members over the years about the impact of ESEA. School employees know that education policies should emphasize what works and how to replicate it, as opposed to what some think should work. In addition, the reauthorized ESEA should have a greater focus on fostering shared responsibility among all stakeholders and less on making educational success the sole responsibility of teachers. Along with help for persistently low-performing schools, it should support the movement toward high-quality common standards that are aligned

with real curriculum and valid assessments. And ESEA must maintain targeted funding for the very children for whom it was always intended: those in greatest need.

Of course, all this requires adequate resources. The Obama administration and Congress made an important investment in our nation and our children by enacting the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which stabilized a rapidly declining economy and averted disastrous cuts in education. Today, more than 325,000 teachers, professors and other education staff who were in danger of being laid off are working with students in schools and colleges nationwide. And you cannot overstate the benefit for young people, who don't get a second chance for a good education.

Now, with Recovery Act funds winding down, states face additional budget gaps of up to \$180 billion next year. States and districts once again are talking about cuts—disinvesting in the education programs and personnel that students still need but simply won't get. Those who set education policy and budgets cannot lose sight of this fact.

Our national responsibility is to educate every child to his or her fullest potential, and the great legacy and strength of our public schools is to take in, accept, teach and care for every child who enters them. This responsibility should be shared by school employees, students, parents, administrators, elected officials and all those concerned with having a capable citizenry. School employees may not have a constitution but we have goals, visions and ideas that guide us. I invite you to read the AFT's Pathway to Student Success: What Every Student Needs, and then share your insights with us.



PSRP REPORTER (USPS 011542) is published five times a year in January, March, May, September and November by the American Federation of Teachers, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001-2079. Phone: 202/879-4400. [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to PSRP REPORTER, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001-2079.

**MEMBERS:** To change your address or subscription, notify your local union treasurer or visit [www.aft.org/members](http://www.aft.org/members).

PSRP REPORTER is mailed to all AFT PSRP members as a benefit of membership. Subscriptions represent \$1.75 of annual dues and are available only as a part of membership.

Although advertisements are screened as carefully as possible, acceptance of an advertisement does not imply AFT endorsement of the product or service.

© 2010 AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, AFL-CIO

**RANDI WEINGARTEN**  
President  
**ANTONIA CORTESE**  
Secretary-Treasurer  
**LORRETTA JOHNSON**  
Executive Vice President

**KRIS HAVENS**  
Communications Director

**ROGER S. GLASS**  
Editor-in-Chief

**ANNETTE LICITRA**  
Managing Editor

**MARY POWER BOYD**  
Copy Editor

**LAURA BAKER**  
**ADRIENNE COLES**  
**JANE FELLER**  
**DANIEL GURSKY**  
**BARBARA MCKENNA**  
**MIKE ROSE**  
**KATHY WALSH**  
Contributing Editors

**CHARLES GLENDINNING**  
Art Director

**JENNIFER CHANG**  
**PAMELA WOLFE**  
Graphic Designers

**SHARON WRIGHT**  
Production Manager

**SHARON FRANCOUR**  
Production Coordinator

**SHAWNITRA HAWKINS**  
**ALICIA NICK**  
Production Support

Cover Photos:  
LAUREN LONG, JULIE HOLBROOK



# Healthcare reform legislation is a historic step forward

Many of the new law's provisions will take effect this year



MICHAEL CAMPBELL

**Public health nurse Yvonne Macklin hopes the law will make healthcare more affordable.**

A PUBLIC HEALTH nurse, Yvonne Macklin works in one of seven health centers in Baltimore County that provide family planning, well-care visits and child immunizations. In the past year, Macklin has seen a surprising drop in patient visits.

"People don't have the \$20 co-pay to spend for care. It's just not in their budget," she says. Macklin, a member of the Baltimore County

Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, attributes the trend to the troubled economy. But she's optimistic that the new healthcare reform legislation President Barack Obama signed into law in March will make healthcare more affordable.

Many of the law's provisions will take effect in 2010. These include:

- Eliminating pre-existing condition exclusion for nondependent children up to age 26;
- Providing \$5 billion to states to create a high-risk insurance pool for those denied insurance due to pre-existing conditions and who have been without insurance for six months;
- Providing up to 35 percent tax credits to small businesses that offer coverage; and
- Establishing a process for reviewing increases in premiums and requiring plan providers to justify increases.

The legislation also increases Medicaid payments to primary care doctors, and it includes incentives for primary care providers to practice in underserved areas.

No law is perfect, but this is landmark legislation that makes a significant start, says AFT president Randi Weingarten. "Healthcare that is accessible and affordable to all, and that enables seniors to purchase affordable medications, should be a right, not a privilege," she says. "Congress and the White House have now given Americans what they need and deserve."

The new law covers recommended prevention and vaccination services without any deductibles or co-payments. States are now allowed to expand Medicaid eligibility to more low-income individuals.

Macklin says opening up Medicaid to more people will give her a chance to treat more patients. And she hopes some of the funds will be used to let everyone know about the services the center provides.

**"In the United States, healthcare that is accessible and affordable to all ... should be a right, not a privilege."**

—RANDI WEINGARTEN  
AFT president

## AFT president addresses jobs, education during national tour

First few stops in New Mexico, California include schools

AFT PRESIDENT Randi Weingarten is visiting cities around the country to draw attention to the problems states face in dealing with the fiscal crisis. During her first stop in early April, Weingarten addressed the concerns of school staff in Albuquerque, N.M., on two major issues: jobs and the law that sets national education policy.

"Preserving teaching jobs this year preserved opportunities for our nation's youth," Weingarten said at the town hall-style meeting, the first of several planned through May. "A child's life moves forward, no matter what the circumstances. The second grade does not stop because of a budget crisis."

With local schools and governments strapped for cash, the AFT is working hard to make sure Congress keeps sending funds that preserved or created 250,000 education jobs during the current school year. A proposed Local Jobs for America Act includes \$23 billion for the upcoming school year to help avoid layoffs.

Weingarten also addressed the Obama administration's plan to overhaul the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which will replace the No Child Left Behind law, saying the new plan places too much responsibility on teachers alone. She pledged to keep working on improving the bill.

Weingarten visited a middle school to see how collaboration between staff and administrators can raise student performance. She drew a sharp contrast between this approach and the chaos that occurs where administrators blame and fire workers, saying: "Commitment, collaboration and shared responsibility are what make this school work."


At a later stop on the tour, Weingarten vis-



RICK SCIBELLI

ited San Francisco on April 20, where she said staff cuts are the wrong solution to California's budget woes because they simply "pull the rug out from under kids." Her first visit there was to El Dorado Elementary School, where 13 of 20 teachers have received layoff notices.

Upcoming tour stops include schools in Illinois, Minnesota and New York.

**AFT VOICES** 

"After a health scare, a new baby and a 12-hour workday, my brother was called into the office ... and told he was doing a good job. In the next sentence, he was told he was laid off."

—MANUEL MENDOZA, Cleveland, Ohio

# Food for thought



*Continued from page 1*

rural areas with little or no access to food stores, so people rely on convenience stores or fast food outlets selling empty calories. Other things that can block families' access to good food include lack of time between jobs or shifts, lack of transportation and lack of cooking facilities or storage space.

## School meals = big deals

All this often leaves child nutrition in the hands of school food workers and administrators. Obtaining fresh local food for schoolchildren can be daunting, especially since schools have to contend with health regulations and bidding rules, which don't always square with what local farmers can provide. To overcome these restrictions, food workers say they need to practice three qualities: diplomacy, patience and persistence.

Barbara Davenport, a middle-school home and career skills teacher and member of the Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Personnel in Kingston, N.Y., comes from a farm family, so she knows her stuff when it comes to veggies. She's worked in both urban and rural schools along the eastern side of the state and she says that improving school food is hard.

Davenport is on the cutting edge of the nation's healthy food movement. She works closely with co-workers, farmers, students and parents on bringing food directly from local farms to schools. "I really feel so passionately that we need to do something to make our kids healthier," she says. "To run a successful farm-to-school program, you really need the cooperation of the entire school."

Davenport, who collaborates with the Rondout Valley Growers Association, has introduced her middle-schoolers to the food that local farmers grow. In her region—traditionally the bread basket of New York City—a federal grant is helping convert commercial kitchens into centers for moving fresh produce between farmers and schools.

Davenport begged administrators at her urban middle school for a school bus so that for \$5 per child, she could take students to a farm where they picked acorn squash, green beans and corn, dug potatoes and brought them back to school. There they washed the veggies, cut the corn off the cobs and prepared a banquet. The children also visited an orchard to find out what's behind growing apples and making cider.

At her latest school, she had fifth- and

sixth-graders in a behavior management class growing garlic. "The pride they took in their garden was amazing," she says. For an eighth-grade entrepreneurship project, students made pickles from a banner crop of Kirby cucumbers. The students' Clove Valley Pickle Co. has won an invitation to an international pickle festival this November.

Another way to get fresh produce into school meals is to grow it yourself. Julie Holbrook is an AFT member and a school food service manager in upstate New York, where she and her students built a garden adjacent to the school and are installing a community-funded geodesic greenhouse (one of those glass structures that look like giant golf balls) conforming to health regulations.

Holbrook's K-12 school in Keene, N.Y., is nestled in the Adirondack mountains, meaning she has a very short season for growing fruits and vegetables compared with the rest of the country. "Up here, we can have killing frosts in September and can still have frosts in May," Holbrook says. The greenhouse will let them raise all their greens for salads and sauces year-round.

## One way to get fresh fruits and vegetables into school meals is to grow them yourself.



JULIE HOLBROOK

Lunch offerings are getting fruitier at Walberta Park, top, and everybody pitches in at the Keene Central School garden.



Holbrook works hard to get as much food as possible directly from the garden into school lunches. "I just grow lots and lots of food," she says.

In her union contract, Holbrook is now an 11-month employee, receiving a stipend for the planting, weeding and watering she does in the school garden. "Over the summer, I mostly do the work, but we often have students, parents and community members come and help," she says.

Because she needs them in the cafeteria, Holbrook mainly raises tomatoes, onions, carrots, potatoes, lettuce, spinach and other greens, including swiss chard and herbs, plus peas, beans, squash, cabbage and leeks. Holbrook hopes someday to hold cooking classes in the cafeteria.

### A growing menu

Holbrook's garden drives her menu: "I began by changing the margarine to real butter and started using shell eggs instead of the processed ones. I use 100 percent whole wheat flour in my desserts and have slowly arrived at 60 percent whole wheat flour in my breads and pizza doughs. I put blended mustard greens in most of my sauces and soups. I use sweet potatoes in most things, including my macaroni and cheese, and the students think it is orange cheese. I have learned to refuse canned vegetables from the government food program. I use only fresh or frozen veggies and mostly fresh fruit. I have reduced the meat in a lot of my recipes."

On the flip side of farm-to-school programs and school vegetable gardens are neighborhoods where only unhealthy food is readily available and often there's little food for children at all. Many of these places are urban or rural, and most are afflicted with poverty.

According to the Food Research and Action Center, the South Bronx neighborhood of New York City has the worst food hardship in the country, at about 37 percent. Philadelphia follows at 36 percent, Los Angeles at more than 31 percent and Brooklyn, N.Y., at almost 31 percent.

Even in less dense urban areas like Syracuse, N.Y., AFT member Eileen Kitts sees both

a student monitored for obesity and another who comes to school hungry every day. "This little boy, he concerns me," says Kitts, who works closely with the school social worker in cases of children who seem hungry or unkempt, the same ones who don't recognize hot food because they never get it at home and can't tell peaches from pears. "She tries hard," Kitts says of the social worker. "She takes our word to heart. It's sad when children come to school sick. It's troublesome."

The AFT has partnered with the anti-hunger group Share Our Strength to combat child hunger (see story, page 8).

Despite the challenges of hunger and poor nutrition, good news is springing up all over, including urban districts, as parents and school employees join forces in shunning unhealthy food. "We do go through a lot of apples and orange slices," says Kitts, who is president of her unit of food service workers within the Syracuse Teachers Association. "I like that. It's better than applesauce because there's more fiber and less messing with it."

Slowly, over the years, food awareness has come a long way both in New York state and across the nation. First lady Michelle Obama has planted a vegetable garden at the White House and is speaking out about child health. The students of AFT members are helping lobby for better laws governing school food. Already, campaigns to improve nutrition have

brought about a sharp drop in soda sales to schools, which have plunged 72 percent since 2004-05.

Following the lead of California and other states, Massachusetts has legislation in the works banning junk food at school. Gov. Deval Patrick wants

to go further by lifting the sales tax exemption on candy and soda, then funneling that money into health programs.

Even the U.S. Department of Agriculture commodities program is improving a bit, Holbrook says. She now gets frozen blueberries and unsweetened cherries and walnuts from the USDA. The government's meat hasn't improved yet, she adds, "but we have a dream of grass-fed beef."



Eileen Kitts at Salem Hyde Elementary School.

LAUREN LONG

## Have wholesome foods replaced unhealthy meals or snacks in your school? If so, how was it done?

"The lunches have become smaller, with little or no nutrition. Every lunch should have a vegetable, fruit, meat and bread. Not chicken nuggets or cardboard pizza."

**JACKIE CANTRELL**  
DeRidder, La.

"Our school is serving healthy lunches but the combinations are strange. They have cut back on the quantity as well as the quality. Most of the food is thrown away by the students."

**KURT KUNZMAN**  
Whitehouse, Texas

"Students need to be exposed to different foods. School would be the perfect place to teach them what different foods look like and how they taste."

**MARY STOTT**  
Harvey, La.

"My concern is the portion size. I think the portions are too small for high school students and need to be enlarged slightly to accommodate growing bodies. My school is also in a poor neighborhood with many students getting all of their daily food intake at school."

**WANDA TRUMAN**  
Minneapolis

"Our elementary school is serving local foods, such as cheese and apples. We also have whole wheat bread and rolls. We have tried some new vegetables like squash. Also some ethnic foods, like stir fry and orange chicken. Wraps with chicken and good things to top it with. Homemade salsa and sauces, too. We tried dried fruits and almonds that were delicious, but it will take another try for the students!"

**KAREN JENSEN**  
Northfield, Minn.

**Tell us your story about how the work you do makes a difference in the lives of your students.**

**IT'S YOUR VOICE** We want to hear from you! Visit [www.aft.org/voices](http://www.aft.org/voices) to respond to this question and to others throughout the year.



## Support personnel share their stories at conference



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

Top, Wanda Alldredge of Alliance-AFT in Dallas is one of many members telling their stories and raising awareness about the outstanding work that support staff do. Above, AFT members sign a banner in solidarity with workers in Osceola, Fla. No stopping them now!

FROM HONORING WORKERS to mobilizing against those who would hijack education, AFT members attending this year's PSRP conference in Orlando, Fla., April 9-11 described how the work they do improves the lives of their students.

The meeting's main events were devoted to stories of struggle and achievement on the job. Ruby Newbold, an AFT vice president and head of the Detroit Association of Educational Office Employees, and Brenda Smith, president of the Douglas County Federation of Teachers and Classified Employees in Colorado, described how paraprofessionals and school-related personnel (PSRPs) have testified in public—before school boards and on the airwaves—about their professional contributions.

One Colorado member grew into her job through extensive work with the Boy Scouts and a food bank. Another PSRP, a school engineer, saved the system \$60,000 in energy costs in just one year. Both told their stories before the board when school employees suddenly came under attack during the current budget crisis. AFT Colorado fended off the attack by highlighting these good services, good programs and good people.

Newbold's local put together a radio and Internet campaign, "A Stronger Detroit for Our Kids," in which school office workers each told their stories of helping children survive and thrive in a fast-paced environment. "Our members stepped up to the plate," Newbold said. "Please don't leave here today thinking you alone can defeat these attacks."

### Time to be heard

The conference drew all three of the AFT's top officers. AFT president Randi Weingarten warned paraprofessionals and school-related personnel about hundreds of thousands of layoffs coming before June, unless emergency funding and cost-saving measures arrive from all quarters, including members themselves.

"We have to step it up and start offering solutions," Weingarten said, adding that school managers certainly haven't done the job. "It's cheap to blame us," she added. "It's a lot easier to blame the people who actually do the work. This is the time when 'Solidarity Forever' means solidarity forever."

PSRP program and policy council chair and AFT executive vice president Lorretta Johnson acknowledged that layoffs are straining families

## Quick action saves fellow PSRP from choking

LITTLE DID ROBERT WARREN imagine while learning first aid years ago that he would one day actually save a life. He was walking down a hall at the PSRP conference in Orlando when he wheeled around to see a woman choking.

A Texas heating and air conditioning specialist and member of the Houston Educational Support Personnel, Warren had never used his training in CPR or the Heimlich maneuver.

Those skills turned out to be most useful. The woman, a new volunteer organizer from California, was flushed, choking and having difficulty breathing. After smacking her on the back, which did no good, Warren reassured her and administered the Heimlich maneuver several times. A piece of fruit dislodged from her throat. "It worked out, so I'm glad," Warren says. "It's a simple duty that we have to do one another as human beings."

For her part, the volunteer organizer feels the attention she's received is worthwhile as long as other AFT members get the word about the importance of safety training.

Before presenting Warren with a new PSRP Lifesaver Award at the close of the conference, AFT executive vice president Lorretta Johnson encouraged everyone to learn first aid. "You never know," she said. "It might come in handy."

The AFT's health and safety program offers free certified first aid, AED and CPR classes in partnership with affiliates. Ask your local union to e-mail [healthandsafety@aft.org](mailto:healthandsafety@aft.org).



Robert Warren, winner of the new PSRP Lifesaver Award.

but noted that school workers are doing the smart thing by sticking together in the AFT, which now counts among its ranks more than 360,000 paraprofessionals and school-related personnel.

“PSRPs or ESPs or classified, it doesn’t matter what they call us,” Johnson reminded the crowd. “We know who we are: the backbones of our schools and colleges.”

Support staff from around the nation also met some of the 1,300 brave secretaries, clericals and paraprofessionals from Osceola County, Fla., who have been dug in for a year fighting for the right to organize. “My dad was a custodian,” said Kathy Donato, president of the Osceola Classroom Teachers Association, “and it was always my dream that the ESPs would be joining us.” Over the weekend, members covered a huge banner with words of encouragement for the Osceola workers.

AFT secretary-treasurer Antonia Cortese said her “aha! moment” at the conference came when the PSRPs needed no prompting to jump to their feet and cheer the Osceola employees. “We are a union, all of us, brothers and sisters,” she said, “and as long as we stay together, we’ll be strong.”

A few of the issues members explored through workshops and other breakout sessions included counteracting budget cuts in schools and colleges; bargaining for respect; and learning how to help grieving or traumatized children.

The group also heard from U.S. Rep. Alan Grayson (D-Fla.) during a luncheon talk in which he recalled a time of greater respect for educators. Grayson told the PSRPs that he can’t understand why any American would degrade the public schools, adding that “the only way we can look forward to a happy, healthy country is to give children a good education.” He supports the Osceola organizing campaign. When his constituents complain about pay cuts, he asks, “Then why don’t you join a union? We’re all proud to be members, including me.”

### Shanker Pioneer Award

Each year, the division honors one member who has led the way for others—in other words, a pioneer. This year’s winner of the Albert Shanker Pioneer Award was George Williams, who was recognized as someone who brought a union to people who had never enjoyed the benefits of a union, and as someone who helped develop a rock-solid contract.



As president of the American Association of Classified School Employees and longtime president of the AFT-affiliated Madison County (Fla.) Education Association, Williams has become a leading voice on motor coach safety and Florida’s beleaguered school finances. He has worked at the same elementary school as head custodian for going on 30 years. When Williams took the podium to accept the award, he burst into song, intoning, “The AFT is here, the power of the union is here.”

Later in the evening, the mood was tempered by the singing of “Speak for Me,” in remembrance of unionists who have died over the past year, including 29 West Virginia workers killed in April during the worst mining disaster in 40 years.

AFT president Weingarten left the school support workers with her hopes. “I want us to be the union of ideas, I want us to be the union of moxie, and I want us to control our own destiny,” she told them. “Are you ready for it?”

Florida PSRP leader George Williams, top, realizes that he is the Shanker Pioneer Award winner. On Solidarity Night, officers Antonia Cortese, above left, and Lorretta Johnson join the parade.

## 2010 PSRP CONFERENCE AWARD WINNERS

### Professional Achievement

- Baltimore Teachers Union

### Child Welfare and Community Service Helping Hands Award

- Cindy Fulwood, Hillsborough School Employees Federation

### Community Service Award

- NYSUT SRP

### Advocacy and Organizing

- Detroit Association of Educational Office Employees

### PSRP Union Builders Award

- United Teachers of Dade

### PSRPs in the Spotlight

- WVSSPA and president Jackee Long

### Militancy Award

- Tulsa School Service Workers, AFT 6049 Oklahoma

### Outstanding PSRP

#### Legislative Program

- AFT-Oregon and OSEA

### Lorretta Johnson Solidarity in Action

- California Federation of Teachers

### Dorothea Bell Political Action

- Oklahoma City Classified Employees Federation
- AFT Washington

### Workers Memorial Day

- Kansas City Federation of Teachers
- St. Croix, Virgin Islands
- San Antonio, Texas
- Broward Teachers Union ESP
- Oakton Community College

### Union Workplace

#### Advocacy Award

- NYU Clerical
- Calcasieu Federation of Teachers and School Employees

### PSRP Lifesaver Award

- Robert Warren, Houston Educational Support Personnel

# Educators seeing more hungry students

## AFT partners with anti-hunger group Share Our Strength

EDUCATORS NATIONWIDE are noticing increased hunger and impaired learning among their students, despite programs intended to ensure that children have enough to eat.

Teachers responding to a survey by the anti-hunger group Share Our Strength (SOS) cataloged an array of issues confronting the nearly 17 million U.S. children at risk of hunger at some point each school year. Because educators are the first responders to hunger in our classrooms, the AFT is joining SOS in raising awareness. The problem has worsened, they say, describing symptoms of chronic hunger including headaches, stomachaches, lethargy and poor concentration.

Nearly two-thirds of teachers surveyed say they spend their own money to buy food for students who often are thinking less about the day’s lesson and more about where they will get their next meal. Elementary teachers report spending an average of \$27 a month on food. Middle school teachers spend about \$38 a month.

Despite the best efforts of school employees, many children have nothing to eat from

the time school lets out until they come back the next morning. “They have lunch at 11:30 and then don’t eat the rest of the day,” says Amy Di Biase, an AFT member and fourth-grade teacher in the Bronx, N.Y. “I don’t know how people expect them to do their homework. It’s just one more thing that makes it so hard for them to learn.”

In an SOS video, Di Biase describes a boy who regularly shows up to help her, hoping she’ll give him a granola bar. Beyond what the survey found, AFT members have related stories of cafeteria workers handing out extra food and classified staff who keep snacks on hand.

That any child in America comes to school too hungry to learn is a travesty, says AFT president Randi Weingarten. She’s asking administrators to redouble their efforts to get children signed up for meal programs and help remove the stigma of free meals by making food more accessible before, during and after school, as well as on weekends and during the summer. “Student hunger is one of those ‘outside the classroom’ problems that could be addressed in part by community schools,” Weingarten says.



**SHAREOUR STRENGTH**  
NO KID HUNGRY

[www.strength.org](http://www.strength.org)



TRAVEL



## Time to get away?

(you pick the dates—  
we’ll help with the plans)

**HOTELS:** Save an additional 20 percent off the “best available rate” at more than 6,400 participating hotels in locations worldwide.

**CAR RENTAL:** AFT member discount car rental programs will meet your travel needs and budget.



A Union of Professionals

**AFT+**  
Member Benefits

+

For more information about these and other savings, go to:

[www.aft.org/members](http://www.aft.org/members)

**AFT+** is your advocate. For information on all **AFT+** programs, call 800/238-1133, ext. 8643, or e-mail [aftplus@aft.org](mailto:aftplus@aft.org). The AFT has an expense reimbursement and/or endorsement arrangement for marketing this program. For more information, please contact AFT Financial Services at 800/238-1133, ext. 4493; send an e-mail to [disclosureinfo@aft.org](mailto:disclosureinfo@aft.org); or visit [www.aft.org/benefits/disclosure](http://www.aft.org/benefits/disclosure).