



AMERICAN Teacher

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

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Leading the charge

**CONVENTION '08:
AFT MEMBERS ARE THE
SOLUTION FOR IMPROVING
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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Newly elected AFT officers from left:
President Randi Weingarten, Executive
Vice President Lorretta Johnson and
Secretary-Treasurer Antonia Cortese

Open Door Policy

Community schools have a lot to offer
children, families, neighborhoods

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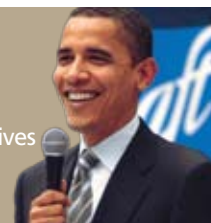
A conversation with the AFT's new president

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AFT stands with Obama

Presidential candidate receives
union's endorsement

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A Union of Professionals

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Answering the challenge

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

I AM HONORED to have been elected to lead our great union, and I am humbled to follow people whom I have revered so long. Al Shanker led the fight for collective bargaining and school improvement. Sandy Feldman never let us forget what public schools, libraries and universities mean for families striving to get ahead. Ed McElroy built our membership strength, our political clout and our leading role in the labor movement. We stand on their shoulders and, because of them, our union is capable of great things.

The first priority of my presidency will be the development of an AFT reform agenda that involves AFT members in improving the lives and prospects of children and their families, especially those in greatest need. The success of our agenda hinges upon replacing the No Child Left Behind Act with a new federal education law that will help, not harm, students and schools.

The No Child Left Behind Act began as a bipartisan effort to close the gaps in educational achievement, but NCLB's flaws doomed its laudable goals. For years, the AFT worked to improve the law, but now it is clear: NCLB does not work. By misdefining achievement, relying too heavily on paper-and-pencil tests, narrowing and dumbing down the curriculum, and stressing sanctions over support, NCLB has become a blunt instrument for attacking, not assisting, our public schools.

What we need—and what we seek—is a new vision of schools for the 21st century, a vision that truly commits America to closing the achievement gap once and for all—and the accountability to ensure this happens: Accountability that is meant to fix schools,

not to fix blame. Accountability which recognizes that student, teacher and school success means much more than producing high scores on two tests a year. Accountability that holds all parties responsible for doing their share, including school districts, states and the federal government, which must provide the necessary resources. And accountability that takes into account the conditions that

What we need is a **new vision** of schools for the 21st century, a vision that truly commits America to closing the achievement gap.

are beyond a teacher's or a school's control.

The AFT will pursue a new federal education law that will promote both proven and promising models of education reform. The law we seek will ensure that students are exposed to all the elements of a well-rounded education. It will encourage school districts to enhance teacher quality by paying competitive salaries, and devising professional compensation models that support great teachers and keep them teaching. The law will call for professional development to be embedded in the job, for mentoring for new educators, and peer coaching for those who are struggling. Of course, our vision can be realized only with the educational resources we have long advocated, like quality pre-K, smaller classes, up-to-date materials and technology, and a nurturing atmosphere so no child feels anonymous.

If we really want to close the achievement gap, any new law must address factors that are beyond the control of teachers and schools yet have a direct effect on student outcomes. Too often, healthcare, social services and parental

involvement are divorced from school life, although they are crucial to student success. The AFT will push for a federal law that promotes community schools—schools that serve the neediest children by bringing together under one roof all the services and activities they and their families need.

The schools we envision will be centers of community well-being and success. They

could offer after-school and evening recreational activities and homework assistance. They could provide child care and dental, medical and counseling clinics. They could offer English language instruction, GED programs or legal assistance—whatever services are necessary to meet the needs of students and the community.

Whether due to a lack of imagination, understanding, will or wherewithal, America has failed to provide equity and excellence for every child—we have failed to make education a civil right, an ideal the AFT has long championed. Community schools are a good place to start to correct this injustice.

It won't be easy, but we can do it. Let us proudly present our vision of an America that offers all children a fair, healthy and hopeful start on their journeys in life—a vision that inspires our ideas for community schools, healthcare for every family, college opportunity and career training for every American, and a strong and growing labor movement that empowers every worker and dignifies all work. I am honored to lead our charge.



A Union of Professionals

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BONNIE TRAFELET





Fenesha Hubbard, shown here with Yoshi, left, and Joy, used an AFT+ mortgage to save thousands on closing costs for her condo.

AFT ads help parents help their kids

THE AFT WANTS to help students, parents, teachers and schools start the year off right. So the union has created back-to-school advertisements that are appearing in the September issues of these popular magazines: *Essence*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Latina*, and *Redbook*. The AFT ads feature a list of simple tips that parents or guardians can use to help their children have a great school year.

The tips range from establishing a daily routine for homework and bedtime to getting involved in school activities. The advertisements also encourage parents to develop strong partnerships with teachers, staff and schools.

The AFT developed these ads to provide practical, back-to-school information geared toward parents and guardians with children in elementary school. The ads also direct people to AFT's back-to-school section (www.aft.org/backtoschool), which features more extensive advice and information on a variety of topics from how to help children with their reading to school bus safety. The Web section is available in English and Spanish.



UNION PLUS PHOTO

Teacher slides into home, thanks to AFT+

CHICAGO MATH TEACHER Fenesha Hubbard was in no rush to buy a home, living with her dad and searching for something attractive and within her means. For five years, guided by a patient real estate agent, she explored various options.

Finally, she found what she was looking for. "I walked in and knew instantly that it was where I needed to be," Hubbard says.

Her loan officer explained how, as a member of the AFT, Hubbard could benefit from a union mortgage program that caps fees at \$100, which saved Hubbard thousands of dollars. And, if she should ever need it, the program offers an interest-free loan to qualified union homeowners who've been laid off, disabled or caught in a lockout.

There's more. A few weeks after moving into her condominium in Kenwood-Hyde Park, Hubbard received a \$500 gift card in the mail—a "Welcome to Your First Home" award from the AFT + member benefits program.

Hubbard is spreading the word about this great benefit. She tells her colleagues that when they're ready to buy, "they definitely need to look into this program."

To find out how AFT + can help you, call 800/981-3798 or visit www.aft.org/aftplus.

Extreme makeover: Classroom edition

AFTER WINNING a competition sponsored by the Jefferson County (Ala.) American Federation of Teachers last spring, first-grade teacher Sarah Holloway has the classroom of her dreams. Corporate sponsors donated all of the materials for the Extreme Classroom Makeover, and volunteers from the Jefferson County Central Labor Council completed the work. The annual competition builds awareness of the need to upgrade classrooms and schools in our community, says Tracee Binion, program coordinator for the JCAFT.



First-grade teacher Sarah Holloway can't contain her excitement upon seeing her new classroom for the first time.

PHOTOS BY JEFF ROBERTS

AFT VOICES



How is the current economic climate affecting you personally as well as the quality of education in your school and district?

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

Should schools share student health and safety data with colleges?


YES

It might avert future tragedies

BY CINDY HUFFMAN

TROUBLED TEENS RARELY keep secrets when they need help. They may reach out to a teacher, counselor or friend to get assistance with their problems, or they may actively exhibit signs of mental disorder, as was the case with Cho Seung-Hui before he went on a shooting rampage that left 32 dead on the campus of Virginia Tech last year. This information needs to be in the hands of adults who can help prevent tragedy, and that's why our public schools should make health and safety information available—both for high school transfer students and students matriculating into colleges.

Enhanced screening for student mental health problems may prevent school shootings, particularly if it is accompanied by an end to the communication divide between adults responsible for these young people. College students have a right to privacy and many have a right to bear arms, yet trying to provide troubled students with the mental health they may need is often not possible in the current system, where sharing information is discouraged or prohibited. With a change in laws to promote the type of information sharing that can assist young adults during crisis, tragedies such as a college gunman planning a rampage might be averted.

A primary reason school violence occurs is as revenge for being bullied. Even though public schools are taking part in anti-bullying campaigns, there still are bullies and victims of that behavior. Shouldn't there be nondiscriminatory ways for colleges and universities to be made aware of students who have suffered at the hands of bullies in the past, particularly since there is universal agreement that bullying can be a precondition of tragic problems in the future?

Colleges have a duty to keep their students safe. If high schools share information with colleges and universities, disturbed students could be identified and offered counseling and coping skills before another tragedy makes it into our everyday vocabulary.

Cindy Huffman, an officer in the Norfolk (Va.) Federation of Teachers, is an employee with the Norfolk Public Schools; she has two daughters, one in high school, the other at Ohio State University.


NO

It's at odds with law and common sense

BY TRUDY HILTY

HIGH-PROFILE EPISODES of violence on campuses will prompt many people to argue that colleges and universities need as much information as possible about each prospective and current student. Only by funneling more student health and discipline data to colleges, the argument runs, can campuses be protected from a repeat of another tragedy like Virginia Tech or Northern Illinois University. But this remedy runs contrary both to the law and to common sense.

A student's educational records are protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The law requires that schools receiving federal funds "comply with regulations that seek to safeguard the privacy of student educational records." It's an important safeguard in a law that already works to strike the right balance between privacy and safety: FERPA removes police records from the

definition of "education records." Every university has access to police records of students.

And what about a student's health information—shouldn't colleges be equipped with these files as well? The thought of such an intrusion on Americans' personal lives should make everyone shudder, particularly because sufficient health protections already are in place. A student with a disability is covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and every college has a student disability office. There, a student can submit medical documentation that will allow the university to make the modifications necessary for the student to succeed in college. It's a system that provides support without moving down a path that might let every university decide which professors should be given information from a student's medical file.

How condescending and patronizing of us to decide that some nameless, faceless registrar, clerk or secretary at a high school has the right to distribute an adult's confidential information. Forcing high schools to share more student health and discipline information with colleges weakens important safeguards, yet guarantees no return when it comes to campus safety.

Trudy Hilty, RN, is a school nurse at Scott Elementary in Houston and a member of the Houston Federation of Teachers School Nurse Task Force.



GUY SCHEUM

WEIGH IN!

We want to hear your thoughts on the current "Speak Out" question. Go to www.aft.org/speakout to cast your vote.



In the last issue of *American Teacher*, our "Speak Out" question was:

Should school rules extend to online networking?

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

76% YES

24% NO

"I teach a class that is fortunate to have a laptop computer for each student. The students have access to the Internet, and it has opened up an entirely new world for classroom management. I now have to constantly watch what sites students are visiting and what they are doing."

MARTHA A. DAMIAN

Calcasieu (La.) Federation of Teachers and School Employees

"As a technology teacher, I have discovered that if students don't have rules to follow when using the Internet, the result is pretty much the same as what happens with some adults: They run amok."

ANTHONY TULACZ

Chicago Teachers Union

"Maintaining a safe and orderly virtual community is as important as maintaining a safe and orderly real-time community."

ZEPH CAPO

Houston Federation of Teachers

"What students do in their free time should not fall under school jurisdiction."

KAREN LORF

New York State Public Employees Federation

What is this thing called **RTI**?

Process is a response to “over-referral” of students into special education



AN RTI WEB SOURCES SAMPLER

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION is a complex subject, but there are valuable Web sites that educators can visit to learn the intricacies of the practice. Here are several of the sites.

AFT ONLINE

Visit www.aft.org/topics/rti for a variety of information and resources.

IDEA PARTNERSHIP

The AFT and dozens of other partner organizations in education have produced a useful overview of the RTI process. Visit www.ideapartnership.org/page.cfm?pageid=18.

RTI ACTION NETWORK

The RTI Action Network, a program of the National Center for Learning Disabilities, offers one of the most comprehensive sources of information on the practice. The network is located at www.rtinetwork.org.

NATIONAL CENTER ON RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

Located at www.rti4success.org, the National Center on Response to Intervention offers discussion forums, “Webinars,” tools for educators and parents, and much more.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE DIRECTORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

The group has produced “RTI Blueprints for Implementation at the School-Building Level.” It is available at www.nasdse.org/Portals/0/SCHOOL.pdf. Also featured on the site is “RTI Blueprints for Implementation at the District Level,” located at www.nasdse.org/Portals/0/DISTRICT.pdf.

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

(RTI) is a three-step practice that is gaining currency in classrooms around the country. Teachers provide high-quality instruction and interventions matched to a student’s need, then they gather and monitor data about how the student is progressing, and finally they apply that data to important decisions about what instructional changes are needed (or what new goals should be set) for the student.

RTI has grown in part because the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 puts a big premium on curbing the “over-referral” of students into special education, and it does so by encouraging data-driven decisions on placements. IDEA doesn’t prescribe RTI. But, when it comes to the placement of students in general or special education settings, the law does require states to “permit the use of a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention.” Done correctly, RTI fits that bill. And it is often used in lieu of other placement models, since IDEA allows states to prohibit approaches such as the “discrepancy model” (special education placements that are made when it’s determined that a student’s intellectual ability is grossly at odds with achievement).

One thing is certain about RTI: The federal law offers scant details about how to implement the practice. That accounts for wide variations in how RTI has been rolled out in different districts and states. Local education agencies can—and

do—use a lot of discretion when it comes to incorporating RTI. That means classroom teachers need to come to the discussion armed with the facts. Here are some common misconceptions, along with relevant citations in federal law and professional literature, to help you separate RTI fact from fiction.

MYTH #1: RTI is only “pre-referral”; special education staff will have to sort it out.

IDEA refers to the use of scientific, research-based strategies (see “Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities” at <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view>), and there is no doubt that this effort will involve the entire school community. A successful RTI process should be a comprehensive service delivery system—one that requires significant changes in how a school provides services to all of its students. That means RTI will involve the entire school.

MYTH #2: RTI delays special education referrals.

The goal of RTI is to broaden the range of academic and behavioral interventions in general education, not to prevent or deny students access to needed academic services and support. Interventions should be designed and implemented over a period of time, and relevant data from these interventions should be taken into consideration and should inform an instructional support team’s decisions over time. But the fact remains: A successful RTI process will identify at-risk students as early as possible. (See the “Progress



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAN SHERBO



Monitoring" discussion under RTI Topics at www.rti4success.org.)

MYTH #3: You cannot refer a student for special education evaluation if your school or district has an RTI process.

A parent and/or educator may submit a request for an initial evaluation to determine if the student has a disability. RTI does not weaken that right. Beyond that, states and districts adopting RTI processes to assist in identifying students with learning disabilities must make sure that these are not "add on" features to the current system. RTI procedures must be core components of the full and individual (comprehensive) assessment. (See "Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities" at <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view>.)

MYTH #4: "Tier 3" is another name for special education.

A "3-tier model," which refers to different levels of intervention in a general education classroom, is a concept advocated by many education organizations and researchers and is closely tied to RTI. The most intensive level of intervention provided to students in general education is often known as "Tier 3." Any student who does not respond to intensive interventions may indeed qualify for special education services—but only when it has been definitively established that the general education setting provides neither the intensity nor type of

intervention necessary to improve student performance (the IDEA Partnership, www.rtinetwork.org/essential/tieredinstruction).

MYTH #5: RTI interventions should be tried for no more than six to eight weeks.

Student performance data, not a specified period of time, should determine how long interventions are used (National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, www.nrcld.org). Adequate time must be provided to determine if the intervention will work. And adequate time must be provided to allow successful approaches to narrow the gap between the level at which the student is performing and where he or she needs to be.

MYTH #6: RTI reduces the need for special ed teachers.

Special education teachers are invaluable to an RTI process. They can work with students and monitor performance via curriculum-based measures and other means to assess whether students are meeting goals. Successful RTI programs promote more effective use of their skills and expertise. Special educators and general educators both will be required to collaborate more effectively to plan, implement and monitor students' responsiveness to interventions.

And general educators should always bear in mind that RTI, done correctly, will reinforce many good practices that teachers already are using.

Understanding National Board Certification

New AFT-NEA guide helps members navigate the process



ASSISTING MEMBERS who are working toward certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is an important part of our union's efforts to strengthen the profession and improve student achievement.

The AFT, in collaboration with the National Education Association, has produced the 2008-2009 edition of "A Guide to Understanding National Board Certification." The 68-page book demystifies the certification process by translating its rigorous requirements into manageable tasks that are clearly explained.

National Board Certification (NBC) is a voluntary assessment of teaching that involves a detailed examination of a teacher's actual classroom practice. To date, about 64,000 teachers have

attained NBC—the teaching profession's highest credential.

As a complement to the materials provided by NBPTS, the AFT-NEA guide offers practical advice, strategies and suggestions for potential, current, advanced or renewal candidates. It provides advice on how to prepare a portfolio, including tips on collecting student work samples and preparing video/DVD entries.

Materials from the guide can be adapted for professional development activities being conducted by locals or as a resource for candidates in union-developed NBPTS support programs.

To obtain copies of the 2008-2009 guide, go to www.aft.org/edissues/pubs. If you have questions about the guidebook or about NBPTS, contact Patricia Sullivan at psullivan@aft.org.

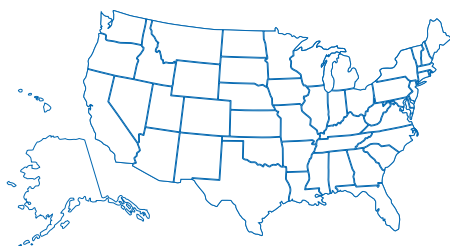
AFT WEB SITE BY TEACHERS FOR TEACHERS

NEARLY 33 PERCENT of beginning teachers leave the profession after only three years, and almost half leave after five years. Many of them cite the lack of professional support and guidance as their chief reason for leaving.

The AFT's "Tools for Teachers" Web site (formerly called t-source) is aimed at assisting novice teachers and other educators with some of the most fundamental challenges, including how to arrange your classroom and how to set rules and procedures.

Designed by AFT members, the Web site features resources and communications opportunities in a way that is certain to appeal to all teachers. The interactive features allow educators to access a range of research-based information and to reach out to one another. These features include opportunities to configure a well-designed classroom using an interactive tool, advice on working with paraprofessionals and parents, and funding sources for loan forgiveness and grants for teachers.

During the 2008-09 school year, the "Tools for Teachers" Web site will be expanded to include such features as ask-a-mentor, Web chats and specialized forums on classroom topics, and a searchable database of classroom resources and tips for teachers. You can access the site at www.aft.org/tools4teachers.



CA Early childhood educators represented by the California Federation of Teachers were out in force last spring for Preschool Advocacy Day at the State Capitol in Sacramento.

Last year, the state increased its budget by \$55 million to continue developing the Prekindergarten and Family Literacy preschool program. However, earlier this year the governor proposed cutting nearly \$200 in preschool and child care funding. The cuts would mean a loss of thousands of spaces for children of low-income working families, the CFT has argued.

Members from several CFT affiliates, as well as staff from the state federation's Early Childhood Education Organizing Project, visited California legislators and urged them not to balance the budget on the

backs of 3- and 4-year-old children and the workers who care for them.

MO The Kansas City Federation of Teachers and School-Related Personnel is fighting to gain a new contract and to prevent school board negotiators from dismantling four decades of good-faith bargaining in the school system.

Judy Morgan, president of the Kansas City local, told AFT convention delegates in July that prospects for an agreement have been jeopardized by the school board's decision to terminate the previous collective bargaining agreement and by the school board's chief negotiator, a former Wal-Mart attorney, who has threatened to unilaterally impose a new teacher contract.

Meanwhile, the district has rejected the local union's request to reinstate the previous contract while a new one is negotiated.

In July, AFT convention delegates stood in solidarity with teachers in Kansas City by unanimously approving a special order of business calling on the school board to reinstate the previous contract, to return to a position of good-faith bargaining and to

refrain from imposing any type of contract outside of the collective bargaining process.

Members of other state and local labor unions, including AFT St. Louis and AFT Nurses United for Improved Patient Care, have joined in demonstrations organized by the Kansas City affiliate.

NJ Union and school officials in Newark aren't waiting for new teachers to show up on their doorsteps, so they're going out and recruiting them. The Newark Teachers Union recently worked with the school district and Montclair State University to host the fourth annual Urban Educators Institute. The gathering included visits to Newark schools where 50 prospective teachers had the opportunity to hear directly from teachers and administrators.

Many of the teachers involved with the institute are part of the school system's Partnership for Instructional Excellence and Quality, a network of teachers, principals and administrators as well as Montclair State faculty and staff who meet regularly to share information and best practices.

TEACHERS' LOUNGE

OUT OF SIGHT If staring at a huge stack of ungraded papers is as off-putting to you as it was to ninth-grade science teacher **Myrtha Allen** of **Baltimore**, here's her technique for lowering the level of frustration. She creates alphabetical folders for each of her three class periods. Her students place their homework, lab reports and other written assignments at the front of the folder labeled with the first letter of their last name. At the end of the day, she has folders with papers alphabetically sectioned for each of her classes. "I grade papers faster, seeing only those under the letter, instead of a large stack of papers," Allen says. "I feel great when I'm able to grade three classes of papers and return them to students within a reasonable time."

A TICKET TO RIDE As an incentive for students to earn good grades, ninth-grade language arts teacher **Sarah Damian** of **Barrigada, Guam**, gives her students a "ticket" each time they earn a perfect score on any assignment. Students can collect as many as they can to earn extra points on a quiz or test, earn a homework pass, or even a surprise package of school supplies or a treat.

IT'S ON THE CARDS Here's a tip for tracking students' recitation work from retired middle/high school social studies teacher **Stephen Hryvniak** of **Rochester, N.Y.** Print the name of each student on a 3 1/2 x 5 index card, and use the cards to create a systematic way for calling on students and finding patterns to their responses. If a satisfactory answer is given, mark it with the letter S. An answer, even if incorrect, merits a √. If no answer is given, the student gets a "goose egg." A quick glance at one student's "calling card" might look something like this: √ √ S O S S S O √ √ √ S S. Another student's card might show: O O O √ √ √ O √ O O √ O O O. The cards "quickly reveal the pattern of their work," says Hryvniak, who notes that substitute teachers also find them useful.

DISAPPEARING ACT A bane for any teacher, custodian or administrator is having to deal with the results of children writing with permanent markers where they shouldn't be writing, says

HAVE A TIP TO SHARE?

Submissions to "Teachers' Lounge" can be made online at www.aft.org/teacherslounge or sent in care of *American Teacher*. We will pay \$40 for each idea published.



Marykay Flett, a fourth-grade teacher from **Lancaster, N.Y.** One of her students who did just that showed Flett how to solve the problem. Simply scribble across the marks with a dry erase marker, then erase them. "It is so simple that even the child who wrote with the pen can 'erase' her own mistake," Flett explains.



The preparation gap for first-year teachers

New teachers not prepared for diverse classrooms and special needs students

WHEN IT COMES to the quality of their teacher training, first-year teachers say their preparation was lacking in two main areas: dealing with an ethnically diverse classroom and teaching students with special needs. Aside from those two weak areas, new teachers are generally satisfied with how well prepared they were for the realities of the classroom, according to a new report from Public Agenda and the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality.

"Teaching in Changing Times" is the third and final report in Public Agenda's "Lessons Learned" series. The first looked at differences between the views of new elementary and secondary teachers, and the second examined the views of teachers entering the profession via alternative preparation programs.

The final survey asked about 12 areas of teacher preparation, and the two areas mentioned above revealed the greatest gaps between what the novices learned in their teacher training and how much they say it helps them in their classrooms today. Seventy-six percent of new teachers, for example, said that teaching an ethnically diverse student body was covered in their training, but only 39 percent said that training helps a lot in their classrooms. On working with special needs children, 82 percent of the new teachers said their preparation program covered this, but only 47 percent said the training was very helpful.

"These subjects are being taught in teacher training," says Jean Johnson, Public Agenda's executive vice president and director of education insights. "But apparently, large numbers of new teachers still enter the classroom feeling unprepared."

The report found that anxiety about dealing with diverse classrooms is highest among first-year teachers in more-affluent communities. Nearly half of the teachers who work in high-needs schools said their training in this area helps them a lot; less than a third of teachers in more-affluent schools said the same thing.

In other aspects of preparation the survey looked at—such as coursework on children's cognitive, emotional and psychological development as well as classroom management and discipline—the new teachers ex-



If new teachers "continue to work **without a net**, they will likely **turn away** from the profession, or be less effective than we need them to be, **regardless** of the quality of preparation."

SABRINA LAINE

President of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality

perienced less of a gap between their pre-service coursework and its usefulness in the classroom.

The new teachers also were asked to rank 14 proposals designed to improve teacher quality. Not surprisingly, the findings closely resembled those from the first two reports in the Public Agenda series. Reducing class size easily topped the list, with 76 percent of the new teachers saying it would be an effective way to improve teacher quality. Next on the list was preparing teachers to meet the needs of a diverse classroom.

In an afterward to the report, Sabrina Laine, who is president of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, points out that teacher preparation programs bear only some of the responsibility

for the weaknesses highlighted in the report.

"The realities of today's classrooms are harsher in many cases than necessary," she argues, with many first-year teachers being assigned to the toughest students and too many teaching out of their area of subject expertise.

"Proper placement and sound support for new teachers need to be in place as they continue to hone their knowledge and skills," she writes, in a passage that would fit nicely in many AFT policy resolutions about teacher preparation and induction. "If they continue to work without a net, they will likely turn away from the profession, or be less effective than we need them to be, regardless of the quality of the preparation."





convention '08

THE 80TH CONVENTION of the American Federation of Teachers was held July 10-14 in the birthplace of the national union—Chicago. The gathering was notable for many reasons, including the election of new officers, the retirement of two long-time AFT leaders, and the celebration of recent organizing successes and impressive growth. Convention delegates also adopted several major policy resolutions and approved a special order of business endorsing Sen. Barack Obama in his run for president of the United States.

greater than > 1 one

New AFT president vows to fight for national reform agenda

“We have often been called a ‘special interest.’ I will never apologize for that because our ‘special interests’ are the **students** we teach, the **patients** we care for and all the **people** we serve.”

RANDI WEINGARTEN
AFT President

A HIGHLIGHT of the convention was the election of a new slate of national officers. On July 13, delegates elected Randi Weingarten president, and Antonia Cortese and Lorretta Johnson were elected secretary-treasurer and executive vice president, respectively.

Weingarten has served 10 years as president of the 200,000-member United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in New York City, the largest union local in the country. In her first address as AFT president, Weingarten promised to fight for a national reform agenda that protects and improves the institutions where AFT members work, while bettering the lives and prospects of those they serve—particularly children and

those in need.

She picked up on the common theme in this election year: Change. “The society that we serve, the institutions where we work and the workforce that we represent all are changing at speeds we never envisioned,” Weingarten said. “Yet the AFT has always been about making change work.”

The new AFT president introduced her parents and told delegates about her roots: Raised in Rockland County, N.Y., she is the daughter of a teacher and trade unionist-turned-electrical engineer. Her views on teaching and trade unionism were sharpened while witnessing her mother’s union go



through a seven-week strike. From this experience, Weingarten said, she came to understand that “while teaching will never get you a penthouse, it shouldn’t put you in the poorhouse.” She also learned that teachers have to stand up and fight for their profession.

The AFT president delivered fighting words to those who would demonize public employees: “We have often been called a ‘special interest.’ I will never apologize for that because our ‘special interests’ are the students we teach, the patients we care for and all the people we serve.”

Weingarten outlined the reform agenda she will promote. The AFT president elicited the strongest chorus of support when she spoke about the union’s most urgent priority—“overhauling the federal education law that, for many AFT members, has become a four-letter word.”

NCLB has put education’s focus on testing, not teaching, and it has slammed the door “on much of what makes up modern civilization and replaces it with multiple-choice questions.”

“How will kids who have spent 12 years learning to keep their pencil marks inside the bubbles ever be able to think outside the box?”

Weingarten provided an alternative view—a vision that encompasses a broader role for community schools, putting them at the heart of improving the lives of children and their families. These schools bring together a full range of services and resources, from before- and after-school activities to medical clinics, from GED programs to providing legal assistance.

AFT president Randi Weingarten, far left, delivers her inaugural address to the national union’s convention. The AFT, she vowed, will continue to be a leader in efforts to improve the institutions where members work. Antonia Cortese, second from left, was elected secretary-treasurer and Lorretta Johnson, third from left, is the national union’s new executive vice president.

But teachers cannot do all of this alone, she said, turning to the importance of electing a U.S. president who shares our vision and values (see page 16). “Sen. Obama will make history not only because of who he is, but because of where he will lead America.”

In closing, Weingarten challenged her colleagues to proudly present a new vision for America to those who say public service workers are part of this country’s problems: “We need to put forth the simple but powerful truth that, far from being the problem, a progressive and innovative union like the AFT is part of the solution.”

AFT secretary-treasurer Antonia Cortese and executive vice president Lorretta Johnson will work closely with Weingarten to implement the reform agenda.

Cortese was first vice president of the now 600,000-member New York State United Teachers before coming to the AFT in 2004. She began her education career in Rome, N.Y., where she taught fourth grade and served as a school social worker.

She has served for the past four years as AFT executive vice president. “I am so proud to have been a member of the AFT, a vice president of the AFT and an officer of the AFT,” Cortese told convention delegates.

Lorretta Johnson began her career as a teacher’s aide in the Baltimore City Public School System, where she organized a union to improve the work situation of paraprofessionals like herself, and she subsequently has become a leading voice for working families

Waving signs and dancing to the music, delegates from across the country celebrate the union’s organizing successes over the past two years. The AFT grew by more than 108,000 during that period.

throughout the state of Maryland.

Johnson, a longtime AFT vice president who is president of AFT-Maryland, and of the Baltimore Teachers Union’s paraprofessional chapter, promised to “work hard to push the policies and programs of the AFT.”

ORGANIZING SUCCESSES PROMPT ‘DANCING IN THE STREETS’

SCORES OF AFT DELEGATES took the convention hall by storm to celebrate their organizing victories over the past two years.

Delegates from across the country waved signs and danced to the singing of Lynn Marie Smith, an organizer with AFT Michigan, who led them in a union-tailored version of the Motown anthem “Dancing in the Streets,” which included the lines “All we need are unions, strong unions,” “We’re marching in the streets” and “Everybody grab a sign, and don’t you cross a picket line!”

Outgoing AFT secretary-treasurer Nat LaCour, who chaired the national union’s

Continued on page 10



TEN NEW EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

DELEGATES ALSO ELECTED 39 AFT vice presidents. Ten were elected for the first time: **Mary Armstrong**, president of AFT St. Louis; **Elsie Burkhalter**, president of the St. Tammany (La.) Federation of Teachers and School Employees; **Thomas Dooher**, president of Education Minnesota; **Ed Geppert Jr.**, president of the Illinois Federation of Teachers; **Dennis Kelly**, president of the United Educators of San Francisco; **Francine Lawrence**, president of the Toledo (Ohio) Federation of Teachers; **Merlene Martin**, president of the Oregon School Employees Association; **Michael Mulgrew**, vice president of career and technical high schools at the United Federation of Teachers (New York City); **Sharon Palmer**, president of AFT Connecticut; and **Phillip Smith**, president of United University Professions (N.Y.)

Re-elected to the executive council

Shelvy Y. Abrams	Edward Doherty	Jerry Jordan	Laura Rico
Barbara Bowen	Kathleen Donahue	Ted Kirsch	Pat Santeramo
Linda Bridges	Eric Feaver	Alan Lubin	Sandra Schroeder
Kenneth Brynien	Andy Ford	Louis Malfaro	Marilyn Stewart
Stacey Caruso-Sharpe	David Gray	Maria Neira	Ann Twomey
Kathy Chavez	Judy Hale	Ruby Newbold	Adam Urbanski
Lee Cutler	David Hecker	Candice Owley	
	Richard Iannuzzi	Marcia Reback	

For biographies of AFT officers, visit www.aft.org/about/officers/exec_council.htm.



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Continued from page 9

organizing committee for the past eight years, described how nurses stood their ground against the “biggest, baddest” administrators at a hospital in Missouri. He lauded eight years of hard work in New York state that paid off by bringing on board 270 new K-12 locals.

And he hailed the resilient members from the United Teachers of New Orleans, who beat back mean-spirited attacks after Hurricane Katrina and today are reinvigorating their union.

Below, Hillary Clinton thanks AFT members for their support. A tearful Emma Escobedo, bottom, a housekeeper fired by Resurrection Health Care for her union activities, gets support from Randi Weingarten.



LaCour also noted the extraordinary challenges members have overcome in states without collective bargaining, such as Florida, Texas and West Virginia.

The national union has grown by more than 108,000 in the two years since the last AFT convention.

CLINTON RALLIES AFT TO NOV. 4 CHALLENGE

SEN. HILLARY CLINTON showed AFT convention delegates that she came out of the 2008 primaries the same way she went in—fighting to help build a better America.

The Navy Pier convention hall filled with cheers and standing ovations as Clinton addressed delegates with passion and conviction, vowing to continue her battle for health-care reform, excellent schools, equal opportunity and other goals that matter most to working Americans. That fight resumes immediately, she said, with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to put America back on the right track by electing Sen. Barack Obama the next president of the United States.

The stakes in the coming election couldn't be higher because the pain Americans have suffered under the current administration could hardly be greater, she reminded delegates.

The New York Democrat spoke warmly of the thousands of AFT members who spent countless hours at phone banks, canvassing neighborhoods and traveling across the country on her behalf as the AFT's endorsed candidate in the Democratic primaries.

“I saw you across America,” Clinton told the delegates. “I saw those signs and saw those hats and T-shirts—and it made me feel so good.”

DELEGATES ENTHUSIASTICALLY BACK HEALTHCARE WORKERS

ENCOURAGED BY ENTHUSIASTIC delegates who chanted “Yes you can!” Emma Escobedo, a hospital housekeeper who was fired by Resurrection Health Care for her union activity, tearfully shared her story during a convention hall rally July 12 to support Resurrection workers.

She told convention delegates she had been fired for distributing leaflets to her colleagues on her own time and in a public setting. “Resurrection may have fired me, but they haven't got the best of me,” said Escobedo, who was overcome with emotion.

Escobedo and other Resurrection employ-

ees thanked convention delegates for supporting their efforts to unionize under the banner of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

“Every story has two sides, but when it comes to your fight, there are no gray areas. You are right and management is wrong!” outgoing AFT president Edward J. McElroy told the workers from Resurrection.

AFT vice president Randi Weingarten, added, “We don't have to choose sides. We stand with Resurrection's workers, patients and community until this struggle is over.”

In a spontaneous collection, AFT delegates donated more than \$7,600 to help Escobedo and her family.

After the close of the convention on July 14, a delegation of AFT vice presidents traveled to Resurrection Health Care's corporate headquarters in Park Ridge, Ill., to deliver a petition bearing the signatures of more than 2,200 AFT convention delegates. The petition calls on Resurrection to end its campaign of intimidation against workers seeking to organize.

MCELROY: 'I WILL BE A FOOT SOLDIER'

IN A SPEECH INTERRUPTED frequently by applause, Edward J. McElroy delivered his final address as AFT president during the convention's opening session on July 11. McElroy, who retired after a 16-year tenure as an AFT national officer, promised delegates he would continue to put his energy into the battles that await the AFT and the labor movement.

Reflecting on the union's recent successes, McElroy said: “Our growth and potential growth span every division of the AFT and add to the AFT's presence clear across the country—from the Lower East Side to the Pacific Northwest.”

He also cited the effectiveness of the national union's political action program, particularly our e-Activist network, through which members have sent more than 100,000 letters to legislators on crucial issues, and the Activists for Congressional Education (ACE) program.

“Every AFT member—every single one of you—contributes to the success of our union. And when you join forces with your fellow members, the impact truly is greater than one,” McElroy said, referring to the convention's theme.

While there is much to be proud of, much more remains to be done, McElroy said, “starting with replacing the current occupant

of the White House with a president who will lead our country into a new era of progress and opportunity.”

McElroy closed by saying that he was not planning to say goodbye to the AFT or the labor movement. “We have much unfinished business to attend to, and we must attend to it together. You will have new leadership, but they will be my leaders, too, since I will be a foot soldier with you in the work before us.”

CONVENTION PAYS TRIBUTE TO McELROY AND LaCOUR

DELEGATES BID FAREWELL to McElroy and secretary-treasurer Nat LaCour at a general session filled with videos and tributes—as well as long and enthusiastic standing ovations.

The convention passed special orders of business honoring both retiring leaders and giving them the titles of president and secretary-treasurer emeritus.

McElroy winds up his AFT career after four years as president, 12 years as secretary-treasurer, and almost 20 years before that as an AFT vice president. McElroy was an important source of continuity for the AFT—a “rock,” Antonia Cortese said—through the illnesses of his predecessors, Albert Shanker and Sandra Feldman. “He has created a political program involving every level of the AFT, which has given us political clout,” she said.

LaCour’s career as a national AFT leader—vice president, executive vice president and secretary-treasurer—also dates back more than 30 years. In introducing the special resolution in his honor, Randi Weingarten highlighted LaCour’s role as a master organizer.

LaCour urged delegates to rededicate themselves to doing their jobs in ways that improve the lives of the people they serve. “I am encouraged to know that this important work to which I have committed so much of my life will continue because this union has so many dedicated leaders,” he said.

SPECIAL OLYMPIAN INSPIRES DELEGATES, URGES INVOLVEMENT

IF ANY DELEGATES at the AFT convention’s opening session July 11 were thinking about volunteering with the Special Olympics program, it took about 30 seconds of listening to Illinois Special Olympian Angie Picchi to see what incredible rewards can come from working with people with disabilities. Picchi, who competes internationally as a figure skater, brought the delegates to their feet with



McELROY



LaCOUR

an inspiring talk about what the Special Olympics program has done for her and other children and adults.

Her remarks were part of a segment led by AFT secretary-treasurer Antonia Cortese highlighting the union’s long tradition of community service. The AFT’s involvement as a prime supporter of Special Olympics is just one recent example of labor working together with the community to promote the common good. Many AFT members are active in the program as coaches and volunteers.

“You guys are great,” Picchi said, “not only for your support of Special Olympics but also for your patience and support in teaching children with disabilities. Your open minds and caring hearts have given us a chance to amaze the world with our ability to learn.”

She talked about her lifelong desire to be a figure skater, despite her mother’s fear that a child with Down syndrome would not have the balance or muscle strength to do it. But once Picchi took her first class at age 12—and met the coach who has worked with her for 15 years—she felt she “could do anything on ice, as long as I kept on trying.”

Picchi echoed Cortese’s call for the delegates to volunteer with Special Olympics. “I promise you will have a great time if you join us,” she said.

The session opened with a video highlighting the efforts of the AFT and its members—not only in

Antonia Cortese welcomes Special Olympian Angie Picchi to the convention.

DELEGATES BACK DUES INCREASE

CONVENTION DELEGATES approved a series of constitutional amendments and bylaws, including a per capita increase this year and next year. The increase of 65 cents per member per month, effective this September and again in September 2009, will go toward three different funds: 40 cents will go to the AFT general fund, 15 cents to the national Solidarity Fund and 10 cents to state affiliate Solidarity Funds.

With the increase, the amount going to the national Solidarity Fund will total \$1.50 per member per month. Since 2003, more than \$9 million has been disbursed from the fund to states to help defeat anti-union ballot initiatives as well as to help pass proposals such as a minimum wage increase in Ohio.

Marty Hittelman, president of the California Federation of Teachers, said the Solidarity Fund has been a tremendous help to his union, which has faced a constant barrage of bad ballot initiatives. “We really need to stop the bad ideas in California so they don’t spread,” he said, noting that 11 initiatives—many of them opposed by his union—will be on the state ballot this November.

Special Olympics, but in other recent projects such as helping the victims of Hurricane Katrina, working to raise money to fight cancer, and a community event/health fair at Chicago.

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... with the new AFT president, Randi Weingarten

ON JULY 13, delegates to the AFT convention in Chicago elected Randi Weingarten president of the American Federation of Teachers. Weingarten, who is president of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City, has amassed an impressive array of accomplishments since becoming UFT president 10 years ago. These include raising salaries of the city's teachers by 43 percent in the last six years, negotiating differentiated pay plans that have enhanced teacher quality, and taking the lead in pushing for a voluntary schoolwide bonus package that has helped promote collaboration as a way to improve high-needs schools.

Weingarten also has expanded the UFT's commitment to professional development and has opened two union-operated charter schools, which are proving that union contracts are no obstacle to reform.

Late last year, the UFT won bargaining

rights for 28,000 home day care providers in New York City.

In addition, the new AFT president has spearheaded the creation of several alliances, among them the "Keep the Promises" coalition, which includes 40 civic, community and advocacy groups as well as prominent individuals who have mobilized against education budget cuts and other threats to the community and the schools.

Roger Glass, director of the AFT editorial department, interviewed Weingarten a few days after she was elected AFT president.

How will the AFT look different to the average member under your leadership? How will you put your stamp on the union?

I see myself as building on the legacies of our past three presidents. Al Shanker was a risk taker who really believed in the power of ideas. Sandy Feldman was about passion—passion for kids in particular. This was connected to her roots growing up in Brooklyn, and it came out in everything she did. And Ed McElroy was about building muscle—whether in politics or organizing.

I see myself building on those three legacies—Al's brains, Sandy's heart and Ed's muscle.

I believe the reason some people call me a reformer is because I'm open and willing to look at doing things differently—provided it's good for kids and fair to educators. We know we can always improve upon what we're doing, but at the same time we have to fight against being scapegoated and demonized.

We must take risks to do what works and to change what doesn't to ensure that at the end of the day we are creating a path of continuous, sustainable academic growth and social development for all kids.

Critics of teachers unions have charged that we put members ahead of children. What's your response to that charge?

Much of the criticism is predictable because we fight hard to secure a voice for educators so they can improve their schools and have a better life for themselves. What's terrible is that it shows some people's misperception of the labor movement today. Forty years ago, when more people belonged to unions, people understood that unions helped build the middle class, and no one would begrudge a worker making that fight for

"We can play a leading role in improving the institutions in which our members work."



MICHAEL CAMPBELL

economic dignity and respect.

What we as the teachers union do is draw attention both to the working conditions that teachers need to be successful and to the economic aspirations they have for themselves and their families. So we're a thorn in the side of those who want to pay teachers as little as possible and who demand that they do as much work as possible in as unfair a setting as possible. The conditions that are good for teaching are the same conditions that are good for learning—small classes, adequate books and supplies, decent facilities, and support for good teaching.

Of all the resources that we give to children, the most important one is a qualified teacher. That's why I always say that a school teacher is a combination of Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa and Tony Soprano. You don't attract and retain large numbers of highly qualified people with low pay, poor working conditions and low status.

What's really special about the AFT is that we are as much about helping our members be the best they can be, and improving the institutions in which they work, as we are about helping them achieve economic security.

So when people say unions are the problem, I say: "Let actions speak louder than words." I'll put my record and those of my predecessors at the AFT up against anyone who says that. We can show that we've always been about what's good for kids and what's fair for teachers.

The AFT has endorsed Barack Obama for president. Why is this election so important?

Our first priority must be electing a new president who will be a strong leader—a leader who will re-establish our country's reputation in the world and turn around our economy. I believe the next president must focus on healthcare and education, and what Americans need if they are to see a brighter day for themselves and their families.

To accomplish this agenda, we must elect Barack Obama president and a Congress we can work with. Obama and John McCain offer two very different records and two very different visions for America's future.

Without national leaders who understand what America needs to do both economically and socially, we're not going to get very far—either at home or abroad.

An urgent priority is for us to weigh in on

what a revamped federal education law should look like, specifically how to really eliminate the achievement gap and ensure that all kids get the education that will allow them not simply to dream their dreams but to achieve them.

In my speech to the AFT convention, I proposed expanding the community school model to help our neediest children. Community schools bring together under one roof all the services and activities that our children and their families need. These schools would be open all day, and offer after-school and evening recreational activities and homework assistance, as well as child care and dental, medical and other services.

Charter schools are growing rapidly, particularly in the urban centers where the AFT represents many teachers and educators. What is your position on charter schools?

There's a right way and a wrong way to do charter schools. We are concerned about the profiteers and privateers coming in and supplanting a viable public school system. We are concerned about the loss of funding to public schools, which we're seeing in some cities, and charter schools being used to de-unionize schools.

I believe that charter schools should be open to all children and held to the same standards as other public schools. Charter schools should be open to being organized so that their teachers and other school staff can have a voice.

We know that teachers and kids do better when teachers have a voice at work, and we've shown this to be true at the two charter schools the United Federation of Teachers runs in New York City. We believe a union contract is not an obstacle to success. In fact, I would argue that a contract helps create success.

What role do you see community and business organizations, parent groups and others playing in AFT efforts to improve schools and help children?

It takes a village to raise a child. It was true when Hillary Clinton said it several years ago and it's even truer today. I believe education should be a community value. Whether it's parents, churches, businesses or other groups, a community and its schools must see themselves as partners.

We, as the teachers union, need to reach

out to others who are active in the community and walk in their shoes to see what they are up against. And they need to walk in ours. When people do that, there is a lot more tolerance, there's a lot more engagement and there's a lot more involvement. And that's only good for kids.

Workers' benefits, particularly pensions and healthcare, are increasingly under attack. What can the labor movement do to secure these and other benefits for members?

The labor movement is the conscience of this country, and if we don't educate our elected leaders and our communities about the ramifications of losing the social safety net, then who will?

Right now, we have a market-driven healthcare system that has been unsuccessful in ensuring that all Americans get high-quality affordable healthcare. We have more and more Americans who are uninsured or underinsured. The same is starting to happen in terms of our retirement system. How are people going to have retirement security when they are

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MILLER PHOTOGRAPHY



ON THE WEST SIDE of Philadelphia, high school students in Jennifer Boyd-Waller's chemistry class are learning about forensics by engaging in activities much like those seen on the TV show "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation."

This isn't just a cute exercise. Pennsylvania state police come to school and set up the crime scene. Sayre High School students photograph it and collect evidence, including fingerprints. A state trooper plays the victim. Next, student sleuths present their findings and offer theories on who committed the crime. They'll solve the mystery using chemistry.

How does this kind of enrichment take place at a school with limited resources?

Sayre is a community school.

Important advances in urban education are being made through community schools that stay open extended hours, serving as the hub of their neighborhoods by hosting a wide range of services. There's no single model for a community school, but most have features in common, including child care, healthcare, recreation and the arts, job training and an array of adult education classes.

The purpose isn't simply to make maximum use of a school building. It's to strengthen the community and its relationship with the neighborhood school. Parents who visit schools regularly—in fact, anybody who sets

foot in a school—wind up as strong supporters of public education.

At the AFT convention in Chicago this summer, newly elected president Randi Weingarten asked delegates to imagine what it would be like if city governments integrated services on behalf of children and their families in every public school.

The AFT president spoke of the possibility of a federal law promoting community schools.

Training for democracy

Community schooling develops in three phases, according to Joy Dryfoos, a national expert on the subject. First, a school starts with one or two components, like an after-school program or a school-based clinic. Next, the school adds a few more components, but these still aren't integrated with the school. Finally, the separate programs link to each other and the curriculum, and someone is selected to coordinate them.

This kind of around-the-clock schooling is "not just job training but training for citizenship and democracy," says Marty Blank, director of the national Coalition for Community Schools, an alliance of about 160 groups, including the AFT.

For anyone concerned that wraparound services at school might translate into unpaid extra hours for school employees, those with

the most experience in community schooling say this would be entirely unnecessary and even counterproductive. Funds for before- and after-school programs already exist because many of the programs already exist—they're simply located somewhere else.

Nonetheless, it does take leadership, constituents and money to advocate for and coordinate these programs so people can see that everybody has a stake in the public schools. Fine examples abound, including Baltimore, Boston and Minneapolis. Blank points to Chicago's aggressive efforts to expand wraparound services into 150 of its 600 public schools, solving local problems ranging from nutrition to the environment.

In the trenches

Sayre High School is one of the rock stars of community schooling. AFT members who work there have helped win a national award for Sayre, which not only has a health clinic and after-school programs (including family fitness night and a store selling fruits and vegetables) but also has infused community programs directly into the curriculum.

In 2002, Sayre approached the University of Pennsylvania on behalf of Sayre students. At the time, it happened that a group of Penn undergraduates wanted to help solve the healthcare crisis in West Philly. In 2006, together with Penn's Center for Community

LAURIE BECK

Open door policy

Community schools bring services for children, families and neighbors under one roof

BY ANNETTE LICITRA





Partnerships, Sayre began offering a neuroscience unit focused on lead poisoning in children. Students in Boyd-Waller's chemistry class identified lead "hotspots" and checked their siblings' teeth for lead.

Students like the hands-on work. In fact, "those who love it really love it," says Boyd-Waller, a member of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers who has taught at Sayre since 1992. Many of the students who took the pilot unit in neuroscience signed up for cardiology last year. "So they're actually at the hospital doing additional work," she says, such as learning basic hospital intake procedures like recording blood pressure.

Today, more Sayre students are considering careers in medicine, and 90 percent of the kids who participate in fitness night say they're eating healthier foods and exercising more.

"Sayre is the best example we have because it has the deepest curricular links," says Ira Harkavy, a co-founder of the Coalition of Community Schools and one of its chief proponents in Philadelphia.

Another good example of community schooling is Rafael Cordero School, I.S. 302, in Brooklyn, N.Y. The school is not just where Valeria Marquez works, but a welcoming place for members of her family who drop in around the clock for learning, healthcare, fun and games, volunteer projects and more learning. "It directly touches my family be-

cause I live right around the corner, and my kids really use the programs," says the pupil-accounting secretary, a member of the United Federation of Teachers.

For the Brooklyn middle-schoolers, there's homework help, food, counseling and even summer camp. Marquez's 16-year-old son still comes back for a program to help elderly neighbors—picking up a prescription, doing yard work or installing an air conditioner. And there's also a community-based nurse who can give him the shots he needs for his working papers.

Marquez, who has worked 21 years in the schools, 13 of them as a safety officer, reviews the immunization registry to see if any students are missing their vaccinations, then coordinates with the nurse. "This makes it easier for the parents," she says, because they don't have to run over to the school every time their child needs a shot.

The Brooklyn school buzzes in the evenings with exercise and arts classes—all free—as well as volleyball and basketball. When parents come to the school after hours for ESL or GED classes, "we have a chance to grab some of them for PTA meetings," says Oral Brady, an eighth-grade social studies teacher and the UFT chapter leader at I.S. 302, adding that a handful of the parents go on to become hall monitors. One of Brady's former students now

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What kinds of expanded services and programs would make your school a community hub for students, parents and families?

"All government human service agencies should be represented on public school campuses at least once every week. Offices should exist where parents and children can access information concerning their needs—food, healthcare, job opportunities, etc."

CHRIS J. SHAEFFER

Community College Teachers of San Francisco

"You know what I'd like to see? Not just what we automatically think of—health services, counseling services—that's good, and that's needed, but I'd like to see schools become educational community centers. Book clubs, for example, or classes that get parents immersed in academics. How about a science project for parents and kids?"

JACKIE BENNETT

United Federation of Teachers (New York City)

"I work in a district where schools with low enrollments are being closed. Rather than close these schools, it would be much more beneficial to their communities to locate social service offices in parts of the school building."

RUTH GREGORY

AFT St. Louis

"My school has a community school within it. We provide expanded services that include a variety of classes, such as cooking, computers, ESL and aerobics. One main component that it lacks is social services. The school currently is trying to secure funds to expand the community school so that it also provides social and medical services."

PATRICIA KEATING

Chicago Teachers Union

"State and federal grants that encourage school-community partnerships would help make the schools a more vital part of the community."

MIKE DALE

West Suburban (Ill.) Teachers Union

See the new "AFT Voices" question on page 2.



LAURIE BECK



RUSS CURTIS



COURTESY OF SAM DAVIS

High school science teacher Jennifer Boyd-Waller, above left, works at Sayre, a community school in Philadelphia, while Sam Davis, above, teaches language skills to Oakland, Calif., adults in the evening and to families, left, during the school day.

School-based programs shine in new early childhood study

RESEARCHERS AT GEORGETOWN University added to the convincing body of evidence showing that young children are better prepared to enter school if they participate in high-quality prekindergarten programs.

The Georgetown study looked at 4-year-olds enrolled in school-based prekindergarten programs and Head Start programs in Tulsa, Okla., and found that children who participated in school-based pre-K programs outperformed peers by nine months in pre-reading skills, seven months in pre-writing skills and five months in pre-math skills. Children in Head Start showed similar advantages, report the researchers, who stress that these programs can boost school readiness for disadvantaged and middle-class children alike. The study findings are reported in the June 27, 2008, issue of *Science*.

The gains are “above and beyond those that otherwise occur through aging,” says William T. Gormley Jr., lead author of the study and co-director of the Center for Research on Children in the U.S. (CROCUS) at Georgetown. “We found that negative effects of family and environmental risk factors can be lessened by a strong preschool program.”

The Georgetown team also found that participation in pre-K and Head Start programs was a more powerful predictor of performance on some assessments than factors such as gender, free-lunch eligibility, a mother’s education or whether the biological father lives at home.

The state-funded pre-K program in Oklahoma has gained national attention because it is a universal approach, based in the school system, and includes a higher percentage of 4-year-olds than any other state pre-K program. Oklahoma’s pre-K program standards are high compared with those of other states, the Georgetown researchers point out, and the state offers relatively high pay and benefits to well-qualified teachers.

Applied knowledge

Tool kit helps make early learning fun and rewarding

JAYDON IS A BRIGHT 5-year-old, the oldest of 11 children attending the Staten Island, N.Y., child care center operated by Andrea Royal. Getting the child ready for kindergarten was a major part of Royal’s work last spring. “He was having a little trouble with sounds, like the letter ‘b,’” reports the AFT member, who was looking to develop and refine a plan of action that would take Jaydon to the next level in learning.

That challenge helps explain why Royal’s eyes lit up the first time she saw the AFT’s “Transitioning to Kindergarten” tool kit. What was offered in the attractive, well-organized binder fit perfectly with the needs of this child—and the many other “Jaydons” in early childhood education settings nationwide.

A joint project of the AFT and the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), the tool kit and related training provide the type of fun, research-based activities that build skills in young learners, Royal says. There are also simple diagnostic tools to help track children’s progress, parent handouts, teacher’s guides and other resources.

The AFT partnered with NCLD on the tool kit, including early childhood educator training tied to it, because “we

Educator Andrea Royal says the AFT’s “Transitioning to Kindergarten” tool kit helps lay a foundation for young learners.

recognized its tremendous value in supporting children’s early learning experiences,” explains Marci Young, director of the AFT’s Center for the

Child Care Workforce. The research-based resources include easy-to-use materials for teachers and caregivers working with prekindergarten-aged children.

The “Early Learning Passport” is one of the major strategies presented in the kit. It provides templates and step-by-step help for early childhood educators who want to compile an individual folder, called an Early Learning Passport, that can be given to parents and kindergarten teachers. Closely tied to the passport is a “Getting To Know My Child” booklet, which encourages parents to fill out information highlighting their child’s likes, dislikes and interests.

“It’s a really good way for the kindergarten teachers to get to know the child,” says Lauren Tozzi, a teacher at Crown Hill Cooperative Preschool in Seattle, who has trained early childhood educators in her region to get the most out of “Transitioning to Kindergarten.” The resources for parents are particularly valuable in a cooperative setting, says Tozzi, who on a typical day will be working with four or five parents in the classroom.

“I don’t think parents have a really concrete idea about preschool learning, that it doesn’t have to be all rote and flash cards,” she explains.

Tozzi is a member of the AFT’s Washington Educators in Early Learning (WEEL). Supported by the AFT and its state affiliate, WEEL is a grass-roots organizing effort that advocates for worthy wages and respect for all early child-

hood educators and for quality services for the children and families they serve every day. Tozzi says the educators she trained to use the tool kit seemed enthusiastic from the start. And the resource makes the correct tie between professional issues and the project’s advocacy of professional wages and working conditions for early childhood educators, she says.



BRUCE GILBERT



For more information on the “Transitioning to Kindergarten” tool kit, write to ece@aft.org.

Members bring teachers' voice to charter school conference

Union delegation among the largest teacher groups at national gathering

AVI SPILLER SMILED as he explained the situation to two guests in the lobby of the Hotel New Orleans. Spiller saw their puzzled expressions after he mentioned he is a charter school teacher *and* a proud union member.

A charter school with an active union is not an oil-and-water arrangement, Spiller assured them. It is more like two sides of the same coin—union representation helps charter school teachers, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel be successful because it gives them a real voice in important school decisions, protects their rights and expands their opportunities to grow as professionals.

"All I have to do is talk about what I know, what I do and what I believe in" to get beyond the misgivings, explained Spiller, a teacher from Pembroke Pines Charter High School in Broward, Fla.

He was one of more than 30 AFT members—all teachers and PSRPs in unionized charter schools across the country—who shared the professional rewards of working at their schools at the 2008 National Charter Schools Conference held June 22-25 in New Orleans.

The AFT delegation was one of the largest groups of educators at a meeting where many of the other attendees were charter school operators and managers.

The AFT conference participants are part of AFT's Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff (ACTS), a community of charter school employees. Included in the delegation were charter school teachers from Broward County, Fla.; Buffalo, N.Y.; New Orleans; New York City; St. Louis; and several California communities.

The AFT conference participants said they appreciated the opportunity to network with colleagues and discuss ideas for improving instructional practice at their schools. "The passion to help our students and improve our schools is contagious," said Deatrice Bacchus, a teacher at the United Federation of Teachers Secondary Charter School in Brooklyn, N.Y. "We support each other from near and far. I love that."

Jed Shields, a teacher at the recently unionized Construction Careers Center Charter School in St. Louis, echoed that sentiment.

"Since we're in the early stages of our union, it was extremely helpful to hear about successes at other charter schools and how the union helped solve problems."

A conference highlight was a reception hosted jointly by ACTS, the United Teachers of New Orleans (UTNO), the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and the Coalition of Essential Schools. UTNO president Larry Carter thanked the visitors for coming to New Orleans: "You prove that unions and charters, together, are a win-win proposition."

He reiterated that UTNO will continue working toward its goal—restoring teachers' voice in New Orleans, so that all teachers in every type of school are empowered and supported.

Michelle Bodden from the UFT told attendees that they are "living proof that unionized charter schools work," adding that unionized schools consistently rank among

the best charter schools in terms of student performance.

After the reception, Broward, Fla., teacher Khea Davis summed up the experience for many of the AFT members in attendance: "I'm just so proud to be part of an organization that puts students and teachers first."

AFT members share professional experiences at a charter schools conference in New Orleans.



NUJME RINALDI-NUN

Building bridges with brushes

A NEW ORLEANS charter school got the brush from AFT members this summer—and the folks at McDonough 42 Charter Elementary School couldn't be happier about it.

More than 30 members of the AFT's charter school community, the Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff (ACTS), took time out from a busy conference schedule to visit McDonough 42. This public charter school serves a Ward 7 community still trying to recover from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, and AFT members spent much of Sunday afternoon trying to help that effort along—picking up paintbrushes and rollers, putting a forest-green finish on a rusted fence at the back of the schoolyard (pictured below).

The afternoon was punctuated with jokes, laughing and good music drifting from a volunteer's nearby car. It's all part of educators helping educators, explained Kayla Meadows, a kindergarten teacher from a charter school in Ukiah, Calif. All charter schools have their own challenges to deal with, Meadows observed as she helped prep the fence for painting. "It's important that we find ways to work together like this."

The AFT members were in New Orleans for a conference, and their work at McDonough was a hit with the host city. Three TV stations sent crews to report on the project. "When students see a freshly painted fence, we hope we can inspire them that there's something new going on," said United Teachers of New Orleans president Larry Carter.



NUJME RINALDI-NUN



For information on the AFT's Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff, visit www.aftacts.org.



TIMOTHY H. RAAB

Retired teacher Tom Hart and school nurse Cathy Wager work with their local Lions Club to help children with vision and hearing problems.

Returning the favor

Local organization honors school nurses

IF A CHILD is having problems seeing or hearing, the school nurse is among the first to know.

"School nurses are the first line of defense," says Tom Hart, a retired elementary school teacher who taught for 30 years before leaving his post at West Sand Lake (N.Y.) Elementary School in 2001.

No longer in the classroom every day, Hart is spending more time working with the Albany-Troy, N.Y., chapter of Lions Clubs International.

As a Lion, Hart collects old eyeglasses from drop boxes at local doctors' offices, banks, libraries, post offices,

and other businesses. Last year, he collected more than 13,000 pairs. Eyeglasses are not reused in the United States; instead, they are repaired and donated to other countries.

The Lions Club is well known for its efforts to help people in the community who have vision or hearing problems. The organization provides vouchers for free eye exams and glasses or hearing aids to those who otherwise couldn't afford them. Most requests for vouchers are made by school nurses to help students in need.

School nurses are well aware of the work the Lions do, says Cathy Wager, the school nurse at West Sand Lake Elementary. "They are an absolute godsend for families who don't have the resources."

Recognizing the bond they have with their local school nurses, the Albany-Troy Lions began honoring them several years ago with an annual banquet, attended by nearly 100 school nurses each year. "School nurses are overwhelmed with their duties. The dinner is a nice way of saying we appreciate all that you do," says Hart.

And the school nurses are equally appreciative. "The dinners are always well-attended," says Wager. "It is a marvelous feeling to have our efforts recognized."

Building on a legacy of activism

Retirees continue to make invaluable contributions

ACTIVE RETIREES HAVE always played an important role in the AFT's election and legislative programs, and it will be even more important in this year's presidential election, AFT secretary-treasurer Nat LaCour told the audience at the opening session of the AFT's pre-convention Retiree Leadership Conference on July 10 in Chicago.

Thanks to the exploding growth of the retiree ranks, the union will be able to call on more than 239,000 retired members to help coordinate volunteers, staff phone banks, stuff envelopes and canvass neighborhoods for the 2008 elections.

"If we can encourage

members to get involved, we can build on the legacy [of activism] that you have started," said LaCour, who was part of a panel on retirees and the union, the community and the election. The other panelists were Harris Wofford, retired U.S. senator from Pennsylvania, and William Benson, a policy expert on health and aging.

"The union is being confronted with many challenges, and we must redouble our efforts and energies to focus on turning members into activists," said LaCour.

"Most of the baby boom generation will hit 65 on the next president's watch. So that makes who gets elected in 2008 very important," explained Benson. "It is a window of opportunity to address the needs of the aging."

Retirees also honored Leon Shore of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers with the 2008 Retiree of the Year award. Shore was selected for his outstanding leadership and advocacy. After his retirement in 1993, he served as president of the PFT's retiree chapter for four years and was named vice president of the Pennsylvania Alliance for Retired Americans in 2007.

The two-day conference also featured workshops on financial planning, health and wellness, and organizing around legislative and political issues.

Just a few days before his own retirement, AFT secretary-treasurer Nat LaCour, left, presents the Retiree of the Year award to Leon Shore of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.



LEE BALGEMANN

RESOLUTIONS TO RECRUIT, RETAIN AND PROTECT UNION RETIREES

AFT DELEGATES TO THE UNION'S 80th convention this July passed resolutions to strengthen the voice of retirees in the union and to protect Social Security and Medicare. One resolution urges affiliates to pursue pension dues checkoff (the dues are deducted from retirees' pension checks) or adopt prepaid retiree membership provisions in their constitutions as a means of recruiting and retaining more retirees. Norman Swenson, a member of the AFT committee on retirement and retirees, says membership in his Illinois retiree chapter has grown from 100 to more than 700 since it adopted dues checkoff. Other resolutions oppose the privatization of Social Security and address Medicare benefits, especially prescription drug coverage.

For these and other AFT resolutions, visit www.aft.org/about/resolutions.



convention '08

Continued from page 11

go's Bass Elementary School held July 10.

Cortese urged delegates to talk with volunteers from Special Olympics in Illinois who were on hand to answer questions about how to get involved. "You and your members will feel pride in your union, and your community members will feel pride in having teachers and unions who care deeply about their sons and daughters," she said.

AFT BACKS PEER ASSISTANCE AND REVIEW FOR NEW TEACHERS

THE AFT TOOK BOLD STEPS to take charge of the teaching profession—and to check mindless, test-driven "teacher quality" schemes—when AFT convention delegates overwhelmingly approved a resolution July 13 urging all locals to consider engaging in peer assistance and review (PAR) programs for new members.

The resolution explains that PAR is a professional induction and evaluation program for teachers that recognizes "experienced, expert teachers are the people who are positioned to offer the best assistance to probationary teachers and to make the most credible judgments about their capabilities."

Traci Castro of the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers joins in the debate over peer assistance and review.

A trailblazer in this approach has been the Toledo (Ohio) Federation of Teachers, which in the early

1980s negotiated a plan based on peer coaching and evaluation. It provides an intern program for all new teachers, in which they are assigned mentors—consulting teachers who are themselves excellent teachers. The mentors provide both professional development and evaluation to new teachers, and they also conduct a complete evaluation of the intern's progress in meeting the performance standards of the school system.

"A high-quality peer assistance and review program for new teachers can profoundly improve hiring decisions, teaching quality and teacher retention," the resolution notes. "Peer assistance and review for new teachers should play a major role in our continuing drive to strengthen the teaching profession, and the American Federation of Teachers resolves to make it a priority to support affiliates seeking to establish such programs."

Peer assistance and review is a strong defense against those who would measure teaching quality through student test scores, said AFT vice president Marcia Reback, who is also president of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, and chair of the AFT's task force on peer assistance and review.

Concerns that teacher-led evaluations would be divisive are ill-founded, said Francine Lawrence, president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers, who rose in support of the resolution. Surveys of teachers in Toledo show that 90 percent of them support the model, and 72 percent of AFT members are positive about PAR programs for new teachers. Lawrence told delegates: "Brothers and sisters—that is solidarity!"

Concerns that peer assistance and review amount to abdication of due-process "couldn't be farther from the truth," said newly elected AFT president Randi Weingarten, who is also president of the United Federation of Teachers.

Assistance and evaluation from excellent, effective teachers achieves the right balance between support for professionals and preserving quality in the profession, she said. And it is the best form of protection in a test-fixated climate where "a new teacher is cut" if students do poorly on test scores.

The resolution also pledges AFT efforts to increase member awareness and understanding of PAR programs, directs the union to identify and pursue ways of providing policy and financial support to these programs, and calls on the union to "project a national voice on this issue."

Randi Weingarten



Continued from page 13

losing their pensions?

Ultimately, unions have a big job to do in educating, in energizing, in mobilizing and in lobbying.

Organizing was a priority of the AFT under President McElroy. What are your thoughts on this aspect of the union's work?

Organizing the unorganized always will be an AFT priority. We need to be on the lookout for every opportunity to both organize and mobilize members. It's our lifeblood.

We're going to keep growing the AFT in every one of our constituencies, and we're going to build and deepen the culture of organizing. By doing that, we'll be giving others an opportunity to have a voice at work and a better life. If we really want to make a difference for the people we serve, then we have to strengthen the strongest force there is for improving their lives, and that is our union.

Is there a final message or thought you'd like to send to AFT members and leaders?

Ultimately, we're one big union brought together by the common goals of improving the services in the institutions where our members work, giving members a voice at work, and fighting for members and working people's economic security. I started at a local union 22 years ago. Locals, and to some extent state federations, are really where the rubber meets the road. Local leaders face the same kind of obstacles and challenges whether they're in New York City or in New Mexico, Ohio, California or Missouri; whether it's a big city, a small town, the suburbs or a reservation.

As unionists, we can play a leading role in improving the institutions in which our members work, while at the same time affirming the labor movement's traditional goals and values.



Open door

Continued from page 15

runs an after-school program. There's also tutoring and SAT prep in the afternoons, as well as breakfast in the morning. Many of the extracurricular programs at I.S. 302 are sponsored by Beacon Family Place, part of a multicounty foundation that coordinates services at the school site.

A history of community care

Beacon centers can be found on the other side of the country as well, in the San Francisco public schools. Beacon provides after-school and summer activities, while the city furnishes healthcare centers and special programs for teen moms.

San Francisco has a history of community-based care stretching back to World War II, explains United Educators of San Francisco president and AFT vice president Dennis Kelly. Back then, says Kelly, child care and healthcare centers sprang up to serve mothers working around the clock building Navy ships. Going back even further, 19th-century settlement houses for immigrant families in New York and Chicago cut the initial pattern for community schools, leading the philosopher and early AFT member John Dewey to promote the concept of a "school as social center" in 1902.

Today's AFT members in Oakland, Calif., are providing similar services there. Adult education instructors working in the Community-Based English Training program teach basic language skills at Oakland elementary schools, says Ana Turetsky, president of the Oakland AFT.

During the school day, AFT member Sam Davis teaches English and computer literacy to the parents of Even Start and elementary students at a family center on the campus of two public schools in Oakland. Besides learning English, the parents, mostly mothers, spend time in their children's classrooms, practicing reading with them and figuring out how to navigate the school system.

These parents, Davis says, "become the role models for other families," learning not only from him but also from each other about volunteering in the classroom and raising their children. Of a particular mother who advanced to community college, he says, "It's wonderful for her kids to see that she's a life-

long learner."

The family center where Davis teaches also offers adults advice on nutrition, housing, safety and child care. Over time, he and his colleagues are figuring out how to better coordinate their services, which now include English and computer courses that Davis teaches at night in schools around town.

Like every other community schools program worthy of the name, the Children's Aid Society reaches deeply into neighborhoods. It runs 24 full-service public school programs in New York City, "each a little different," says Phil Coltoff, special adviser to the society, which sees itself as an organic partner in schools, contributing through an eye clinic or a drop-in center for parents. All its partner schools are open at least until 6 p.m., some until 9 p.m., 300 days a year. Everything is run by parents, including a huge neighborhood barbeque.

Since partnering with the public schools around 1990,

Eighth-grade social studies teacher Oral Brady and friends at Rafael Cordero School in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Coltoff says, the society has worked closely with the union to make sure schools respect the contract if staff work extra hours.

Funded by private foundations plus public sector support from city, state and federal governments, the society's program has been picked up by hundreds of schools outside New York, including Chicago and Evanston, Ill., Long Beach, Calif., and Seattle, as well as other countries, including Scotland, South Africa and Vietnam.

Back in Brooklyn, after-school activities have invigorated I.S. 302. Take the reward system of dinner and a Broadway show for making the dean's list. Or the standing-room-only crowd for this spring's student production of the musical "Annie." Brady was amazed to see how many parents crammed into the school auditorium: "It was one of my proudest moments."

Annette Licitra is a contributing editor of American Teacher.



The many flavors of community schools

BY PARTNERING WITH their neighbors to dish up exactly what local residents need, community schools offer various kinds of support:

Early childhood services: Starting with basic child care and adding components such as baby wellness, these programs allow parents to function as students or workers.

Healthcare: A clinic that's open before, during and after school every day provides an important anchor for the community.

Curriculum: University students and others with specialized knowledge, working closely with teachers, volunteer their expertise in the classroom as a supplement to the curriculum.

Adult education: These programs include GED completion, job training and placement. They also offer English as a second language and practical courses such as car care.

After-school care: The best programs don't stop at middle school but continue through high school, providing age-appropriate homework help, extracurricular activities and field trips.

Youth development: Expanding from sports and recreation, these programs promote community service and other character development groups, such as Boys & Girls Clubs.

Family support: Social services run the gamut from counseling to housing assistance.

Off to a fresh start

Union festival features fun and a health fair for the entire community

FAMILIES AND CHILDREN from Chicago's Englewood neighborhood gathered at Bass Elementary School on July 10, for a morning of fun, food and health screenings. Hosted by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) and the AFT, the Fresh Start Festival was held just prior to this summer's AFT convention in the Windy City. The event included face painting, balloons and a moon bounce for the children, and materials for parents on helping their kids succeed in school.

The highlight, however, was a health fair that featured free physicals, immunizations, and hearing and vision screenings for the community's schoolchildren, along with information on diabetes, cholesterol and high blood pressure. "There's a shortage of nurses in Chicago schools, and many families have trouble getting the screenings required before children start school," said CTU president and AFT vice president Marilyn Stewart.

IFT's director of program development JoAnn Harper said the health screenings benefit members as well as the schoolchildren. "Children are what we're about as educators. And if we expect to be able to teach them, it's important that they be able to hear and see."

Sharon Davenport has been a parent volunteer at Bass for more than 10 years. All four of her kids attended the school. "This is great for those kids who need their shots before they return to school and for those kids who need their eyes examined," she said.

Bass Elementary is one of the city's eight Fresh Start Schools. The program is a partnership between CTU and the Chicago Public Schools.

ALMOST ONE IN THREE children and teenagers in the United States is overweight or obese. In response to this epidemic, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation—a joint initiative of the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation—established the Healthy Schools Program to help schools develop policies that promote healthy eating and increase physical activity.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL



The health fair benefited children who need health screenings before the start of school, says Chicago Teachers Union president Marilyn Stewart, above. A festival participant has her vision screened, at left.

Keeping the faith with our schools

Religious leaders and AFT share common ground

THE AFT AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS are like-minded when it comes to the needs of children and the nation's public schools. That was made clear during the inaugural Faith in Action meeting hosted by the union last spring. Held at the AFT national headquarters in Washington, D.C., the gathering brought leaders from the Catholic, Jewish, Muslim and Protestant communities together with AFT leaders and staff to discuss ways in which the union and the faith community can work together to save and strengthen public schools.

Whether it was increasing access to early childhood education, expanding parent education and involvement, or engaging voters, the AFT and the faith leaders were in har-

mony. The Rev. Romal Tune, from Clergy Strategic Alliances, told the participants that it is not enough simply to turn out the vote in the fall. "We need to make sure people are informed about the issues, including public education," he stressed.

During a robust discussion of charter schools, Nancy Van Meter, from the AFT president's office, said the union is "looking at building relationships with charter school operators and advocates" in order to bring the values of the union to these schools, including giving teachers more voice.

Religious leaders from Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, New Orleans, New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and other cities attended the Faith in Action meeting.



For more information on healthy habits for children, visit www.healthiergeneration.org.

Some days you eat the bear ... some days the bear eats you

BY DON KUEHN

ON JULY 1, the Dow Jones Industrial Average traded in "bear market" territory for the first time in this nearly yearlong decline. It's called a bear market when an index like the Dow trades 20 percent or more below its high levels.

There's no question that the current economy is bad. Almost every sector has experienced some calamity in recent months, with gas prices dominating the news all summer. If you are in your 20s or 30s, or if your long-term memory isn't what it used to be, you may not remember the 1980-82 recession. By comparison, today's problems don't seem so bad: Inflation is about 4.2 percent, whereas in March 1980 it peaked at 14.76 percent; unemployment hit 5.5 percent in May and June of this year, but in November 1982 it was 10.8 percent; back then homebuyers were paying 18.6 percent for a 30-year mortgage—three times what we're paying today.

For an expanded version of this article, go to: www.aft.org/publications/your_money.

After the 1980-82 period, we began a long, steady climb to the greatest period of prosperity the world has ever seen. We went from a stock market low of 759 in 1980 to a peak of 14,164 in October 2007.

None of that probably makes you feel better about *today*. We have gone through the subprime housing fiasco; the meteoric rise in energy, food and consumer goods; inflation; and one bad economic story after another. Oh, did I mention the war?

So, if the bear has been nibbling at you, what do you do now?

First, maintain perspective. The economy goes through cycles, and the current downturn won't last forever.

As for energy, some experts say the current record gas prices can be blamed on speculators or on Big Oil and OPEC taking advantage of both the war and global political uncertainty to boost prices. Others point to the weak dollar and declining inventories, as well as the emergence of consumer-based economies in former Third World nations.

The positive side might be that Americans

are retooling their driving and energy-consumption patterns. If true, some good could come out of this mess.

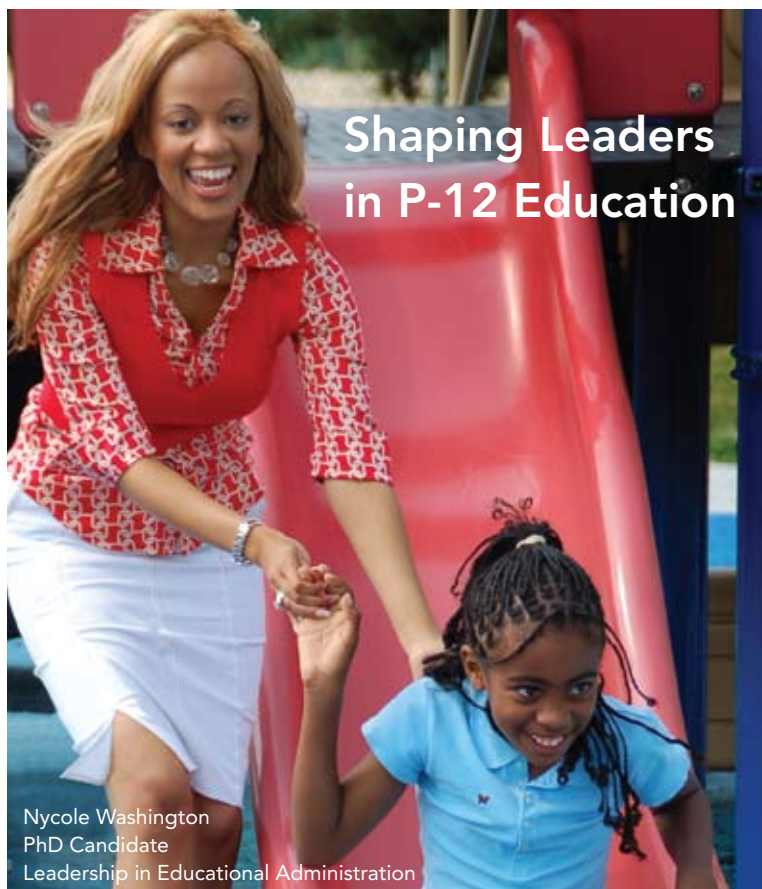
If you haven't spent that stimulus/rebate check yet, consider using it for a long-term goal. Invest it in a broadly based stock index fund now, while prices are low, and in 20 years or so it could be worth 10 times what it is now.

And that raise your union negotiated for you this year, or your step adjustment? Direct it into a 403(b) account through your employer's payroll department. If you never see it, you'll never miss it.

If you are an investor with a little cash on hand, this market may offer a once-in-a-decade chance to buy good company stocks or mutual funds at fire sale prices. If you want to "eat the bear," buy while the markets are at these low levels.

It's *your* money—put it to work for you.

Don Kuehn is a retired AFT senior national representative. For specific advice relative to your personal situation, consult competent legal, tax or financial counsel. Comments and questions can be sent to dkuehn60@yahoo.com.



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¹PhD requires attendance at colloquia.



PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS/JESSICA GRIFFIN

schoolwork.

She loves teaching in Philadelphia. "The city has so many resources," and its top teacher uses them to best advantage to make her subject come to life for her students. For example, Hart has used the Teen Author Series sponsored by the Free Library of Philadelphia to connect students with the writers they're studying. Her students have met Nikki Giovanni, Julia Alvarez and Chinua Achebe, Hart's favorite author.

Before joining the Bodine staff in 2002, Hart taught for a year in Korea. The experience overseas gave her a sense of what she *didn't* want as a teacher: large, lecture-based

Bodine High School English teacher Gina Hart was recently named Philadelphia's Teacher of the Year.

classes. Her style is to have students work with each other and find out what they excel in.

"As teachers, we each serve a different role," says Hart, who sees hers as that of a nurturer. "I feel lucky to be teaching literature. It allows me to be myself and to let students be themselves."

Bodine graduate India Johnson says Hart influenced her decision to major in English; the former student will enroll at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh this fall. "Ms. Hart's name matches her because she has a huge heart. She takes all of her students under her wing and just cares for them."

Students changing their community one public policy at a time

Teacher engages students to become citizen activists

IF SALLY BROUGHTON'S middle school students learn anything, it's that they have the power to change their community one public policy at a time.

It's an important lesson. "In order for our democracy to work, we have to have engaged and informed citizens," says Broughton, who teaches grade 6-8 social studies and language arts at Monforton School, six miles west of Bozeman, Mont. "If we don't, then we are not going to have the institutions we want."

Broughton's curriculum is "We the People: Project Citizen," a program of the Center for Civic Education and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

At the start of every school year, Broughton's

ton's sixth-grade social studies students make a list of problems in their community that can be fixed through public policy. Their grievances have targeted what the community or school doesn't have: a park, public restrooms downtown, a warning system on the dam, a school kitchen. But the kids also have put a priority on the need for policies that hold them accountable—a bike helmet requirement and compulsory community service, for example.

Broughton helps the kids whittle their lists down to a single issue. "It has to come from their heart, or it is no good," says Broughton, a member of Montana's MEA-MFT. Then the work begins. Students gather information, examine solutions and develop an action plan that includes community outreach. They present their plan to the appropriate group of elected officials, including the school board or the city commission.

The result: grass-roots organizing that would leave some elected officials and AFT affiliate leaders blushing.

The variety of student accomplishments is impressive: a new playground, a school kitchen, a school breakfast program, a school helmet policy—the list goes on.

Broughton notes that failed policy attempts are an important part of the lesson, too. Students "need to learn that you don't always get what you want," she says, "and if you don't get what you want, you try again."

The teacher credits her students, but the civic education community is tipping its hat to Broughton. She is a 2008 American Civic Education Award winner.

If citizens don't engage with government, "we are not going to have the institutions we want," says Sally Broughton.



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE PHOTOGRAPHY INC.

Honoring one of Philly's finest

AFT member earns top spot early in her career

GINA HART IS a little self-conscious about her new status as Philadelphia's teacher of the year. "I've only been teaching for six years," she explains. "My fellow nominees are great at what they do, and they are all very distinguished."

All modesty aside, Hart is establishing a solid reputation herself.

She teaches ninth-grade English and 11th-grade International Baccalaureate English at Bodine High School for International Affairs in Northern Liberties, Pa.

Hart, who is a member of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, relishes the opportunity to expose her students to new experiences. That's why she's active in many student activities and the sponsor of many—including the Asian Club, the Poetry Club, the theater program and yearbook. No wonder the *Philadelphia Inquirer* called her "an action hero" in a recent headline.

"I want to give students as many opportunities as I had when I was in school," says Hart. "I'm in a place in my life right now where I don't have to be home at a certain time. So when the students come to me with ideas for clubs and they need a teacher to sponsor them, I just do it."

Hart, who grew up in Cherry Hill, N.J., gravitated toward teaching as a teenager, when she helped her peers with their

A new slant on professional development

Lesson study model originated in Japan



PATSY WANG-IVERSON

Above, students at Pine Trail Elementary in Volusia County, Fla. Right, math teachers Nga Tran and Roger Lawson took what they learned from AFT on lesson study back to their school in San Antonio.



MICHAEL J. SHORT

THE MORE YOU LEARN about how students think about a subject, the better you are at teaching it. That's the principle behind lesson study, a professional development model that originated in Japan and has been in limited use in the United States for more than 20 years. In lesson study, teachers plan a lesson together with the aim of developing specific knowledge; observe the lesson, gathering evidence about student understanding; and discuss what they have learned from that evidence. But the goal is not to create specific lessons—it's to create a clearer understanding of students and content, and thereby improve teaching.

"Lesson study helps us to better understand student thinking, in ways that help us make new learning more accessible," says Nancy Sundberg of Rochester, N.Y., where the AFT established its first lesson study site with the help of the Rochester Teachers Association. "Many of us come to see mathematics as a far more interesting and nuanced content than we ever imagined it could be. When teachers get excited in this way about content, the passion and joy are passed on to students."

The AFT's support for lesson study dates back to the early 1990s with the publication of an article in *American Educator* titled "How Asian Teachers Polish Each Lesson to Perfection." In 2002, the AFT asked the Rochester local to be its first lesson study site. Two years later, the AFT and the Volusia Teachers Organization established a second site in Volusia County, Fla. It was there, in January 2008, that

the AFT held its first conference to introduce the lesson study concept to teams of teachers and administrators from the ABC Federation of Teachers (Calif.), Douglas County (Colo.) Federation of Teachers, Leon (Fla.) Classroom Teachers Association, San Antonio Alliance of Teachers and Support Personnel, and the United Teachers of Dade (Fla.).

Cracking the glass ceiling

LILLY LEDBETTER hasn't broken the glass ceiling, but she has managed to put some serious cracks in it. Ledbetter, the 2008 AFT Women's Rights Award recipient, shared the story of her quest for equal pay for equal work at the women's rights breakfast at the AFT convention in July.

Ledbetter began working at Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. in Gadsden, Ala., in 1979. "As they say in Alabama, I didn't just fall off of a turnip truck in front of the plant," said Ledbetter. "I was well-qualified. There was no reason I couldn't have been paid the same as my peers."

When she found out that she was earning less than three of her male co-workers, "I was never so shocked," Ledbetter recalled. "The difference was drastic. I was being paid 60 to 70 percent less than the men."

Ledbetter filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 1998 and then filed a lawsuit. Her case went

The teams had the opportunity to observe teachers at Pine Trail Elementary School in Volusia County conduct a research lesson.

Nga Tran, a math teacher at Rhodes Middle School in San Antonio, had never heard of lesson study until the AFT conference, but the process was familiar to her.

"We already plan lessons together and discuss teaching techniques, but it is not as structured or formal," says Tran, a member of the AFT local in San Antonio. "It made perfect sense. Most teachers ask themselves if what they are doing is working, but lesson study allows you to pay more attention to student learning. It's not just the students who learn. Teachers learn a lot along the way too."

To work well, lesson study requires collaboration among teachers and support from administrators. Teachers must work together in teams and find the time to plan, observe and discuss their lessons.

The San Antonio Independent School District supports the union's effort to move forward with lesson study, says Shelley Potter, president of the San Antonio local. "Seeing lessons through the students' eyes is the most powerful form of professional development that I can conceive," says Potter. "The collaboration and discussion that takes place is extremely powerful."

to trial in 2003.

The jury awarded Ledbetter \$3.8 million, which was later reduced to \$300,000. Her case landed in the U.S. Supreme Court where it was overturned by a 5-4 ruling. The court's majority said Ledbetter waited too long to initiate her lawsuit. It should have been done within a six-month period.

Ledbetter, who is now 70, added, "What happened to me was not only an insult to my dignity, it has real and meaningful consequences for my ability to care for my family. My retirement depends on my salary. I will never collect what I should in retirement. That has a tremendous impact on my life."

During the breakfast, the AFT women's rights committee presented two members with the diamond recognition award for 50 years of labor service: Claudette Jean, Nashua (N.H.) Teachers Union and D. Jo Schaffer, United University Professions at the State University of New York.



MICHAEL CAMPBELL

LEDBETTER

EXCELLENT BY DESIGN

Schooldesigner.com is a business that promotes quality school design through its Web site, monthly e-newsletter and design competitions (named "Collabetitions" because they also stress collaboration among parties that design and use school spaces). The Collabetitions seek the broadest range of judges, particularly educators who actually utilize school facilities daily. The second annual Collabetition began in August, with the online judging process slated for early 2009. AFT members can sign up to become judges by going to www.schooldesigner.com and following the link entitled "Judge the Collabetition." When signing up, be sure to check the box that indicates you are an AFT member.

LIGHTS ... CAMERA ... TEACH!

The new Web site WatchKnow is launching a nationwide contest this fall to showcase video clips that portray the unique teaching styles and techniques of individual educators. Prizes will be available for approximately 500 topics ranging from lessons on the periodic table of the elements to "What is a verb?" explorations. Videos will be posted, viewed and rated in a free online forum similar to YouTube. For each topic, the project will award approximately \$75 for the first-place prize and \$25 for the second-place prize. Larger prizes will be awarded based on overall performance. WatchKnow is being launched as part of the Citizendium, a wiki-style online encyclopedia project aiming to create the world's finest free

encyclopedia and general reference source. For details on the project and contest, visit www.watchknow.org.

BABAR: THE EARLY YEARS On Sept. 19, the Morgan Library & Museum will debut "Drawing Babar: Early Drafts and Watercolors," the first exhibition of an extraordinary collection on Babar the elephant, which the museum acquired in 2004. Featuring more than 175 original works, with manuscript drafts, sketches and watercolors for the first books by Babar's two authors, Jean and Laurent de Brunhoff, the exhibition illuminates the creative process of father and son and documents the birth of one of the most iconic characters in children's literature. The Morgan's Web site also will make available to the public for the first time all the pages of Jean de Brunhoff's maquette (or small illustrated booklet) for the first Babar book "L'Histoire de Babar," which the author made midway through his composition process. It is in French but will also include English translations, and viewers will be able to click through and zoom in and out of the entire booklet. Visit www.themorgan.org for details.

CO₂ CARTOGRAPHY Researchers from Purdue University recently debuted revolutionary new maps that can help bring the problem of carbon dioxide emissions into sharp focus for students. The high-definition, interactive maps track carbon dioxide emissions around the United States with more than 100 times more detail than was previously possible and with greater accuracy. These "Vulcan maps" are available at www.eas.purdue.edu/carbon/vulcan.

IMPULSIVE LEARNERS Educators and parents can access free online tools that make it easy to design and tailor online learning games. Learning Impulse, www.learningimpulse.com, was

developed by interactive gamer Education by Design to be a Web-based interactive tool that reinforces classroom lessons and information for primary school students. Users supply their own questions and answers as they design games in a step-by-step approach. There are even applications to score and record student growth.

HOTTERCHALK DEBUT

HotChalk, an online education resource to connect teachers, students and parents, recently added content through partnerships with McGraw-Hill Education, National Geographic and PBS, and many of the offerings are available through a free trial. The new material includes more

than 1,000 lesson plans for science and world languages for grades

6-12, royalty-free stock video clips from National Geographic Digital Motion, and 100 selected video shorts covering history, science, public affairs and arts programming from PBS. The new material is available at www.hotchalk.com.

FINANCIAL SAVVY Junior Achievement and AARP's educator support network have teamed up to advance financial literacy among young people over the next year. Junior Achievement staff will train volunteers to help teach

real-world application of the financial principles fundamental to achieving lifelong success, including budgeting and the importance of saving. The program was piloted in the summer and is slated for a national rollout this fall. For more details, visit Junior Achievement online at www.ja.org.

JUST FOR GRAPHS Vernier Software & Technology is offering its Logger Lite software free for Intel-powered classmate PCs. Logger Lite is award-winning software that provides fundamental graphing and analysis tools for K-12 science students. Both a Windows and a Linux version of the software are available from www.vernier.com.

A VERY GOOD YEARBOOK The Journalism Education Association is looking for a few good yearbook advisers. The organization is taking applications for the National High School Yearbook Adviser of the Year Program, which honors outstanding high school advisers based on their careers as well as their previous year's edition. The winner's school receives \$1,000, and up to four distinguished advisers will receive \$500 awards for yearbook classroom equipment or summer workshops. Deadline for applications is Oct. 1. Visit www.jea.org and select "Awards and Contests." The yearbook adviser contest is listed in the "JEA Awards" category.

HOME IS WHERE THE HELP IS

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR adjustable-rate mortgage (ARM) resetting at a higher interest rate? If so, pick up the phone and call the "Save My Home" hot line, a new AFT + member benefit that offers consultations with certified counselors to help you keep your home.

AFT members can call to arrange a confidential, free consultation with HUD-certified counselors who will analyze their budget, develop a written Homekeeper Action Plan and help them keep their American dream. Call 866/490-5361.

