

By Teachers, for Teachers

**Randi Weingarten and
Louise Rogers**

Teaching is an extraordinarily complex and challenging enterprise, made even more so by new academic standards to help students develop 21st-century skills and by years of harsh budget cuts. It can be reassuring for teachers to know that, for virtually every educational challenge they encounter, a fellow teacher somewhere undoubtedly has solved it. But it also can be frustrating: Who has come up with a solution, what is it, and where can it be found?

There is an illogical contradiction to being a teacher in the United States. Teaching, in this country, is a knowledge profession largely without organized systems for teachers to share knowledge, challenges, ideas and support.

That's not the case in most countries with high-performing education systems, such as Finland and Singapore, which recognize the value in teachers learning from and helping each other. Some American schools strive to regularly provide teachers with such opportunities, but built-in time for teachers to collaborate is still the exception.

So much is expected of teachers today, but too little is offered in the way of resources, support and professional development. To meet this need head-on, we have formed a somewhat unconventional partnership to provide teachers in the United States with a new digital platform where users can upload their best resources, review and rate materials to provide quality control, and download these resources at no cost. This site, called Share My Lesson, is by teachers, for teachers, and it will become the largest online community for educators in the United States. Check it out at www.sharemylesson.com.

Teachers crave the tools and resources to help their students succeed. They often report that existing instructional websites are too limited, too vast or inaccurate. Teachers find that there is no one-stop shop for the resources they need, materials are not "teacher-tested," and "free" resources have hidden costs. Share My Lesson addresses all of that with a system that categorizes teacher-created resources by grade level, subject and type of resource, such as video

or lesson plan, and it is completely free of charge. It also allows teachers to find an array of ways to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all their students.

For every teacher who has stayed up late into the night thinking about ways to help every child in her classroom master multiplying fractions, or ways to bring the Declaration of Independence to life, Share My Lesson offers access to extensive resources that will benefit educators and students. Great ideas that engage students in an individual classroom now will have a pathway to countless teachers and their students.

This fall, millions of teachers will be expected to start teaching to the Common Core State Standards. These standards, if implemented

Great ideas that engage students in an individual classroom now will have a pathway to countless teachers and their students.

right, have the potential to help students acquire the subject knowledge, deep understanding and skills to apply concepts that will prepare them for college, career and life. Most teachers have not received the tools and preparation they need to meet these instructional challenges because of budget

cuts or inadequate implementation. Share My Lesson will help fill some of this vacuum by enabling educators in the United States to build a rich bank of lessons aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

Opportunities for teachers to share with and learn from their colleagues are crucial to helping all children get an excellent education. They are also crucial to keeping teachers in the profession, 50 percent of whom leave within their first five years because of lack of support or other frustrations. This teacher turnover crisis costs \$7.3 billion annually, with unknown costs to children's education. The AFT and TES Connect have made considerable investments to create a resource that will help teachers succeed—and stay—in this demanding and wonderful profession.

Educators not only want their students to learn and grow—they, too, want to learn throughout their careers. And, given the opportunity, teachers will willingly share their best ideas and most effective lessons. Share My Lesson will be a place where teachers' needs and their colleagues' solutions intersect, helping to provide all students with the great education they deserve.

Weingarten is president of the 1.5 million-member American Federation of Teachers.

Rogers is CEO of TES Connect, which operates the world's largest online network of teachers.



Rogers and Weingarten viewing Share My Lesson.

FOLLOW AFT PRESIDENT RANDI WEINGARTEN: twitter.com/rweingarten