

Professional Learning & You





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OUR MISSION

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

As a member of the American Federation of Teachers, you have access to a variety of programs and resources designed to enhance your professional growth. Many of these opportunities are detailed here. For more information, email **edissues@aft.org** or contact your local union.

By addressing the professional needs of our educator members, we are able to help them become even more successful in their careers; in their union; in the institutions in which they work; and in serving the students, families and communities they serve.



The AFT Professional Learning Program

The AFT has long recognized that the union's responsibilities go beyond the traditional "bread and butter" issues of salary and benefits. The AFT Professional Learning Program represents one of the union's major efforts to improve student achievement by making a difference in practitioners' performance and professional growth. This program:

- Is rooted in evidence-based educational, cognitive and social science research.
- Is guided by cutting-edge experts in the field and designed by frontline educators who know firsthand what goes on in classrooms and schools every day.
- Provides educators with the necessary tools and resources to make complex decisions and select the most effective strategies for meeting individual students' academic, social and behavioral needs.
- Connects excellent teaching practice with broader educational policy issues and campaigns.

Our professional learning and engagement program is based on the train-the-trainer model of professional development.

- This model allows for internal capacity building and enables affiliates to meet the unique needs of their school community.
- When professional learning is led by peers from similar backgrounds, contexts and experiences, participants are more likely to buy into the process and incorporate new knowledge into their practice.
- AFT trainers assist in the development of coursework and deliver training through the AFT's Professional Learning Summer Educator Academy or locally based trainings. There are also opportunities for participation in member-led web-based professional learning and seminars.



Union-sponsored professional learning strengthens our relationship with our members and is an indispensable tool for building broader, deeper support for the union.

- It provides a direct way for more members to get to know the values of our union as a professional organization dedicated to enhancing both the profession and the practice of its members.
- It opens up lines of communication for worksite leaders to reach out to colleagues and conduct member-to-member outreach around professional issues.
- It creates networking opportunities for members to meet other members and build a stronger union!

Learn more at www.aft.org/education.

AFT Professional Learning Online

Through this web-based platform, members are able to access content to help them learn new techniques and skills and to get tips that will help them create classroom environments that foster success for their students. AFT Professional Learning Online also provides a space where educators and locals can connect with their peers and colleagues from around the country and access support, the latest research and more.

The site hosts a variety of professional learning opportunities, including webinars, self-paced courses and blended learning. Topics range from student learning objectives to the appropriate uses of assessments for educators. Affiliates can contribute to the site by adding their online offerings to the platform or announcing face-to-face offerings that will be available to members in their district.

This site is free to AFT members and locals. Go to <http://elearning.aft.org> to create your account or contact elearning@aft.org for more information.





AFT Teacher Leaders Program

The AFT noticed the lack of teacher voice in education policy discussions in our country and decided to do something about it. Why weren't experts in the classroom being asked for their input on how to ensure that our children have the best opportunities to learn? To help address this question, the AFT designed the Teacher Leaders Program in 2011, based on Ellen Meyers' Teachers Network, to help prepare educators to facilitate discussion of the issues that affect our profession—both locally and nationally. More than 20 locals are participating this year with cohorts of 15 members from each.

Teacher leadership embodies the idea that classroom teachers can become formal, recognized leaders within their schools and communities while still maintaining their in-the-classroom status. Teachers who feel passionate about education—and want to continue working with children—can become coaches, peer evaluators, mentors, specialists in curriculum and instruction, advocates, activists, union leaders, teachers on special assignment, fellows in state or national programs, “teacherpreneurs,” National Board Certified Teachers, teachers of the year, and more. The Teacher Leaders Program identifies and brings together a select group of teachers and supports and empowers them to assume active leadership roles in their schools, unions, communities and beyond.

Learn more at www.aft.org/education or contact Marjorie Brown at mbrown@aft.org.

AFT-Sponsored Conferences

AFT TEACH Conference

TEACH (Together Educating America's Children), the AFT's biennial educational issues conference, brings together educators from across the country for workshops, discussions and speakers. The conference attracts more than 2,000 participants, including AFT members, state and district administrators, school board members, and representatives of the higher education, business and social services communities nationwide.

TEACH offers:

- Turnkey tools and resources to use back home;
- Ways to engage on issues facing your students, school or community;
- Hands-on sessions;
- Networking opportunities; and
- Thought-provoking speakers.

Learn more at www.aft.org/teach.



AFT Center for School Improvement Leadership Institute

The CSI Leadership Institute is a professional learning and technical assistance opportunity for leading and facilitating school improvement through a focus on promoting positive school climate. The institute offers collaboration strategies, tools and practices to strengthen the leadership capacity of all participants, new and returning, as well as provide a continued focus on leading and facilitating school transformation that results in improved student performance and improved schools. CSI skill-building principles and practices include:

- Team building;
- Effective communication;
- Data-informed decision-making;
- Professional learning; and
- Action planning.

Learn more at www.aft.org/education.

AFT Professional Learning Summer Educator Academy

This nine-day academy provides union-sponsored, research-based professional learning that addresses the complexities of teaching. The program is designed to help local unions build the capacity to deliver high-quality professional learning services to all educators—teachers, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel.

The AFT collaborates with leading education researchers to synthesize and apply research-validated best practices. Classroom-based activities help participants connect the research findings to their daily work, including small group interaction, role-play, case studies, simulations, Socratic seminars and shared reflection.

This comprehensive and intensive training prepares these educators to return to their locals as facilitators in specific course areas. These individuals, in turn, train others to facilitate sessions at the local level in a pyramiding effect designed to reach larger numbers of participants.

Learn more at www.aft.org/education.

Online Resources

Share My Lesson | www.sharemylesson.com

ShareMyLesson.com, the AFT's free lesson-sharing website, provides anyone who works with students a place to collaborate on new ideas and best practices to enhance the profession and the larger community. With more than 1 million members, Share My Lesson is where teachers, parents and school staff:

- Find thousands of standards-aligned, preK-12 lesson plans, activities and professional development webinars that span the curriculum.
- Access high-quality resources from content partners like Colorín Colorado, Student Achievement Partners, the Anti-Defamation League, Teaching Tolerance, PBS NewsHour Extra and the Boston Teachers Union's 21st Century Lessons.
- Get resources for community-wide issues like bullying prevention, creating a safe and welcoming environment, engaging parents, immigration, and nutrition and wellness.
- Contribute their finest, most effective work to support colleagues across the country.

Colorín Colorado | www.colorincolorado.org

ColorinColorado.org is the premier national website serving educators and families of English language learners in grades preK-12. Colorín Colorado has been providing free research-based information, activities and advice to schools and communities around the country for more than a decade.

To support these educators and parents, Colorín Colorado offers free multimedia materials such as classroom videos, toolkits, research-based articles, multilingual tip sheets, newsletters, featured books and authors, and social media. The site also provides information about topics such as reading together at home and creating a welcoming classroom environment.

Colorín Colorado is a bilingual website in English and Spanish, and offers basic parent content in 11 other languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Korean, Diné (Navajo), Russian, Tagalog and Vietnamese.



First Book | www.firstbook.org

The AFT and First Book are working together to help bring free and low-cost books and educational resources to students, families and communities in need. By engaging community partners, AFT members, school districts and local businesses, we have helped distribute more than 1.5 million books, with the shared goal of increasing literacy and promoting a lifelong love of learning.

If you work in a school, community program, library, or city or county program in an under-resourced community, sign up with First Book to get free and low-cost new books for children in your area.

To date, First Book has distributed more than 160 million books and educational resources to programs and schools serving children from low-income families throughout the United States and Canada. First Book is transforming the lives of children in need and elevating the quality of education by making new, high-quality books available on an ongoing basis.



Share Your Voice

AFT members have great expertise and passion, and we want to help you share that energy, experience and wisdom with a wider audience. There are a number of opportunities available for you to share your voice to help improve our schools and communities.

Become a Professional Learning Trainer

Are you interested in delivering AFT professional learning courses? Opportunities are available to join our trainer cadre to deliver courses face-to-face, virtually, locally or nationally. To learn more about the program and the application process, check with your local leader and email edissues@aft.org.

Start Blogging

The posts on our Schoolhouse Voices blog (<https://medium.com/school-house-voices>) are in large part written by teachers from around the country, with some additional commentary by AFT leaders and staff. Our teacher bloggers are sharing their experiences in the classroom—from their thoughts on how the Common Core is working, to their reflections on professional learning, to their successes and struggles working with students of all backgrounds and abilities.

If you are interested in adding your voice to the blog, email edissues@aft.org.

Provide Testimony

Consider joining our cadre of members and leaders who are available to deliver testimony on education-related legislation to state legislatures and Congress. It is critical that our elected leaders hear directly from you before making decisions about our schools and the teaching profession.

Get Out the Vote

Are you interested in efforts to encourage your colleagues and your neighbors to vote on issues covering all levels of government? From the local school board to the union hall to the governor's race to the presidential election, we need you to share your story with members and the public about the importance of making your voice count through the election process.

Send an email to edissues@aft.org to find out how to get involved.

Connect with Us on Social Media

Tell us what you do on social media, and we can follow you! If you have your own blog, website, Facebook page or Twitter account, let us know! We will follow you, and might even feature you in an upcoming newsletter or article.



www.facebook.com/AFTteach



www.twitter.com/AFTteach





Shaping the Future

Educators Rising

To broaden and diversify the teaching talent pool, we need to start early and grow our own. The AFT is proud to partner with Educators Rising (formerly Future Teachers of America) to support elective courses and career academies for high school students to explore teaching. In 2017-18, the new EdRising Academy curriculum and “Beginning to Teach” micro-credentials will be piloted in sites across the country.

The AFT is collaborating with Educators Rising to recruit union leaders to plan and spearhead implementation of Educators Rising programming for the 2018-19 school year.

For more information, email dkrusema@aft.org or go to educatorsrising.org.

Grow Your Own Program

Teacher diversity matters. Numerous studies indicate the benefits for students of color who attend schools with a significant concentration of teachers of color who share their cultural, linguistic, racial and national background. The AFT recognizes that diversity is a key component to equality and opportunity and strongly believes in diversifying the teaching workforce through Grow Your Own programs—a promising practice for recruiting people of color to the profession.

GYO is a recruitment strategy designed to address teacher shortages and teacher diversity gaps that are especially prevalent in underserved communities across the country. For more information, contact Dyan Smiley at dsmiley@aft.org.

Newsletters & Publications

American Educator

As an AFT member, you already should be receiving this quarterly magazine. If you are not, please email ae@aft.org.

AFT Teachers Professional Learning Newsletter

Sign up to receive this e-newsletter that highlights the work our members and leaders are doing regarding professional issues. Each issue includes tips you can use with your students or share with your colleagues. Upcoming training sessions and events are also listed as well as links to new resources.

Subscribe online at www.aft.org/education.

Other Publications

AFT members may request complimentary copies of AFT reports and brochures. To see the latest offerings, visit www.aft.org/education/publications.

Most publications are available for download, but hard copies can be requested at edissues@aft.org.



A Union of Professionals

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