

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Committee Chair: Donna Chiera, AFT New Jersey

Committee Secretary: John Meeks, Duval Teachers United, Local 3326

**1. COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: HELPING STUDENTS
THRIVE IN OUR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES**

Committee recommends concurrence as amended below:

- 1 WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers has long
2 believed in and worked to advance a comprehensive vision for public
3 education that promotes children’s well-being; supports powerful
4 learning; builds teacher and staff capacity; and fosters cultures of
5 collaboration among educators, administrators, families and
6 communities, recognizing that these values are inherent to the
7 community schools model; and
8 WHEREAS, community schools are not just another program, but
9 a paradigm shift in the way we think about schools that goes beyond
10 providing supports and services for students; and
11 WHEREAS, by establishing partnerships, community schools
12 provide a variety of services, supports and enriched learning
13 opportunities to students, parents, school staff and the community
14 based on a comprehensive asset and needs assessment, providing a
15 sustainable way to support their communities’ physical, emotional and
16 academic needs, as well as aid in economic recovery and stabilization
17 that benefit students and adults alike; and
18 WHEREAS, there are fundamental principles that must govern the
19 creation of community schools, including the four pillars that have been
20 established in research on the efficacy of community schools, including
21 “An Evidence-Based Strategy for Equitable School Improvement”:¹
22 1. Integrated student supports
23 2. Expanded learning time and opportunities
24 3. Family and community engagement
25 4. Collaborative leadership and practice; and
26 WHEREAS, community schools build a culture of open and
27 purposeful collaboration where everyone involved—community
28 partners, families, school staff and administrators—shares
29 responsibility for continuous improvement in both academic and non-
30 school-related outcomes; commits to building a culture of open and
31 purposeful collaboration; and seeks to build a diverse consortium of
32 stakeholders who reflect the community they serve; and
33 WHEREAS, community schools establish collaborative structures
34 and practices such as site-based decision-making teams that include
35 educators, school staff, school administrators, parents, community

¹ <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-equitable-improvement-brief>

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

36 leaders, and students who engage in the planning and decision-making
37 process for the school; and community schools utilize a site coordinator
38 to ensure partners are working together to get students access to
39 resources and supports attuned to their needs and talents; and

40 WHEREAS, the AFT believes all students have a right to learn and
41 achieve academic success—regardless of where, or under what
42 circumstances, they live—and recognizes the impact racism and
43 inequity has on access to high-quality education, healthcare and
44 employment opportunities for people living in poverty and people of
45 color; and

46 WHEREAS, there are many examples of the community schools
47 strategy being used to foster the principles of social justice and equity,
48 community self-determination, valuing community knowledge and
49 wisdom, shared leadership, transparency and trust relationships,
50 reflective learning culture, and a whole-person approach to education
51 that are backed up by research; and

52 WHEREAS, research from the Learning Policy Institute and the
53 Institute for Educational Leadership shows that when implemented as
54 a comprehensive model with fidelity, schools and communities both
55 benefit from:²

- 56 • Reduced health-related obstacles that cost students instructional
57 time;
- 58 • Decreased student mobility rates. When schools serve as hubs
59 of the community, families can establish roots rather than moving
60 around to receive necessary services;
- 61 • Increased family involvement;
- 62 • Stronger community involvement and schools that reflect the
63 communities they serve; and
- 64 • Potential for reduced racial and economic achievement gaps; and

65 WHEREAS, community school models across the country
66 demonstrate how schools and communities can connect to help all
67 students learn and thrive regardless of politics, demographics or
68 geography, including how to:³

- 69 • Manage space and resources, and design new community
70 schools or redesign existing schools and buildings and co-located
71 spaces for community school use; and
- 72 • Connect non-school personnel and experts to schools in a
73 sustainable way; and
- 74 • Leverage support from outside organizations, including
75 government, private not-for-profit and philanthropic
76 organizations; and
- 77 • Build grassroot support and engagement among families and
78 community leaders in community schools; and

² <https://communityschools.futureforlearning.org/>

³ <https://communityschools.futureforlearning.org/>

- 79 • Leverage federal, state and local funding resources for growth
80 and sustainability; and
- 81 • Bring new opportunities to underserved or economically
82 depressed communities:
- 83 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will join**
84 **with coalition partners in calling for 25,000 community schools by**
85 **2025.⁴**
- 86 **RESOLVED, that the AFT will:**
- 87 • **Affirm its commitment that every school should have access**
88 **to resources to develop a community school model,**
89 **including a designated community school**
90 **director/coordinator—an essential resource to link services**
91 **and develop community partnerships; and**
- 92 • **Expand our community schools initiatives from the more**
93 **than 700 community schools we currently support**
94 **nationwide to 2,500 schools over the next five years; and**
- 95 • **Urge local union affiliates to partner with school districts,**
96 **local government entities, political leaders, and labor and**
97 **community leaders to transform the schools serving our**
98 **neediest students into community schools to bring together,**
99 **under one roof, the services and activities our children and**
100 **their families need;⁵ and**
- 101 • **Be unapologetic about efforts to create anti-racist, culturally**
102 **sustaining schools and will support all locals that desire to**
103 **address systemic and structural racism, social justice and**
104 **inequity within their schools as part of their community**
105 **school strategy; and**
- 106 • **Elevate the work already being done across the country and**
107 **support locals and states that want to establish, sustain or**
108 **expand the community schools model for prekindergarten**
109 **through higher education; and**
- 110 • **Use education, political and legislative advocacy, as well as**
111 **grassroots organizing with locals, community partner**
112 **organizations and coalition allies to increase the number of**
113 **community schools nationwide, and support state and**
114 **federal legislation and programs that fund community**
115 **schools as part of a strategy to improve struggling schools;**
116 **and**
- 117 • **Support federal and state legislation that enables school**
118 **districts to accelerate new construction and/or renovation of**
119 **community schools to accommodate their various functions**
120 **and to build them to green and sustainable standards such**
121 **as those of the U.S. Green Building Council, the Leadership**

⁴ <https://www.communityschools.org/>

⁵ <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/sustainablecommunityschools.pdf>

- 122 in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system or the
123 Collaborative for High Performance Schools; and
124 • Call for ongoing, high-quality research into community
125 schools' best practices, staffing models, and approaches to
126 implementation that ensure community schools enhance
127 academic standards and other meaningful outcomes; and
128 • Create and deliver professional development so that
129 members are equipped to advocate for and implement
130 community schools strategies as part of a comprehensive
131 model for school improvement; and
132 • Foster opportunities for locals to network and learn from
133 each other's experiences; and

134 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will call on policymakers at all levels
135 to recognize the transformative power of community schools and
136 their unique capacity to serve all students, and to use their
137 authority to fund and support the community schools model with
138 fidelity; and

139 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will call on:

- 140 • The U.S. Congress to pass comprehensive legislation, such
141 as the Full-Service Community School Expansion Act, to
142 sustainably fund community school initiatives at the federal
143 level; and
144 • The U.S. Department of Education to establish a database of
145 community schools and disseminate findings to guide
146 research, policy and implementation; and
147 • The Department of Education to advocate for the
148 consideration of those findings when Congress modifies
149 legislation like the Elementary and Secondary Education
150 Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and other
151 legislation, budgetary items and competitive grants; and
152 • States and school districts to ensure that community
153 schools are not a pretext to bypass contractual agreements;
154 reduce standards for existing, normal operating school
155 hours; lessen those standards during after-hours
156 operations; displace existing services and/or staff; or
157 weaken existing crucial health and safety regulations, and
158 will support locals in developing and articulating their
159 bargaining demands related to implementing and sustaining
160 community schools.; and

161 **RESOLVED, that the AFT will advocate for funding at the**
162 **federal level dedicated specifically for creating additional**
163 **community schools and supporting the hiring of community**
164 **school directors/coordinators to lead the critical work of aligning**
165 **community services with family and student needs.**

Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

3. EQUITY THROUGH CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE, BALANCED ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

Committee recommends concurrence.

- 1 WHEREAS, an assessment system encompasses formal and
2 informal practices, activities and procedures used authentically within
3 classrooms to measure students' learning, are administered both
4 during and after the learning process, resulting in data and information
5 that is used regularly by education professionals, students and their
6 families, and sometimes by policymakers to diagnose student learning
7 needs and make decisions about students' education and educational
8 opportunities; and
9 WHEREAS, effective classroom assessment practices are founded
10 in culturally responsive teaching, curriculum, and assessment—and
11 supported by school and district leaders, states, teacher educators,
12 and measurement experts—so that students experience an equity-
13 focused learning environment that recognizes and builds on their
14 culture, knowledge and experience, and ensures authentic
15 instructional and assessment tasks, which provide feedback to support
16 students' learning and growth;¹ and
17 WHEREAS, classroom-based, curriculum-embedded formative
18 assessment is the "lived, daily embodiment of a teacher's desire to
19 refine practice based on a keener understanding of current levels of
20 student performance, undergirded by the teacher's knowledge of
21 possible paths of student development within the discipline and of
22 pedagogies that support such development";² and
23 WHEREAS, standardized tests represent one form of assessment
24 within a broader system of assessment types, and are designed to
25 measure a student's knowledge and skills at a specific point in time;
26 and they have been misused and overused for diagnostic, formative
27 and summative purposes in American public schools since the
28 passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the testing
29 expansions that occurred during the period of federal Race to the Top
30 grants in the 2010s; and

¹ Shepard, Lorrie A., Diaz-Bilello, E., Penuel, W. R., and Marion, S. F. (2020). *Classroom assessment principles to support teaching and learning* (policy brief). Center for Assessment, Design, Research and Evaluation, University of Colorado Boulder. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from https://www.colorado.edu/cadre/sites/default/files/attached-files/classroom_assessment_principles_to_support_teaching_and_learning_-_final_0.pdf.

² Fleisher, Cathy, Filkins, S., Garcia, A., Mitchell Pierce, K., Scherff, L., Sibberson, F., and Daviset, M. (2013). *Formative assessment that truly informs instruction* (policy brief). National Council of Teachers of English. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from https://cdn.ncte.org/nctefiles/resources/positions/formative-assessment_single.pdf.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

31 WHEREAS, despite increased testing in public schools, academic
32 performance gaps as measured by standardized tests remain
33 unchanged since the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954;³
34 and

35 WHEREAS, extensive research demonstrates standardized testing
36 has not escaped its shameful beginning of "intelligence tests" for
37 military fitness, which were designed to confirm beliefs of eugenics
38 and racism⁴ and continue to perpetuate the false premise that they
39 objectively measure student achievement while retaining design
40 practices (e.g., test question bias, use of a bell curve, test question
41 difficulty- setting practices, arbitrary raising of cut scores when students
42 show success on state tests) that continue to perpetuate race and class
43 inequality as their structures and designs are inextricably intertwined
44 with social and economic inequalities that exist outside of schools;^{5,6,7,8}
45 and

46 WHEREAS, the most recent accounting of state spending found 10
47 years ago that states spend \$1.7 billion every year on standardized
48 testing,⁹ and in response, school districts have directed millions of local
49 dollars and a countless number of instructional hours toward
50 "benchmark" or "interim" tests and mandated test-prep activities, yet
51 the information provided by these high-stakes tests has been misused,
52 thus making them ineffectual in providing real and meaningful guidance
53 to teachers, students and families;¹⁰ and

³ Hanushek, Eric, Peterson, P., Talpey, L., and Woessmann, L. (2019). *The achievement gap fails to close: Half century of testing shows persistent divide between haves and have-nots* (research study). Education Next. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from <http://hanushek.stanford.edu/publications/achievement-gap-fails-close-half-century-testing-shows-persistent-divide-between-haves>.

⁴ Meier, Deborah and Gasoi, E. (2018). *These schools belong to you and me; Why we can't afford to abandon our public schools* (book). Beacon Press.

⁵ Au, Wayne (2008). *Unequal by design: High-stakes testing and the standardization of inequality* (book). Routledge.

⁶ Au, Wayne (2013). *Hiding behind high-stakes testing: Meritocracy, objectivity and inequality in U.S. education* (research study). The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives, 12(2), 7–19. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/IEJ/article/view/7453/7812>.

⁷ Au, Wayne (2016). *Meritocracy 2.0: High-stakes, standardized testing as a racial project of neoliberal multiculturalism* (research study). Educational Policy, January 2016, v30 n1, 39-62. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0895904815614916>.

⁸ Berliner, David C. (2012). *Effects of inequality and poverty vs. teachers and schooling on America's youth* (research review). Teachers College Record. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from <http://www.tcrecord.org/PrintContent.asp?ContentID=16889>.

⁹ Chingos, Matthew (2012). *Strength in numbers: State spending on K-12 assessment systems* (research report). Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/11_assessment_chingos_final_new.pdf.

¹⁰ Zavitkovsky, Paul, Roarty, D., and Swanson, J. (2016). *Taking stock: Achievement growth in Illinois under No Child Left Behind* (policy brief). Chicago: Center for Urban Education Leadership, University of Illinois at Chicago. Retrieved

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

54 WHEREAS, our country must recognize the harms that high-
55 stakes standardized tests have inflicted over two decades to multiple
56 student generations: stifling the joy of learning as districts demand
57 test-prep activities and increase use of benchmark testing, which
58 leads to one-skill-at-a-time instruction despite lack of evidence of
59 effectiveness;¹¹ devaluing teachers' curriculum-embedded
60 assessment practices; tying student and teacher worth to test scores;
61 firing teachers; disproportionately impacting Black and brown
62 communities by closing public schools; instituting never-ending
63 state takeovers/receivership policies; and privatizing public
64 schools; and

65 WHEREAS, test prep has drained instructional time, student and
66 teacher energy, and school funds from schools already underfunded
67 and under-resourced, while also narrowing school curricula, stripping
68 away teacher autonomy, eroding the love of teaching and learning, and
69 fostering hostile, antagonistic school climates, particularly in schools
70 serving Black and brown students and students from lower-income
71 families,^{12,13,14} and

72 WHEREAS, for more than 20 years, our nation has generated
73 student, family, and educator stress and anxiety by administering high
74 stakes, large-scale standardized tests to collect data, which has not
75 improved teaching and learning conditions or equity; and

76 WHEREAS, the overreliance on lengthy standardized tests for
77 accountability has been amply demonstrated to cause negative
78 physical and mental harms to students of all ages by inducing toxic
79 stress, with these impacts being most profound among our most
80 vulnerable students, and contributing to the school-to-prison
81 pipeline, as a test-prep culture undermines student engagement and
82 increases negative student behavior, thus leading to students,
83 particularly students of color and those with disabilities, being

on June 7, 2022, from <https://education.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/csep/ISLAC-Final-Report.pdf>.

¹¹ Slavin, Robert (2019). *Benchmark assessments: Weighing the pig more often?* (research review). Robert Slavin's Blog. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from <https://robertslavinsblog.wordpress.com/2019/04/11/benchmark-assessments-weighing-the-pig-more-often/>.

¹² Fair Test (2017). *The case against high-stakes testing* (policy/research review). The National Center for Fair and Open Testing. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from <https://www.fairtest.org/k-12/high%20stakes>.

¹³ Koretz, Daniel (2017). *The testing charade: Pretending to make schools better* (book). University of Chicago Press.

¹⁴ Nelson, Howard (2013). *Testing more, teaching less: What America's obsession with student testing costs in money and lost instructional time* (research report). American Federation of Teachers. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/news/testingmore2013.pdf>.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

84 pushed out of school, thereby increasing the likelihood for
85 interaction with police and law enforcement;^{15,16,17,18} and

86 WHEREAS, students in special education are already subjected to
87 additional progress monitoring and testing, which takes away from
88 valuable learning time; and

89 WHEREAS, at least 27 states require schools to administer an
90 English language proficiency screening assessment for students
91 whose primary language is not English, and at least 24 states require
92 students to demonstrate English language proficiency on a
93 standardized test to be reclassified as English proficient, which they
94 must take in addition to federally required reading and math tests;¹⁹
95 and

96 WHEREAS, systemic inequities in public education have widened
97 educational opportunity gaps, since students from disadvantaged
98 groups are more likely to attend schools with far less funding and
99 coursework offerings, experience significantly higher instructional
100 hours devoted to test prep, and face increased threat of restructuring
101 and/or closure and high teacher/principal turnover;²⁰ and

102 WHEREAS, vendors and education “reform” groups that are not
103 comprised of educators have successfully pushed costly public school
104 policies and products not based in research which attempt to “teacher
105 proof” public education by directing scarce school funding toward large-
106 scale standardized testing tied to narrow curriculum pacing guides
107 rather than trust and invest in teachers’ professional knowledge, skills
108 and experience to design, deliver and reflect on culturally responsive
109 curriculum, instruction and assessment; and

¹⁵ Fair Test (2017). *The case against high-stakes testing* (policy/research review). The National Center for Fair and Open Testing. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from <https://www.fairtest.org/k-12/high%20stakes>.

¹⁶ Koretz, Daniel (2017). *The testing charade: Pretending to make schools better* (book). University of Chicago Press.

¹⁷ Kohn, Alfie (2015). *Schooling beyond measure & other unorthodox essays about education* (book). Heinemann. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from https://www.academia.edu/24493866/Kohn_A_2015_Schooling_beyond_measure_and_other_unorthodox_essays_about_education_Portsmouth_New_Hampshire_Heinemann_ISBN_978_0_325_07440_5_168_p_Soft_cover_26_73.

¹⁸ Ravitch, Diane. (2010) *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education* (book). Basic Books.

¹⁹ Rafa, Alyssa, Erwin, B., Brixey, E., McCann, M., and Perez Jr., Z. (2020) *50-state comparison: English learner policies* (research report). Education Commission of the States. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-english-learner-policies/>.

²⁰ Journey for Justice (2015). *Failing Brown v. Board: A continuous struggle against inequity in public education* (policy brief). Schott Foundation. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from <http://schottfoundation.org/blog/2018/05/18/new-journey-justice-report-shows-how-were-failing-brown-v-board#:~:text=BLOGPOST-,New%20Journey%20for%20Justice%20Report%20Shows%20How%20We're%20Failing,Board&text=More%20than%2060%20years%20after,segregation%20based%20largely%20on%20race>.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

110 WHEREAS, at a time when public schools face greater challenges
111 than ever, education privatizers have capitalized on the worldwide
112 COVID-19 pandemic to change state laws to expand charter and
113 voucher programs without safeguards to ensure students, families and
114 taxpayers are protected from "discrimination, corruption and fraud"
115 and, in 26 states, with no requirements for voucher students to take the
116 same state tests as their public and charter school counterparts;²¹ and

117 WHEREAS, our union strongly opposes the ways state and federal
118 policymakers have misused standardized test data to shame, blame
119 and close schools attended by some of America's most vulnerable
120 students, and to fire teachers in ways that disparately impact teachers
121 of color, especially Black teachers;²² and

122 WHEREAS, our union does not oppose standardized testing when
123 the data it generates is used appropriately to improve student learning,
124 school programs, and other school and district continuous-
125 improvement activities; and

126 WHEREAS, our union believes in humane, balanced assessment
127 systems that include a comprehensive, coherent and continuous use
128 of curriculum-embedded, unit-based formative and summative
129 assessments in the classroom to better understand student learning,
130 layered with appropriate school and district assessment systems,
131 and state accountability tests to inform the overall educational
132 process;²³

133 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will**
134 **create a national assessment task force that will develop goals for**
135 **changes to federal assessment requirements in the**
136 **reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to**
137 **promote balanced assessment systems, diminish overreliance on**
138 **standardized tests, and address the harms ESSA has brought to**
139 **teaching, learning and the privatization of public schools, as well**
140 **as issues related to punitive measures such as receivership,**
141 **whether by the state or other entities. In order to promote an**
142 **aligned response and action, the AFT will provide supports and**
143 **resources to state and local affiliates about ways to elevate**
144 **teacher voice in decisions about learning and assessment to**

²¹ Burris, Carol and Cimarusti, D. (2022). *Public schooling in America: Measuring each state's commitment to democratically governed schools* (research report). Network for Public Education. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from https://www.scribd.com/document/570300930/Public-Schooling-Report-2022#from_embed.

²² Albert Shanker Institute (2015). *The state of teacher diversity in American education* (research report). Albert Shanker Institute. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from <https://www.shankerinstitute.org/resource/teacherdiversity>.

²³ Marion, Scott and Sheperd, L. (2021). *The components of a balanced assessment system* (presentation). Center for Assessment and California Collaborative for Educational Excellence. Retrieved on June 7, 2022, from <https://vimeo.com/539432824>.

145 support the development of meaningful, culturally responsive,
146 classroom-based assessment practices that promote balanced
147 assessment systems and meaningful learning experiences for all
148 students, and especially Black and brown students; and

149 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will connect with other national
150 organizations, including groups representing families and
151 students, which share the AFT's values on humane, balanced
152 assessment systems and take concrete steps to create
153 partnerships that lead to actions which dismantle testing regimes
154 that have gone too far and are not helping support children's
155 learning, but often lead to overly punitive sanctions on schools
156 and educators; and

157 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will actively work to change ESSA
158 to ensure standardized testing harms will not be imposed on
159 future generations of students by eliminating the annual
160 testing requirements for grades 3-8, the arbitrary quota that
161 results in the identification and related consequences to the
162 "bottom 5 percent," and to include in the next reauthorization
163 of ESSA federal funding support for professional learning and
164 technical assistance for states, local education agencies, and
165 schools to shift from an overreliance on standardized test data
166 to humane, balanced assessment systems, and to address the
167 root causes of education disparities; and

168 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will support and make available to
169 affiliate unions and members union-developed, sustained, job-
170 embedded professional learning, such as the AFT course
171 "Reclaiming Assessment," which supports educators in
172 elevating culturally responsive assessment practices that
173 support high-quality instructional practices, providing
174 classroom based, day-to-day learning feedback to students
175 and educators; and

176 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will support state and local
177 affiliates in advocating for pre-service and in-service
178 professional learning experiences on assessment to support
179 the elevation of teacher voice in the decision-making process
180 as it relates to the best interests of children; and

181 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will support affiliate unions'
182 advocacy to shift to state assessment policies that focus on
183 what is important for learning rather than what is easily tested,
184 by emphasizing the importance of more immediate, teacher-
185 directed authentic assessments of student learning across all
186 grades and subjects so that assessment is integrated into
187 decision-making practices that are focused on student needs
188 as a natural part of the teaching and learning cycle.

Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

5. FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY AND EQUITY

Committee recommends concurrence.

- 1 WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers has a long
2 history of fighting for public education and believes that a high-quality
3 public education is the cornerstone of our democracy, an economic
4 necessity, a moral imperative and a fundamental right; and
5 WHEREAS, formal education was once prohibited for enslaved
6 people and as schools opened they were historically designed to
7 assimilate and sort students by class and race, evolving into a one-
8 size-fits-all factory model that serves only a select few, and this legacy
9 is still seen in schools today; and
10 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated long-standing
11 inequities within the public education system caused by continuous
12 cuts to funding, antiquated means of funding public schools,
13 privatization, and the re-segregation of schools by race and
14 socioeconomic status, and the compounding of challenges that many
15 students already face in their daily lives related to poverty, institutional
16 racism and classism; and
17 WHEREAS, research in neuroscience and the developmental and
18 learning sciences shows that the lack of psychological safety and the
19 impact of adverse childhood experiences can impede and even prevent
20 learning, and students' sense of safety and connectedness is the
21 foundation of their schooling and academic success; and
22 WHEREAS, community schools are instrumental in providing
23 schools and the surrounding communities with resources and
24 wraparound services offering nonacademic support that promotes the
25 overall development of students and families; and
26 WHEREAS, partnerships with parents, community, and community-
27 based organizations provide schools and school districts with
28 additional capacity to improve schools by offering responsive
29 programming for all students and families; and
30 WHEREAS, schools and relationships with teachers and school
31 staff can provide safe havens for students who may experience trauma,
32 neglect, abandonment, or food and housing insecurity by providing
33 supportive relationships and guidance, assistance programs and
34 services, such as counseling, health services, clothing essentials, and
35 supports for food and shelter; and
36 WHEREAS, paraprofessionals and specialized instructional
37 support personnel (SISP) have been instrumental to ensure tailored
38 health services, social services and economic supports reach students
39 with the greatest needs, and several local affiliates have bargained for
40 additional SISP in schools; and

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

41 WHEREAS, all students and school staff thrive in schools in which
42 they can show up as their authentic selves while feeling safe,
43 welcomed and affirmed, and research shows that educator well-being
44 is integral to student learning and school climate; and

45 WHEREAS, the AFT has long been an advocate for providing
46 teachers and students with the highest-quality instructional materials
47 and pedagogy, adapting to new knowledge and tools to support
48 improved instruction; and

49 WHEREAS, the AFT and allies have upheld educators' rights to
50 teach honest, authentic and inclusive American history by fighting
51 against legislation and school board policies (e.g., book bans,
52 eliminating curriculum, and other policies) aimed at content that allows
53 students to critically examine and disrupt white supremacy and
54 systemic racism; and

55 WHEREAS, an anti-racism framework in K-12 classrooms
56 recognizes students' intersecting identities (race, class, sexuality,
57 gender, citizenship status, differing abilities, primary language, etc.),
58 situates those identities in systems of inequity and resistance, and
59 values these life experiences as assets in the classroom; and

60 WHEREAS, the overreliance on standardized test scores in
61 punitive test-based accountability systems has created an education
62 system where schools that serve low-income students, and schools
63 that have predominantly Black, Hispanic and Indigenous student
64 populations are ranked, sorted and punished rather than supported;
65 and

66 WHEREAS, extracurricular activities, clubs and electives are
67 usually cut when schools are reported as "low-performing" according
68 to a state's accountability system and replaced with "drill-and-kill"
69 instruction as opposed to enrichment and project-based learning; and

70 WHEREAS, educators and school staff are rarely included in the
71 decision-making on policies and programs that directly impact their
72 instruction and are forced to succumb to the policy decisions of
73 noneducators who lack adequate understanding of the pedagogy
74 required to deliver instruction on a wide variety of concepts and
75 content; and

76 WHEREAS, a strong, high-quality teaching force is also a
77 representative teaching force and has been shown to reduce absences
78 and suspensions, improve test scores, and increase referrals to gifted
79 and talented programs; and the demographics of the teaching
80 profession rarely reflect the demographics of the students in public
81 schools across the country; and

82 WHEREAS, racist and white supremacist speech and policies have
83 no place in public education institutions, and we must support the
84 intentional and interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity
85 with a focus on the experiences and perspectives of people of color

86 and address the social, economic and political ways in which identity-
87 based systems of oppression and privilege connect; and

88 WHEREAS, inequitable schooling serves no one, not even the most
89 advantaged, and equity and social justice must be at the center of
90 educational policies and practices if we are to ensure that public
91 schools serve our society and remain the cornerstone of our
92 democracy:

93 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers, and our**
94 **affiliates will be unapologetic in their efforts to uphold public**
95 **education as one of the most important civil rights of modern**
96 **times and relentless in their advocacy for policies and practices**
97 **that inspire greater opportunity, justice and freedom; and**

98 **RESOLVED, that the AFT encourages its affiliates to promote**
99 **policies that protect educators who teach anti-racism and practice**
100 **gender inclusivity, and fight against districts that make rules or**
101 **policies to advance discrimination and marginalization in any**
102 **form; and**

103 **RESOLVED, that the AFT and its affiliates will elevate student-**
104 **focused policies and programs to disrupt inequitable practices**
105 **that disproportionately impact schools serving low-income**
106 **students, and schools that have predominantly Black, Hispanic**
107 **and Indigenous student populations, by advocating for:**

- 108 • **The involvement of educators in planning and creating**
109 **student-centered learning environments with pedagogical**
110 **practices that ensure students are active participants in their**
111 **learning.**
- 112 • **Schools that focus on the healthy cognitive, social,**
113 **emotional and physical development of students by**
114 **increasing access to school staff who have expertise in**
115 **mental health to serve staff, students and families, such as**
116 **school counselors, psychologists and social workers.**
- 117 • **Significant and sustainable growth and development of**
118 **community schools to provide community-specific supports**
119 **and services.**
- 120 • **School schedules that provide educators and school staff**
121 **with consistent and protected time for planning,**
122 **collaborating and creating student-centered learning**
123 **environments.**
- 124 • **Coordinated state and district systems of assessment that**
125 **support culturally relevant and responsive teaching and**
126 **learning, along with the elimination of annual, high-stakes,**
127 **punitive testing, and accountability that is mandated under**
128 **the Every Student Succeeds Act.**

129 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT and its affiliates will promote
130 empowering, rigorous curriculum and instruction by advocating
131 for:

- 132 • Pedagogy and curriculum that are age and developmentally
133 appropriate, effective, and culturally inclusive and
134 responsive.
- 135 • Research-based reading instruction and literacy practices
136 that are culturally rich and diverse and build upon AFT's
137 Reading Opens the World.
- 138 • Increased collective capacity to provide or partner in training
139 on trauma-informed practices, social emotional learning,
140 and bereavement support.
- 141 • The purposeful establishment and continuation of well-
142 rounded school programs that offer STEM, arts, and
143 inclusive enrichment programs and extracurricular/co-
144 curricular activities to all students.
- 145 • Career and technical education and apprenticeship
146 programs.
- 147 • Innovative ways for schools to engage students and infuse
148 hands-on, student-centered experiential learning
149 approaches that foster student ownership of learning; and

150 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will encourage its affiliates to partner
151 with the AFT Professional Learning and Member Engagement
152 program to build local, state and regional pathways for training
153 trainers and developing structures for support in providing peer-
154 led, research-based professional development that addresses the
155 imperative shift in pedagogy away from coverage and test, and
156 toward engagement and application; and

157 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT and its affiliates will support
158 practices that create safe and affirming environments for
159 educators and students without punitive, institutionalized
160 policing of their identities and the erasure of their cultural and
161 individualized expressions; and

162 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT and its affiliates will fight against
163 censorship that prevents teachers from connecting with all
164 students by supporting litigation against laws that create an
165 arbitrary micromanagement of what is taught; and

166 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will support affiliates' involvement in
167 AFT programs that increase educator voice and participation in
168 policy and decision-making, such as the Teacher Leaders
169 Program and the Teacher Leaders Alumni Advocacy Training; and

170 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT and its affiliates will seek to
171 collaborate with higher education institutions and partner
172 organizations to review policies and share best practices for the
173 intentional recruitment and retention of educators of color to a
174 more diverse educator workforce; and

175 **RESOLVED, that the AFT will continue its unwavering**
176 **commitment to advancing opportunity, justice, and freedom for**
177 **each and every educator through these principles of equity, for**
178 **they are the basis for preparing all children for bright futures as**
179 **involved citizens in our democracy.**

- Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

2. SPECIAL EDUCATION CASELOADS CAP

Committee recommends concurrence as amended below:

1 WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers believes each
2 child deserves a free and appropriate challenging education that can
3 only be reached through adequate and supported resources as
4 identified in their individualized education plans (IEPs); and “Federal
5 law requires states to monitor class-size and caseloads for special
6 education personnel to ensure that students with disabilities receive a
7 free appropriate public education,” (source: Kansas State Department
8 of Education); and

9 WHEREAS, through the Centers for Disease Control and
10 Prevention, the percentage of children ages 3-17 diagnosed with a
11 developmental disability increased from 16.2 percent in 2009-11 to
12 17.8 percent in 2015-17 (source: CDC); and

13 WHEREAS, the California Department of Education Section 56362
14 (c) addresses only caseload caps of 28 students for resource
15 specialists; and

16 WHEREAS, the Ohio Department of Education’s rule 3301-51-09
17 addresses caseload caps of 16 at the elementary and high school
18 levels, and no more than 24 at the high school level for students with
19 intellectual disabilities (source: Ohio Administrative Code); and

20 WHEREAS, the New York Regulations of the Commissioner of
21 Education, Part 200 states that “The maximum class size for those
22 students whose special education needs consist primarily of the need
23 for specialized instruction which can best be accomplished in a self-
24 contained setting shall not exceed 15 students, or 12 students in a
25 state-operated or state-supported school” (source: The New York
26 Regulations of the Commissioner of Education); and

27 WHEREAS, nationally, the number of teachers currently holding
28 substandard credentials and temporary permits has increased annually
29 at a time when the percentage of preliminary education specialist
30 credential holders has been decreasing, oftentimes resulting in fully
31 credentialed special educators picking up the work of developing IEPs
32 for students who are not on their caseloads and making them

33 responsible for a disproportionate amount of IEPs relative to their own
34 caseloads (source: Learning Policy Institute); and

35 WHEREAS, nationally there is critical shortage and retention of
36 special education teachers and special education support staff at a
37 time when increased enrollment of students with special needs is
38 prevalent (source: Learning Policy Institute); and

39 WHEREAS, the demographics of special education caseloads have
40 changed to include a diverse range of students with identified needs
41 ranging from mild to severe *academic, physical and socio-emotional*
42 disabilities:

43 **RESOLVED, that in order for each student to receive quality,**
44 **focused special education services from trained and fully**
45 **qualified educators and support staff, an equitable and enforced**
46 **student-to-teacher ratio is just, ~~with a ratio of no greater than 12:1~~**
47 **~~caseload,~~ adjusting for core versus alternative curriculum, for**
48 **special day class programs, self-contained or otherwise, to**
49 **include but not be limited to: autism core, autism alternative**
50 **curriculum, intellectually disabled, emotionally disturbed,**
51 **severely handicapped, etc., in order to provide the access and**
52 **instruction each child requires; and**

53 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will**
54 **advocate for the establishment of caseload caps for every special**
55 **education program and classification in all states and territories**
56 **where the AFT has local affiliates.**

- Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
- Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

4. FOR A GREEN SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN

Committee recommends concurrence.

1 WHEREAS, climate change is an urgent crisis confronting people
2 all over the world: Extreme weather, forest fires, increased infectious
3 disease outbreaks, rising sea levels and pollution are wreaking havoc
4 on the planet; and

5 WHEREAS, communities of color are disproportionately impacted
6 by pollution, climate change and resulting extreme temperatures,
7 causing forced migration from Puerto Rico and Central America,
8 increased frequency and intensity of flooding and erosion, respiratory
9 illnesses that exacerbate COVID-19 outcomes, and increased
10 pregnancy risks especially for Black mothers; and

11 WHEREAS, the climate crisis exacerbates already existing
12 systemic injustices along racial, regional, social and economic lines,
13 having a disproportionate impact on “frontline communities” (including

14 Indigenous communities, communities of color, migrant communities,
15 deindustrialized communities, the poor, low-income workers, women,
16 the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities and youth); and

17 WHEREAS, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on
18 Climate Change agrees that to avert this catastrophe, we need “rapid,
19 far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of our society”
20 to reduce world carbon emissions to 50 percent of current levels by
21 2030 and to net-zero emissions by 2050; and

22 WHEREAS, buildings are the fourth-largest source of greenhouse
23 gas emissions in the U.S., and it is essential for our union to take
24 concrete steps to demand a green transformation at the sites where
25 we have the most power: our schools; and

26 WHEREAS, drastic improvements to many public school buildings
27 are long overdue, including a need to replace outdated and ineffective
28 heating and cooling systems; improve ventilation and insulation; and
29 remediate asbestos, lead and mold that pose a risk to students and
30 staff; and

31 WHEREAS, millions of Americans are out of work and in need of
32 good jobs as soon as possible:

33 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will**
34 **endorse and promote a campaign for green schools to demand**
35 **that the U.S. Department of Education advocate that states and**
36 **municipalities do their part to mitigate and prepare for the**
37 **unfolding climate crisis by doing the following:**

- 38 • **Retrofit and weatherize public schools to make them**
39 **healthier and energy efficient.**
- 40 • **Remediate schools for lead, asbestos and mold.**
- 41 • **Install new electric, energy-efficient heating and cooling**
42 **systems that save money and the planet, and keep our**
43 **buildings’ temperature better regulated.**
- 44 • **Install new ventilation systems that prevent COVID-19, and**
45 **also provide heat and energy recovery by using outgoing air**
46 **to heat or cool incoming air.**
- 47 • **Install solar panels at public schools to produce clean**
48 **energy and provide cooling centers and electricity to**
49 **communities during heat waves, disasters and power**
50 **outages.**
- 51 • **Support the integration of school solar and other green**
52 **technology with climate justice curriculum across the grade**
53 **levels.**
- 54 • **Source 100 percent of the energy used by public schools**
55 **from renewable sources.**
- 56 • **Expand solar energy career programs to support a pathway**
57 **to green careers for students.**
- 58 • **Implement school composting programs, community**
59 **gardening, and other sustainable practices to reduce public**

- 60 **schools’ carbon footprint and address food deserts and**
- 61 **other community needs.**
- 62 • **Work with unions to train and hire unemployed parents and**
- 63 **public school alumni from their local neighborhoods with the**
- 64 **highest unemployment rates to do this remediating,**
- 65 **retrofitting and solarization work.**
- 66 • **Prioritize schools serving low-income students and**
- 67 **communities hardest hit by the impacts of COVID-19,**
- 68 **environmental racism and systemic disinvestment.**

Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

**8. DEFEND THE TEACHING PROFESSION AND
LGBTQIA+ EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS AGAINST
PROLIFERATING ANTI-LGBTQIA+ MEASURES**

Committee recommends concurrence.

1 WHEREAS, on March 8, 2022, Florida's Senate passed legislation
 2 that would severely curtail classroom instruction about the reality of
 3 human sexual and gender diversity; and
 4 WHEREAS, in February 2022, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott directed
 5 state agencies to treat gender-affirming care for transgender youth as
 6 "child abuse" and required teachers and nurses to report parents who
 7 aid their child in receiving such care to the Texas Department of Family
 8 and Protective Services; and
 9 WHEREAS, these measures join 300 anti-LGBTQIA+ bills currently
 10 under consideration by state legislators across the U.S., according to
 11 the Human Rights Campaign, including legislation passed by Idaho’s
 12 House of Representatives on March 8 that would make the provision
 13 of gender-affirming healthcare to transgender youth a felony and
 14 punish providers with life in prison; and
 15 WHEREAS, this wave of anti-LGBTQIA+—and often specifically
 16 anti-transgender—action villainizes individuals in the LGBTQIA+
 17 community, putting a target on the back of every member of the
 18 LGBTQIA+ community and anyone assumed to belong to that
 19 community, including the many LGBTQIA+ educators and students in
 20 our schools; and
 21 WHEREAS, this pervasive villainization increases anti-LGBTQIA+
 22 violence and bullying in and out of schools; and
 23 WHEREAS, laws like those in Florida are a direct attack on the
 24 teaching profession, preventing educators from teaching basic facts
 25 about human existence and fostering a chilling environment in the
 26 classroom that may deter teachers from the profession:

27 **RESOLVED**, that the American Federation of Teachers will
28 condemn these measures as an attempt to indoctrinate young
29 people in anti-LGBTQIA+ ideology and conscript educators as
30 enforcers in this effort; and

31 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will implore its members to support
32 the state and local organizations fighting these bills, like Equality
33 Texas and the Florida chapter of Lambda Legal, as well as labor
34 efforts to empower local educators against these measures.

- Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

9. STRENGTHEN AND DIVERSIFY THE EDUCATOR PIPELINE

Committee recommends concurrence.

1 WHEREAS, American Federation of Teachers affiliates are working
2 to develop a robust educator pipeline across the U.S. to encourage
3 young people and career changers to pursue careers in teaching and
4 to increase diversity in the educator workforce; and

5 WHEREAS, at the core of these initiatives are the development and
6 expansion of grow-your-own (GYO) initiatives that cultivate
7 relationships between P-12 school districts, higher education and
8 community partners—programs that provide valuable early
9 experiences for students considering a career in education, and help
10 strengthen ties to community groups supporting students and families
11 outside of school:

12 **RESOLVED**, that the American Federation of Teachers will call
13 on legislators and the Department of Education to support and
14 strengthen pathways for aspiring educators—including new
15 students, career changers and teaching assistants—and remove
16 impediments to preparation and teacher certification at the state
17 level through the development and expansion of programs,
18 including:

- 19 • **Scholarship opportunities for education majors at higher**
20 **education institutions covering not only tuition, but fees and**
21 **books as well;**
- 22 • **Career ladders that provide education and certification**
23 **pathways for teaching assistants—many teaching assistants**
24 **have their associate or bachelor’s degree and need the**
25 **financial assistance and supports to become certified as a**
26 **teacher;**
- 27 • **Programs designed for career changers—school districts**
28 **should partner with higher education institutions to design**

29 programs tailored to career changers in high shortage areas,
30 such as career and technical education. These individuals
31 come to the classroom with a wealth of working knowledge
32 developed through their employment history;

33 • Fellowship opportunities within school districts. These
34 programs provide pre-service training covering core
35 teaching skills, customized academic programs, and
36 support and guidance for fellows to obtain their teaching
37 certification;

38 • Residency programs developed through partnerships
39 between higher education programs and public school
40 districts that provide students with educational and teacher
41 training and preparation, as well as financial assistance in
42 the form of stipends allowing students to fully focus on their
43 studies and student teaching;

44 • Improved educator certification processes at the state level
45 eliminating delays in educators receiving their teacher
46 certification, which results in an unnecessary barrier to
47 getting educators in the classroom; and

48 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will call on the Department of
49 Education to provide grants to assist school districts with
50 establishing and growing educator pipeline initiatives, such as
51 GYO programs, and developing collaborations with established
52 programs that have a proven track record of engaging students
53 of color; and

54 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will call on school districts to review
55 and update their hiring practices and work to identify and remove
56 any obstacles or hurdles that create barriers to educators of color,
57 and continue to support successful programs to expand the
58 number of diverse teacher candidates available to be hired by
59 districts throughout the U.S.; and

60 **RESOLVED**, that AFT will call on the Department of Education
61 to allocate funding to provide scholarship opportunities to
62 potential educators, the creation of programs to support career
63 ladders, career changers, fellowship and residency programs.

- Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
- Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

6. SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Precluded by recommendation of concurrence with Resolution #1.

1 WHEREAS, public schools in the United States are the center of
2 our communities; and

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

3 WHEREAS, unfortunately, too many of our communities are
4 dealing with poverty, a lack of access to health and social services,
5 housing and food insecurity, and a lack of reliable transportation and
6 internet services; and

7 WHEREAS, these conditions create a barrier against success in
8 school and the workplace; and

9 WHEREAS, fully funded schools and well-designed, community-
10 based wraparound services can provide much-needed support for
11 communities and families in need; and

12 WHEREAS, community schools offer a valuable coordination of
13 services to support students and families in need. This model goes
14 beyond serving just the academic needs of students; and

15 WHEREAS, at the core of effective community school initiatives is
16 a well-planned coordination of services by a dedicated community
17 school director/coordinator who helps support the unique needs of
18 each community; and

19 WHEREAS, funding for community schools has also been proven
20 to be a sound investment. For every \$1 invested in establishing a
21 community school and hiring a site coordinator, the national average of
22 return on investment is more than \$7; and

23 WHEREAS, the community school model is underutilized
24 nationwide, with offerings that vary:

25 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will**
26 **affirm its commitment that every school should have access to**
27 **resources to develop a community school model, including a**
28 **designated community school director/coordinator—an essential**
29 **resource to link services and develop community partnerships;**
30 **and**

31 **RESOLVED, that the AFT will advocate for funding at the**
32 **federal level dedicated specifically for creating additional**
33 **community schools and supporting the hiring of community**
34 **school directors/coordinators to lead the critical work of aligning**
35 **community services with family and student needs.**

- Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

7. IMPLEMENT DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE GRADES 3-8 ASSESSMENTS THAT MEET STUDENTS' NEEDS

Precluded by recommendation of concurrence with Resolution #3.

- 1 WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers supports
- 2 substantive changes to the federally mandated grades 3-8 testing
- 3 requirement to ensure they provide an accurate picture of student
- 4 progress; and
- 5 WHEREAS, the tests should be developmentally appropriate,
- 6 authentic and shorter; and
- 7 WHEREAS, high-stakes tests do not provide timely, meaningful
- 8 data and simply do not meet the needs of families and educators; and
- 9 WHEREAS, teacher-generated, locally developed assessments
- 10 are more authentic systems of assessment than high-stakes
- 11 assessments crafted by corporate testing companies:
- 12 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will call**
- 13 **on the U.S. Department of Education to call for changes to the**
- 14 **federally mandated testing requirements to allow grade-span**
- 15 **testing in lieu of grade-by-grade testing, and allowing locally**
- 16 **determined screening and progress-monitoring assessments,**
- 17 **that schools may already administer throughout the school year,**
- 18 **to be used to meet federal mandates; and**
- 19 **RESOLVED, that the AFT will continue to work to secure**
- 20 **changes and/or waivers to the federal testing mandate to allow**
- 21 **these changes at the state level.**

Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____