



Education | Healthcare | Public Services

Professional Learning & You





Education
Healthcare
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OUR MISSION

The AFT 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.



Our union, the AFT, fights to secure a better life for those we serve and those we represent. Our members make a difference every day: educating students, caring for patients and strengthening communities—work that touches nearly every family in America.

The 1.8 million-strong AFT fights for good wages and benefits, a real voice at work, strong public schools and services, and accessible, affordable healthcare and higher education. We fight for a democracy that works for the people—not just the powerful—and we fight for the opportunities and pathways that allow all our students, families and members to thrive.

That mission is even more urgent today. Families are being squeezed by rising costs, new technologies are reshaping work and learning, and divisions are deepening across our country.

You are a vital part of this work. When members like you are involved, we build the power to achieve together what no one can accomplish alone.

Thank you for being part of your union—the AFT.

—**Randi Weingarten**, AFT president

Protect Our Kids & Communities

The AFT is about paving pathways for a better life for all Americans. Our Protect Our Kids and Communities campaign rejects the toxic attacks against public education. We are fighting for safe, welcoming and fully funded public schools that are engaging and relevant and prepare our young people for college, career and life. We're creating opportunity by focusing on reading, community schools, experiential learning, mental health and well-being, and investment in our public schools. Learn more at aft.org/ProtectOurKids and aft.org/RealSolutions.

When you become a member of the AFT, you help protect our kids and communities. And we help you by offering educator-designed programs and resources that will enhance your professional growth and ensure children thrive. This brochure highlights many of these opportunities. You can also visit aftpd.org, email edissues@aft.org or contact your local union to learn more.

Helping Educators and Students Thrive

Reading Opens the World

Reading is a foundational skill necessary for virtually everything we do. It opens possibilities for all children to succeed—to learn and grow, to explore and imagine, to investigate and verify, and to lead fulfilling lives. Reading well instills confidence and helps reduce inequities. That’s why the AFT launched Reading Opens the World, a multiyear campaign to spread the joy of reading by giving millions of free books to students, families and educators in marginalized communities, to provide parents and caregivers fun and research-based tips for boosting literacy, and to ensure teachers and school staff have tools and professional development that translate the science of reading into usable resources to help students read and read well.

Through our 10+ year partnership with First Book, we have given more than 10 million books to students, families, educators and school staff for classroom collections, home libraries and community centers. Visit aft.org/read to find out more, or go to sharemylesson.com/read to join Reading Opens the World’s online community and access webinars, blog posts and other literacy resources.



Be part of Reading Opens the World! Work with your local leader to fill out the form at go.aft.org/signuptoread, and help spread the love of reading to all students.

In addition, we are proud to have partnered with Reading Universe. Visit ReadingUniverse.org, a completely free website with ready-to-use teaching strategies, in-classroom videos, interviews with teachers and reading experts, and helpful answers to common questions about teaching reading and writing—all rooted in evidence-based reading instruction.

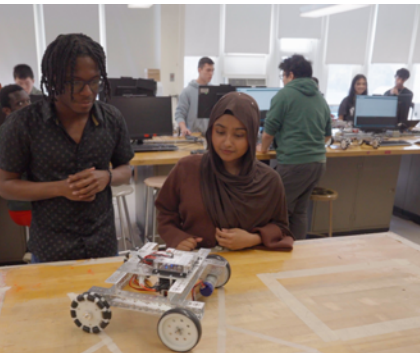
Career and Technical Education— Career Pathways

The AFT aims to bring additional resources and attention to career and technical education; to link education to economic development; and to expand career pathways, internships and apprenticeships for students. By being intentional about this—starting in high school (if not earlier), partnering with employers, creating paid internships and offering industry-approved credentials or college credit—we can engage students in deep and fun learning and set young people on a path to a career or higher education, or both, as soon as they graduate.

The AFT is working with government and industry to ensure that CTE is seen as the pipeline for preparing a workforce with the flexible skills that today's economy is clamoring for. More districts are offering high-quality pathways in areas of high demand. For example, our New York affiliates are partnering with microchip maker Micron and 11 districts throughout the state to pilot a curricular framework and provide students rich learning experiences that will prepare students for careers in and related to advanced manufacturing.

The AFT is also working with CareerWise, Bloomberg Philanthropies, and the World Economic Forum on scalable projects and partnerships that connect employers to schools. The goal of the AFT is for every student to be offered engaging opportunities in whatever career pathways spark their interest.

For up-to-date information, including access to a robust and growing monthly newsletter visit aft.org/education/CareerAndTechnicalEducation.



Community Schools Strategy

The community schools strategy transforms public schools into the centers of their communities. It helps public schools weave together community partners to support students and their families; creates an environment where everyone has a voice; and is a collaborative and effective vehicle for increasing educational equity, social cohesion and civic participation. Community schools purposefully partner with food banks, social service agencies, businesses, higher education institutions, health clinics and youth organizations, typically under the guidance of a site coordinator. Community schools create the supportive environments that make it possible for educators to focus on what they do best—teaching—and for students to learn and reach their full potential.

The AFT has consistently advocated for the community schools strategy and, in collaboration with other national partners, has supported our local affiliates in designing and implementing community schools. We have supported dozens of locals in working with their districts and communities to create nearly 900 schools.

For more information, visit aft.org/position/community-schools.

Fight for Affordability

aft.org/affordability

Being part of a union means having support when life gets harder. Through the AFT's new Fight for Affordability campaign, members can access tools, videos and resources to help navigate medical debt, credit card debt, debt



collectors and other financial challenges—including support and protections many people don't realize they're entitled to.

Ethical, Educator-Centered Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping our classrooms, and the AFT is making sure educators are leading the way. We believe AI should be a tool to enhance, not replace, the human relationships at the heart of education. That's why we are investing in resources, professional learning and partnerships that ensure AI is used to support student learning, teacher autonomy and democratic values.

At the forefront of this effort is the AFT's growing ecosystem of ethical and educator-driven AI learning, including:

- **The National Academy for AI Instruction:** AFT's flagship professional learning initiative prepares educators to use AI responsibly and effectively in their practice. Through hands-on learning, collaboration and real classroom application, educators develop the skills to evaluate tools, design AI-supported instruction and lead in their schools and districts.
- **Share My Lesson AI hub and community:** From understanding AI fundamentals to implementing classroom tools, AFT's AI resources on Share My Lesson offer free, educator-vetted lesson plans, webinars and practical guides. This growing hub supports educators at every level whether they are just getting started or deepening their instructional use of artificial intelligence.
- **High-quality professional development:** Building on educator voice and real classroom needs, AFT offers in-person and virtual trainings focused on ethical use; instructional integration; student-centered learning; and critical issues such as privacy, bias and misinformation. These experiences are designed to be practical, collaborative and grounded in the realities of teaching.
- **Ongoing advocacy and partnerships:** The AFT is building long-term, transparent relationships with AI developers and policymakers to ensure that AI tools are teacher-tested, aligned to the values of public education and accessible to all schools—especially those serving underserved communities.

The AFT is committed to putting educators first in the AI conversation, creating the guardrails that protect our students and our democracy, and empowering teachers to confidently lead in the digital age.

To learn more about our AI work and resources, visit aainstruction.org and sharemylesson.com/ai.

AFT Teachers Program and Policy Council

The AFT Teachers Program and Policy Council is the advisory body for the AFT Teachers division, encompassing over 700,000 preK-12 educators. It includes more than 70 representatives from local and state affiliates nationwide (who have been recommended to the PPC by the AFT president and appointed by the AFT executive council). The PPC meets periodically to help ensure that the work of the division is aligned with the issues that matter most to our members and with important developments in the preK-12 field. The AFT Teachers PPC reviews policy, programs and research, and recommends resolutions for action by the AFT executive council. The AFT relies upon rank-and-file members and local leaders to keep our work grounded in the challenges our public school students, teachers and support staff face every day.

AFT Innovation Fund

The AFT Innovation Fund—open to affiliates at the state and local levels—works to identify, nurture and bring to scale union- and educator-led innovations in public education. Through this funding, the AFT provides a platform for our local affiliates and members to lead and engage partners in improving outcomes for our members and the people and communities they serve. The majority of the fund's resources are distributed as grants to affiliates to be used to plan and carry out their work.

In addition, the fund's staff and other AFT departments provide technical assistance to grantees through monthly calls, periodic site visits, and connections to experts and resources.

For more information, go to aft.org/about/innovation-fund.

AFT Teacher Leaders Program

The ever popular Teacher Leaders Program identifies and brings together a select group of educators and then supports and empowers them to assume active leadership roles in their schools, unions and communities. The program was launched in 2011 because the AFT noticed the lack of teacher voice in education policy discussions in our country. 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, based on Ellen Meyers' Teachers Network, to help prepare educators to facilitate discussion of the issues that affect our profession—both locally and nationally. To date, more than 2,600 individuals from over 42 affiliates have participated in the program.

Teacher leadership embodies the idea that classroom teachers can become 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. This program helps educators find their niche and follow their passion.



The AFT Professional Learning Program

The AFT professional learning and member engagement program empowers educators to connect theory to practice and improve student outcomes. AFT professional learning:

- Is rooted in evidence-based educational, cognitive and social science research;
- Is guided by expert practitioners 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; and
- Connects excellent teaching practice with broader educational policy issues and campaigns.

We know that in the changing landscape of education settings, educators need diverse strategies to meet students where they are. With more than 50 offerings, this program provides a variety of professional learning opportunities to meet varying teaching and learning needs.

Courses range from online asynchronous classes available to all AFT members on the AFT eLearning platform to 30-hour-plus graduate-level, train-the-trainer courses that require approval and involvement from your local union.

Any AFT professional learning courses can be customized to meet the unique needs of your local union.

- See our catalog of course offerings: aft.org/catalog
- Visit the AFT Professional Learning website: aftpd.org

AFT-Sponsored Conferences

AFT TEACH Conference

AFT TEACH (Together Educating America's Children) provides an unforgettable experience filled with inspiration and ideas for educators to take back to their schools. Each professional development workshop is custom designed for TEACH by AFT members and other experts to directly focus on tools and strategies to support educators and their efforts to provide real solutions for kids and communities.

TEACH offers:

- Engaging and energizing sessions to inspire for the year ahead;
- New strategies to improve teaching and learning; and
- Time to connect and collaborate with educators from across the country.

Learn more at aft.org/teach.

AFT Professional Learning Summer Educator Academy

This train-the-trainer 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-playing, case studies, simulations, Socratic seminars and shared reflection. This comprehensive, intensive and energizing 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.

AFT Center for School Improvement Leadership Institute

The CSI Leadership Institute, created in collaboration with the United Federation of Teachers Teacher Center and AFT national partners, focuses on helping teams discover how to collaboratively create sustainable systems change around the issues impacting their own schools' students, educators and families. Through intensive work sessions, teams strengthen their collective leadership capacity and learn how to lead and facilitate school transformation that results in improved student performance and improved teaching and learning environments; the teams dig deeper into their local data and integrate strategies to improve school culture and climate, always with an eye toward sustainability.

AFT Share My Lesson Virtual Conference

Each spring, the AFT's Share My Lesson runs a free three-day virtual conference featuring more than 35 webinars on a wide variety of topics. Each webinar provides one hour of professional development credit for participation. Topics include teaching current events and controversial issues; instructional strategies across the curriculum; social emotional learning; supporting diversity, equity and inclusion; and trauma-informed practices. All webinars are available on demand, and webinars since 2020 include closed captioning in English and Spanish.

Learn more at [ShareMyLesson.com/webinars](https://www.sharemylesson.com/webinars).

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 enable grow-your-own programs through CTE courses and Educators Rising chapters so high school students can explore education careers. The Educators Rising chapters (which are career and technical student organizations), their curriculum and their associated micro-credentials can help you get a program started in your school/district. PDK International's national conference for Educators Rising draws thousands of high schoolers each summer to compete in teaching skills and service projects. The AFT is collaborating with Educators Rising to recruit leaders to plan and spearhead the implementation of Educators Rising programming.

Grow-Your-Own Programs

Teacher diversity is crucial to student success. 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 and racial backgrounds. The AFT recognizes that diversity is a key component to equity and opportunity, and strongly believes in diversifying the teaching workforce through grow-your-own (GYO) 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. Programs such as Red Hawks Rising Teacher Academy in New Jersey are introducing high school students to careers in teaching by helping them build their academic and problem-solving skills.

AFT New Teachers

The AFT has developed resources to give beginning teachers the tools they need to do their jobs and the support they need to stay in their jobs. In the New Teacher Community, you can:

- Find valuable tools for the first weeks of school, including the basics of setting up classrooms and working with families, the essentials of classroom management, and resources on content knowledge and pedagogy;
- Discover AFT resources on teacher evaluation, feedback, professional development and teacher leadership;
- Learn about the union and how to become more active and engaged in the work we do and in the local community; and
- Connect with other new teachers through online issue discussions.

For more information, visit the New Teacher Community on Share My Lesson: sharemylesson.com/AFTNewTeachers.

Online Resources

Share My Lesson | sharemylesson.com

AFT's Share My Lesson is more than a teaching hub with over 2 million members—it's a vibrant community of educators, school staff, parents and community members committed to student success and community well-being. With Share My Lesson, you can:

- Download time-saving lesson plans and strategies to support preK-12 learning;
- Access practical resources that go beyond the classroom—mental health, public health, civic engagement, financial literacy and more;
- Earn PD credit with free, expert-led webinars and AFT Professional Learning online courses; and
- Join supportive communities to share ideas, ask questions and grow together.

Whether you're leading a class, supporting a school, teaching future educators or empowering your community—you belong here.

Reading Universe | readinguniverse.org

Reading Universe is a *completely free*, state-of-the-art, video-rich website supported by the AFT that offers research-based strategies and practical guidance to help educators and parents teach children to read and write. It offers systematic, comprehensive professional development for general education teachers in kindergarten to third grade (additional grade levels to be added), along with paraprofessionals, reading coaches and other educators. On the website, you'll find:

- Guides for teaching all of the essential reading and writing skills—and an interactive taxonomy showing how those skills are connected;
- In-classroom videos showing AFT members and other teachers working with students, filmed in diverse classrooms nationwide;
- Classroom-ready lesson plans, printable activities and decodable texts for every skill; and
- A free, self-paced five-course series just for paraprofessionals.

In addition, Reading Universe has a special focus on serving teachers who work in Title I schools and who teach children who are immigrants, have learning disabilities or speak a dialect of English. Reading Universe complements WETA's established national education websites, which include (among others) Reading Rockets, Colorín Colorado and [AdLit.org](https://adlit.org).

First Book | firstbook.org

The AFT-First Book partnership brings our shared values to life by creating inviting, inspiring and enriching learning environments for students, educators and communities in need.

Through this partnership, we provide:

Affordable Access to Essentials

- Access to brand-new, high-quality books, school supplies and basic-needs items at 50–90 percent below retail cost through the First Book Marketplace.

Opportunities for Free Books and Resources

- Access to First Book Marketplace funding to get brand-new and engaging books for free.

Community and School Events

- Local book distribution events where educators, schools and communities receive free books that kids and families can keep and enjoy at home.

Together, the AFT and First Book have distributed more than 10 million books to classrooms and community programs serving students and families in need—and have connected thousands of educators to ongoing, essential resources. To continue to learn more about the AFT-First Book partnership, and other First Book opportunities, such as free virtual author talks, please sign up at <https://info.firstbook.org/aftbenefits> to become a First Book member. Registration is *free* and only takes about five minutes!

Colorín Colorado | colorincolorado.org

Colorín Colorado, with support from the AFT, offers free resources for educators and families of English language learners in grades preK-12, including classroom videos, toolkits, multilingual tip sheets, newsletters and featured books and authors. The website is bilingual in English and Spanish and offers basic content in 14 other languages.

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. Opportunities are 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 Share My Lesson blog (sharemylesson.com/blog) are in large part written by educators 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 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 or have a story you want to tell, email edissues@aft.org.

Connect with Us on Social Media

Tag @sharemylesson, @AFTTEACH or @aftunion if you want us to share your work and follow us on these platforms: Facebook, Bluesky, Instagram, Linked In, Pinterest and YouTube!

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Become an E-Activist and Stay Informed

The AFT has tools and resources to support your work and engage your community, including e-Activist alerts that give you opportunities to speak up for working families, monthly newsletters highlighting AFT members' issues and initiatives, and print and electronic journals to enhance your professional knowledge.

At aft.org/subscribe, you can subscribe to the alerts and publications that match your interests, including:

- **AFT Professional Learning News**
Sign up for this email list, which highlights the work our members and leaders are doing regarding professional issues, upcoming training sessions and new resources.
- **AFT Share My Lesson Newsletter**
Sign up for this e-newsletter to get helpful ideas for engaging preK-12 students, free lesson plans and timely professional development webinars—all based on what's happening in the news; and resources aligned to upcoming holidays or events.
- **American Educator**
The AFT's preK-12 and higher education members receive this quarterly magazine focused on educational equity, research and ideas. If you are not receiving this magazine and would like to, please email ae@aft.org. To read *American Educator* online, go to aft.org/ae.

Other Publications

AFT members may request complimentary copies of AFT reports and brochures. To see the latest offerings, visit aft.org/education/publications. Most publications are available for download, but hard copies can be requested at edissues@aft.org.



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