

RECLAIMING THE PROMISE

In her address to the 2013 TEACH Conference, AFT President Randi Weingarten took a bold stand in the “education wars” that have resulted in competing reforms that have failed to provide all children with the education they need and deserve. Weingarten noted that the aspiration of a great public education for every child has never been totally realized, which some have used as an excuse “to deep-six the entire franchise.” She called on educators to join with parents and community partners throughout the country to reclaim the promise of public education and, in so doing, to fulfill our collective responsibility to enable individual opportunity for all children. <http://bit.ly/18xHGRU>

“THE DREAM” AT 50

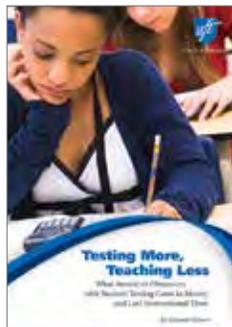
AFT members from New York to California descended on the nation’s capital in late August to participate in events tied to the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington. The gathering drew thousands to the National Mall where, a half-century earlier, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke passionately of the dream of equality and economic justice for all Americans. That dream was very much alive at the 2013 gathering, where many featured speakers and participants described the event as a continuation, rather than only a commemoration, of that first groundbreaking march. AFT President Randi Weingarten addressed the crowd, joined by Asean Johnson, a 9-year-old student activist from Chicago’s public schools. <http://bit.ly/1eb4jzr>

A TRUE PROFESSION

At the 2013 TEACH Conference, Linda Darling-Hammond, of Stanford University, and Ronald Thorpe, president of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, joined AFT President Randi Weingarten to discuss what it takes for teachers and teacher educators to advance and own their profession. From the federal level on down, “we’re still waiting for this part of the agenda,” warned Darling-Hammond. All speakers emphasized that at a time when churn seems built into the system, learning to teach and to collaborate should define the profession. <http://bit.ly/127R5yn>

THE COST OF OVERTESTING

A close examination of two medium-sized school districts’ standardized testing practices found that kids are losing out on a full, high-quality education because of pervasive test preparation and testing, according to an AFT report released in July. Test preparation and testing absorbed 19 full school days in one district and a month and a half in the other in heavily tested grades. The report found that cutting that amount in half would restore needed instructional time and provide additional funds for other instructional purposes. <http://bit.ly/1eMBDud>



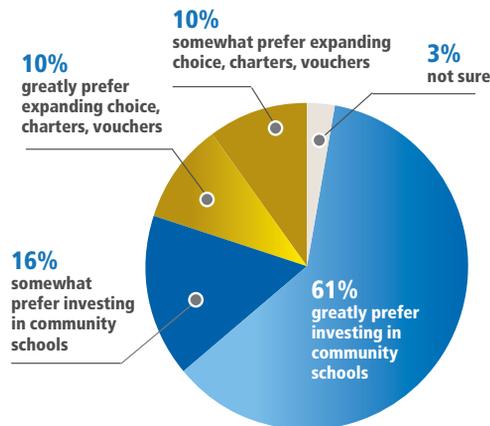
SHORT ON SURPRISES, LONG ON CONCERNS

After months of warnings that the first results of Common Core testing would be disappointing, no one should be surprised by results in New York, released in August, that showed a significant drop in scores, AFT President Randi Weingarten said. “These results are the consequence of years of intense fixation on test prep and rote memorization instead of developing the critical-thinking and problem-solving skills our kids need,” she said. “They are the consequence of simply telling teachers, ‘Here are new standards—just do it,’ without providing the adequate supports and preparation. They are the consequence of putting testing before teaching and learning, and rolling out tests before teachers and students even have the tools, curriculum, and material to bring the Common Core into the classroom.” <http://bit.ly/15e2LIlf>

THE SCHOOLS WE WANT

Parents overwhelmingly believe that public schools are the single most important institution for the future of their communities and our nation, and they choose investing in strong neighborhood public schools over expanding choice, charters, and vouchers, according to a nationwide AFT poll of 1,000 teachers released in July. Support for strong public schools over expanded charters and vouchers is widespread, with 77 percent of parents surveyed supporting this approach; such support cuts across political and class lines. <http://bit.ly/16oZilc> and <http://bit.ly/1evUuMQ>

Parents surveyed overwhelmingly support investing in community schools over expanding choice, charters, and vouchers.



SOURCE: HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, JULY 2013

New Additions

Starting with this issue of *American Educator*, several popular features from *American Teacher*, whose final issue was published in May, will appear in these pages. “Where We Stand,” a column of thoughtful commentary by AFT President Randi Weingarten, and “Tools for Teachers,” a resource providing professional development tips and guidance on instructional practices, will be featured, along with lesson plans from Share My Lesson and news summaries. Highlights of the AFT’s work with educators will further enhance *American Educator*’s articles on educational research and ideas.

—EDITORS