



AMERICAN Teacher

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

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by teachers for teachers

The AFT has partnered with a British company to launch **"Share My Lesson,"** a website that allows teachers like Amy Spies to share resources and innovative ideas. **PAGE 16**



Obama and Romney on Education
See how they compare

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**AFT +
Member Benefits
2012-13**

**FOLLOWING PAGE 12—
PULL OUT AND SAVE!**



**A vision of
'solution-driven
unionism'**

CONVENTION 2012 PAGE 8



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By teachers, for teachers



Solution-driven unionism

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

BEING A TEACHER these days can feel like being in the middle of a tempest. Education budgets have been squeezed, class sizes have risen in many places, and educators frequently are required to do much more with much less. Our students too often bear the scars of America's shamefully high poverty rate, while some people suggest that teachers can single-handedly resolve all of society's crises in their classrooms. Teachers often are required to implement top-down policies made without their input, and then they are blamed when the strategies fail.

It's enough to demoralize even the most devoted teachers and, indeed, teacher attrition in the United States is alarmingly high. But throughout the country, individual teachers, AFT state and local affiliates, and the national union are addressing this new reality with a new approach to unionism—what I call “solution-driven unionism.”

The concept of solution-driven unionism took root for me when I saw the members and leaders of the ABC Federation of Teachers in Southern California commit to an approach that focuses on solving problems—not on winning arguments. Instead of finger-pointing about how student achievement was not increasing at the pace anyone wanted, the union and district partners identified solutions and used collective bargaining as a way to aggressively and collaboratively move systemic reforms. The result is double-digit gains in student achievement scores in each of the past 10 years and an approach that can serve as a national model for solution-driven unionism.

This concept is our compass at the national union as well. We know that this tough climate is no excuse for not having a proactive education agenda. To the contrary—it demands it.

In my keynote address to delegates at the

AFT national convention this summer, I highlighted examples of solution-driven unionism that don't simply call out what doesn't work, they point to a better way. Here is a sampling.

The AFT has just launched Share My Lesson (see the story on page 16 and visit www.sharemylesson.com), an online resource for educators that we developed with our partner TES Connect. Share My Lesson is essentially a digital filing cabinet full of educators' best ideas. Many of the resources are aligned to the

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Common Core State Standards, providing tools and support to teachers who will be expected to teach to the new standards (in some cases the only support they will receive).

The AFT is challenging the current fixation on high-stakes testing. A new AFT resolution calls for tests to inform, not impede, teaching and learning. And we have created an online petition demanding an end to the misuse of high-stakes testing that has been signed by almost 23,000 parents, teachers and students in the first month alone.

In an era when many educators feel that teacher evaluations are more about “gotcha” than professional growth and improving student achievement, the New Haven (Conn.) Federation of Teachers set out to change that. The New Haven union and district are partner-

ing to overhaul teacher development and evaluation with a focus on helping all teachers improve throughout their careers. Similar efforts are taking place at the state level in New York and Rhode Island, where AFT's state affiliates received AFT Innovation Fund grants to develop approaches to teacher development and evaluation that are rigorous, meaningful and teacher-driven.

In Cincinnati, our local affiliate and its community and district partners have created schools that put in place the conditions all students need for success, particularly at-risk and low-income students. Every public school in Cincinnati offers students and their families access to wraparound services, including health and mental health services, tutoring, counseling and after-school programs. Student mobility, which can be so disruptive to a child's education, is down. Discipline referrals have dropped sharply—keeping students in school, learning. And Cincinnati is the only urban district in Ohio to receive an “effective” rating—ranking 13th out of 609 districts on a state academic index.

At its core, solution-driven unionism unites educators with their students and communities and, in so doing, ensures that we don't merely survive, but that we succeed. Our success also rests upon electing leaders who support this concept, which is based on collaboration as opposed to conflict and on problem-solving as opposed to finger-pointing. The tempest swirling around us has far from subsided, and the November elections can shape whether it continues to rage or gives way to a climate of seeking solutions for the common good.

Tell us what you think about solution-driven unionism, and the kind of solutions you think should be happening in the trenches at <http://go.aft.org/solutions>.



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First Book, AFT team up to distribute free books to disadvantaged kids

Weingarten challenges members to hand out 5 million new books this year



Top: Students at Crestwood Elementary School in Tampa, Fla., celebrate their new books. Kids in Birmingham, Ala., below, and elsewhere also received books thanks to the AFT and First Book.



IN PLACES where children have very little, books are a luxury available to only a very few. That's why the AFT has launched a new initiative to partner with First Book and distribute 5 million new books to children from low-income families over the next year.

During the last six months, in more than 20 pilot programs across the country, AFT affiliates have joined with First Book to give nearly 250,000 books to students and families in need.

"AFT members and affiliates have already ensured that thousands of children have books at home that they otherwise would not have had," AFT president Randi Weingarten told members at the union's national convention in July.

The new challenge launches a major expansion of our partnership with First Book, a national nonprofit organization that has distributed more than 90 million books over the last 20 years to kids from low-income families.

"Our partnership with First Book ensures that children have access to an essential building block of literacy—their very own books," said Weingarten. "It's another way the AFT is advancing solution-driven unionism—connecting the people we represent to the people we serve, linking arms with community, building bridges and tackling challenges."

To underscore this commitment, the AFT

and First Book held a book bank distribution at a Detroit-area warehouse during the week leading up to the convention. AFT volunteers helped ship nearly 500,000 books nationwide, and AFT members personally picked up more than 30,000 books to give to their students.

Locals in Birmingham, Ala., Cincinnati, Cleveland, Minneapolis and Tampa, among others, have distributed thousands of books since the AFT began its efforts, holding book parties with read-aloud sessions and stocking new libraries, replacing books lost in tornadoes and distributing books to families at social service agencies as well as schools. The high-quality books are available free or at greatly discounted prices to any school or program serving children from low-income families.

"Some of the kids were absolutely overwhelmed," says Vi Parramore, president of the Jefferson County (Ala.) AFT, recalling a distribution at Crumley Chapel School in the county. "They'd never had books like that."

"It was such a heartwarming experience to see the joy on their faces as they looked through each book," says Kathy Bruner, a child welfare case worker and executive vice president of the Federation of Franklin County Children Services Employees in Columbus, who helped organize an event there. The population the center serves, she says, "has it harder than most, in this very difficult economy."

A recent Harris survey found that interest in reading nearly tripled in children who have received books through First Book programs.

To register for First Book, go to www.firstbook.org.

AFT VOICES



Mitt Romney—whose tax plans include providing tax relief to the wealthiest American while forcing middle-income families to pay more—has been under fire for refusing to share past income tax returns. Do the American people deserve to see Romney's tax returns?

IT'S YOUR VOICE Visit www.aft.org/voices today where you can respond to this and other questions.

Should the high school dropout age be raised to 18?


YES

The cost of dropping out is tremendous

BY ROBERT BALFANZ

IT IS SUBSTANTIVELY and symbolically important to raise the school-leaving age to 18 in all states. High school dropouts are costly to American society. There is little work in the 21st century for high school dropouts, and almost no work that can support a family. Yet every year, we send the one-fourth of high school students who fail to graduate into young adulthood, unprepared to work and contribute to society. This leads to tremendous costs in terms of diminished productivity, lower tax revenues, decreased civic engagement and increased social costs. It has ripple effects for generations to come, since a mother's education level is one of the strongest influences on a student's school success. Finally, with the dropout crisis concentrated in low-income neighborhoods, entire sections of the nation are cut off from full participation in American endeavor.

Raising the school-leaving age to 18 by itself will not end the dropout crisis. We also need to fundamentally transform the middle and high schools that produce most of the nation's dropouts; artfully employ early warning and intervention systems; provide clear pathways to postsecondary schooling or training; and bring a second shift of adults into schools to help mentor, tutor and support students. But to continue to say that it's OK for students who are 16 or 17 to leave school before they graduate tells students and communities that it's OK for students to quit school, and that despite all evidence to the contrary, a diploma is really not needed for adult success. It gives students a reason not to persevere, and it gives school districts a reason not to try very hard to enable all students to succeed.

Raising the age to 18 sends the message that we are all in this together, that students need to keep trying and that schools and school districts need to find a way to provide all students with a path to high school graduation. It also puts leaving school on par with entry points into adulthood, like voting and serving in the military. Enabling 16- and 17-year-olds to wander without purpose or opportunity, and with no institutional guidance, only invites trouble and undermines the nation's future.

Robert Balfanz is a research professor at the Everyone Graduates Center, based at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University. He works closely with Diplomas Now, a program to support students through graduation.


NO

Unwilling students use resources, distract others

BY ANNA SWENSON

FROM A CURSORY GLANCE, raising the age an individual can legally withdraw from school might read as a good idea. But upon examination, raising the high school dropout age would make an already beleaguered school system less free, less fair and less able to produce smart, engaged citizens.

If students want to leave school at 16, both logic and actual experience reveal that forcing them to remain in the classroom does not make it more likely they will graduate. These students have no incentive not to fail every class they are mandated to attend, sapping valuable resources and instructor attention from students who willingly volunteer to pursue their education.



If resources are tight now while students retain their right to drop out, consider how budgets would crack when even these students are required to stay in school (and further use valuable dollars allocated for education) when they don't even want to be there.

A state can force its children to be physically present in a classroom, but it cannot force their minds to be present.

Rather than focus on when students drop out, legislators should instead consider why. If some students or their parents do not believe a high school diploma or college is attainable or worthwhile, it's not because the students haven't turned 18.

If lawmakers are interested in creating citizens who are prepared to work, think and contribute to society, they ought to spend more time making sure those citizens have access to the education and resources necessary for graduation and college, and less time taking away students' autonomy in the interest of an easy sound bite and a quick fix.

Anna Swenson is a graduate of the University of Arizona. Her columns have appeared in USA Today, the National Review, and elsewhere.

WEIGH IN!

We want to hear your thoughts on the current "Speak Out" question. Go to www.aft.org/speakout to cast your vote.



In the last issue of *American Teacher*, our "Speak Out" question was:

Should teachers friend their students on Facebook?

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

9% YES

91% NO

"I don't want to be Facebook 'friends' with my students or their parents, but setting up a classroom page they can 'Like' is a great way to interact with them using technology."

MARK STEWART

Florida (N.Y.) Teachers Association

"My policy is allowing former, graduated students to 'friend' me on Facebook but not current students."

DARA FRAZIER

Texas AFT/PEG

"Social media sites are not for teachers and their students. A line needs to be drawn somewhere."

LAURIE BATEK

 North Providence (R.I.)
Federation of Teachers

"My no vote comes with a caveat. It is possible to set up classroom Facebook pages that cover only what is happening in the classroom. Reminders of special events, photos of guest speakers, photos of special projects, study guides and homework reminders."

ARLENE EASTER

Corpus Christi (Texas) AFT

Great tech tools you can take back to school

TECHNOLOGY took center stage at the AFT convention in Detroit this July. Delegates passed a digital learning resolution for preK-12 education, and the AFT launched a resource-sharing website called Share My Lesson.

When implemented successfully, technology can bring excitement into the classroom, providing the highest quality instructional tools. The right technology can provide customized supports, empowering teachers to differentiate instruction.

For technology to work, we must ensure equitable access; prevent technology from replacing teachers or moving teaching responsibilities to unqualified instructors; use collective bargaining to ensure professional development is available; and address the impact of new technologies.

We've found some tools that support the recommendations of the AFT resolution. You might want to try them.

Share My Lesson

www.sharemylesson.com

Share My Lesson is the product of a joint venture between the AFT and TES Connect, the largest online network of educators in the world. Created by teachers, for teachers, this website was launched with more than 250,000 classroom resources, free of charge, in the main K-12 subject areas. Users can share their best resources, rate resources and follow their favorite contributors.

Looking for resources aligned with the Common Core State Standards? Share My Lesson has a large collection of them. You can see resources and lesson plans that meet the standards and, where available, use videos courtesy of Share My Lesson's content partner, the Teaching Channel, showing ways to meet the standards.



Make sure you follow Share My Lesson on Facebook and Twitter to receive alerts about resources as they become available. Share your lessons and you could be eligible for one of many prizes we are giving away.

If you are a local affiliate, union-sponsored professional development team, teacher center, professional learning community or similar group, consider becoming a content partner on Share My Lesson. The site provides opportunities for labor-sponsored or labor-management groups to share resources that teachers can use for their own professional development and/or in the classroom. For details on becoming a content partner, contact Heidi Glidden at hglidden@aft.org.

Understanding YouTube and digital citizenship

www.google.com/edu/teachers/youtube/curriculum/index.html

There is more to YouTube than funny cat videos. Although some videos have questionable educational value, many provide historical insights into people and events that can be of great use in the classroom. Lots of

schools still block YouTube; others allow it only after teaching students how to use it.

To help educate students and staff on how to use YouTube and behave properly online, Google (which owns YouTube) has released 10 free interactive lessons. Even if your school doesn't allow YouTube, these lessons are worth sharing with students, parents and guardians. Lessons include a teacher's guide and slide show covering the basics of YouTube, including false postings, online reputation, cyberbullying, privacy, copyright and more.

Lesson Note App

free from the iTunes app store

This new application for your tablet is a must for anyone looking to capture observation data about students. The app allows educators to write notes or take videos of student work that can be used to inform instruction, grading and parent-teacher conferences. It's a perfect companion for capturing the rich data that teachers are constantly seeing and hearing but not always documenting.

EdSurge

www.edsurge.com

Want to know about the newest K-12 ed-tech ventures? This free newsletter is for you. Unlike most technology publications, EdSurge makes you feel like you have insider information about what is being developed and who the big players are. A must-read if you work with ed tech in your school or district.

National School Broadband Test

www.educationsuperhighway.org

We know the vast majority of schools are connected to the Internet. What we don't know is how fast their connections are. For technology to be most effective and to ensure equal access, every school must have powerful bandwidth. The nonprofit Education Superhighway is asking schools to sign up for a speed test starting in September. Its results will provide one of the first looks at bandwidth in U.S. schools.

Learnist

<http://learnist.st>

If you are a Pinterest user, you might like this new venture. Billed as a "Pinterest for education," Learnist lets you collect your favorite resources, articles, blogs and videos. You'll be able to create "learning boards" and sequence the materials you've collected. The site is in beta testing and you will need an invitation to join, which you can request at the Learnist website.

HAVE A FAVORITE online resource you'd like Tools for Teachers to highlight? Send your recommendations to edissues@aft.org. Your submission could win you a Share My Lesson T-shirt.

Collaborating for the Common Core

Working with all stakeholders to secure buy-in and success

SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO overcome labor-management differences for the sake of your students.

That is why, even under the most challenging circumstances, union members and administrators are working together to implement a new set of teaching standards that could revolutionize learning.

The AFT believes in the Common Core State Standards, but also recognizes that they will only succeed if teachers are trained in implementation, and if there is buy-in beyond the union rank and file. So even in Chicago, where contract negotiations led to a strike vote in June, labor and management are collaborating to help faculty understand and begin to implement the standards.

"We all want what's best for our students, and Common Core is giving us a table to discuss what that is," says John Boggs, a National Board Certified Teacher and Chicago Teachers Union member. "This is something we all agree on, and we all feel passionately about," agrees Didi Swartz, Chicago Public Schools director of special projects.

Funded by the AFT Innovation Fund, union members and administrators in Chicago created unit development teams of teachers who wrote six new, teacher-driven learning units encompassing the Common Core standards. A summer event, "Collaborate Chicago!" showcased the work, and teachers are field-testing the units in the 2012-13 school year. Principals released the teams, which included four, five or six members, for three professional development days; team members and field testers also received a stipend.

Members of the Chicago Common Core team joined three other successful labor-management teams at an AFT Common Core Stakeholders Conference this summer to share their success. In attendance were 19 other labor-management/community member teams, which were, for the most part, just getting started.

"I am a zealot about the Common Core, but I'm even more of a zealot about having to do the advocacy all together as a community," AFT president Randi Weingarten told conference participants.

"[That includes] parents, teachers, teach-

er leaders, unionists, superintendents, curriculum folk, clergy, school boards." Each team in attendance represented various combinations of a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

A team from Cleveland described the Common Core awareness symposia that labor and management organized together,

and accountability strategies. Nuts-and-bolts tools were distributed as well, including examples of how colleagues in other districts found funding, samples of parent information letters explaining Common Core, even a flow chart outlining how to work successfully with disparate parties toward a common goal.

"We all want what's best for our students."

—JOHN BOGGS, Chicago Teachers Union



along with professional development workshops and a system of "Common Core Champions" who help coordinate all things Common Core at their individual schools. The Volusia County, Fla., panel described its success with Thinking Math, an existing curriculum recently realigned to meet the new core curriculum. And Albuquerque, N.M., educators focused on their integration of English language learners as implementation gets under way there.

Participants also spent time "unpacking" the standards in detail, relating specific standards to actual curriculum and tasks for students; and they discussed related assessment

Conference participants were deeply committed to that concept of collaboration. "[If we don't] take the risk and work to build these relationships, we're always going to be shouting across the aisle at each other," said James Liou, a teacher from the Boston Teachers Union. "This has allowed us to collectively dip our toes in the water," said Kathleen Aldred, a professional development specialist also on the Boston team.

Weingarten agreed: "If we do that one thing that doesn't cost a dime—work together—we will be able to navigate through this."

Chicago, working together: from left, administrator Didi Swartz, CTU staffer Erin O'Brien, and teachers John Boggs and Tanya Mead.

Well played, champs

New movie on middle school chess team holds critics in check

GOOD THINGS START in the fall, and one of them is the award-winning documentary “Brooklyn Castle,” a film to be released this October that shows exactly what’s right about

public education. The movie examines the chess team at I.S. 318 in New York City, which has won more than two dozen national chess championships, including the high school

nationals this year—the first middle school ever to do it, and a Title I school at that. Placed by critics in the first tier of this year’s documentaries, “Brooklyn Castle” follows five students at different levels of skill and maturity: Rochelle, a 13-year-old who stands to become the first female African-American chess master; 12-year-old Alexis, who sees chess as his ticket to college; Pobo, a candidate for class president who’s 12 going on 21; Patrick, an 11-year-old who uses chess to counteract his attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; and Justus, who at age 10 excels at chess but isn’t so sure about competition.

The film’s real heroine, though, is chess teacher and coach Elizabeth Spiegel, a member of the United Federation of Teachers who is brilliant both at chess and at understanding children on the cusp of puberty. Spiegel has powered her team to year upon year of championships at national scholastic chess competitions. Even more important, she shows her students how to consider all possibilities,

take chances and build mental strength.

Does she do this through a rigid selection process? Decidedly not. Any student can join, and hundreds have. “I’m a big believer that public school programs should be open to everybody,” Spiegel told *American Teacher* last year. “We don’t have tryouts or anything. Total beginners are welcome.”

The film was previewed during movie night at the AFT convention in July. It provides a strong counterweight to those who have nothing good to say about public schools—and who see no harm in the rounds of deep funding cuts that undermine these children’s opportunities to travel and compete. Katie Dellamaggiore, director of “Brooklyn Castle,” documents not only the children’s chess victories, but also their crusade on behalf of adequate funding for their school—something that no child should ever have to worry about.

You can see a trailer of the movie at www.brooklyncastle.com.



public education. The movie examines the chess team at I.S. 318 in New York City, which has won more than two dozen national chess championships, including the high school

TEACHERS’ LOUNGE

THE KIDS NEED A VOICE, TOO Here’s a tip from **Gregory Grambo**, a sixth-grade science teacher from **East Elmhurst, N.Y.**, that can be used in all grades. “We think we always know what is best for our students,” he says, “but could our questions be too difficult or too easy for them to answer? Students don’t always hand in reading assignments or homework, and we think, ‘What is their issue?’ Once in a while, it is a good idea to stop and get a quick check on what is going on with your students.” You could make up a worksheet or have them write down what they are good at, what they’re having trouble with, and what are some next steps students and teacher can work on together to help the kids achieve their goals in the classroom, Grambo says. “As educators, we know what we want, but sometimes it is important to ask our children what they need.”

HONOR THY PARENTS To show appreciation for parents who have been “supportive with helping their children and providing anything they need to succeed in my class,” first-grade teacher **Courtney Nina** of **Land O’ Lakes, Fla.**, created PAW (Parents Appreciation Week). Each day, the kids

honor their parents by doing things to show how much they appreciate them. The students have taken a photo in which they’ve posed to form the words “Thank U” with their bodies. The picture is placed in a card with their signatures and a weekly schedule of daily gifts for their “caregivers.” For example, an in-class poem, a promise to read aloud to their parent, or a “chore” gift certificate. “I have been fortunate to have such wonderful parents,” Nina says, so this is a good way to show them how much their efforts are appreciated.



BOY, GIRL, BOY, GIRL Fifth-grade teacher **Patricia Dubois** of **Cumberland, R.I.**, says that after 30 years of teaching at the elementary level, she’s discovered that when students are

HAVE A TIP TO SHARE?

Submissions to “Teachers’ Lounge” can be made online at www.aft.org/teacherslounge or sent in care of *American Teacher*. We will pay \$40 for each idea published.



walking to and from the library or lunchroom, they “will be much quieter and more organized” if they are lined up by the boy-girl-boy-girl method. “Perhaps it’s because at these young ages, students are not yet comfortable with members of the opposite sex,” she says. “All I know is that it works!”

MOTHER, MAY I? Third-grade teacher **Leslie Joslin** of **Saline, Texas**, says she had tried everything to help her students remember synonyms, antonyms and homonyms—but to no avail. One day, she decided to create a contest based on the “Mother, May I?” game. She would call out a vocabulary word and ask her students to give a synonym, antonym and homonym for the word. “We went outside on a sunny day, and the students took one step forward for every correct answer,” she says. “The kids were so excited, and the winner received a small prize.” And, Joslin notes, “The next week I was amazed at the retention level of this activity. It worked wonders.”

Absenteeism epidemic hinders academic achievement

Good news is that interventions to improve attendance work



MISSING SCHOOL is serious business, and its impact on student achievement and dropout rates has been vastly underestimated, according to a recent report from Johns Hopkins University.

“Like bacteria in a hospital,” the report notes, “chronic absenteeism can wreak havoc long before it is discovered,” and it often goes undetected. Just six states keep records indicating “chronic absenteeism,” generally defined as missing 10 percent or more of all school days, or about 18 days a year. That number of missed days would add up to nearly a month of school days. Not surprisingly, the result is lower achievement and higher dropout rates.

The study estimates that the national rate of chronic absenteeism is 10 percent, though researchers suspect the rate is closer to 15 percent. That’s 5 million to 7.5 million students who are absent from 18 to 20 days of the school year. The six reporting states (Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Nebraska, Oregon and Rhode Island) show absentee rates from 6 to 23 percent. In high-poverty urban areas, up to one-third of the students are chronically missing from school; in poor rural areas, one-quarter of them are chronically absent.

The problem is most pressing among students from low-income families, and increases as children rise from middle school through 12th grade. Gender and ethnic background do not appear to affect attendance.

Wherever absenteeism occurs, its results are clear: Nationally, chronic absence in kindergarten was associated with lower academic performance in first grade, with the negative impact twice as likely among students from low-income families. Achievement gaps increase at all levels. In Baltimore, researchers found a strong correlation between sixth-grade attendance and the rate at which students graduated from high school on time.

Further research shows students miss school for three primary reasons: They cannot attend, due to illness, family responsibilities, housing instability or involvement with juvenile justice; they will not attend because of bullying, unsafe conditions, harassment or embarrassment; or they do not attend because they (and/or their parents) do not value education.

Knowing the causes of absenteeism can help guide solutions, many of which are already being successfully implemented. The best anti-absentee programs involve close tracking of attendance, diagnosing reasons for absence, building strong relationships with students and families, recognizing students for good attendance, and often having a “second shift” of adults in schools to follow up with absent students.

“The good news is if we do measure and monitor absenteeism, there is quite a bit that can be done to improve it with existing resources,” the report concludes. “As a nation we must act, to ensure that our students are ready, willing and able to attend school every day. Their future, and hence our future, depends on it.”

Among specific successes is a program called AttenDANCE, where 200 sixth-graders who attended 95 percent of their second quarter at Dever-McCormack K-8 School in Boston, earned permission to attend a dance at a hall across the street. The incentive, along with calls to absent students, tutoring and case management (to provide counseling, healthcare and housing where needed) is part of Diplomas Now, a graduation advocacy nonprofit also operating successfully in Los Angeles, Miami and Washington, D.C.

In New York City, where more than 200,000 students are chronically absent, a campaign to keep kids in school ensures that more than 30,000 students get wake-up calls from celebrities like Michael Jordan and Whoopi Goldberg. In addition, mentors follow students’ progress, and subway signs keep the issue fresh (“It’s 9 a.m. Do you know where your children are?”)

“Like bacteria in a hospital, chronic absenteeism can wreak havoc before it is discovered.”

—JOHNS HOPKINS REPORT



“The Importance of Being in School:
A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation’s
Public Schools.” <http://go.aft.org/>.

Community, politics and labor solidarity

AFT president Weingarten rallies delegates behind 'solution-driven unionism'

NEARLY 3,000 AFT MEMBERS from across the country gathered in Detroit, July 27-30, for the 82nd AFT national convention. The convention featured speeches from Vice President Joe Biden, education historian Diane Ravitch and United Auto Workers president Bob King, among others. In addition, convention delegates adopted several major AFT policy resolutions.

RANDI WEINGARTEN

"SOLUTION-DRIVEN UNIONISM"

AFT president Randi Weingarten kicked off the convention by advocating "solution-driven unionism," a new vision that advances solutions focused on uniting union members, the people we serve and the communities in which we live.

In her keynote speech, Weingarten said that America's workers face a "new normal"—with severe budget cuts jeopardizing public education, healthcare and other critical services; families losing more than 30 percent of their wealth during the economic crisis; and more than 100 bills introduced in state legislatures to demonize and attack public employees and undermine public services.

"This new reality, this new normal, demands an entirely new approach to unionism—an approach that is relevant and appropriate to the 21st century," Weingarten told the delegates. "More than ever, we

need to act in innovative, creative and new ways—simultaneously refuting our critics, advancing our values, connecting with community and proposing solutions. That's solution-driven unionism."

Weingarten said the idea of solution-driven unionism grew out of what she saw with members in the ABC Unified School District in Southern California, who committed to a unionism that focused on solving problems, not on winning arguments. "It unites those we represent and those we serve, and in so doing, it ensures that we don't merely survive but that we succeed."

Across the country, the AFT is working with communities, businesses and other partners on finding solutions that address economic and educational equality, noted the AFT president, who used her speech to highlight collaborative reform efforts in New Haven, Conn., and Cincinnati. She also talked about the AFT-led public-private partnership in McDowell County, W.Va., and the union's First Book and

Share My Lesson initiatives.

"Every day, in schools, universities, health-care facilities and other work sites, AFT members are helping children and their families achieve a better future," she said.

We must "unite those we represent and those we serve."

The AFT president concluded by urging members to stand strong for those we represent and serve. "You teach, you heal, you serve," she

said. "It's through this work that you affirm our values and our desire to improve not only our lives, but the lives of our students, our patients and everyone in our nation."

VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

"WE SEE YOU AS THE SOLUTION"

In a lively speech punctuated by chants of "four more years," Vice President Joe Biden drew a strong contrast for AFT convention delegates between the Obama administration's vision for the country and that of Republican candidate Mitt Romney.

The fundamental debate between their administration and Romney, Biden said in a



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL AND RUSS CURTIS

convention session dedicated to politics, is about how important it is to rebuild the middle class.

"We think you build and rebuild this country from the middle out. They honestly believe that the best way to make us more competitive in the world is from the top down." That translates into contrasting economic policies, with the administration supporting middle-class tax cuts, and the Republicans fighting to maintain—and even expand—tax cuts for those making more than \$1 million annually.



Biden spent much of his speech praising the work of educators and the central role they play in making that vision of a revitalized middle class a reality. "When we look at you," he said, "we see educators, we see professionals and

we see public servants who are under full-blown assault."

"We don't see you as the problem," he said. "We see you as the solution."

People don't fully understand how much goes into your profession, he told delegates.

"When the district runs out of money, it's you who sacrifice and forgo contractual raises," he said, citing a series of districts across the country where such sacrifices have helped save full-day kindergarten programs, physical education and art classes, and have helped maintain reasonable class sizes.

Biden was introduced by his wife, Jill, a community college professor.

DIANE RAVITCH SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

Introduced by Weingarten as "the epitome of speaking truth to power," education scholar and activist Diane Ravitch hit all the right notes, speaking against policymakers who blame teachers for school conditions beyond

their control, and sharply criticizing education cuts that threaten public schools.

Ravitch lambasted the so-called reform movement for criticizing public education and favoring privatization. In fact, test scores are higher than ever, she said, though the reformers will never admit it. "We should be thanking our nation's teachers, but reformers keep up a steady drumbeat of criticism."

Struggling schools need help, not the firings and closings they face. "Firing teachers is not a school improvement strategy," Ravitch pointed out. "Firing teachers creates turmoil and churn and instability." Closing schools is equally destructive. "Killing a neighborhood school is like putting a knife into the heart of a community."

She praised the AFT for the union's firm stand against high-stakes testing, and she called value-added assessment—basing teacher evaluations on test scores—"junk science."

"Your job, your reputation and your career should not depend on such an unreliable and unstable measure," she noted. "The single biggest predictor of test scores is family income. The single most reliable predictor of achievement is poverty."



Delegates adopt new mission statement that reflects union's priorities

AS THE FIRST STEP in a process that will culminate with a full report at the 2014 convention, AFT delegates approved a new mission statement that was developed by the union's Futures III committee:

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.

"We are a union that has never been afraid to step back and look at ourselves, take stock of the challenges we face, and chart a course to enable us to be as effective as we can be," AFT president Randi Weingarten said. Futures III, she noted, will focus on three major areas: community engagement, the union's quality agenda and membership mobilization. The statement, which is the AFT's first new one in more than a decade, reflects those priorities.

Saint Paul (Minn.) Federation of Teachers president Mary Cathryn Ricker, who serves on the committee, noted that they went through multiple drafts and much editing before producing the final statement. "As powerful as words are," she said, "the real power is the action all of us will take to live out this mission statement."

The approval of the new mission statement will initiate a process that will "invigorate grass-roots activism and give an enhanced voice to AFT members," said Jeff Freitas, secretary-treasurer of the California Federation of Teachers, who also serves on the 34-person Futures III committee.

BOB KING STRENGTH IN SOLIDARITY

There's a silver lining to these challenging times for unions and workers, United Auto Workers president Bob King said. And it's this: "There's greater solidarity in the labor movement than I've seen in my lifetime."

King, who praised the AFT for focusing on member mobilization and activism, said he and the UAW stand with our union in the fight to ensure that workers have a voice on the job. "If we want better education, better hospitals or better government, we need the voice of workers in solving problems."



Continued on page 10



Continued from page 9

"A vibrant and strong labor movement is essential to a strong democracy and society."

Labor and our allies must take the lead in restoring an America based on democratic values and jobs with wages that lift everyone's quality of life, King asserted. "We have to be committed to rebuilding a social and economic justice movement."

Lashing out at those on the far right who would cut education funding, oppose smaller class sizes and refuse to support school infrastructure projects, while they were also vilifying teachers, King told the educators: "You are miracle workers."

King praised President Obama for supporting the bailout of the auto industry when many elected officials, especially Republicans, opposed it and polls showed it wasn't a popular decision. "If the auto industry had been liquidated," he said, "over a million good-paying, mostly union jobs would have been lost."

THE REV. WENDELL ANTHONY COLLECTIVE ACTION IS OUR 'TRUMP CARD'

Unionists in the Detroit metropolitan area know that the



Rev. Wendell Anthony, pastor of Fellowship Chapel, is a true friend of labor. He has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with organized labor in support of collective bargaining and in opposition to laws such as the one that has put the Detroit school system under the control of an emergency financial manager.

In a rousing address, Anthony, president of the Detroit Branch NAACP, urged delegates not to be discouraged by the harsh criticism from those who don't share their vision of an America where the needs of children and the most vulnerable are a priority. "You have come too far to turn back now," he said.

Labor and its community allies must not forget that "collective action is our trump card," Anthony said.

He called for using collective action to ensure that the nation's budget priorities reflect the needs of ordinary Americans, especially children.

"Children are the future of our nation. Our budgets should reflect that."

"It is impossible to serve the academic needs of students without addressing their basic need for health and safety," added Anthony, who argued for a holistic approach to caring for our children.

GABY PACHECO KEEPER OF THE DREAM

How far would you walk for your dream?

In 2010, activist Gaby Pacheco walked 1,500 miles for her dream of becoming a United States citizen. Born in Ecuador and brought to Florida as a 7-year-old, she was placed in a gifted third-grade classroom and proceeded to excel at every aspect of school. Yet, she told delegates, she'll always remember the day when, as a high school senior, she listened to her concerned college counselor tell her not to apply to college. She was afraid Gaby would be deported.

"We cannot be paralyzed by fear," said Pacheco, who enrolled at Miami Dade College, earned her teaching degree and now is a special education teacher in Miami.

She is also one of the leading faces of the Dream movement, which seeks to help young immigrants who are brought to this country as children, graduate from high school, and then, through no fault of their own, move into an unlawful status.

For 11 years, immigrant rights activists

Continued on page 22



TOP AFT OFFICERS RE-ELECTED

DELEGATES TO THE AFT convention re-elected **Randi Weingarten** president. They also elected **Lorretta Johnson** to her first full term as secretary-treasurer; she formerly served as executive vice president. **Francine Lawrence** was elected executive vice president, a position she has held since September 2011. Also elected were 43 vice presidents.

The following seven vice presidents were elected for the first time: **Karen Aronowitz**, president of the United Teachers of Dade (Fla.); **Susan Kent**, president of the New York State Public Employees Federation; **John McDonald**,

president of the Henry Ford Community College Federation of Teachers in Michigan; **Joshua Pechthalt**, president of the California Federation of Teachers; **David Quolke**, president of the Cleveland Teachers Union; **Mary Cathryn Ricker**, president of the Saint Paul (Minn.) Federation of Teachers; and **Tim Stoelb**, president of the Oregon School Employees Association.



From left: AFT officers Randy Weingarten, Francine Lawrence and Lorretta Johnson.

ELECTED TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Shelvy Abrams	Richard Iannuzzi
Mary Armstrong	Keith Johnson
Barbara Bowen	Jerry Jordan
Linda Bridges	Dennis Kelly
Elsie Burkhalter	Ted Kirsch
Stacey Caruso-Sharpe	Karen Lewis
Kathy Chavez	Louis Malfaro
Lee Cutler	Daniel Montgomery
Edward Doherty	Michael Mulgrew
Kathleen Donahue	Maria Neira
Thomas Doohar	Ruby Newbold
Marietta English	Candice Owley
Eric Feaver	Andrew Pallotta
Francis Flynn	Sharon Palmer
Andy Ford	Sandra Schroeder
David Gray	Phillip Smith
Judy Hale	Ann Twomey
David Hecker	Adam Urbanski

Major policy resolutions on testing, jobs and union solidarity adopted

AFT DELEGATES unanimously passed a clear and forceful resolution on what has become a vexing issue for many educators, students, parents and school administrators: the growing fixation on high-stakes testing.

Educators have increasingly complained about standardized tests being used to close schools and sanction teachers, while doing little to improve the quality of education or close the achievement gap.

"Appropriate assessments are an integral part of a high-quality public education," the resolution, titled "Testing Should Inform, Not Impede, Teaching and Learning," points out. "By contrast, the current test-and-punish accountability model has seriously damaged public education."

This overuse of testing also is crowding out "vital parts of the curriculum because they are not subject to testing," the resolution says. "Student learning time has been sacrificed in favor of testing and test preparation."

"We believe in assessments that support teaching and learning, and align with curriculum rather than narrow it," the resolution says.

Rebuilding our economy

Convention delegates passed a sweeping resolution that lays out ideas to rebuild our economy in ways that will help restore economic dignity and invest in public services.

To create good jobs and rebuild a "broad highway to a middle-class way of life," the resolution says, "we must reinvest in America. We need to modernize our infrastructure, fund the public services needed to create real economic development, and take steps to see that hard work will have rewards not just for the fortunate few but for everyone." Austerity and budget cuts are not the answer.

Montana public employee Jill Cohenour spoke in support of the resolution on the economy.

The resolution recognizes the AFT's ability to help in the effort to rebuild the economy, by supporting investment of public pension funds in infrastructure im-

provements and by advocating for the services that communities need for strong economic development. The resolution notes that through fair tax reform for citizens and corporations alike, the U.S. economy can recover more quickly.

"This isn't about class envy or class warfare. It's about fairness and justice," said Leo Canty from AFT Connecticut.

Standing as one

A special order of business to stand in solidarity with colleagues around the country who are fighting to maintain collective bargaining rights and defend fair contracts was unanimously and enthusiastically adopted.

While the special order singles out a number of AFT districts—Chicago; Detroit; Lawrence, Mass.; Jefferson Parish, La.; and Douglas County, Colo.—currently facing assaults on their rights, speakers made it clear that they will support AFT affiliates wherever they face challenges. "If you want a fight with any of us, you're fighting with all of us," said AFT vice president and United Federation of Teachers president Michael Mulgrew.

The resolution calls on the AFT to "stand in solidarity with these AFT locals and any others engaged in the critical struggle to advocate for students and their families, for citizens and their communities, for patients and healthcare, and for our own existence as organized labor."



'This is about people helping people'

FARMERS PRAY FOR RAIN, and those who turned out for the AFT's pre-convention adventure in healthy living got a downpour. AFT members and Detroit families shared good food and good vibes at a community garden run by Urban Farming, a nonprofit organization that promotes planting vegetable plots in big cities.

Experts at the event gave demonstrations on how to start a garden, har-

vest vegetables and cook healthy meals, as well as promoting fitness and literacy. Urban Farming founder Taja Sevelle said she saw so much land and so much poverty in Detroit that she established three gardens there. Urban Farming, which started in 2005, now has 59,000 gardens registered nationwide.

Kathleen Roach, president of the Peru Association of Teachers near Plattsburgh, N.Y., said she was there to give back to the community and to help advance economic justice. "This is about people helping people."

Besides Urban Farming, partners in the event included Gleaners Community Food Bank, No Kid Hungry Michigan, Cooking Matters and First Book, which gave away gardening books to children.

"Teachers, paraprofessionals and other educators—we see kids every day who are hungry," AFT president Randi Weingarten said. "In endorsing the practice of urban farming, 'we are uniting those we represent and those we serve.'"

The AFT and the Detroit community farm together.



JIM WEST



"If you want a fight with **any** of us, you're fighting with **all** of us."

—MICHAEL MULGREW,
United Federation of
Teachers (NYC) president



You can register your garden with Urban Farming by visiting www.urbanfarming.org.



COMPARE THE CANDIDATES on education

Barack Obama

"I believe that this country succeeds when everyone gets a fair shot."

—President Obama,
weekly address, June 9, 2012

Mitt Romney

"He [Obama] says we need more firemen, more policemen, more teachers. Did he not get the message of Wisconsin? The American people did. It's time for us to cut back on government and help the American people."

—Mitt Romney,
campaign event, June 8, 2012

Early Childhood Education

- Expanded funding for early learning programs to serve an additional 61,000 children and families. (Laura Wilson, "Keeping His Word: Early Childhood Education," 2/17/12.)
- As governor of Massachusetts, cut funding for early childhood education and opposed universal pre-K. (Derrick Z. Jackson, *Boston Globe*, 6/9/07; Kate Plourd, *Telegram and Gazette*, 2/2/07.)

Class Size

- Provided funding to keep educators on the job to help prevent class sizes from growing. (U.S. Dept. of Education, "ARRA Report: Summary of Programs and State-by-State Data," 11/2/09.)
- Dismisses the importance of smaller class sizes, claiming the fight to maintain teacher-student ratios is a ploy by teachers trying to add more members to their unions. (Romney, *No Apology*, p. 208.)

Testing

- Says we should "stop teaching to the test" and give teachers the flexibility to teach a fuller range of real-world skills to students. (Obama 2012 State of the Union address, 1/24/12.)
- Believes in standardized tests, and attributes concerns about them to teachers unions trying to reject accountability for the performance of teachers in the classroom. (Romney, "A Chance for Every Child," 5/23/12; *New York Times*, South Carolina Republican Presidential Debate transcript, 5/15/07.)

Vouchers

- Opposes private school vouchers. (Associated Press, "Obama Budget Would End D.C. School Vouchers," 2/14/12.)
- Supports transforming portions of Title I and IDEA into a massive federal voucher program. (Romney, "A Chance for Every Child," 5/23/12.)

Education Jobs

- Signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act protecting critical public services and stabilizing communities. The ARRA saved or created approximately 300,000 education and public service jobs. (Cynthia McCabe and Tim Walker, *NEA Today*, 2/17/10.)
- Wants to cut funding for police officers, firefighters and teachers. (Andrew Rosenthal, *New York Times*, 6/12/12.)

Higher Education Affordability

- Made higher education more affordable and accessible by increasing the number of Pell Grant recipients from 6 million to 9 million. (Matthew Lynch, *Huffington Post*, 4/3/12.)
- Supports a budget plan that would take away Pell Grants from 1 million college students over the next 10 years. (Joy Resmovits, *Huffington Post*, 3/27/12.)

When you compare the candidates on the issues, the choice is clear.

That is why the AFT has endorsed President Barack Obama for re-election.

For more information, visit www.aft.org/election2012.

AFT Innovation Fund invests in extended learning time, Common Core State Standards

A FOURTH ROUND of investments by the AFT Innovation Fund, which solicits and supports ideas from on-the-ground educators to help improve public education, were announced at the AFT's national convention in Detroit.

"These exciting ideas are drawn from the wisdom of those who are closest to students—teachers and paraprofessionals," said AFT president Randi Weingarten. "These grants are examples of how our locals use solution-driven unionism to improve education."

For the first time, the Innovation Fund is supporting local unions in redesigning the school day to expand learning time—for students, and for teachers. The union supports expanded learning time so that students can have access to a rich, well-rounded curriculum and the extra-curricular activities vital to their personal and social development. In addition, finding time for teachers to collaborate as professionals is essential so that they can improve student achievement.

The AFT is a signatory to the Time to Succeed Coalition, launched this year by the National Center on Time & Learning and the Ford Foundation.

For the second year, the Innovation Fund also is investing in teacher-designed, collaborative innovations centered on the Common Core State Standards. Some grantees will focus on conducting a communitywide campaign to explain the new standards and enlist support for helping students reach them, and others will work closely with a local university to make sure new teachers are prepared to teach the new standards.

The 2012 grants, totaling \$750,000, were awarded to the following AFT affiliates:

■ **Meriden (Conn.) Federation of Teachers**, to work in partnership with the school district to expand and enrich learning time for students at a high-needs elementary school in the areas of reading; science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); and healthy living. Teachers at the school, and from other schools in the district, will collaborate to develop a staggered teacher schedule and spread the model throughout

the Meriden school district.

■ **Providence (R.I.) Teachers Union**, to support United Providence!, an innovative "education management organization" established by the union and the district, in turning around three high-needs schools in Providence. The schools will receive significant assistance to expand learning time so that teachers are able to collaborate during the school day and so that students can get extra support and enrichment. This grant also will provide United Providence! with national expertise on conducting "time audits" and recommendations on how best to expand teacher and student learning time.

■ **Cleveland Teachers Union** to "harvest" high-quality curricular units, written by Cleveland teachers, that are aligned to the Common Core State Standards. These teachers will work with one another and with a Common Core expert to improve and expand upon the units. When polished, the units will be uploaded into the district's data warehouse—called School Net—where all teachers will have access to them.

■ **Quincy (Ill.) Federation of Teachers** to develop a communications campaign for parents, businesses and local institutions about the Common Core State Standards and what they mean for teaching and learning. The campaign will focus on explaining the key shifts in the Common Core and how community members can best support students to reach the new standards. Teachers will lead the campaign, which is to include polls, community forums and public service announcements.

■ **Jefferson County (Ala.) AFT**, to work with the University of Alabama at Birmingham to align English language arts curricula in middle and high schools with the Common Core State Standards. Two schools in the Jefferson County district will serve as intensive sites for student teachers to collaborate with cooperating teachers to write and teach new lessons.

Since its launch in 2009 by AFT president Weingarten, the AFT Innovation Fund has made a total of 25 investments in groundbreaking work across the nation.



AFT lights up the runway

A PARADE of 35 proud union sisters strutted their stuff in sleek, trim skirts and dresses, pants and jackets from fashion icon Norma Kamali at an evening fashion show during the AFT convention. As colleagues cheered, the models, who are also paraprofessionals, clerical workers, teachers, nurses, surgical technicians and professors, showcased not only Kamali couture, but also an irrepressible confidence in their professions and in themselves.

Designer Kamali believes that when you look good, you feel good. She created the affordable KamaliKulture collection for educators and other working women, and has priced her Kulture outfits, which come in sizes 0 to 18, at under \$100, and crafted them to help educators raise their profiles as polished and confident professionals.

Kamali is giving AFT members a **25 percent discount** on all purchases, at kamalikulture.com.
Sales code: AFT2012.



For more information about the AFT Innovation Fund, visit www.aft.org/innovate.

Everyday **HEROES**

Earlier this year, the AFT put out a call for nominations of members who go above and beyond the call of duty. Twenty-seven semifinalists, selected from a field of more than 300 nominees, received close to 15,000 online votes. The winners, who come from all six AFT constituencies, were honored at the AFT convention in July in Detroit.



Teachers

MENTION **MARTIN MESSNER** to Donna Ruland and she immediately sings his praises. “I can’t say enough about Marty. He is just a wonderful, wonderful person.”

Ruland, an AFT retiree, is one of hundreds of flood victims hit by Hurricane Irene last year in Schoharie, N.Y. Dozens of families lost their homes.

Messner, president of the Schoharie Teachers Association, rallied union members from all over the state to join the cleanup. They hauled waterlogged carpets and furniture to the curb, and later insulated the homes for the winter. The 100-member local contributed \$10,000 and raised another \$30,000 to insulate about 160 homes, churches and businesses, coordinating 300 volunteers and 100 organizations to get the job done.

A health and physical education teacher at Schoharie High School, Messner typically works four or five hours after school on union and volunteer projects.

One of his unique efforts is an ad campaign combating the attacks on public education. Featuring real students praising the good education they get in New York public schools, the grass-roots ads have reached 1.6 million households.

The local’s members, with Messner in the lead, participate in pro-teacher rallies in Albany and Washington, D.C. Closer to home,

they sponsor an annual 5K run, organize the Main Street Halloween parade; hold barbecues to raise scholarship funds; and make contributions (in dollars and volunteer hours) to the regional food bank and breast cancer research.

“The union is an integral part of the community,” says Messner. He has made it so.



Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel

Kids at St. Martinville Primary School know they can count on **Lynette “Mommy Nette” Thomas** to take care of them.

As food service manager at the St. Martin Parish, La., school, she feeds the young students—but she also throws them birthday parties, organizes a Halloween haunted house, raffles off bicycles, and organizes a TV-style game show to help kids prepare for tests. As if that’s not enough, she’s taken dozens of women and children into her home. Thomas is a member of the St. Martin Federation of Teachers and School Employees.



Higher Education

Bonnie Jobe has an irrepressible habit of volunteering for good causes.

Motivated in part after she lost both parents to cancer, the exercise physiologist and health educator at Henry Ford Community College raised \$10,000 for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and was named the organization’s woman of the year.

Among her many other contributions is the money she raised for the St. John Hospital Christmas Ball to buy dialysis machines, and the \$222,000 she helped raise for bioelectrical limbs at the Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan. She involves her students, epitomizing the school’s commitment to service learning.



Public Employees

For **Michael Morris**, public service is not just a career. It is a way of life. His job, as a correctional officer at the Baltimore County (Md.) Detention Center;

his duty, as a sergeant in the Maryland National Guard; and his passion, as a volunteer firefighter and medic, come together in a tapestry of selflessness and leadership. Morris is a member of the Baltimore County Federation of Public Employees.



Healthcare

Whenever Washington Elementary School nurse **Saundra McCauley** sees a need, she figures out a way to help.

Not only has she provided Thanksgiving baskets and lunch money; she has approached her local pharmacy to donate nebulizers for children with asthma, set up a bike safety program for students, and held an after-school program to teach children how to knit and crochet.

“Students are needier than they used to be, and I like being able to help. Sick, sad or hungry children can’t learn,” she says.

McCauley is a member of the West Haven (Conn.) Federation of Teachers and School Nurses.



Retirees

Joe Satriano, a member of the Roslyn (N.Y.) Teachers Association, and his wife, Susan, were both math teachers at Bushwick High School in Brooklyn

until Susan was diagnosed with breast cancer. When she died, Joe Satriano not only lost his wife but also had to watch his two sons lose their mother.

Now the Susan Satriano Foundation distributes scholarships to other children whose parents have cancer. “I no longer help kids in front of the classroom,” he says, “but I can help in another way.”

Recognizing outstanding educators

Two AFT members inducted into national hall of fame

AFT MEMBERS Scott Charlesworth-Seiler, a fifth-grade teacher at the Fine Arts Interdisciplinary Resource School in Crystal, Minn. (and member of West Metro United Educators) and Glen Lid, a high school chemistry teacher and coach at Proviso East High School in Maywood, Ill., (and a member of West Suburban Teachers Union) were among just five teachers selected for induction into the National Teachers Hall of Fame this year.

Called “the best of the best of the best” by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, award winners are all veteran teachers, required to have been in K-12 classrooms for at least 20 years.

For Lid, the honor is icing on the cake: His greatest satisfaction is his daily connection with students. Known for his creative style (he’s dressed up as fictional rapper, Shorty L, to rap about chemistry, and projected fireballs across the room to demonstrate chemical reactions), Lid is also an advocate for his students. He established a scholarship fund, using the money he won from the Disney All-American Teacher Award, and has sent stu-

dents to MIT’s summer program for minority students. Lid is an Illinois Golden Apple Teacher of Distinction and Proviso East High School Male Teacher of the Year.

Charlesworth-Seiler describes his reward as secondary to the privilege of teaching. “Very few people have the opportunity to impact lives, to make relationships as part of their work,” he says.

“Mr. C.S.,” as he is known at the FAIR School, ignites the imaginations of his students: A visitor to his classroom might see

students sitting at their desks on exercise balls, instead of chairs, guessing an adverb their teacher is acting out. He has won the Hopkins Public Schools Education Services Volunteer Award and the Milken National Educator Award; he received a Fulbright Scholarship to teach in Japan in 2003.

Other 2012 inductees to the National Teachers Hall of Fame are David L. Brock from Roland Park Country School in Baltimore; James A. Brooks, who teaches at West Wilkes High School in Millers Creek, N.C.; and Deborah Lynn Tackmann, a health teacher from Eau Claire, Wis.

Visit www.nthf.org for information on the hall of fame and the nomination process.



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by teachers for teachers

Thousands of AFT-reviewed teaching resources are available at no cost at sharemylesson.com

When teachers stay awake at night struggling to come up with creative ways to reach a particularly challenging student, or puzzling out a fresh approach to an old lesson plan, they might turn to any number of resources for help—but which are legitimate? And will they meet the new Common Core State Standards?

Share My Lesson covers all the bases. Officially launched by the AFT and Britain's TES Connect at the AFT national convention in Detroit July 28, this new digital platform allows educators to collaborate and share teaching resources and innovative ideas.

Developed by teachers, for teachers, Share My Lesson already includes more than 250,000 resources, and that collection is expected to grow rapidly as more educators add to it. The user-generated content will be supplemented by tens of thousands of contributions from hundreds of content partners,

including Sesame Street, Oxfam, GreenTV and Encyclopaedia Britannica. Educators can register and start using the site immediately, for free, utilizing its offerings or contributing materials of their own.

In fact, many convention delegates and other participants registered right at the Detroit convention during a demonstration designed to show how easy the system is to use.

"Share My Lesson is truly one of the most exciting developments I have seen since becoming a teacher," Carolyn Jones, executive vice president of the Norfolk (Va.) Federation of Teachers, says. "It is easy to navigate and is a one-stop shop for absolutely free uploading and downloading."

High school English arts teacher John Kuijper likes the idea of "an online resource where some of our best teachers are sharing great strategies" for helping kids learn.

Many teachers struggle with online resources that are poorly presented, difficult to find, of questionable accuracy or include hidden costs. Simply put, says AFT member Christy Gill, "Teachers are in dire need of quality resources."

So before it launched, AFT members combed through Share My Lesson resources to ensure they were accurate, relevant, and aligned with the Common Core standards. The lesson plans and activity ideas, from "Race Around the Clock Times Tables" to "The Life and Times of William Shakespeare," are categorized by grade and subject, and



CHUCK GARVIN

"Teachers are in dire need of quality resources."

—CHRISTY GILL

designed to be quick and easy to access. Users can find resources by a particular contributor, including Share My Lesson resource teams, and "follow" that contributor so that each time he or she uploads new content, the user will be notified.

In addition, an entire resource bank is dedicated to the Common Core standards, which are now being followed in 45 states and several other jurisdictions. The Share My Lesson website also includes an introductory "tour" for newcomers, and classroom tips for behavior management, plus a Twitter feed for



"Some of our best teachers are sharing great strategies."

—JOHN KUIJPER



instant updates that can lead to everything from math riddles to ideas for class rules and a “safety dance” with a Bunsen burner. Online community forums allow teachers to collaborate even more directly.

All of Share My Lesson’s resources address AFT member Amy Spies’ biggest frustration: spending hours on random online searches, then reviewing dozens of possible resources herself, without knowing which are trustworthy, which involve cumbersome downloads, and which will serve her students’ specific needs. Share My Lesson, says Spies, “is one central location where teachers are actually generating the resources, not where some publisher is just out to make a quick buck. These are absolutely tested-and-tried resources teachers have used. That’s such a huge timesaver.”

“It brings the best practices right to your fingertips,” says AFT member Karen Gant. “If you want to do a good lesson for your kids, there is no excuse. It’s right there for you. Just plug in what you need, and it’s going to pop right up.”

AFT retiree member Janey Frank, who helped review the content for the new online tool, says this sort of resource would have been “invaluable” when she was teaching special education. Because every student learns at a different pace, everything had to be customized for every student. “I had to differentiate the curriculum myself.” With Share My Lesson, teachers can tap reliable resources quickly, using the expertise and experience of their peers to find just the right lesson for each child. “We’ve finally come to realize that all children belong to all of us,” she says.

“Teachers are expected to do so much, often with very little support, and they are thirsty for the tools they need to improve instruction,” says AFT president Randi Weingarten. “We know that when teachers share and collaborate—whether it is about the content of their lessons, or their strategies for reaching students—students benefit.”

“We know from experi-



“These are absolutely tested-and-tried resources teachers have used.”

—AMY SPIES

ence that if you give teachers the chance, they will willingly share their best ideas, most inspiring teaching methods and most effective lessons without hesitation,” agrees Louise Rogers, CEO of TSL Education, the parent company of TES Connect. “When teachers start sharing their vast knowledge and experience with each other, their lessons get more creative, better and more effective.”

Share My Lesson is a joint venture of the AFT and TES Connect, the world’s largest network of teachers with more than 2 million teacher members. TES, a British-based platform, currently offers more than 400,000 resources and logs 2.5 million downloads weekly. Share My Lesson, an Americanized version of TES, is likely to develop just as big a following.


To register, go to www.sharemylesson.com, or visit www.aft.org for more information.



“It brings the best practices right to your fingertips.”

—KAREN GANT

Share My Lesson is available to anyone who works or has worked with students from preschool to college levels—teachers, paraprofessionals, student teachers, retired educators, after-school and day care providers, school support personnel, early childhood educators and higher education faculty and staff. Just register at www.sharemylesson.com for free access to teaching resources, and to share your own great ideas.


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By teachers, for teachers

America's teachers see key role for unions

Educators want unions involved in ed reform and improving teacher quality

UNION AND NONUNION teachers alike recognize the importance of unions in strengthening the teaching profession and our public schools, affirms a recent report released by Education Sector.

In addition to wanting their unions to protect jobs and to negotiate good salaries and benefits, teachers also want unions to be involved in improving their work and in support-

ing certain reforms, according to the report, "Trending Toward Reform: Teachers Speak on Unions and the Future of the Profession."

In addition, union members today are more likely than they were four years ago to report involvement in local union activities and more likely to associate their membership with feelings of pride and solidarity, the report notes.

the support they need to succeed." But, she adds, "a disturbing trend that we continue to see in surveys is teachers' sense of loss of control over teaching conditions.

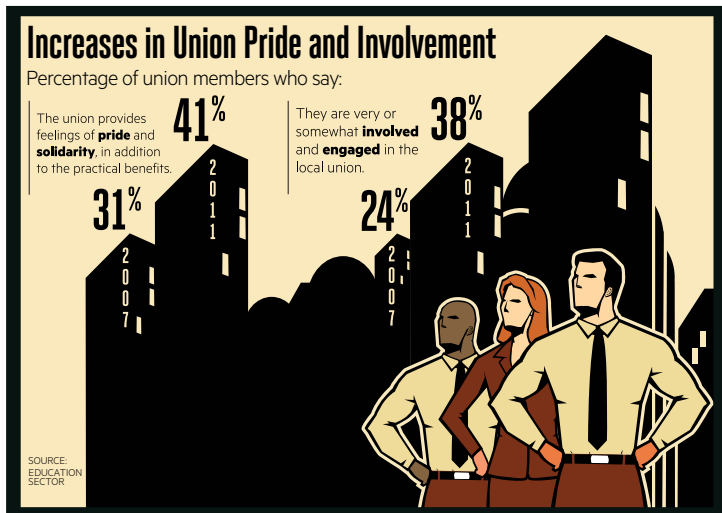
"This is especially troubling as budget cuts have forced teachers to do more with fewer resources, as teachers are required to implement reforms without the support and tools they need to succeed, and as special interests continue to demonize teachers and dictate what happens in the classroom. America's teachers spend every day with our children and know what students need to succeed. Teachers need and deserve a voice in decisions that impact their students and their classrooms."

The report also makes clear that new and veteran teachers believe unions can play a key role in education reform and ensuring teacher quality—a responsibility the AFT takes seriously. AFT affiliates are working in collaboration with school districts across the country on reforms that will help our children learn and grow.

To see the report, visit <http://go.aft.org/edsector>.

Many of the report's findings are consistent with what AFT members have been saying for years: What American teachers want most and get least are the tools, time and trust to be better teachers and to help their students learn and grow.

"Teachers also believe in accountability," says AFT president Randi Weingarten, "as long as the measures are fair, they have a voice in the process, and they receive



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AFT retiree leaders focus on 2012 elections

Weingarten challenges retirees to ‘do what you do best: educate’

MOST SENIORS know the importance of Medicare and Social Security. They also are aware that these and other retirement security programs are under assault. Nevertheless, if the presidential election were held today, many seniors would vote against their own interests, AFT president Randi Weingarten told attendees at the AFT Retirees Leaders Conference held in Detroit, July 26-27.

“People don’t have the sense of optimism we once had,” said Weingarten. “There is resentment instead of aspiration, and that resentment is clouding the facts.”

To turn things around, Weingarten challenged the AFT retirees to do what they do best: educate. “You must create awareness around the attacks on retirement security by educating members and friends in your circle. You may be retired, but you are not retired from educating people.”

She also encouraged them to find ways to unite with the community over the issue of retirement security. “We have to make the



RUSS CURTIS

fight about saving the safety net. And we have to make the case for saving the safety net not just for ourselves, but for everyone.”

Retired AFT leaders from across the country were on hand for the conference.

Seniors can play a crucial role in the 2012 elections, Weingarten said. “We have to ensure that those who are voted into office believe that it is a core value to create and sustain a safety net for those who helped to build

this great country.”

Brian Bond, director for national constituency outreach at the Democratic National Committee, also spoke about the upcoming election, reiterating the importance of programs like Medicare and Social Security, and sharing how the programs helped him care for his parents. Bond pointed out that retirees are in the best position to talk about what these programs mean to them.

“You are the validators of programs like Medicare and Social Security. You know how the programs impact you and what’s at stake in this election,” said Bond.

The DNC has built a robust program to incorporate seniors, Bond told participants, encouraging them to become involved.

“President Obama is committed to ensuring that Social Security and Medicare will be there for seniors. Mitt Romney wants to turn Medicare into a voucher program,” Bond said. “The election will determine whether we go forward or backward.”



AFT CONVENTION
detroit

Standing up for the rights of women

Activists Betty Dukes and Sandra Fluke recognized at AFT convention

BETTY DUKES, a store greeter and the lead plaintiff in *Dukes v. Wal-Mart*, the largest gender-bias class-action lawsuit in U.S. history, and Sandra Fluke, whose testimony before a congressional committee about contraceptive rights drew personal invective from right-wing extremists and the support of President Obama, were presented with Living the Legacy Awards during the Women’s Rights Awards Breakfast at the AFT convention in Detroit.

Dukes, a Baptist minister, hung tough as her case wound through the courts for 10 years. After losing, 5-4, before the U.S. Supreme Court, she remains unbowed. “We are pressing on,” she said. “You can’t let fear get under your feet, for it will carry you where you don’t want to go.”

Fluke called on women’s advocates to keep up the fight for equal pay and access to healthcare, to stop violence against women and to protect comprehensive sex education so that students can make sound life decisions. She also expressed concern about gender-segregated schools, which can reinforce harmful stereotypes. She thanked Dukes and she thanked the AFT, saying, “I’ll see you on the protest lines.”

The occasion included a nod to recent achievements, including the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and the 40th anniversary of Title IX, as well as new threats, such as efforts in 43 states to restrict voting rights through regressive laws that disproportionately affect women.

Special recognition was also given to activists who for 30, 40 and 50 years have provided leadership in women’s rights. Diamond recognition for 50 years of service went to Edythe Bloom, Hartford (Conn.) Federation of Teachers retiree chapter; Ruth Dworkin, Yonkers (N.Y.) Federation of Teachers; Rhoda Newman, North Babylon (N.Y.) Teachers Organization; Joan Perrini, West Islip (N.Y.)



Teachers Association; Judith Schultz, Schenectady (N.Y.) Federation of Teachers; and Edith Shanker, United Federation of Teachers in New York City.

Both Betty Dukes, top, and Sandra Fluke spoke out for the rights of women.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

A crisis of financial illiteracy

BY DON KUEHN

IT OUGHT TO BE pretty clear that you are responsible for your own retirement and other financial decisions. Nobody is going to ride to your rescue. When it comes to a 403(b) or 401(k) account, a college fund for your kids, your personal investment portfolio, managing debt or working your way out of a pattern of excessive spending—it's all on you.

In an era of frequent job changes, layoffs and cutbacks, way too many Americans are "flying by the seat of their pants" when it comes to budgeting, money management and investing.

Why is this a big deal? Because it will have a trickle-down effect on society as a whole: Excessive debt and a low FICO score can lock you out of some jobs. Debt can force some to drop out of school (the average debt load of 2010 college grads was more than \$25,000). A

generation unable to acquire new job skills means workers who can't compete on the world stage and who rely more on social programs to survive. People forced to pursue jobs simply because they pay enough to service their debt may lead to an era where we don't have enough social workers, artists, musicians or (egad!) teachers.

It's never too early (or too late) to teach children about the importance of earning money, saving, making wise spending decisions and using credit responsibly. Several organizations and resources are working to help reverse this national trend of illiteracy. Among them are the Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy, the Council for Economic Education, and Practical Money Skills for Life.

Among the reasons I write these columns is because this crisis of financial illiteracy is not limited to millennials, to Gen Xers or to kids. AFT members lead lives filled with satisfactions and distractions. We focus on careers, on children, on making ends meet. Unfortunately, too many of us are seat-of-the-pants financial planners.

We wander from paycheck to paycheck; we charge too much on credit cards instead of



paying cash or saving before making major purchases. Few have a smart budget plan or know how they are going to pay for retirement.

We are a nation of financial illiterates. A population that doesn't grasp the basics of how their finances work is vulnerable to all kinds of economic snake oil, whether peddled by financial "advisers" or by politicians.

It's your money. You need to understand it. You've got to become financially literate. And you need to teach your children the values that will help them be financially responsible citizens in the future.

Don Kuehn is a retired AFT senior national representative. For specific advice relative to your personal situation, consult competent legal, tax or financial counsel. Comments and questions can be sent to dkuehn60@yahoo.com.

For an expanded version of this article, go to: www.aft.org/publications/your_money.

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Convention 2012

Continued from page 10

have been trying to pass the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (Dream Act). Two years ago, “a group of us thought we had heard, seen and felt enough,” said Pacheco, describing how the 1,500-mile walk named the Trail of Dreams came about. “Four of us felt it was time to take our stories to Washington, D.C. We refused to allow hatred and the misinformation about us to be the defining story.”

On June 10, the Obama administration announced a stopgap policy change for those immigrants who would be covered by the Dream Act. It halts any deportation proceedings against them for two years and allows them to apply for a work permit.

CHARLES BLOW

MAKING A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

New York Times columnist Charles Blow has had up-close-and-personal relationships with teachers. His mother was an educator, and the person he credits with taking him from being an insecure, supposedly “slow” student to valedictorian of his high school class was his fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. Thomas.



Mrs. Thomas lit a fire under him. She could give him extra attention; she had the time to give him “because no one was telling her that she had to teach to a test or risk losing her job,” Blow said.

“Mrs. Thomas knew that part of what I needed was a smile and a hug,” he said.

“Someone who could just make the world slow down.”

Far too many of today’s teachers, Blow said, are being asked, unfairly, to do what Mrs. Thomas was able to do—provide “social services” to kids who live in poverty and are under a great deal of emotional stress.

Right now, “we are punishing teachers for society’s problems, and that’s not right,” he asserted.

Blow said many teachers feel an intrinsic need to do everything they can for the children they serve. “Teachers did not become teachers to make a world of money. They became teachers to make a world of difference.”

Teachers deserve both greater respect and higher pay, said Blow, who noted that getting young people to enter the teaching profession

Healthcare local honored for work in Haiti

Rustin award given for response to devastating earthquake

“THE PROOF that one truly believes is in action.” This well-known quote from civil and labor rights activist Bayard Rustin serves as inspiration for members of the Vermont Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals. Fittingly, the AFT Healthcare local was honored for its beliefs and actions with the Bayard Rustin Human Rights Award at the convention’s Human Rights Luncheon.

After seeing the destruction and death caused by the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010, members of the VFNHP were determined to help. In the days following the quake, many members and their colleagues volunteered to be part of the medical relief effort in Haiti. The nurses, doctors, paramedics, and physical and occupational therapists exhausted their vacation and personal leave to rotate in and out of the country for nearly a year.

“This tragedy reminded us that natural disasters—wherever they occur—have the power to touch us all,” said AFT president Randi Weingarten, who presented the award to Mari Cordes, the local’s current president, and former president Jennifer Henry.

The VFNHP made a long-term commitment to the people of Haiti by establishing a union-run health clinic for women and

children in Port-au-Prince. The members worked closely with the Confederation of Public and Private Sector Workers (a Haitian trade union), and Public Services International and its affiliate in Haiti to get the clinic off the ground.

The facility opened its doors in August 2011, and VFNHP members continue traveling to Haiti volunteering their time to help in the clinic, alongside the Haitian confederation members who staff the facility.

The humanitarian work of VFNHP members not only has changed lives of people in Haiti, it also has changed the lives of the nurses and health professionals who have volunteered, said Cordes. “We found unending inspiration in Haiti, and we are deeply humbled to accept this award.”



From left, Ann Twomey, Candice Owley, Mari Cordes and Jennifer Henry celebrate winning the Bayard Rustin Award.

is one of the major challenges facing our nation.

U.S. REP. DALE KILDEE A LIFETIME AFT MEMBERSHIP

U.S. Rep. Dale Kildee of Michigan, a staunch supporter of public education, was honored with a lifetime AFT membership card. Kildee, who is retiring at the end of the year after 36 years in Congress, is a former AFT member who started his career in public service as a teacher.

“While I’ll be retiring, I know I can count on the AFT to continue the fight for education,” he said. “There is no

higher honor than to be recognized by you for my work on education. It’s my life’s passion.”

As a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, Kildee has been a key player in landmark legislative efforts, such as improving federal K-12 education programs, including the Elementary and Secondary Education

Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; increasing eligibility for the school lunch and Head Start programs; and making college more accessible and affordable by increasing the maximum Pell Grant and strengthening community colleges.



Delegates flood Detroit neighborhoods in a show of solidarity



IF MICHIGAN LABOR regains its bargaining mojo, AFT members from across the country can say they played a part. On July 28, nearly 500 convention delegates jumped on buses and headed out to Detroit-area neighborhoods to talk up an initiative that would amend the state constitution to specifically protect the right to collectively bargain. The initiative will appear on the Nov. 6 ballot.

Delegates knocked on doors to ask registered voters one question: "Do you support amending the Michigan Constitution to support collective bargaining?" Neighbors were welcoming.



Top: AFT president Weingarten and David Hecker, president of AFT Michigan, speak with a voter. The national union's executive vice president Francine Lawrence, far left, canvasses, and secretary-treasurer Lorretta Johnson, left, joins delegates headed to the solidarity walk.

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For a complete list of state champions, for contest information or to register your students in Scholastic Challenge 2013, visit amschoolschallenge.com





BETTMAN/CORBIS

LABOR DAY wasn't always just a day at the beach: initially it was an opportunity to demonstrate for workers' rights. In fact, the early celebrations involved giving up a day's pay to march in the parades. Learn about the origins of the holiday at the History Channel website, www.history.com/topics/labor-day, where you'll also find videos on the fight to end child labor, historic strikes and other labor history.

TED TALKS, the short-lecture repository of innovative ideas on dozens of fascinating themes, recently launched TED-Ed (<http://ed.ted.com>) to help teachers use the material in class. The website features videos categorized by speaker or subject (like the arts, business and economics, or science and technology), plus quizzes and supplemental materials. There are individual lessons (we especially liked "Poetic Stickup: Put the Financial Aid in the Bag," a poetry slam-style treatment on the inequality of education) and series, such as "Inventions That Shaped History" or "Math in Real Life," and teachers can customize the material for students on Facebook, Twitter or e-mail.



IT'S NO WONDER that NASA cares about STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) education, but the

space agency's array of free lesson plans, professional development courses and other resources for educators might surprise you. Among them: a lesson plan for developing a lunar colony, an opportunity to use NASA's micro-gravity drop-tower for student experiments, and an astronaut's personal reflections on "lifting" 600 pounds as part of a space station exercise regime. You can also rent an astronaut suit for kids to try on, or find out when satellites will be visible near your school. Go to www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators.

VIRTUALLY ART Google Art Project is more than an online gallery; its education section is a rich resource with myriad activities that encourage students to delve into the details that make art meaningful. One quiz helps you match details of shoes to the period in which



they were painted (an aristocrat's slipper? a goddess' sandal?). Another helps you recognize how the folds of fabric were painted differently in Italy and Northern Europe. DIY projects have students create their own galleries by theme, or invent scavenger hunts using online paintings as clues. Visit www.googleartproject.com.

RIGHTFULLY OURS As the November elections approach, young students might value the process more once they understand what it was like when women were denied the right to vote. Kerrie Logan Hollihan's new book, *Rightfully Ours: How Women Won the Vote* (\$16.95, Chicago Review Press) uses personal stories and hands-on projects like crafting protest banners, chanting

jump-rope rhymes and hosting a Victorian tea to show what it felt like to move from no rights at all—regarding property, law or free speech, much less voting—to winning the long and difficult fight for the vote. Vintage photographs, illustrations and firsthand accounts from and about heroines like Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth and Elizabeth Cady Stanton help kids see why securing women's rights took generations.

BRINGING STEM TO LIFE From designing green roofs to questioning weather folklore like "red sun in the morning," the Thinkfinity website (www.thinkfinity.org/stem) uses the work of real-world scientists to create accessible experiments, videos, handouts and links. Community forums, with discussions about everything from summer reading to teacher evaluations; games and activities for use at home; plus professional development materials are also part of the site. Linked



to Thinkfinity is <http://scienetlinks.com>, a great resource in itself, full of lesson plans, discussion and daily science updates

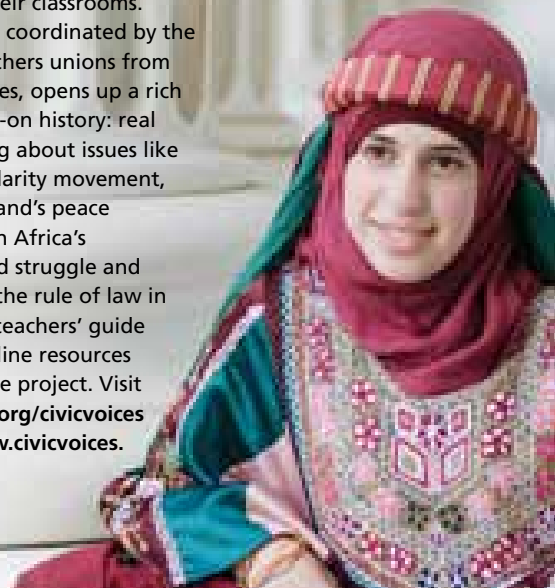
(60-second sound bites plus follow-up lessons). The site is sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

TELL ME A STORY What better way to enhance a history lesson than with stories told by the people who have lived it? Story Corps, an oral history project that captures tales from every sort of ordinary American and a few extraordinary ones, lends itself to learning not only history and civics, but listening and interviewing skills. Organized by category at <http://storycorps.org>, these stories, lesson plans and curricula enrich students' experience of the material. Their practice interviewing each other builds tolerance, confidence and pride. We also love Story Corps' National Teachers Initiative, a collection of inspirational segments about teachers who have made a difference.

CIVIC VOICES

THE CIVIC VOICES International Democracy Memory Bank Project teaches twice: once when students interview change makers working for freedom and justice in their communities, and again when educators use the transcribed interviews and analyses in their classrooms.

The project, coordinated by the AFT with teachers unions from seven countries, opens up a rich vein of hands-on history: real people talking about issues like Poland's Solidarity movement, Northern Ireland's peace process, South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle and the fight for the rule of law in Colombia. A teachers' guide and other online resources are part of the project. Visit <http://go.aft.org/civicvoices> or go to www.civicvoices.org.



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