



PSRP Reporter

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF AFT PARAPROFESSIONALS AND SCHOOL-RELATED PERSONNEL



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OUR MISSION

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

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AFT weighing in on rules for new law

Talk centers on funding, flexibility and curriculum

AFTER YEARS of taking a test-and-punish approach to education under the No Child Left Behind Act, the revamped version of that law, now called the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), provides a critical new window of opportunity to reset local, state and federal education policy.

The key to success, as always, will be implementation of this law.

In a development that's causing concern, the U.S. Department of Education is pushing changes under a part of the law known as "supplement-not-supplant," the idea being that federal education funding for needy students should always be used in addition to, not instead of, state and local dollars.

Concerns about this requirement surfaced in April when a committee of education stakeholders met in Washington, D.C., to review the department's draft regulations.

AFT Executive Vice President Mary Cathryn Ricker represented the AFT at the table. She and other committee members argued that the draft must be revised to keep the kind of flexibility in school staffing needed at the state and local levels.

"We don't want to hurt one school to help another school. We have to help all schools," says AFT President Randi Weingarten. "If you know other kids are going to get hurt by this, why would you do it?"

The good news coming out of this process is that stakeholders—including paraprofessionals, teachers and school administrators—are making their voices heard.

In a new development as *PSRP Reporter* went to press, the Education Department has released draft guidelines on ESSA accountability provisions that would be a mixed bag for schools, Weingarten says.

The language is strong on issues such as appropriate inclusion of English language proficiency in accountability systems, but weak in other areas. Schools would face unwarranted consequences when fewer than 95 percent of students participate in tests, for example, and districts wouldn't get the time they need to implement new accountability systems.

"Without enough time," Weingarten says, "states will revert to what they have—a test-driven accountability system."



Be a part of history! www.aft.org/100years

THE MEMORIES ARE INSPIRING. One century ago, on May 9, 1916, the American Federation of Teachers was founded in Chicago. Here's a memory from the 1960s, in which members of the United Federation of Teachers paraprofessionals committee met at union headquarters in New York City to review the first batch of questionnaires on contract proposals submitted by their peers. These paraprofessionals

from grades 3–12 were among 3,500 paras who joined the union in 1969, led by Velma Hill, the committee's first chair, and UFT President Albert Shanker. Seated, from left: Eunice Ann Johnson, PS 25K; Helen R. Cutler, Evander Childs High School; Pearl Klonsky, PS 33Q; and on the phone, Doris L. Hunter, PS 25K. Standing, from left: Sarah Davis, PS 306K; Laura Vaughan, PS 306K; and Vera Lee Best, PS 179M.

See our amazing timeline of events at www.aft.org/timeline.



Honoring our past and inspiring our future

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION of Teachers reached a significant milestone in May: the centennial of our founding. As I've pored over historical documents from our archives, it's clear that, from generation to generation, our union has been a vehicle to fight for positive change both in public schools and in society. As we enter our second century, we remain fiercely committed to creating educational opportunity, building professional voice and agency, and advancing economic, racial and social justice for all.

The seeds were sown in the late 19th century, with educators like Henrietta Rodman, who helped found a union in New York City and led the fight to allow women teachers to keep their jobs when they married or had children. In Chicago, Margaret Haley worked through her local union to challenge pervasive poverty, lack of resources and low pay. Recognizing the strength they would have as affiliates of a national union in a larger labor movement, in 1916 both women's unions joined with six other local unions to form the AFT.

Members of the School Secretaries of Chicago, organized in 1930, were the first PSRPs (paraprofessionals and school-related personnel) to merge into Local 1. They were followed by paraprofessionals in New York City and Baltimore during the 1960s, and, after that, a wave of PSRP wins in the South, Midwest and West.

Then, as now, working people have had many reasons to be angry. The AFT has worked to channel the aspirations underlying that anger into positive action. From the start, our leaders have known that power is necessary to bring about change at the ballot box and the bargaining table. For 100 years, the AFT has worked to build power and use it for good. In the 1920s, the AFT lobbied Congress for children's rights, improved salaries and programs to combat adult illiteracy.

We have continued that work. For example, in 2015, as Congress set about reauthorizing the primary federal education law, AFT members took more than 120,000 online actions and met face to face with legislators to help shape the law so it could have the potential to give educators the voice and resources they need to give children the education they deserve.

The AFT has grown to include many other

school and college employees, government workers, nurses and healthcare professionals, and early childhood educators. While the AFT and the larger labor movement grew, so did America's middle-class and working families' standard of living. The labor movement helped ensure that working people, not simply special interests, had power in our democracy. Collective bargaining provided AFT affiliates leverage to advocate for quality, agency and voice on the job—the embodiment of our motto: "A union of professionals."

knowledge and ideas strengthen their union. The AFT's Share My Lesson is the fastest-growing free digital collection of resources for educators. The AFT Innovation Fund cultivates promising union-led ideas to strengthen public education. And AFT members—from paraprofessionals and registered nurses to adjunct professors and parole officers—practice solution-driven unionism, using our expertise to improve the quality of our work.

You don't hit 100 without some setbacks. Austerity has caused harmful cuts to public

At 100, the AFT remains **fiercely committed to creating educational opportunity and advancing economic, racial and social justice for all.**



Weingarten, right, with Michael Mulgrew, president of the United Federation of Teachers (AFT Local 2), and Karen Lewis, president of the Chicago Teachers Union (AFT Local 1).

MICHAEL CAMPBELL

The AFT also has used collective action to advance racial and social justice. As early as 1918, the AFT demanded equal pay for African-American teachers and lobbied for equal educational opportunities for African-American children. In 1953, the AFT filed an amicus brief in support of the plaintiffs in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case before the U.S. Supreme Court—the only educational organization and union to do so. Today, the AFT is working to promote racial equity in education, the economy and criminal justice. We stand up against bigotry in all its forms.

The AFT's greatest strength has always been our members, professionals whose skills,

education and services throughout our history. Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and other governors intent on destroying any curb on their power have waged war on public sector unions. Many elected officials have sought to destabilize public schools and services to promote flawed privatization schemes.

It's all the more reason to honor the example of the AFT's founding mothers and fathers, to take our anger, build on our aspirations, and channel them into action—for our cause, our country and our members, and for those we serve and those who will follow. From one generation to the next, we are honoring our past and inspiring our future.

AFT PSRP

Digital Cheat Sheet



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Wow! What a response

WE HAVE RECEIVED an unprecedented response to our “Work Shouldn’t Hurt” cover story in the spring edition of *PSRP Reporter*. To see some of the personal stories members are telling about violence in the workplace, go to our new home for *Reporter* at this site: www.medium.com/PSRP-Reporter.

We are adding stories as we receive them, and plan to post developments and expert strategies as well.

You also can find news on www.aft.org/PSRP, through our monthly PSRP e-newsletter and through AFT social media. These channels, listed at left, are just a few of the ways you can stay in touch with all things PSRP, and how you can make change happen through your union.

If you are experiencing or witnessing violence in your school or college workplace, your first step should be to contact your local affiliate of the AFT. That’s because every state law is slightly different, and we want to make sure you get the appropriate help at the state and local level.



We’ve already begun exploring initial ideas about solutions, such as working toward better reporting systems, banding together with teachers in our union, forming school safety committees, starting restorative justice programs and offering strategies for facing intimidation.

Unfortunately, we can’t make any promises, but we can work on this together.

We will be updating our new blog site, www.medium.com/PSRP-Reporter, so please check back.

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A Union of Professionals

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Hillary has the answers on gun violence

BY MARGUERITE RUFF

IF I WASN'T ALREADY voting for Hillary Clinton, she definitely won my vote after I had a chance to be in the audience at MSNBC's town hall with her in Philadelphia on April 25. I wanted to ask her about how she plans to deal with gun violence, but Rachel Maddow asked her about it first. This issue is so important to me because I lost my son Justin to gun violence last December in

a senseless shooting. And this is such a big problem in Philadelphia.

I'm glad they didn't show me on the TV when she was talking because I was just bawling. I agreed with her wholeheartedly when she said we have to break the grip of the gun culture on young people, and we have to get them to understand that guns are never an answer to settling disputes.

There is no cure-all, obviously, but she spoke with such passion, and it was heartfelt. I really believed what she was saying, and I believe she will make it a priority if she's elected.

Being involved in politics is new for me, so it was just an amazing experience to be able to attend this event. I was so glad I could participate. It made me want to get even more involved. On the morning of the Pennsylvania primaries, I even got up early to vote, and that's not like me. But I had to get out and vote early so I could do phone banking after work to make sure other members of my union got out to vote, too.

Watch Hillary's comments about gun violence: bit.ly/HRC_Philly.

Marguerite Ruff is a special education classroom assistant at John Marshall Elementary School in Philadelphia, and an active member of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.

This spring, retired AFT member Sherry Friedman volunteered with fellow retirees from the United Federation of Teachers in New York City on Hillary Clinton's campaign trail in Florida, canvassing from Fort Lauderdale to Miami. With a daily list of up to 70 doors to knock on, she found it sometimes exhausting but always gratifying to talk with voters.

Campaign notes from the road

BY SHERRY FRIEDMAN

LET ME SHARE this with you. I learned that Florida is more than luxurious gated communities for northern snowbirds. Instead, it is also a state of native Floridians with varied social and economic problems, a microcosm of America. We were amazed at how many people said "God bless you for coming to see

me" because they were hungry for contact with other union members and the chance to discuss their views.

We met a range of people from young workers to retirees, from the wealthy to the poor. With most, their eyes lit up at the sight of our blue "AFT for Hillary" T-shirts.

In Riviera Beach, a mailman making rounds, who told us he relocated from "anti-union Wisconsin," was glad to see us, yet urged us to leave before sundown. He warned we were canvassing an area that had suffered street violence. Undaunted, we continued knocking on doors of modest stucco houses.

"Life needs to get better here," a senior citizen recovering from surgery told us, "and I need my pension, Medicare and Social Security. That's why I'm for Hillary."

A retired painter in Lake Worth invited us in to see his gallery of President Obama pictures. "Look at my shrine," he boasted. "We need Hillary to continue Obamacare!"

In West Palm Beach, an ex-New Yorker would speak to us only in whispers. "I'm a black woman and this is still the South. Life

is hard for us here. Hillary can change things."

Besides canvassing, our group attended exciting events. That was us at the Miami Dade College debate between Hillary and Bernie Sanders, waving our placards to cheering crowds and cars honking in support. The culmination of our activities was the thrilling victory rally in West Palm. The atmosphere was electric as we stood proudly on risers near the stage, believing we helped Hillary win that winner-take-all state.

"We love the AFT and all you do for Hillary and your students," a staffer told us.

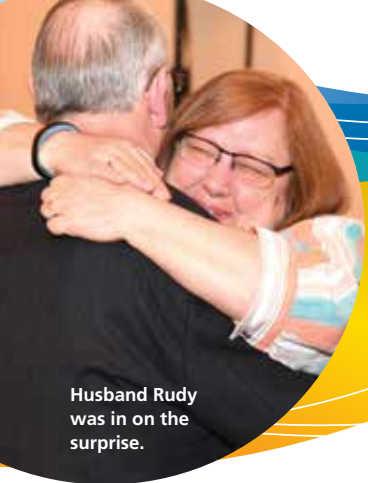
Back home in New York, I continue to support our candidate, attend rallies and donate to the campaign fund. You may have spotted me behind Hillary onstage at the Apollo Theater. As she walked by, she smiled at my AFT shirt and gave me a thumbs-up. After her speech, she thanked me for going to Florida for her. "Please ask the AFT to keep up the good work. I still need you," she added.

Now I urge you to join us and vote for Hillary Clinton this November. I recommend that you volunteer your time and money, too. She is the most qualified person to be our nominee and the next president of the United States. She has always had our backs, and it is time to have hers.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHERRY FRIEDMAN

Sherry Friedman is an AFT member retired from a 35-year career in the New York City public schools.



Husband Rudy was in on the surprise.



2016
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2016 PSRP award winners

Child Welfare and Community Service Helping Hands Award

- Springfield (Mass.) Federation of Paraprofessionals

Children's Literacy Award

- Robbinsdale (Minn.) Federation of Teachers

Defender of the Public Service Award

- Education Minnesota Osseo Educational Support Professionals
- Jefferson County (Ala.) AFT
- Portland (Ore.) Federation of School Professionals

Dorothea Bell Political Action Award

- New York State United Teachers

PSRP Professionalism Award

- Karen Riggelman, Jefferson (La.) Federation of Teachers

Talking Union Award

- Genia Scott, Berkeley (Calif.) Council of Classified Employees
- Tina Solórzano Fletcher, AFT Guild, San Diego Community College District

Union Building Award

- United Federation of Teachers, New York City
- Lawndale (Calif.) Federation of Classified Employees
- Baldwinsville (N.Y.) Educational Support Professionals Association

Union Helping Hands Award

- Albuquerque (N.M.) Educational Assistants Association
- Juneau (Alaska) Education Support Staff

Workers' Memorial Day Award

- Oregon School Employees Association

Through basic training, 'the General' turns paras into leaders

Paraprofessional leadership program builds an army of educators

EVEN A MONTH later, Kris Schwarzkopf still gets choked up remembering the night this spring she was awarded the highest honor an AFT PSRP leader can receive: the Albert Shanker Pioneer Award.

"I'm still not over it. Shocked. Surprised. Honored that I was chosen," she says, and then, with a touch of mischievousness, adds: "First time in my life that I was speechless."

She isn't kidding. Known as "the General" (after the Gulf War general with the same last name), the paraprofessional leader in the Toledo Federation of Teachers is legendary for her political organizing in Ohio, a crucial swing state. The political victory she takes most delight in is the 2011 defeat of infamous right-to-work bill S.B. 5, the handiwork of Ohio Gov. John Kasich.

"One of his threats to us was: 'You either get on the bus, or I'll run you over with the bus,'" she says. "We remember that."

As great as that victory was, Schwarzkopf's singular achievement may be in creating the TFT Paraprofessional Leader Program four years ago, modeled on the AFT's Teacher Leaders Program. The program convenes para leaders one Saturday per month from January through May, with each enrollee receiving a \$500 stipend.

It has three main components: basic training in leadership, a political piece (this spring, participants phone-banked for presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, who won the Ohio Democratic primary), and a project, such as

anti-bullying strategies, that participants develop into a workshop.

This year, the whole group chose one project, a First Book giveaway planned for this summer. So far, the paras have raised well over their \$3,000 book-buying target, including a big donation from the Greater Northwest Ohio AFL-CIO.

Schwarzkopf hopes the nine para leaders currently in the program become friends, and that she'll be able to call on them to take bigger leadership roles over time.

"You know," she says, "the AFT has a saying: Turn members into activists, and activists into leaders."

She has a new project, too: converting fair share payers into union members. The TFT para unit used to have more than 50 fee payers in a unit of 417. That number is now down to 20, "and I'm not giving up yet."

Schwarzkopf received the Pioneer Award at the 2016 PSRP conference. For a full account, visit www.aft.org/PSRP.

PHOTOS BY YRUS CURTIS



A salute and a selfie for the PSRPs.



Connecticut is in the house!



Families and community stand with us in Detroit.

ACTIVISM IS THE ANSWER

Members in two manufacturing towns refuse to lose

MICHIGAN

Calling out broken promises

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD about sickouts in Detroit this spring. What actually happened was more like lockouts.

In March, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder signed a bill to provide \$48.7 million for Detroit Public Schools, money that was supposed to pay school salaries through the summer. However, employees then were told they had no guarantee of being paid for work they'd already done.

Following an enormous outcry from parents, union activists and the public, DPS issued assurances that school programs would continue and staff would be paid.

There was no time to let down their guard, however, as school staff now face an even graver threat. The Michigan House of Representatives, ignoring fierce opposition from the Democratic minority, passed a dead-of-night bill in May that would take harsh actions against Detroit schools—the kind of punishment no other school systems in Michigan have to endure. The AFT and our allies are urging the governor to reject this scheme and move forward with legislation much closer to what Detroit schools need.

“The children of Detroit deserve the same great education that students in surrounding districts can count on,” says Ruby Newbold, president of the Detroit Association of Educational Office Employees and chair of AFT PSRP. “These hateful bills would fail to pay the full DPS debt and would keep our schools

in a chokehold. As a society, we have a moral obligation to fund an equal education for all our kids.”

Promises are being broken in Detroit. The community was promised that the state’s financial package would put a stop to ruthless school cuts. Detroit families were promised a school system that runs efficiently and fairly.

You may already know that workers in Detroit are doing what they must to rebuild their economy. What their schools need from state lawmakers is a helping hand, not a slap in the face.

NEW YORK

Buying time to rebuild

Detroit is not too different from another factory town: Massena, N.Y.

Alcoa, Reynolds Metals and General Motors had plants along the St. Lawrence River. But a decade ago, GM closed its plant in Massena, ending 500 jobs. Baby boomers remember a golden era, growing up with comfortable childhoods and modest family vacations, thanks to good union benefits and job security. Then in 2007, word came that GM was closing, taking tens of millions out of the economy. And last year, another blow: the Alcoa plant, already downsized, prepared to close and lay off another 488 workers.

That was quite enough for the union families of Massena. They banded together to rally at their high school football field, discuss what to do and find a way to buy time. By speaking out together—the thing unions

do best—the townspeople got the ears of their state officials. Late last year, the state stepped in and paid Alcoa \$70 million to keep Massena’s plant open for about three more years.

When AFT activists Lori Jordan and Erin Covell told their story to members attending the AFT PSRP conference this spring, it resonated. Members asked questions and offered encouragement, after which they stuffed backpacks for Massena’s schoolchildren.

Because of union solidarity, said Covell, president of the Massena Federation of Teachers, town leaders had to pay attention. Getting different factions to sit down together and brainstorm was key, agreed Jordan, treasurer of the Massena Confederated School Employees’ Association. “The town is nothing like it was,” she added, “but what has remained is union power.”

Activists from Massena got a taste of that power when they visited McDowell County, W.Va., earlier this year. They hadn’t heard of the AFT’s involvement in Reconnecting McDowell, a coalition working to bring back an economy that had tailed off with coal mining. Their challenges are much the same: how to come together and replace lost jobs. These towns are fine places to live—if only they can employ their children. “That’s my thing,” Covell said. “I want our kids to come home.”

Thanks to its unions, Massena has bought itself some time. And hope.

“For me,” Jordan said, “that’s an example of how the good guys win, standing shoulder to shoulder in solidarity.”

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- understanding and preventing bullying
- assisting students with special needs
- working with parents



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