

West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571, IFT, AFT, AFL-CIO

Union Messenger

"A Union of Professionals"

WSTU Calendar February

2/5-6 - IFT ULI - Westmont
2/7 - 571 EB Meeting - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.
2/7 - 571 HOR Meeting - Westmont - 6:45 p.m.

Union Messenger

Jane Russell, President
Alice Kautsky, Vice President
Sandra Erickson, Treasurer
Cathleen Pope, Secretary
Jonathan Pazol, Financial Secretary
Ed Hohman, Legal Defense
Secretary & COPE Chairperson
Tom Smith,
IFT Field Service Director
Mike Linder,
IFT Field Service Director
Judy Jennings, Office Manager
Julie Masterton, Office Secretary
Andrew Bendelow,
571 Web Administrator
Angel Holmes,
571 Union Messenger Editor



Meet the President

by Angel Holmes

New IFT President Daniel J. Montgomery was the special guest at the December 6, 2010, Local 571 House of Representatives Meeting in Westmont. An English Teacher at Niles North High School for 18 years, as well as President of Local 1274, North Suburban Teachers Union, and IFT Executive Board/Executive Committee member, Dan brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to his new position. In his remarks to the House, Dan spoke about the results of the November election; and though all of the results were not union favorable, in some

aspects it was a key example of what can be accomplished when we set our minds to it.

Education Reform is an issue that is at the top of Dan's list; and as such, he has already attended the Special House Committee on Education Reform, held on December 16 and 17 in Aurora. Dan spoke on behalf of educators to address changes in performance evaluations, seniority laws, mutual consent transfers, and other issues that threaten the service of teachers.

There is much work to be done in 2011, but Dan reminded us

to always keep in mind that "what we care most about is the children in our schools".



Dan Montgomery
IFT President

Convention News

Inside this issue:

From your president... Wasn't the World Supposed to End in 2012?	2
The Need for Better Teacher Evaluation	3
Calling All Teen Writers	4
January Feature — York Dukes Support the Troops	4

A West Suburban Teachers Union Local 571 constitutional convention will convene on March 21, 2011, at the Robert M. Healey Conference Center in Westmont, Illinois. Each council must hold an election by secret ballot to determine its delegates and alternates. If the total number of nominees is equal to or less than the allotted number of delegates, no election is necessary.

Proposed amendments to the Local 571 constitution and bylaws must be received in the Local 571 office on or before Friday, February 4, 2011. If you are interested in becoming a delegate to this convention, follow the instructions you receive from your council president. Please mark your calendars with the following convention information...

DATE: Monday, March 21, 2011

TIME: 4:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

PLACE: Robert M. Healey
Conference Center
500 Oakmont Lane
Westmont, IL 60559

AGENDA: Light Dinner &
General Business Session

COST: \$5.00 per delegate
(fee is non-refundable)

Wasn't the World Supposed to End in 2012?

from your president

Will the year 2011 live in infamy as the end of collective bargaining for teacher union members as we know it? And we thought 2010 was legislatively bad when the two-tier pension bill passed in less than 12 hours. By the time you read this, teacher dismissal, tenure, performance, layoffs, and strike reform may be drastically altered unless all of our members rose up in defiance of what big business and so-called education reformers absolutely believe is best for education. These are the same groups who address our students, parents, and community members as “third parties”; that is, those who will suffer irreparably if the proposed changes to school code are not made immediately.

The Special House Committee on Education Reform, chaired by Linda Chapa LaVia (Rep #83) and Roger Eddy (Rep #109), met over two days on December 16 and December 17 in Aurora. The agenda was very specific—to hear testimony from only four groups: the education reformers, the union, school management, and a miscellaneous panel that included parents, community advocacy groups, the governor's office and the Illinois State Board of Education. Each of the panels responded to the proposed legislation, *The Performance Counts Act of 2010*, written by Advance Illinois and Stand for Children, two groups largely funded by major corporations and their millionaire CEO's, and the Illinois Business Roundtable.

Here's the “education reform” agenda. How much of this checklist did the 96th Illinois General Assembly push through in its waning days?

- Principals have ultimate control over the revocation of a teacher's teaching certificate.
- Teacher performance, rather than seniority, is the criterion for layoffs.
- In the yet to be finalized performance evaluation model and the launch of the longitudinal data system used to track students, a teacher's pay is now linked to student performance. (How is this done?)
- It is more difficult to obtain the right to due process (tenure).
- Impose additional steps before teachers can strike.
- Additional indicators have been added to the School Report Card, especially student growth, and school per-pupil funding.

At the December 16/17 hearing, the Union panel made up of IFT representatives, President Dan Montgomery and Executive Vice-president Karen Lewis, two IEA officers, and the IFT's general counsel spoke with one voice. Our members' rights must be defended while creating real education reform which cannot be done overnight, or even in a few days. The Special Senate Committee on Education Reform

was set to meet on January 3, 2011. Did the House and Senate Committees forge ahead to pass the proposed legislation, or is there still a chance that we can provide a meaningful voice? Are there really any “friends” of education left in the legislature? How about the governor?

Did you contact your representative and senator about the above checklist? Has the legislation as presented passed and begun to devastate our IFT education members and set a precedent that could potentially devastate every union member in Illinois? Generally we can look forward to a new beginning every January 1. Is 2011 that year? I hope it is. I hope the proposed legislation either failed to be passed or at least stalled to be reworked by the 97th General Assembly. Whatever happened, I hope you can say that you contacted your lawmakers about these serious changes and will continue to make contact until **real** education reform that will help all of our students becomes law.

In unity,



Local 571 President

The Need for Better Teacher Evaluation

by Bonnie Saracco

Many teachers see the state of teacher evaluation today as woefully inadequate, a view that is corroborated by research. Across our country, too few teachers are observed systematically and given useful feedback. Very often evaluation forms are simple checklists concluding with the summative rating choices of satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

This is dangerous for our profession because there is a strong push for linking these problematic evaluations to merit pay and teacher dismissals. The Illinois House Special Committee on Education Reform is now considering the limitation of collective bargaining and due process rights for teachers, a position unremittingly advanced in the media.

Another disturbing trend is the drive to make teacher evaluations public under a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. Fortunately, due to strong IFT efforts, the Performance Evaluations Protection Act prohibits this in Illinois.

During the last decade, with support from AFT, teachers and administrators have worked together in a small number of districts to implement high

quality evaluation systems.

These improved evaluation systems are based on best practice standards and employ rubrics that describe practice at each performance level. The use of specific language in rubrics results in more objective evaluation and is also a useful guide that helps teachers advance to higher ratings. Good evaluation systems also rely on expert observations and feedback, giving teachers more direction and support to improve.

When high quality evaluation systems are missing, many stakeholders find it necessary to propose that tenure and reappointment decisions be made solely or largely on test scores. Despite the fact that statisticians point out serious flaws in doing so, several states have recently passed legislation requiring that 40 to 50 percent of teacher evaluations be based on test scores.

Student scores on valid and reliable tests can be part of a good teacher evaluation system, but many of the tests in use today must be looked at with caution for rating teachers because they measure only a narrow range of achievement,

have not been validated to assess teacher effectiveness, have forms of measurement error, and give only a partial view of student learning.

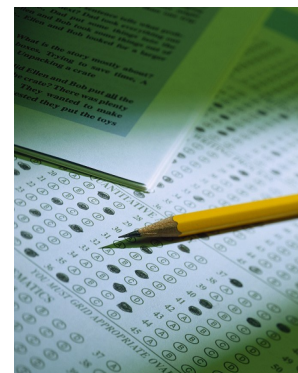
The test score "solution" is fueled by the fact that districts have rarely used their evaluation systems to dismiss incompetent teachers. Although both teachers and administrators report that some teachers are clearly ineffective, very few teachers are dismissed.

Despite the inaccurate public perception, AFT holds the clear position that failing teachers should be objectively and accurately identified, given detailed feedback on how to improve, and dismissed if they do not make quick and significant progress. This can only be done fairly under valid evaluation systems.

Teachers deserve a strong role in designing better evaluation systems, and our union gives us the opportunity to be heard.



"Although both teachers and administrators report that some teachers are clearly ineffective, very few teachers are dismissed."



West Suburban Teachers Union Local 571
500 Oakmont Lane
P.O. Box 390
Westmont, IL 60559-0390

Phone: 630-468-4098
Fax: 630-468-4088
E-mail: jjennings@ift-aft.org



"A Union of Professionals"

We're on the Web!
www.wstu571.org

CALLING ALL TEEN WRITERS...



Do you have a student who is a budding new writer? Does he or she have great story ideas that they can't wait to put down on paper? Are the staff writers of your high school newspaper looking to showcase their work on a larger scale? Then search no more; THE MASH has come to the rescue. Published by the Chicago Tribune, THE MASH is a weekly newspaper showcasing news, sports, and entertainment from a teenage perspective. It is written for teens by teens. Does your student have what it takes to be on staff at THE MASH? Visit THEMASH.COM for details.

JANUARY FEATURE York Dukes Support the Troops

Students and staff of York Community High School in Elmhurst gathered in the faculty lounge on December 10, to prepare care packages for Michael Giuliano and his troop as they were scheduled to spend the holidays in Iraq. Led by Colleen Griganavicius and Karla Goldman, Challenge Club co-sponsors, donations of Slim Jims, Jell-O, pocket size packages of Kleenex, powder



packs of Gatorade, travel size shampoo and soap, energy bars, small tins of bag balm, socks, word puzzles, stationary, hand warmers, gloves, small bottles of lotion, and playing cards were sorted and packaged for delivery. The Elmhurst Press and The Doings stopped by to capture the event in pictures for an upcoming publication. Thanks for giving back, York. Go Dukes!

