



Union Messenger

March 2009

Winter No Respite for West Suburban Staff



Despite an overnight storm, over 75 Local 571 members took part in a Saturday seminar with Social Security Administration and Teachers Retirement System representatives tailored for members 2-4 years from retirement.



Local 571 COPE chair Edward Hobman displays an AFT award as Local 571 president Jane Russell pages through the awards book. Story on page 2 of this issue.

Chicago's variable weather had little impact on activities for Local 571. In addition to an ER&D class that meets weekly, officers represented the Local at a variety of events, workshops were conducted, and a number of meetings held.



Pictured with Illinois attorney general Lisa Madigan (center), are Local 571 area trustee Kathleen Greenawalt, president Jane Russell, vice-president Alice Kautsky, and legal defense secretary Ed Hobman attend a dinner hosted by the Democratic Party of DuPage County on February 8. Over 500 guests included Governor Patrick Quinn, Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias, and Comptroller Daniel Hynes.

March promises no rest as officers plan the #571 election and several PSRP members prepare for the Baltimore conference.

Report Shows Limited Progress on State Standards

“Closing the Expectations Gap,” released February 19 by Achieve, finds that, while some states are taking the steps necessary to better prepare students for college and careers, progress in many states has been slow. “We commend Achieve for continuing its quest to ensure that every child attending U.S. public schools, regardless of where he or she lives, is taught to high-quality, internationally benchmarked standards,” AFT president Randi Weingarten says in response to the report. “The AFT has been a longtime leader in the standards movement, and earlier this week we called for national standards.”

“Achieve's report is based on the common-sense idea that students will learn better if we define what they are expected to learn and what skills we expect them to acquire. We have made too little progress, despite decades of

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Summer Holocaust Seminar

Secondary school teachers who teach about the Holocaust have a unique opportunity to participate in the “Summer Seminar Program on the Holocaust and Jewish Resistance.”

Participants will be taught by prominent scholars in Poland and Israel from July 5-23, 2009. The program is sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers, the Educators Chapter of the Jewish Labor Committee and the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors.

(Continued on page 5)

SAFE Program Expanding

With many families in financial distress, Union Plus is launching a program of new and enhanced benefits to assist eligible union members who are facing hardships.

The new benefits program, called Union SAFE (Security, Assistance and Financial Education) provides an array of benefits, including help for those suffering from layoffs, soaring hospital costs, problems paying their mortgage, and saving or paying for college. See the home page of www.wstu571.org for details.

Have Things in Illinois Really Changed?

from your president

As we move into March, it seems not much has changed in Illinois politics since last December. Political “scandals” persist as the state’s officers and General Assembly try to start work at remedying a huge state deficit.

Fortunately, through the hard work of many American Federation of Teachers members like yourselves, the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was passed. This bill includes funding for education:

\$53.6 billion for State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (can be used for avoiding cutbacks, preventing layoffs, funding school modernization, or other education-related purposes in K-12 and higher education)

- \$13 billion for Title I
- \$12.2 billion for IDEA
- \$15.6 billion for Pell Grants
- \$24.8 billion for qualified school construction bonds
- and more...

The next step is to ensure these funds are wisely invested. State and local levels must guarantee that recovery money is used to support and strengthen public education as well as health care and other public services.

The Obama administration has a new web site, <http://www.recovery.gov/>, where citizens can track every dollar spent. Illinois has a similar site, <http://recovery.illinois.gov/>. You may post comments and ask questions on each of these online resources.

On the IFT’s main web site, www.ift-aft.org, the Legislative radio button leads to an article on the federal stimulus bill with links to the U.S. Department of Education and the ARRA web site. There is a state-by-state breakdown of allocations, including amounts planned for Title I.

Even though there may be an influx of federal dollars into Illinois, the budget will still need to be balanced and state debts paid. The IFT continues to work diligently for its members by finding sponsors for IFT proposed bills, support for bills that will help our students, members and schools, and by monitoring proposed legislation. Should you receive a “legislative action needed” alert from the IFT or through your council president, please respond as soon as is possible.

The most recent alert concerns two bills introduced to the Illinois Senate that would convert Illinois public employee pension plans from the current “defined benefit” system to a “defined contribution” system. In these economic times it would be an even greater disaster to turn public pension dollars into a “defined contribution” system. The IFT has vigorously fought on our behalf against similar previous legislation and will continue to speak out against Illinois Senate Bills 303 and 304 introduced by Senator Bill Brady (R-Bloomington).

As the Illinois General Assembly moves forward, check the IFT web site at least weekly to stay abreast of legislative happenings affecting our jobs, our students, our families and working people in our state.



Together, it is possible to make an impact by contacting our elected representatives. This is as simple as sending an e-mail, making a short phone call or visiting a home office in your area. The officials we elect are public servants. They should have an open door policy for all of their constituents. For legislators in our area with whom we work most closely that certainly is true.

Show your support. Be involved. And thanks for all you do.

In unity,

Local 571 President

West Suburban Teachers Named To AFT Partners In Political Education Honor Roll

The IFT and six Illinois locals, including the West Suburban Teachers Union, have been named to the 2008 honor roll for its efforts to raise political funds for the Committee on Political Education (COPE).

An award plaque and book of honorees circulated at February’s House of representatives meeting. Voluntary COPE contributions allow the AFT to represent members in the political process and make our voices heard at every level of government—local, state, and federal. Local 571 COPE funds have also helped Councils support a number of school referenda campaigns.

Brain Function and Academic Failure

by Bonnie Saracco

Research has found that, although certain demographics predict academic failure, effective teaching can help all students learn better.

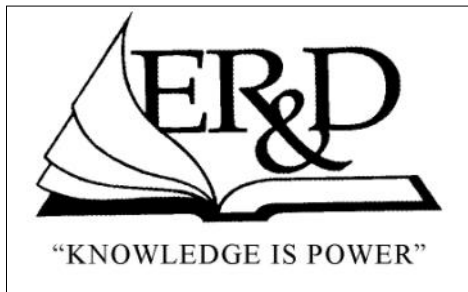
The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) has also done extensive research on brain function and academic failure.

This research used modern brain scan technology and conducted the most precise studies of brain processing ever done to find a medical basis for learning disability.

The NICHD research, which sampled the population across many dimensions such as IQ, gender, and age, found that learning disability is most accurately defined simply as low achievement in a specific academic area, such as reading or mathematics.

When the researchers looked at the successful performance of any academic task, the brain scans of students identified as having a learning disability were no different from the brain scans of the students who simply could not perform the task. The brain scans of both groups differed from those of students who could perform the task.

Brain scans of readers differed significantly from those of nonreaders. Among nonreaders alone, there was no significant difference. Brain scans of adults who have not learned to read looked like the brain scans of young children who have not yet learned to read but will learn easily.



The NICHD concluded that students labeled as learning disabled can benefit from the same instructional strategies as other students and found no evidence to support the commonly-held “discrepancy formula” for identifying learning disabled students.

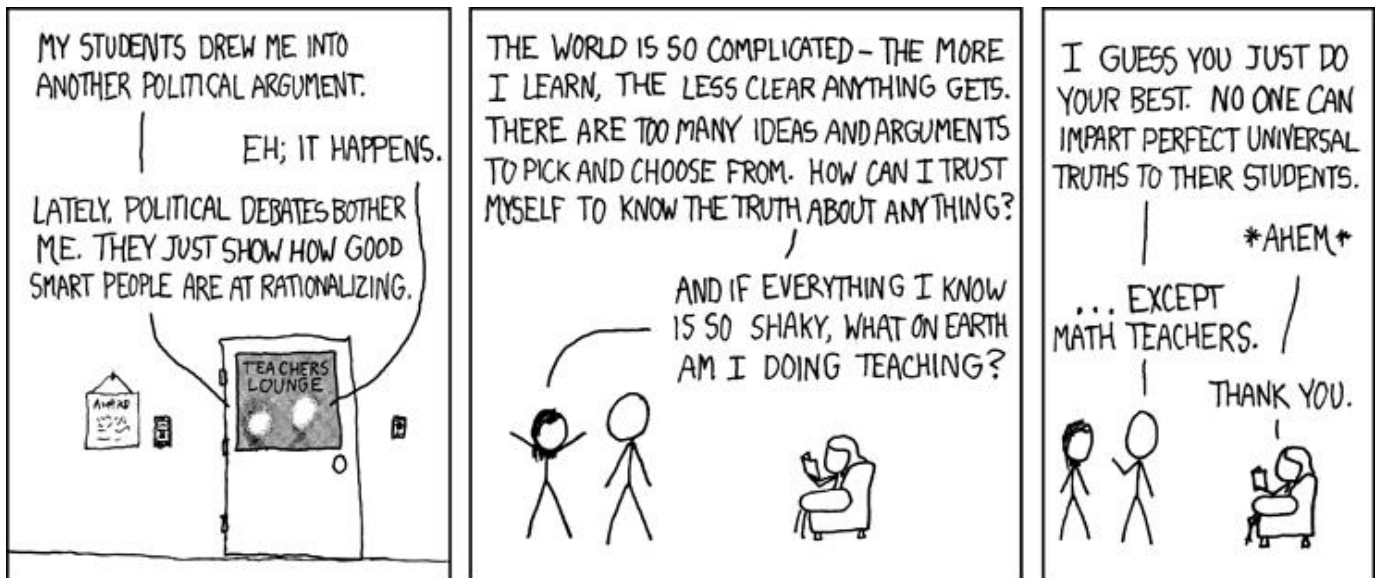
Brain research in other areas of learning, such as Michael Posner’s *Images of the Mind*, has replicated these findings and has also found the brain to be extremely flexible and adaptable.

All of this is good news for teachers because it means that the same instruc-

tional strategies can work for high, medium, and low achievers, and that instruction designed to help special learners can also benefit the class as a whole.

The tremendous challenges that students present to teachers require precise and useful instructional tools, but teachers are often presented with instructional tools that are mere fads based on the swinging pendulum of educational emphasis from teacher-direction to student-direction and back. Fortunately, the past 30 years of empirical instructional design research has found durable instructional tools that are effective for almost all students.

In our ER&D course, *Instructional Strategies that Work for all Disciplines*, teachers become skilled at using six research-based instructional tools that work across grade levels and subjects to prevent failure. These tools are Big Ideas, Background Knowledge, Mediated Scaffolding, Judicious Review, Strategic Information, and Textbook Analysis. This popular class, which also covers additional topics including rubrics design and questioning strategies, will be offered again this summer.



courtesy of xkcd.com

QUOTE OF NOTE: WHY THE EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT MATTERS

“We cannot have a solid, stable retirement unless we have a solid, stable middle class. And unions are key to that middle class. Union workers are *three times* more likely to have a defined-benefit pension plan than non-union workers. And union workers are *five times* more likely to have health insurance than non-union workers.”

George Kourpias, President Alliance for Retired Americans Feb. 11, 2009



Local 571 Retirees Council News

Recent articles on topics important to Local 571 retirees, as noted below and more, are available on the Retirees Council page of: <http://www.wstu571.org>. Additional information about each of these resource is also provided.

Alliance for Retired Americans - Friday Alerts:

- Why Retirees Should Care About the Employee Free Choice Act
- Stimulus Legislation Signed - Offers Checks for Seniors, Help for Unemployed
- Retiree Health Care a “Sticking Point” in Auto Bailout Negotiations
- Deal Reached in Congress on \$787 Billion Stimulus Plan
- House Passes Three Bills to Help Seniors
- Health Care Reform Efforts to Continue Without Tom Daschle
- Temporary Change to IRA Law May Affect Many Seniors
- Medicare Faces Management Problems
- “Doughnut Hole” in Medicare Part D Leads to Health Concerns for Seniors

Join the ARA: www.retiredamericans.org/join

AFT Retirees e-Newsletter: (featured last month)

- Congress Passes \$789.5 Billion Economic Recovery Package
- Recovery Bill Offers Tax Relief to Retirees and Working Families
- AFT Campaign Generates Broad Support for Recovery Package
- Temporary Change to IRA Law May Affect Many Seniors
- Medicare Advantage Premiums Rose by 13 Percent This Year
- The Secrets of Eating for Your Age
- Thousands Turn Out To Urge Passage of Employee Free Choice Act
- Key Healthcare Provisions of House Recovery Act
- White House To Push for Public Plan in Healthcare Reform
- Obama Reverses Bush Anti-Worker Executive Orders
- Quote of Note: Business on House Recovery Bill

Join AFT Retiree e-News: http://www.unionvoice.org/aft_retirement/join

(Expectations Gap continued from page 1)

work, and we need to change our approach in two fundamental ways,” Weingarten says.

“First, we need to ensure that teachers are very involved in setting standards, and give teachers the tools and conditions to help kids meet standards, including a core curriculum, assessments and time for professional development—all based on the standards. The failure to involve teachers doomed the standards movement.

“Second, we need to restart the discussion about creating high-quality content standards for all students. Most of the effort has focused on states, and this report makes clear that too few students today are educated in an environment with clear benchmarks for high standards of achievement. A Fordham Institute report on the variability of No Child Left Behind’s sanctions also reinforces the need for national standards. By bringing together a broad-based group of educators, elected officials, community leaders, content specialists and pedagogical experts to establish high-quality national standards, we can, in one fell swoop, remove a key obstacle—the uneven quality of state standards—to providing better and more opportunities for America’s children.” [AFT release]

Tell the IFT how funding woes are impacting your job...

Your union wants to hear from you about how funding shortfalls in Illinois, for education and public services, are affecting you and the people you serve.

In addition to emailing IFT activist members a link to the surveys, non activist access to the surveys is now posted on www.ift-aft.org.

Your participation will ensure that your voice is heard in Springfield during this legislative session. Thank you for taking the survey and sharing your views.

Tonight (February 13) Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. It now awaits President Obama's signature. This is a remarkable accomplishment made possible by the commitment and leadership of President Obama, House Speaker Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Reid, and by your activism.

I want to thank each and every one of you for your hard work in helping get this important bill passed. The flood of support and activism from AFT members has been truly remarkable. Through the union's "**Fight for America's Future: It's Dollars and Sense**" campaign, members across the country have come together to fight for this recovery bill, from sending more than 30,000 letters and placing thousands of calls to Congress, to meeting with congressional and state elected leaders, to wearing blue in solidarity on February 10, "Unity Day."

The AFT's voice was heard loud and clear in the months and days leading up to passage of this important piece of legislation. But passing the recovery bill is merely the first step. The next step is to ensure the funds are invested wisely. We will continue to get our message out, now at the state and local levels, to guarantee that the funding provided for in this package is used to support and strengthen public education, healthcare and the other public services so vital to our nation's growth and stability.

In unity,
Randi Weingarten

The complete text of President Randi Weingarten's letter is available on wstu571.org — editor

Termination, Dismissal, and RIF

March is the time of the school year when school boards announce most decisions about staffing needs for next year. As these decisions are made and announced, the following information may be helpful.

- Non-tenure teachers may be dismissed without a reason, provided the dismissal does not violate constitutionally protected rights, during the first three years of full-time employment.
- Non-tenure teachers completing four consecutive full-time years of teaching must receive specific reasons for dismissal.
- In either above situation, dismissed teachers must receive written notice at least forty five (45) days before the end of the school term. A district's failure to observe this requirement will result in the teacher being re-employed for the following school year.
- Non-tenure teachers are not entitled to a hearing when dismissed.
- The non-RIF (Reduction In Force) dismissal of a tenured teacher must be for cause and the teacher is entitled to a hearing before an independent hearing officer.
- If a district implements a RIF program it must be done in accordance with provisions of the school code and its own collective bargaining agreement.
- An important distinction between teachers and support staff exists in the event of a RIF. Tenured teachers must receive notice of a RIF sixty (60) days before the end of the school term. Support personnel must receive a RIF notice thirty (30) days before the last day of employment which could be before the end of the school term.

If your administration is considering such action your Council leadership should contact the IFT Field Service Director assigned to your Council to discuss the specifics of your situation in detail.

The popcorn is expensive

+ but the tickets don't have to be.



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AFT has an expense reimbursement and/or endorsement arrangement for marketing this program. For more information, please contact AFT Financial Services at 800/238-1133, ext. 4493; send an e-mail to disclosureinfo@aft.org; or visit www.aftplus.org/disclosure.



(Holocaust Seminar continued from page 1)

Applications are evaluated as they are received, so apply soon. All applications must be received by April 1.

For information go to:

http://www.jewishlaborcommittee.org/2008/11/2009_holocaust_jewish_resistance.html or call 212/477-0707. [Inside IFT]

Teach Haitian Teachers Program

Information on a summer opportunity to teach teachers in Haiti is posted on the Local 571 web site. Deadline for applications is March 16.

Local 571 Officer Duties & Responsibilities

Officers attend all meetings of the Executive Board and House of Representatives, and special meetings called by the president of Local 571. Each shall serve on a committee if appointed. Officers are ex-officio members of each Local 571 Council. Officers are, by virtue of office, delegates to all conventions of the AFT, IFT, and Local 571. All Local 571 officers are bonded by the AFT.

a. **President:** The president presides over all meetings (regular and special meetings of the Local 571 Executive Board and House of Representatives). He/she appoints committee chairpersons with the advice and approval of the Executive Board. The president performs other duties that are ordinarily incumbent upon the office. He/she is the ranking Local 571 delegate to all IFT, AFT, Local 571 and AFL-CIO Conventions. The president serves as a member of the Union Building Fund and as an IFT vice-president (if elected). This is a part-time or full-time position, minimum 20 hrs/month or 20 hrs/week respectively.

b. **Vice President:** The vice president (and president) represents Local 571 as a member of the Union Building Fund (UBF) Board of Directors and reports business at UBF meetings to the Local 571 Executive Board and House of Representatives. Currently, he/she chairs the Convention Committee. The vice president attends official functions and presides over the Executive Board and House of Representatives in the absence of the president. The current vice president holds an elected office as IFT vice president representing Local 571. 10 to 20 hours/month.

c. **Secretary:** The secretary maintains the non-financial files and records and is custodian of the seal and charter of the organization. He/she records and keeps minutes of all meetings of the Local 571 Executive Board and House of Representatives. He/she keeps a list of the names, addresses, and phone numbers of members of the Executive Board, delegates to the House of Representatives, and Local 571 committees. 8 to 15 hours/month.

d. **Legal Defense Secretary:** The legal defense secretary is responsible for chairing the Arbitration and Legal Screening Committee, tracking Local 571's legal defense and arbitration expenses and for applying for AFT/IFT reimbursement funds. Currently, the legal defense secretary also chairs the Committee on Political Education (COPE), maintains the business and financial records for the COPE fund and makes regular reports to the House of Representatives. 6 to 12 hours/month.

e. **Financial Secretary:** The financial secretary is responsible for monitoring all Local 571 expenses and reconciling all expenses with the approved budget. He/she prepares a report for each House of Representatives meeting, itemizing all expenses and their budgeted category. The financial secretary serves as chair of the Audit Committee and is responsible for monitoring and reporting Local 571's non-budgeted revenue and expenses. 8 to 15 hours/month.

f. **Treasurer:** The treasurer is responsible for receiving and depositing monies from dues and other sources. He/she chairs the budget committee, prepares the budget, annual financial statement, and monthly treasurer's reports. The treasurer maintains Local 571's financial records and disburses funds for approved obligations including officer, staff, and council payrolls. He/she keeps accurate records available at all times for the Executive Board and Audit Committee and submits quarterly and yearly IRS forms. The treasurer arranges an annual audit by an impartial party. He/she works with Council treasurers and their business offices as needed. 8 to 15 hours/month.

AFT Member Card/AFT Benefits—Financial Services



AFT + member benefits include a range of financial products and services to help members, in-

cluding credit counseling, loans, and online tax preparation. For information visit **AFT Members Only** at: <http://www.aft.org/members>.

WSTU Calendar

March

3/9—571 EB Meeting - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.
3/9—571 HOR Meeting-Westmont - 6:45 p.m.
3/19-22—AFT PSRP Conference - Baltimore

April

4/20—571 EB Meeting - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.
4/20—571 HOR Meeting-Westmont - 6:45 p.m.
4/25-26—IFT ULI - Westmont
4/27-5/1—Local 571 Officer Elections
(To be conducted at each Council's direction)

May

5/11—571 EB Meeting - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.
5/11—571 HOR Meeting - Westmont - 6:45 p.m.
(571 proposed budget presented to HOR)

WSTU OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY-FRIDAY 9:00 AM—5:00 PM
THE LOCAL 571 OFFICE MAY BE CLOSED ON SCHOOL HOLIDAYS, PLEASE CALL AHEAD.

Reminders...

National PSRP Conference

March 20-22 Baltimore Hilton Convention Center

AFT Robert G Porter Scholarships

Application deadline March 31

Thomas H. Reece Memorial Teacher Education Scholarship

Application deadline April 3

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
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