

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

# Union Messenger

## "A Union of Professionals"

### WSTU March Calendar

3/18-571 EB Mtg. Westmont  
 3/18-571 proposed budget presented to EB  
 3/18- 571 HOR Mtg.-Westmont-6:45 p.m.  
 3/18-Deadline for nominations for 571  
 Officers election  
 3/18- Deadline for nominations for IFT  
 Convention  
 3/21-24 AFT PSRP Conference  
 Minneapolis, MN

### 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  
 Arnavaz Mistry-Mujthaba,  
 IFT Field Service Director  
 Judy Jennings, Office Manager  
 Julie Masterton, Office Secretary  
 Andrew Bendelow,  
 571 Web Administrator  
 Kyra Lopez,  
 571 *Union Messenger* Editor



### You Did It! Again!

by Jane Russell

With the amount of e-mails, phone calls, in-person visits, and Springfield rallies, you convinced the Illinois legislature in its final session days NOT to pass the proposed reprehensible pension reform bills before them. Although touted as a way to save our pension systems, not enough votes could be found to put the legislation up for a vote. Thank you for the monumental effort, much of it coming during the winter holiday break. Local 571 had three bus loads of members attend the Pension Rallies on January 3 and 4 in Springfield. There was even a march to the Governor's mansion in protest of his proposed pension reform legislation. Without your continued persistence, things may have turned out differently.

But now the 98<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has begun to meet with its 33 newly inaugurated members, and pension "reform" begins anew. On January 9, 2013, Senate President Cullerton filed SB1, the newest hybrid of proposed pension changes. SB1 includes:

- Provisions to allow the court to rule that changes can apply to active members and retirees separately (For example, if parts of the legislation were found to be unconstitutional for one group but not the other, the language would become effective for only the one group.)
- The cost shift from state to local districts
- No provision to allow retirement system members, as individuals, to sue their respective retirement system or the State
- Language to extend ERO although ERO is currently set to expire on June 30, 2013

With the state's bond rating reduction and the burgeoning pension debt, legislators are ripe to pass some kind of pension "reform." Understanding that legislation will probably pass this spring, the We Are One Coalition has called for a Pension Summit on February 11, 2013. The unions, legislative leaders, budget analysts, pension system researchers, constitutional attorneys and others are being called upon to work together on the agreed-upon legislative changes to the pension systems.

What happens, of course, remains to be seen.

What we do know is that all of us are going to have to continue the dialogue with the legislators. Many of the newly elected Illinois senators and representatives are from districts where we reside. It will be incumbent upon us to meet with these new legislators to "educate" them about our issues. Most have opened their local legislative offices. Stop by and introduce yourself. Should you need help in identifying your local legislator or finding office information, please call the WSTU office, 630-468-4098.

2013 is going to be an interesting year. Thanks for your continuing commitment to fight for better schools, for our students and workers' rights. Together, We Are One!

In unity,

*Jane A. Russell*

Local 571 President

### Inside This Issue:

#### You Did It! Again!

#### Common Core Standards Update

2

#### Excellence in Education

3

#### Nominations and Elections at Local 571

4

## Updating Reading Instruction to Fit the Common Core State Standards

by Bonnie Saracco



The AFT has revised its professional development courses to include information about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Danielson Framework for teacher evaluation. This fall the AFT brought its reading trainers, including those from Local 571, to Washington D.C., for two days of training on how to teach our classes *Beginning Reading Instruction* and *Reading Comprehension Instruction* to fit the new standards.

We began by discussing the *Winter 2010-2011 American Educator* article "Advancing our Students Language and Literacy, the Challenge of Complex Texts" by Marilyn Jager Adams. A major challenge of the Common Core is that our students will be required to read more complex texts, and the research behind this article demonstrated that they are unprepared to do so due to the "dumbing down" of our textbooks over the last five decades.

SAT scores have been falling for the last 50 years. The SAT verbal scores bottomed out between 1974 and 1998, with the largest drop being within the scores of the top 10% of the test-takers. ACT verbal scores are also problematic. An ACT score below 21 predicts difficulty with the reading demands of college and career, and 51% of our nation's ACT scores are now below 21.

These trends correspond to the decrease in the complexity of our textbooks. Today the most popular high school textbooks have a readability level between ninth and tenth grade. If students have not been instructed with twelfth-grade level texts, they can't read them confidently on these tests or in college courses.

The only way for students to develop adequate literacy levels is to read more advanced texts. It cannot be accomplished by other means. This is true because there are no situations where spoken language begins to approach the complexity and vocabulary demands of written language. In fact, a study by respected researcher Jeanne Chall revealed that the only oral language sample that exceeded preschool books in vocabulary range was expert witness testimony! Because of this, the Common Core will require students to begin to listen to more complex texts in kindergarten and to begin to read more complex texts in grade two.

Our AFT courses now include the instructional strategy *Close Reading* to help us enable our students to deal with the more demanding texts that they will encounter on Common Core assessments. During *Close Reading* the teacher presents students with challenging reading material and closely guides them with many questions and prompts relating directly to the text. For example, our instructor modeled *Close Reading* by leading us through the first three paragraphs of Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* with nearly thirty questions and discussion points.

*Close Reading* is a powerful tool to help students deal with texts beyond their present literacy levels. Teachers can use several websites to develop *Close Reading* skills. These include [www.achievethecore.org](http://www.achievethecore.org), which has exemplars of *Close Reading* at a variety of grade levels. Also, [www.sharemylesson.com](http://www.sharemylesson.com) has a section of lessons for the Common Core, and [www.hunt-institute.org](http://www.hunt-institute.org) has videos of *Close Reading* in practice.

Our Local 571 professional development courses are now updated to help our members deal with the Common Core State Standards. These courses include the presently-running *Reading Comprehension Instruction*, which we offer during the winter, and *Beginning Reading Instruction*, which we will offer this summer. We encourage you to join us.



Retiree Joy Joyce is an excellent spokesperson about proposed pension reform on the We Are One Coalition YouTube video, produced in conjunction with the release of the Coalition's studies on proposed pension cut plans as well as suggestions on solutions. Go to the We Are One Coalition website, [www.weareoneillinois.org](http://www.weareoneillinois.org) to view the video as well as the white papers and summaries.

## Retirees Corner



Retiree Thomas White brings a creative but strong message to the Springfield legislators, "It's my COLA, not yours!"

**WE  
ARE  
ONE**

## Westfield Middle School Selected as a Featured School at RSAC

*By Lauren McDonald*



Heidi Weeks, Cyndi Bringer, and Lauren McDonald submitted an application for Westfield to be selected as a featured school at the 2012 Raising Student Achievement Conference, held annually at Pheasant Run Resort in St. Charles, Illinois. Westfield was chosen as a featured school, and on December 3, Heidi, Cyndi, and Lauren represented Westfield and accepted the Excellence in Education award on

the school's behalf. A presentation titled "Orange Box, Bubble, and E.A.T." outlined three of Westfield's most successful initiatives.

The Orange Box program allows building staff to use data to help students achieve growth goals on MAP testing. The Bubble Program, an ISAT prep program, is a six-week Math and Reading refresher that provides an academic boost right before ISAT testing in March. Finally, E.A.T. is a special lunchtime program that provides exploratory curricula for students who might not normally receive it during the school day. All three programs have shown tremendous promise as ways to increase student achievement.

In 2006, Westfield Middle School had a student pass rate on the ISAT of 79%. This was the lowest in Bloomington Elementary District 13. In addition, student bullying and disciplinary referrals were high, and the school's culture was not viewed by all as being appropriately student-centered. Today, Westfield is the highest achieving school in the district. It is in its fourth consecutive year of achieving a 90% plus pass rate. Student disciplinary referrals are down, the suspension rate has dropped to less than 1%, and student, parent and community surveys point to a very supportive climate.



# Congratulations!



**Congratulations to the following WSTU members who received National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS) certification in 2012.**

**Caroline Felix, Leyden Council, Art/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood  
Daphne Hill, Proviso Teachers Council, Art/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood  
Todd Veltman, Leyden Council, Science/Adolescence and Young Adulthood**



## Reduced Admission Movie Tickets FOR UNION MEMBERS ONLY

**WHAT:** Reduced Admission Movie Tickets

**\$6.50** - AMC Theaters  
*Some restrictions apply.)*

← **NEW PRICE!**

**\$7.00** - Marcus Theaters  
*(No restrictions apply. Receive a \$3.00 coupon for concession-stand items for every two tickets purchased.)*

**WHERE:** West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571

**HOW:** Obtain an order form from the WSTU, Local 571 website ([www.wstu571.org](http://www.wstu571.org)), send the completed form along with your payment to Local 571, and receive your tickets by mail within two weeks.

**NOTE:** A \$2.00 service charge is added to the total of every order. Since these tickets never expire, members usually purchase several at one time.

## Nominations and Elections at Local 571

Local 571 is accepting nominations until March 18, 2013, for two elections that will be held in each Council in April. Retired members will receive their ballots via U.S. Postal Service.

All Local 571 members are eligible to be nominated for these elections:

### West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571 Officers:

- The officers are President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Legal Defense Secretary, and Financial Secretary.
- The term of office will be July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2015.
- The officers' duties and responsibilities can be found on the Local 571 website ([www.wstu571.org](http://www.wstu571.org)).

### Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) Convention Delegates:

- The Convention will convene at the InterContinental Chicago O'Hare Hotel from October 18-20, 2013.
- Delegates will be reimbursed for expenses up to \$400.

Printed or typed nominations for WSTU Officers and IFT Convention Delegates must be received in the Local 571 office on or before March 18. The nominations may be sent via e-mail to Judy Jennings at [jjennings@ift-aft.org](mailto:jjennings@ift-aft.org), mailed via U.S. Postal Service to Local 571, P. O. Box 390, Westmont, Illinois 60559-0390, or via facsimile at 630-468-4088. Hand deliveries will also be accepted. Nominees will receive a written electronic acknowledgement of receipt.

What's Missing from the Messenger?  
E-Mail me:  
[Kyra\\_Lopez@hotmail.com](mailto:Kyra_Lopez@hotmail.com)



We're on the  
Web!!!  
[www.wstu571.org](http://www.wstu571.org)

## CUT YOUR LOSSES



### NOW IS YOUR TIME TO START FRESH

#### + Credit and Budget Counseling

Free certified consumer credit counseling and discounted debt-management assistance are available 24 hours a day. Learn new money-management skills and save for the future.

#### + GET MORE FROM MEMBERSHIP

+ for more information about this and other savings, go to:  
[aft.org/members](http://aft.org/members)



AFT + is your advocate. For information on all AFT + programs, call 800-238-1133, ext. 8643, or e-mail [aftplus@aft.org](mailto:aftplus@aft.org). The 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](mailto:disclosureinfo@aft.org); or visit [www.aft.org/benefits/disclosure](http://www.aft.org/benefits/disclosure).

West Suburban Teachers Union,  
Local 571  
IFT, AFT, AFL-CIO  
500 Oakmont Lane  
P.O. Box 390  
Westmont, IL 60559  
Phone: 630-468-4098  
Fax: 630-468-4088  
E-mail: [jjennings@ift-aft.org](mailto:jjennings@ift-aft.org)