



# Union Messenger

March 2008

## AFT Teachers Division Weighs NCLB Overhaul

Against the backdrop of growing member and public dissatisfaction with the No Child Left Behind Act, the AFT Teachers division program and policy council discussed the need for a totally different approach that would return this keystone federal education law to its original aim of funding schools in poverty.

NCLB, as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has become known under the Bush administration, dominated discussion at the divisional meeting, held February 19-21 in San Antonio. The law is goading states and districts into a frenzy of over-testing, leaders warned, and it continues to be driven by unrealistic achievement targets that ultimately will lead all schools to be labeled failures. These are systemic flaws that will require Congress to consider fun-

damental changes now that the law is up for reauthorization, AFT executive vice president Antonia Cortese stressed.

The council also examined a new Peter D. Hart Research survey of AFT members showing that NCLB anger among frontline educators continues to grow. Almost two out of three teachers (64 percent) feel the current law has a negative effect on public education, a number that has almost doubled in five years. Several members commented that the law's rigid, punitive tone continues to undermine classroom support, and too many decisions tied to the law are being made without the input of educators in the classroom. "Teachers are tired of riding the bench when they know they have the expertise to coach the team,"

said Mary Cathryn Ricker, president of the St. Paul Federation of Teachers. The council also adopted a resolution urging affiliates to develop peer assistance and review (PAR) programs for new teachers and sent it to the AFT executive council for review and consideration at the 2008 national convention. The draft underscores the union's longstanding dedication to teacher quality and its 25-year history with successful PAR programs in such districts as Toledo, Ohio; Rochester, N.Y.; and New York City. The proposed resolution also pledges AFT's active support for assisting a growing number of Locals interested in this "opportunity to take back our profession," noted PPC chair Fran Lawrence, who is also president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers.

*NCLB Overhaul (Continued on page 4)*

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### Local 571 Completes Successful Constitutional Convention



*Constitution and Bylaw Committee Chair Jon Pazol explains the first of several proposed amendments. Local 571 President Jane Russell reads along as Parliamentarian David Kamper, Local 571 Secretary Cathy Pope, and Sergeant-at-Arms Ed Hohman look on. Kamper is also an IFT field representative, and Hohman is also Local 571's Legal Defense Secretary and COPE Chair.*

## Convention Delegates and the Union's Work

*from your president*

More than 100 Local 571 members worked to make the West Suburban Teachers Union biennial convention a success. Over 65 members attended the February 21, 2008, convention assembled where 59 delegates amended the Local's *Constitution and Bylaws*. Changes in our *Constitution and Bylaws* directly affect all our members, as well as each of Local 571's councils.

The Constitution and Bylaws Committee began meeting to review potential amendments in the fall of 2007. Local 571's *Constitution and Bylaws* are nearly 70 years old. They were significantly rewritten in 2003 to conform to the Landrum-Griffin Act, an important component of federal labor law. Although only six changes were proposed this year, the committee met several times to ensure cohesiveness between the proposed changes and the total document. The Local's officers and staff also met to provide assistance on appropriate wording. Draft amendments were then shared with the WSTU Executive Board which made the final recommendation before being mailed to convention delegates for review one month before the convention convened.

The 571 Convention Committee also met in the fall of 2007. Creating an efficient plan for conducting convention business was a first priority. Closer to convention night, committee members prepared folders for each delegate. The day of the convention, committee members made sure each delegate was properly registered. *Robert's Rules of Order* provided the framework for writing the convention rules of conduct and proceedings that were adopted for the meeting. An exact delegate count is required as the official delegate number must be certified before business can be conducted. Since convention proceedings are so important, a parliamentarian, expert in *Robert's Rules of Order*, was arranged to provide assistance to the Local's officers both before and during the convention.

*Constitution and Bylaws'* changes are summarized on page 4 of this *Union Messenger* issue. Questions may be directed to your council president or delegate representative who attended the February 21, 2008, convention.

Although Local 571's *Constitution and Bylaws* have just been amended, we are always mindful that the document can be improved and are already planning for the next convention. Many Local 571 members helped make the Local

571 *Constitution and Bylaws* a timely, working document. The Local's officers appreciate everyone's efforts and thank them for participating in the 15<sup>th</sup> biennial West Suburban Teachers Union Convention.

In unity,



Local 571 President



*Ending the Convention on a lighter note, Alice Kautsky, Convention Committee Chair, conducts the raffle of three "prizes." Also pictured, (from the left) are Nancy Calkins, Indian Springs Teachers Council President, Joan Froncok, Lyons Council, Bonnie Saracco, Rosemont Council, Mary Ellen Navara, Indian Springs PSRP Council President, Judy Kruse, Retiree Council, Diane Janish, Indian Springs Council Treasurer, Christine Schultz, Area Trustee, Maty Kay Weir, Cicero Council Vice President, and Lee Stephens, Proviso PSRP Council Secretary.*

## Teacher Certification Information to Become Public

Teacher certification information maintained by the Illinois State Board of Education through the Educator Certification System (ECS) will soon be made available to the public. Visitors to the site will be able to access teacher information by school name and/or a teacher's last name. The IFT is strongly urging teachers to visit the ECS site to be sure their information is correctly posted.

To do so, log in under the "District Administrators: Look Up Staff Here" link and enter your Social Security number or Illinois Identification Number (IEIN) and your last name as it appears on your teaching certificate. Teachers can edit some information in the system by logging in to their personal ECS account.

# The English Language Learner Testing Fiasco

By Bonnie Saracco

More than 4.6 million English language learners (ELLs) attend school in the United States. NCLB requires that these students be tested and that their scores be reported as a subgroup.

The AFT has consistently supported the analysis of disaggregated test data as a necessary element in helping schools know exactly where help is needed. Schools are not effective if they inadequately educate certain subgroups of students. However, the AFT also holds that the testing of any subgroup should be done appropriately. Currently, this is not the case.

There are two major challenges in determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) for ELLs. The first challenge is how to define the subgroup. Research has found that it takes between four to seven years for a student to attain full proficiency in academic English. In 2004 the U.S. Department of Education made a policy change to better comply with this reality. It now allows states to exempt students new to this country from taking the reading/language arts assessment for one year, while still testing their English language proficiency, as required by Title III. It has also recently announced that states can now allow students who have attained English proficiency to remain in the ELL subgroup for up to two years.

The AFT sees these policy changes as productive first steps that do not completely remedy the situation. The AFT holds that ELL students should remain in the subgroup for at least three years after they have shown English proficiency and that another subgroup of students, non-English speakers born in the United States, should be included in the ELL subgroup.

A second major challenge is the "Catch-22" of this whole situation. NCLB requires all assessments to be valid and reliable. By definition, ELL students cannot read tests in English.



"KNOWLEDGE IS POWER"

Therefore, unless the states give these students native language tests, the assessments are invalid and serve no purpose. The federal government has provided no funds to translate the tests nor does it require the states to do so. Because NCLB requires 95% testing participation for every subgroup, the states now administer tests that ELL students cannot pass.

This bad situation has recently become much worse in Illinois. Two years ago the U.S. Department of

Education informed Illinois that the IMAGE test did not sufficiently approximate the ISAT or the Prairie State Achievement Exam. ISBE failed to address the problem, and in November was informed by the U.S. Department of Education that it can no longer administer the IMAGE test.

The result is confusion. There was insufficient time to take advantage of the \$120,000 offered by the Chicago Public Schools to translate the math and science tests into Spanish, which is obviously only one of the myriad of needed translations.

Now the ISBE has announced testing accommodations which completely mystify teachers. These accommodations include allowing students to take tests that they cannot read for longer periods of time in smaller groups and having schools try to find adults to translate the directions to these same unreadable questions.

Because NCLB requires schools to make AYP in every subgroup or face dire consequences, ISBE's failure to provide acceptable tests for ELLs could have seriously adverse results. The AFT is working hard to see that Congress gets all of this right in the upcoming NCLB reauthorization to finally ensure that English language learners will be appropriately assessed and educated.



LOOK FOR THIS BROCHURE IN YOUR MAIL TODAY. INSIDE, YOU'LL FIND YOUR MEMBERSHIP CARD.

## Card-carrying?

AFT national membership cards\* began mailing on Jan. 15 to all full, half, quarter, retired and on-leave members and will continue mailing through February 2008.

When you activate your card at [www.aft.org/members](http://www.aft.org/members) using the unique number on your membership card, you will have EXCLUSIVE ACCESS TO ALL AFT+ BENEFITS.

If you haven't received a card by March 15, call 888/AFT-JOIN (888/238-5646) or e-mail [membership@aft.org](mailto:membership@aft.org).

**BONUS:** 250 lucky AFT members will win \$100 each for activating their cards. This offer good for a limited time only.

\*Members in Florida, Minnesota, Montana and New York have membership cards from their state federations; those members also can log in at [www.aft.org/members](http://www.aft.org/members) for exclusive member benefits and for a chance to win \$100.

At a time when too much public attention is focused on simplistic, punitive or counterproductive measures to ensure quality in the classroom, PAR offers a genuine "opportunity to raise the level of discourse."

Divisional leaders also adopted a resolution highlighting "Charting the Course," the AFT's education agenda to reach all children. The resolution takes aim at a range of proposals that are being imposed on schools with no evidence they work—including inappropriate use of testing, unaccountable charter schools as private alternatives to public schools, and forced teacher transfers—and showcases alternative strategies that have met the test of time. "Charting the Course" points to proven solutions in the areas of reading; teaching quality, rich curriculum, high-poverty schools, and health, safety and order. It promises AFT support at all levels for proven improvements in these areas, including community and political outreach to groups and candidates who embrace this commitment to proven strategies in public schools. The resolution was sent to the AFT Executive Council for introduction at the 2008 convention.

Mike Rose AFT

### AFT Action on NCLB

The AFT is actively campaigning for a No Child Left Behind Act that, in practice, strengthens schools and improves learning and teaching for our students and our teachers. NCLB, currently under review for reauthorization, must be fixed to:

- ◊Provide a fair and accurate accountability system that recognizes student progress.
- ◊Provide educators the support and resources needed to succeed in the classroom. It should not impose new and unnecessary requirements on teachers.
- ◊Increase support for research-based interventions to truly struggling schools to help raise student achievement. Provide districts and schools the funds they need to ensure that our children and teachers have the very best to do their very best.

## Local 571 Constitution and Bylaw Changes

Changes to Local 571's *Constitution and Bylaws* included a number of revisions clarifying language, or making language consistent. Substantive changes included:

### Article IV; Section 4: Officers and Elections

- ◊Councils whose president will not serve as trustee to Local 571 must elect a trustee by secret ballot.
- ◊Councils may decide the term of office for president, executive board and delegates to the Local, as established in their Council's constitution or bylaws.
- ◊Provision for election by acclamation where an election is uncontested
- ◊571's limited role regarding any disputed Council election is made clear.

### Article V: House of Representatives, Officers and Executive Board.

- ◊Area Trustees are designated officers of the Local.
- ◊The president and the officers of Local 571 will be delegates from Local 571 to all IFT, AFT, and Local 571 conventions.
- ◊The president will be the Local's ranking delegate.

### Local 571 Bylaws Amendments

#### Article III: Dues

- ◊Dues for half members and quarter members changed to reflect increases already in effect as a result of IFT and AFT changes.
- ◊Council dues table changed to reflect current amounts for full, half, and quarter members.

#### Article XIV: Council Responsibilities

- ◊Council financial audit submission date extended to no later than July 15.

#### Article XIX: Committee on Political Education – COPE (new)

- ◊ Defines COPE committee membership, authority, officers and responsibility, financial and accounting rules.

### Limited Supply of Educators' 2008 Tax Guide Available

Order from the Local 571 office on a first-come first-served basis. Call 630-468-4098 or visit the wstu571 web site for an order form.

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## PSRP Leaders Offer Pointers on Internal Organizing

The main challenge of internal organizing, PSRP leaders learned at their program and policy council meeting January 25-26 in New Orleans, is that there's no magic formula. But these leaders manage to work magic anyway by focusing on important issues and making themselves highly visible. Here are some of their recommendations:

- ◇ Break down the union's workload into small, manageable tasks and spread them around so members don't get overloaded, said Sharon Baker, president of the Totem Association of Educational Support Personnel in Alaska. Her "site contact person" is responsible only for greeting new hires and maintaining bulletin boards.
- ◇ Keep the spotlight on one or two key issues. David Gray, president of the Oklahoma City Federation of Classified Employees and an AFT vice president, organizes around the living wage issue by building coalitions with civic and religious organizations.
- ◇ Negotiate more release time. When Becky Hesperen of Education Minnesota bemoaned the fact that she has only three hours per week of union release time and spends it putting out fires, she received this sage advice from PSRP leader Lorretta Johnson. "Putting out fires saves the district from grievances," said Johnson, president of the Baltimore Teachers Union paraprofessional chapter and an AFT vice president. "They need to see what you're saving them. Say: 'You need to consider giving me a day every week for release time.' You need to sell them."
- ◇ "Get people trained. From seminars to AFT training—it all helps," said Johnson. Once, when Baltimore didn't want to deal with inservice training for paraprofessionals, she recalled, "I said, 'Fine. I'll do it.'" Also hold conferences and town hall meetings funded by the school district. "You get it on school time," Johnson said. "They'll come."
- ◇ Stay in contact with members. If Laura Harper receives a drop card, she calls the member and asks why they are leaving the union. It's usually a specific economic reason, such as "my husband lost his job and we need the dues money to pay the utility bill." Harper, PSRP chair of the Jefferson Federation of Teachers in Louisiana, tells the member she understands and hopes she'll come back soon. "They usually do," she added. Harper also calls and congratulates members when they have a child or grandchild.

- ◇ Get out of your office, advised Shelvy Y. Abrams, paraprofessional chair for the United Federation of Teachers and an AFT vice president. "You have to be walking around."
- ◇ Include potential members in any surveys, suggested Rick Kuplinski, the AFT's deputy director of organization and field services, who moderated the session on internal organizing.
- ◇ Celebrate your union by telling its story during meetings, in publications and one-on-one, said AFT organizing director Phil Kugler. "Local leaders and activists get to chart the destinies of their locals," he said. "There's more that we can do to spread those stories." Johnson agreed, recommending the biography of former AFT president Albert Shanker, who was never afraid to lead. Said Ruby Newbold, president of the Detroit Association of Educational Office Employees and an AFT vice president: "We need to explain to our young people that someone had to take the first step."

Before the meeting, PPC members, spouses and AFT staff took informal tours of neighborhoods still wrecked by Hurricane Katrina. As the AFT Higher Education PPC had learned earlier in January, nasty politics are keeping these communities in a state of upheaval.

The PSRP leaders volunteered to work at three schools: tutoring at Laurel Elementary in New Orleans, and helping put together school libraries at Terrytown Elementary in Jefferson Parish and Dilbert Elementary in New Orleans. Council members later commented on how grateful school staff and students were for this bit of help, noting how these schools were functioning with as few as one box of crayons per classroom.

Annette Licitra AFT

### Local 571 Support Staff (PSRP) Only

Speakers from the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) and Social Security Administration will make presentations and answer PSRP members' questions **Thursday, April 10** at the Robert M. Healey Conference Center. Limited seating.

**Cost: None Time: 4:30-7:00 p.m. Dinner served at 4:30**

Reservation deadline April 4, 2008—First Come, First Served

Robert M. Healey Conference Center—500 Oakmont Lane, Westmont  
For information see your PSRP Council president, or  
Contact Judy Jennings at 630-468-4098 or [jjennings@ift-aft.org](mailto:jjennings@ift-aft.org)  
Reservation forms are available on the [wstu571.org](http://wstu571.org) web site.

# West Suburban Teachers Union Local 571

70th Anniversary Celebration  
April 18, 2008—4:00-7:00 pm

\$10



Pig Roast, Music, Prizes, Fun

WSTU Local 571 Office—500 Oakmont Lane, Westmont  
See your Council President or Building Representative for Tickets

## AFT Robert G Porter Scholarship Reminder

Program offers four 4-year, \$8,000 post-secondary scholarships to student dependents of AFT members, as well as 10 one-time \$1,000 grants to AFT members to assist with continuing education. See the AFT web site for information.

APPLICATIONS MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN MARCH 31, 2008

## Local 571 Guest Speaker Schedule

Guest speakers planned for future 571 House of Representatives meetings:

- March 10 Darlene Ruscitti, DuPage County Regional Superintendent of Schools
- May 12 Ralph Martire, Center for Tax and Budget Accountability

Guest speakers are provided time before the regularly scheduled monthly House of Representatives business meeting. All Local 571 members are entitled to attend these presentations, as well as the business meeting. Only elected representatives may vote during the business meeting.

## IFT Offers Condolences Following NIU Tragedy

In the wake of the terrible shooting at Northern Illinois University, the IFT offers condolences to the faculty, staff and students at NIU.

Tragic events such as this are occurring too often on college campuses. We encourage college and university administrators across the state to work closely with their employees to take further steps to make campuses more secure. Collaboration with those who assist students every day can help produce effective strategies that truly work. At NIU, Local 4100 chapter President Sandy Flood was part of a committee that created the NIU Emergency Guide, which contributed to the quick response by university and local emergency personnel in handling this tragedy.

We will continue to work with the Illinois Campus Security Task Force to study campus incident management plans, campus security protocols and emergency communications - IFT President Ed Geppert

## WSTU Calendar

### March

3/10—571 EB Mtg. - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.  
3/10—571 HOR Mtg.-Westmont - 6:45 p.m.  
(Deadline for 571 EB Trustee nominations)  
(Deadline for return of AFT Convention delegate ballots)  
(Deadline for proposed resolutions to be presented to the AFT Convention)

### April

4/14—571 EB Mtg. - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.  
(571 proposed budget presented to EB)  
4/14—571 HOR Mtg.-Westmont - 6:45 p.m.  
(571 Trustee ballots ready for Council pickup)  
4/18—571 70th Anniversary Celebration  
4/23-27—AFT PSRP Conference  
(Washington DC)  
4/26-27—IFT-ULLI - Westmont

### May

5/12—571 EB Mtg. - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.  
(571 proposed budget presented to EB)  
5/12—571 HOR Mtg.-Westmont - 6:45 p.m.

### June

6/9—571 EB Mtg. - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.  
(571 proposed budget presented to EB)  
6/9—571 HOR Mtg.-Westmont - 6:45 p.m.

### Union Messenger

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