

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

# Union Messenger

*“A Union of Professionals”*

## October Calendar

- 10/2— HOR Mtg. (5:30 p.m.— Westmont)
- 10/15 —Deadline for filing IRS forms for Councils that closed their books in May
- 10/20-21—IFT PSRP (Springfield)

## Union Messenger

- Kyle Stern, President
- April Giannosa, Vice-President
- Sandra Erickson, Treasurer
- Cathleen Pope, Secretary
- Eugene Poull, Financial Secretary
- Brett Blair, Legal Defense Secretary
- Emily Moore, Cope Chair
- John Wardisiani, Cope Treasurer
- Rachel Esposito, IFT Field Service Director
- Max Schoenberg, IFT Field Service Director
- Renee Wagner, IFT Field Service Director
- Carolyn Wilson, Membership Support Staff
- Patty Clancy, Office Support Staff
- Andrew Bendelow, 571 Web Administrator
- Robin Hancock, 571 *Union Messenger* Editor



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## My Unpredictable Journey

Dear Union Siblings,

Life often unfolds in unpredictable ways, and my journey as an introverted teacher and union leader has been shaped by an array of experiences that have tested my spirit, my resilience, and my will to live. As I share my story of living with depression, ADD, PTSD, and anxiety, coupled with the traumatic events of my freshman year at the University of Notre Dame, I hope to shed light on the power of using pain as a catalyst for compassion.



Entering Notre Dame with dreams of a bright future, I encountered a reality I could never have anticipated. The physical assaults I faced – the open beer cans thrown at me while I slept, the chilling death threats that echoed in my ears, and the heart-wrenching incident of a chair broken over me in my sleep – left me grappling with profound trauma. Amidst this turmoil, suicide seemed like a haunting temptation, a seemingly easy escape from the torment that had enveloped my existence.

But in the darkest corners of despair, a flicker of purpose emerged. The realization that I could transform my pain into a force for good provided a glimmer of hope that rekindled my will to LIVE. I understood that if I could become a source of positivity and support for others, then my life could find meaning and fulfillment. The choice to harness my suffering as a means to care for others became my lifeline.

Transferring to Illinois Wesleyan University marked a fresh start, a chance to rebuild myself from the ruins of my past. With an unwavering commitment, I embarked on a journey to become an educator, recognizing the opportunity to use my own experiences to guide and uplift others. The road was far from easy – managing depression, ADD, PTSD, and anxiety while immersing myself in the demanding roles of a teacher and union leader is a daily battle. But every challenge only strengthens my resolve.

As an introverted individual navigating the intricate pathways of teaching and leadership, I discovered that my capacity to care deeply for others was my greatest asset. My journey has taught me that compassion isn't born from blissful ignorance, but rather from embracing one's own struggles and using them to connect with the pain of others. In my classroom, I strive to create an atmosphere where every student feels seen, heard, and valued – because I know all too well what it's like to feel invisible and isolated.

*Continued from page 1*

## My Unpredictable Journey

My role as a union leader provides a platform to advocate for fellow educators, a space to amplify their voices and stand up for their rights. My own experiences of adversity fuel my determination to create better working conditions, to ensure that no one faces the darkness alone.

Looking back on my journey, I am humbled by the transformation that has occurred. The scars remain, etching a story of resilience and strength onto my being. They remind me that while pain is inevitable, I have the power to choose how I respond.

In the end, my path has been one of using my pain to care about others. It has taught me that the wounds we carry do not define us; rather, it's how we choose to heal and how we use our pain to foster empathy that truly matters. My journey continues, guided by the belief that in sharing my story, I can inspire others to transform their own pain into purpose, and to find strength in their vulnerabilities.

In Unity,

Kyle Stern

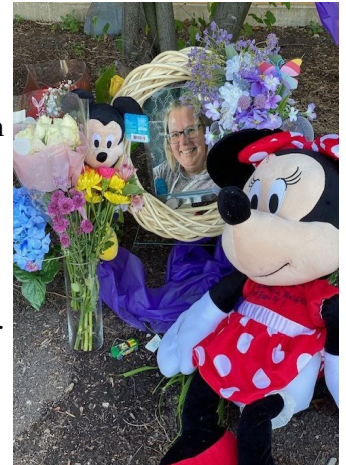
## In Memoriam of Grace Pruim By: Kris Jensen

“It’s a Small World After All” had multiple meanings for Brodnicki Kindergarten teacher, Grace Pruim. You see, Grace taught in a “small world.” Picture the tiny student chairs, the minute bodies of five and six year olds scurrying around a vibrant classroom. Not only did she teach in a “small world,” her other favorite “small world” was in fact: Disney World. In both locations, dreams did come true. However, on May 30th, 2023, these dreams came to an abrupt halt when Grace unexpectedly passed away. Not only leaving her school family, but her own beautiful children, Emily, age 19, and Matthew, age 13, and her husband of 23 years, Joe Pruim.

Grace’s first 2 years of her college education began at Moraine Valley Community College. She continued her college education at Governor’s State University where she earned her BA in Early Childhood Education. She chose to further her education by obtaining her Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Olivet Nazarene University. Last, she earned her ELL certification from National Louis University.

Grace began her teaching career teaching Pre-K at Edwards School, and also taught at Kennedy King College. It was in 2009, when Grace was expecting her second child, (Matthew) that she was hired to teach at Brodnicki School in Justice, Illinois. During her teaching career, she taught third, first, and Kindergarten. Grace was fluent in Polish, and this enabled her to communicate with her non-English speakers to assist them in having a positive, comforting experience on a daily basis. Grace’s daughter, Emily shared that Grace’s favorite part of teaching was, “Watching my students learn and having something finally click, especially the non-English speaking students. To see that pride in those students, knowing I helped them was so rewarding. My students were like my own kids away from home.”

This impact was reciprocated upon Grace’s sudden departure. The next day there were cards, flowers, and pictures outside her classroom door. Purple ribbons and bows adorned the trees and the classroom doors. In addition, outside the front entrance was her picture, fresh flowers, stuffed Miceys and Minnies, and some of her students’ prized possessions as a display of their love, and the immense loss they felt for their teacher. This outpouring of love genuinely demonstrates that Grace truly created her classroom for her kids as “The Happiest Place on Earth.” Our world is now smaller, but Grace’s impact on all of us is never-ending.



Submitted By--Erica Zemaitis- ISD109 Teacher Union President



## A THANK YOU FROM YOUR WSTU PRESIDENT

I never planned to be President of WSTU, Local 571. I was honored when I was selected to be an Area Trustee in 2018 and elected Vice President in 2021. I was expecting to learn with Rachel Esposito as she took the helm from the great Jane Russell. As the saying goes one makes plans and God laughs. Well as you know I became President less than a year after Rachel took over. (Rachel is doing great as a Field Service Director now.) To this day I am filled with a mixture of excitement and humility of this role to which I have now been officially elected. I want to start by acknowledging that I am not perfect (ask my wife), and I will continue to make mistakes along the way. However, I am committed to embracing these challenges, learning from them, and leading with the philosophies of some remarkable thinkers who have influenced my approach.

Brene Brown's emphasis on vulnerability and authenticity resonates deeply with me. As a leader, I recognize the importance of being open about my experiences, both successes and failures. It is through vulnerability that we connect, empathize, and build strong relationships within our union. Just as Brown teaches us, I believe that showing up as my true self will foster an environment where others feel comfortable doing the same.

Amy Edmondson's concept of psychological safety is paramount in our journey together. I am dedicated to creating a space where every member of our union feels safe to voice their opinions, share their ideas, and express their concerns without fear of retribution. This foundation of trust will enable us to collaborate effectively and find innovative solutions to the challenges we face.

Drawing from Daniel Pink's insights into motivation, I am committed to fostering an environment that promotes autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Our educators and support staff are passionate about their work, and I believe that by providing the right conditions, we can tap into their intrinsic motivation to drive positive change within our union and the education system as a whole.

Bettina Love's work on justice and equity strikes a chord with me. I am dedicated to ensuring that our union remains a strong advocate for fairness and equality in education. Love's call to action inspires me to continue advocating for policies and practices that create an inclusive and empowering environment for all students and staff members.

Bob Sutton's lessons on leadership and humility remind me to approach my role with a growth mindset. I am open to feedback and eager to learn from each of you. Just as Sutton suggests, I understand that leadership is not about having all the answers, but rather about asking the right questions and valuing the input of our union members.

Kim Scott's concept of radical candor guides my communication approach. I am committed to offering honest feedback while also showing that I deeply care about the well-being and success of each member. By striking this balance, I hope to foster a culture of open dialogue and continuous improvement.

In the words of Frank Sinatra's classic song "My Way," I am ready to "take the blows" that come with leadership, all while doing my best to lead with integrity and purpose. I acknowledge that mistakes will happen, but it is how we learn from them and grow that truly defines us. With your support and the wisdom of these incredible thinkers, I am confident that we can achieve great things together.

Thank you for entrusting me with this role. Let us embark on this journey together and create a brighter future for our union, our education community, and most importantly, our students.

With Love,

Kyle

## AFT Teach Conference

The recent AFT Teach Conference held in Washington D.C. was a dynamic gathering that brought together educators, policymakers, and advocates to discuss vital education policies and strategies. The event, which attracted AFT Union educators from across the country provided an exceptional platform for fostering meaningful dialogue, sharing insights, and charting a course towards a more inclusive and equitable educational.

I was privileged to engage with prominent figures in the political arena, including Congressman Sean Casten, Senator Tammy Duckworth, and representatives from Senator Durbin's office. These interactions highlighted the importance of collaboration between educators and policymakers in shaping effective education policies that positively impact students and teachers alike. I can assure you all three politicians are on our side.

Workshops on diverse topics, ranged from self-care to the significance of teacher voice. I discovered new strategies for promoting self-care and well-being, acknowledging the essential role educators play in shaping young minds. The emphasis on teacher voice emphasized that educators are not just recipients of policy decisions but crucial contributors to shaping the educational landscape.

A pivotal theme of the conference was the imperative need for diversity, equity, and inclusion within schools. Discussions on this subject resonated strongly, as participants recognized the transformative power of creating inclusive spaces that honor students' backgrounds and foster a sense of belonging. Through lively workshops and panel discussions, I gained valuable insights into fostering an environment where all students can thrive and reach their full potential.

The conference also provided a unique opportunity to hear from individuals with international perspectives. Dan Montgomery and Randi Weingarten shared their experiences in Ukraine, shedding light on global educational challenges and solutions. This global lens served as a reminder that the pursuit of quality education is a universal endeavor that requires collaboration and innovation across borders.

The AFT Teach Conference was a remarkable platform that brought together educators, policymakers, and thought leaders to engage in meaningful conversations about the future of education. The event's emphasis on collaboration, diversity, and empowerment underscored the essential role educators play in shaping the next generation. I look forward to attending in future years and encourage you to consider attending as well.

~Kyle Stern



## President and Treasurers Workshop

On August 7th, Union leaders from WSTU Local 571 convened at the President and Treasurers Workshop, a dynamic event aimed at equipping council presidents and treasurers with the knowledge and tools needed for successful union leadership. Coordinated by Patty Clancy with support from Carolyn Wilson, the workshop delivered crucial insights and resources to attendees.

The workshop underscored essential tasks that council presidents and treasurers undertake throughout the year. Attendees received practical guidance on financial management, adherence to union bylaws, and filing grievances. New member materials were distributed, enabling leaders to welcome and support newcomers while upholding the union's mission.

Patty Clancy and Carolyn Wilson, orchestrated the workshop's success through meticulous planning and execution, ensuring a seamless experience for all attendees.



Experienced union leaders facilitated insightful sessions. Sandy Erickson, Gene Poull, Carolyn Wilson, and Patty Clancy led the treasurer workshop, while Field Service directors Renee Wagner, Rachel Esposito, and Max Schoenberg shared their expertise on effective union leadership with the presidents.

The President and Treasurers Workshop empowered union leaders to navigate challenges, advocate for educators, and foster a supportive environment. With their newfound knowledge and renewed confidence, council presidents and treasurers are poised to lead their local union towards a brighter future.

## Illinois Labor History Society Tour

On August 20th, my family and I took an Illinois Labor History Society Tour of the Pullman neighborhood with Debby Pope. Walking those same streets where workers stood up for their rights back in 1894, I felt a connection to their struggles and saw parallels that resonate with the challenges of education unions today.

The Pullman Strike erupted from the grievances of Pullman Palace Car Company workers, who were grappling with meager wages and appalling living conditions. Their collective outcry led to a nationwide railway strike that disrupted commerce and highlighted the power of unity in the face of injustice. This resonates deeply with the struggles of modern education unions, who seek fair pay, better working conditions, and a stronger say in shaping educational policies.



From the history of the Pullman Strike, we can glean invaluable lessons that hold relevance for education unions today. Firstly, the strength of unity cannot be underestimated. The solidarity displayed by the Pullman workers serves as a reminder that united voices can amplify the impact of advocacy efforts. Similarly, education unions can forge ahead by joining forces to champion the rights of educators and students.



## Proviso Township School District 209 Advocacy Prevails

The departure of Superintendent James Henderson from Proviso Township High Schools serves as a powerful testament to the importance of elections, the need for effective leadership, and the role of engaged union members in shaping the educational landscape. Against the backdrop of the 2022 Proviso teachers' strike and the dedicated efforts of individuals like Rachel Esposito, John Wardisiani, Maggie Riley, and Arnava Mistry-Mujthaba, the community's commitment to fostering change and accountability is vividly demonstrated.

Superintendent James Henderson's leadership was fraught with controversies and challenges. His questionable decisions, coupled with an unsettled career history in educational leadership, underscored the need for vigilant scrutiny during the selection process. With a spotlight on his tumultuous tenure in Holmes County, Mississippi, it became evident that his leadership style was at odds with the community's educational aspirations.

The pivotal 2022 Proviso teachers' strike played a vital role in advocating for a fair contract and highlighting the importance of union engagement. Union members, including Rachel Esposito, Local 571 President at the time, and Maggie Riley, the Proviso Teacher Council



President, stood on the front lines of this struggle. They were joined by Arnava Mistry-Mujthaba, who served as the Field Service Director. The Proviso Teachers stood strong together. Their combined efforts showcased the power of collective action in protecting the rights and interests of educators.

The culmination of the union members' advocacy efforts materialized in the 2023 school board election. Rachel Esposito, John Wardisiani, the Proviso Teacher Council President fervently worked to flip the school board composition, steering the course towards a more promising future. Their dedication to community engagement, mobilization, and the advocacy of a student-centered approach resonated deeply with voters.


With Henderson's departure, a fresh opportunity arises for Proviso Township High Schools to recalibrate their educational journey. The culmination of the 2022 teachers' strike, union advocacy, and the successful election campaign stands as a poignant reminder that a united front can steer institutions towards accountability and excellence. The ongoing commitment of union members and the broader community to remain actively engaged will be instrumental in selecting leaders who prioritize student well-being and academic growth.



### Are you ready to take your leadership skills to the next level?

The Illinois Federation of Teachers Union Leadership Institutes provide a transformative experience that will empower you to lead with confidence, collaborate with purpose, and advocate for educational excellence. If you are a Unionist aspiring to make a difference, these institutes offer the guidance and support you need to thrive.

Sign up at <https://www.ift-aft.org/professionaldevelopment>



**Get quality legal assistance at an affordable price**

Do you have a legal question?  
Need to hire an attorney?

Because you're a union member, you can get free access to basic legal help or upgrade to a higher level of premium legal services for a low monthly fee.

<https://unionplus.org/benefits/home/legal-help>

## Summer Concert Series

This summer, Chicago played host to an array of musical legends, including Bruce Springsteen, Pink, Beyoncé, Ed Sheeran, and Taylor Swift. As we reflect on their masterful lyrics and songs, it becomes evident that there are valuable lessons these artists can impart to teachers and support staff. Drawing from their inspiring lyrics and stage presence, we can discover fresh approaches to inspire our students and enhance our trade.

Bruce Springsteen is a master storyteller who engages his audience through heartfelt narratives. Just as he captivates crowds with his tales, we educators can use the art of storytelling to make lessons more relatable and impactful. By weaving real-world examples and personal experiences into our teaching, we can create connections that resonate with our students. As Springsteen puts it in his song "Thunder Road," we should encourage our students to "roll down the window and let the wind blow back your hair" – that is, to embrace the excitement of learning and exploration.

Additionally, Bruce Springsteen's iconic anthem "Born to Run" reminds us of the importance of unity and inclusivity in the classroom. Just as he sings, "Tramps like us, baby, we were born to run," we must embrace diversity and create an environment where every student feels valued and empowered to contribute their unique talents.

Pink's unapologetic individuality and boundary-pushing performances remind us, like Springsteen, to celebrate our students' unique qualities. In her song "Raise Your Glass," she encourages us to "raise a glass if you are wrong in all the right ways." This sentiment encourages us to create an inclusive and supportive environment where every student feels valued for who they are. Just as Pink defies norms, we should help our students embrace their individual strengths and perspectives.

Beyoncé's fierce confidence on stage exemplifies the importance of self-assuredness. Her lyrics, such as "I'm a grown woman, I can do whatever I want," from the song "Grown Woman," inspire us to instill self-confidence in our students. Encouraging them to believe in their abilities and express their thoughts can lead to transformative growth. As educators, we can foster an environment where students feel empowered to voice their opinions and pursue their dreams.

Ed Sheeran's ability to create an intimate connection with his audience parallels our goal of building rapport with students. In his song "Castle on the Hill," Sheeran reminisces about his childhood friends and experiences, reminding us of the importance of forming meaningful relationships. By taking the time to understand our students' backgrounds, interests, and challenges, we can establish trust and create a supportive learning environment.



Taylor Swift's evolution from country prodigy to pop sensation showcases the value of embracing change and growth. Her lyrics, such as "And the players gonna play, play, play, play, play, but I'm just gonna shake it off," from the song "Shake It Off," teach us to overcome challenges with resilience and a positive attitude. Similarly, we can encourage our students to view setbacks as opportunities for learning and growth.

The performances of Bruce Springsteen, Pink, Beyoncé, Ed Sheeran, and Taylor Swift offer valuable insights for educators and support staff. By incorporating the power of storytelling, celebrating individuality, promoting confidence, building connections, and embracing change, we can inspire our students to reach new heights. As we apply these lessons, we ensure that our classrooms and school buildings become stages of inspiration and growth, fostering a brighter future for all.



## AFT Officers Speak Out Against Hateful, Racist Shooting in Jacksonville, Fla.

Sunday, August 27, 2023

WASHINGTON—Following reports of a hate crime yesterday where a gunman killed three people in a Dollar General store in Jacksonville, Fla.—allegedly after first targeting Edward Waters University, a historically Black university—American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, Executive Vice President Evelyn DeJesus and Secretary-Treasurer Fedrick Ingram released the following statement condemning the attack. The union represents more than 150,000 educators, school staff and higher education faculty across Florida:

### Weingarten said:

"Our hearts break for the victims, their families and the entire Jacksonville community in the face of these horrific, racist murders. It has not gone unnoticed that the murderer had a swastika on his rifle and had expressed racist hatred toward Black people. Florida has become a hotbed for the toxic brew that is radical bigotry and access to guns. And while it's good the governor has condemned this hateful, racist murder of three souls, just this past May the Florida Legislature passed, and Gov. Ron DeSantis signed, a new law allowing carrying concealed loaded guns without permits, just one of a slew of policies taking the state in the wrong direction.

"The disgusting irony is that while this gunman was on his rampage, thousands of others gathered peacefully in Washington, D.C., on the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington, to continue the work for justice for all. We must do far better when it comes to keeping people safe—in our communities, on our streets, and in the places we learn, shop, worship and gather. "Gun violence is a threat to all of us, but access to guns, combined with elected leaders who create an environment that pretends racism doesn't exist, creates a precarious situation for communities of color and others who are the target of violence

and vitriol. It's far past time to ban assault weapons and continue the real work to educate our neighbors and heal the divisions at the heart of this hatred."

### DeJesus said:

"We cannot keep doing the same thing and expecting a different result. As long as both unfettered access to guns and racial animus are not only allowed to persist but encouraged by the highest level of elected officials in Florida, our kids, grandkids, parents, grandparents, friends and loved ones will continue to be terrorized by gun violence and racism run amok. As educators, we demand action to stop the madness, and we hold everyone who has been affected in our hearts."

### Ingram said:

"Make no mistake, the families, friends and communities grieving across Jacksonville today did not have to suffer this way, and we continue to pray for them. In Florida, folks can carry a gun without a permit, and Black families are watching in horror as their history is whitewashed. But instead of healing those divides, elected officials continue to dismantle the very fabric of the state's Black communities, putting them directly in harm's way. Just a few months ago, the NAACP released a travel advisory, saying that Florida 'has engaged in an all-out attack on Black Americans, accurate Black history, voting rights, members of the LGBTQ+ community, immigrants, women's reproductive rights, and free speech, while simultaneously embracing a culture of fear and bullying.' This tragedy is a direct result of the bigoted, shortsighted policies of Florida's governor and Legislature, and makes it abundantly clear that this state needs far more than thoughts and prayers: It needs action, far beyond increased security on communities that are already targeted. Our state is now home to some of the worst mass shootings this country has seen, and while we live and work in terror, Florida's leaders continue to put politics over the lives of Floridians. Enough is enough."

<https://www.aft.org/press-release/aft-officers-speak-out-against-hateful-racist-shooting-jacksonville-fla>



## Legislative Report

By  
Jennie Crownson

I hope everyone had a great summer. We spent many evenings this summer at various events with Illinois elected officials extending our support and asking for their support of Illinois teachers and programs in the areas of retaining teachers, supporting new teacher programs, advocating for more social workers /counselors in schools and opposing private school vouchers. Welcome to another wonderful school year.

Here are some highlights of the fiscal year budget for 2024:

**Early Childhood:** \$250 million to fund the first year of the Governor's early childhood plan with funding increases to eliminate preschool deserts, stabilize the childcare workforce, expand the Early Intervention Program, and Home Visiting programs, plus funding to begin the overhaul of the childcare payment management system.

**K-12:** \$350 million increase for the evidence-based funding formula  
\$45 million for the first year of a three-year pilot to fill teacher vacancies  
\$3 million to expand access to computer science coursework.

**Diverse Literature Grant (new)** \$250k Funding will be distributed from the State Treasurer's Office to elementary and secondary schools and libraries at institutions of higher education.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." - Nelson Mandela



## Illinois General Assembly in Action

The following bills were signed into law this summer:

### **SB 1872 / Public Act 103-0500**

1. The notification deadline for honorable dismissals and nonrenewals is now April 15 (*formerly 45 days before the end of the school term*).
2. Tenure for teachers hired before 2023-24:
3. Four years with Proficient rating in year 4 and in either year 2 or year 3
4. Three years with two Excellent ratings (*formerly three Excellent ratings*)
5. Two years with two Excellent ratings and tenure in prior district
6. Tenure for teachers hired in 2023-24 or later:
7. Three years with Proficient ratings in year 2 and year 3
8. Two years with two Excellent ratings

### **SB 1351 / Public Act 103-0085**

Teachers due to be evaluated in the last year before retirement shall be offered the opportunity to waive their evaluation and retain their most recent ratings (if their most recent rating was proficient or excellent). Districts may still evaluate teachers in this position if they are given notice at least 14 days before the evaluation.

### **SB 2218 / Public Act 103-0398**

Annual RIF lists for teachers in Groups 1-4 will include teacher's race/ethnicity (if provided by teacher), for informational purposes only.

### **HB 3801 / Public Act 103-0207**

Subject to state funding and ISBE rules, retention bonuses (\$4,000 per year for two years) for National Board Certified Teachers will be available if those teachers work in schools that are "hard-to-staff" (schools that have at least 30% of students classified as low income as per IL Report Cards).

### **SB 1993 / Public Act 103-0393**

Takes effect July 1, 2024. School boards must vote at a regular meeting to approve any new contracts for district-wide assessments. Does not affect assessments developed by teachers or administrators to be used within a school building.

### **SB 1352 / Public Act 103-0549**

Teachers will need permission from the school board to resign during the school year, *or during the period of 30 calendar days prior to the first student attendance day of the year*, in order to accept another position that requires teacher licensure. Districts may refer teachers who resign without permission within school year (*or 30 days prior*) to ISBE for possible licensure suspension for one year.

### **HB 300 / Public Act 103-0515**

Teacher minimum salary set at \$40,000 for 2023-24. Minimum salary will increase by CPI in each following year.

### **HB 2147 / Public Act 103-0525**

Teachers may earn optional service credit for TRS for student teaching (if paid a salary). Also extends ability of retirees to work in TRS positions for up to 120 days/600 hours (with 100 day limit in one classroom) through June 30, 2026.

### **HB 3690 / Public Act 103-0542**

Expands types of institute day programming that can be counted for CPDUs. Also, beginning July 1, 2024, the intent is to have GCN training required within six months of hire, and then every five years. Carryover between employers would be permitted with evidence.

[Illinois General Assembly Home Page \(ilga.gov\)](https://www.ilga.gov)  
<https://www.ilga.gov>

# Members Engaged

## Argo Teachers' Union

We held a lunch for members, shared some updates to our CBA, and had 571 President, Kyle Stern speak about the importance of Unions and the strength of Local 571.

~Heather Siegel-Hickman, Council President



Congressman Sean Casten visited Willowbrook High School bringing donuts for faculty and staff. Pictured with the congressman is District 88 Teachers President Jen Burns.



Legislative Directors Grace Drobny and Jennie Crownson with State Senator Ram Villivalam at an event for Don Harmon at Navy Pier.



Legislative Director- Jennie Crownson with State Senator Karina Villa and State Representative Barbara Hernandez (District 50).



571 members at the Constituent Coffee with Senator Duckworth.



Legislative Director Grace Drobny at the July 4th Parade with Congressman Sean Casten.



Legislative Director, Grace Drobny with Bill Cunningham at his event at Haymarket Brewery in Chicago.



Kyle Stern with Representative Mary Gill and Senator Cunningham.



Kyle Stern with Representative Rashid.

# STUDENT DEBT RELIEF VIRTUAL CLINIC

## Remaining 2023 Dates



Please choose the Student Debt Clinic that best meets your needs:

**Full Clinic** – This 90-minute program will introduce Income Driven Repayment (IDR) Plans, Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), legislative updates, and next steps for you.

If you are a recent college graduate, or if you took Parent Plus Loans to help your child graduate recently, this Full Clinic is the program for you.

**PSLF Clinic** – This 45-minute program will dive deeper into Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) and answer questions you have about the forms. This program is geared towards people who have already entered into an Income Drive Repayment plan and need help with the PSLF process.

**Q & A Clinic** – This open session is to ask specific questions about your situation. Understand that this *not* a one-on-one session. There is no formal presentation to this session; it is targeting those who are already in IDR and/or PSLF plans but need answers.

FULL CLINIC	PSLF CLINIC	Q&A CLINIC
Tuesday, October 10, 5 pm	Thursday, October 12, 5 pm	Thursday, October 12, 6 pm
Tuesday, October 24, 5 pm	Wednesday, November 1, 5 pm	Wednesday, November 1, 6 pm
Monday, November 13, 5 pm	Tuesday, November 28, 5 pm	Tuesday, November 28, 6 pm
Tuesday, December 12, 5 pm	Tuesday, December 19, 5pm	Tuesday, December 19 6 pm

These programs are available not only to teachers but also to ANY educational employee.

These clinics are **FREE** to our card-signed union members as a benefit of being part of the IFT. You are encouraged to bring your union peers with you. **All of these clinics are held over Zoom.**

Sign up for one of these clinics by emailing Stella Kapusta ([skapusta@ift-aft.org](mailto:skapusta@ift-aft.org)) or calling the AFT Local 604 office at (815) 725-0402.

***Please have available:***

- *Your laptop computer*
- *Your latest loan servicer(s) statement and/or online account information*
- *Type of loan(s) held*
- *Type of repayment plan(s) enrolled*

## National Hispanic Heritage Month— September 15—October 15

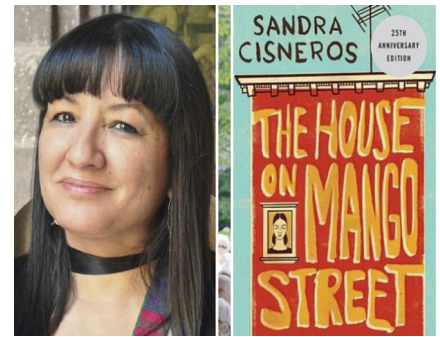
Sandra Cisneros has won multiple awards, fellowships, and honors as an internationally recognized writer. On September 22, 2016, President Barack Obama presented Cisneros with the National Medal of Arts for her work. Her book called *The House on Mango Street*, has sold over six million copies and has been translated into over twenty languages.

Sandra Cisneros was born on December 20, 1954 in Chicago, Illinois. Although her parents met in Chicago, they were both from Mexico. They had seven children, but Cisneros was the only girl. A year after she was born, her parents had another daughter, but she died as a baby. When Cisneros was ten years old, she wrote her first poem. However, she did not write any more poetry until she was in high school. While in school, she was an active writer and was known as “the poet.” After high school, Cisneros attended Loyola University of Chicago. In her third year of school she took a creative writing class and decided to continue studying writing. She graduated in 1976 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. Cisneros continued on to the University of Iowa where she graduated in 1978 with a Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing.

After Cisneros graduated with her second degree, she returned to Chicago. She became a teacher and counselor at the Latino Youth Alternative High School, where she taught students that dropped out of school. A few years later, Cisneros returned to Loyola University of Chicago as an administrative assistant. Later on, she worked at many universities including; California State University at Chico, the University of

California Berkeley, the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, and the University of New Mexico.

The first book Cisneros published was a short book of poetry called *Bad Boys* in 1980. Four years later, she published a fiction novel called *The House on Mango Street* in 1984. This book



would go on to become one of her most famous writings. Just a year after it was published, *The House on Mango Street* won the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation. Cisneros kept writing poems, short stories, and novels in both Spanish and English. She published her first full-length poetry book called *My Wicked Wicked Ways* in 1987.

In 1991, Cisneros published a collection of short stories called *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*. This book won the PEN Center West Award for Best Fiction of 1991, the Quality Paperback Book Club New Voices Award, the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, and the Lannan Foundation Literary Award. It was also nominated as the Best Book of Fiction of 1991 by *The Los Angeles Times*, and it was selected as an important book of the year by *The New York Times* and *The American Library Journal*.

**Source:** [Sandra Cisneros | National Women's History Museum \(womenshistory.org\)](https://www.womenshistory.org)

## We the People

It was on September 17th, 1787 at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania that the US Constitution was signed. This document, ratified by 12 US states, laid out the framework of the nation's federal government and established its three branches, executive, legislative and judicial. Only 12 of the 13 colonies were present during the drafting of the Constitution. Rhode Island did not want to participate and was the last to sign on May 29, 1790. Jonathan Dayton, aged 26, was the youngest to sign the Constitution, while Benjamin Franklin, aged 81, was the oldest.



### What's Missing from the Messenger?

Is there something innovative or exciting happening at your school?

If so, we want to hear from you!

Email your news to Robin Hancock at: [rhancock@wstu571.org](mailto:rhancock@wstu571.org)



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