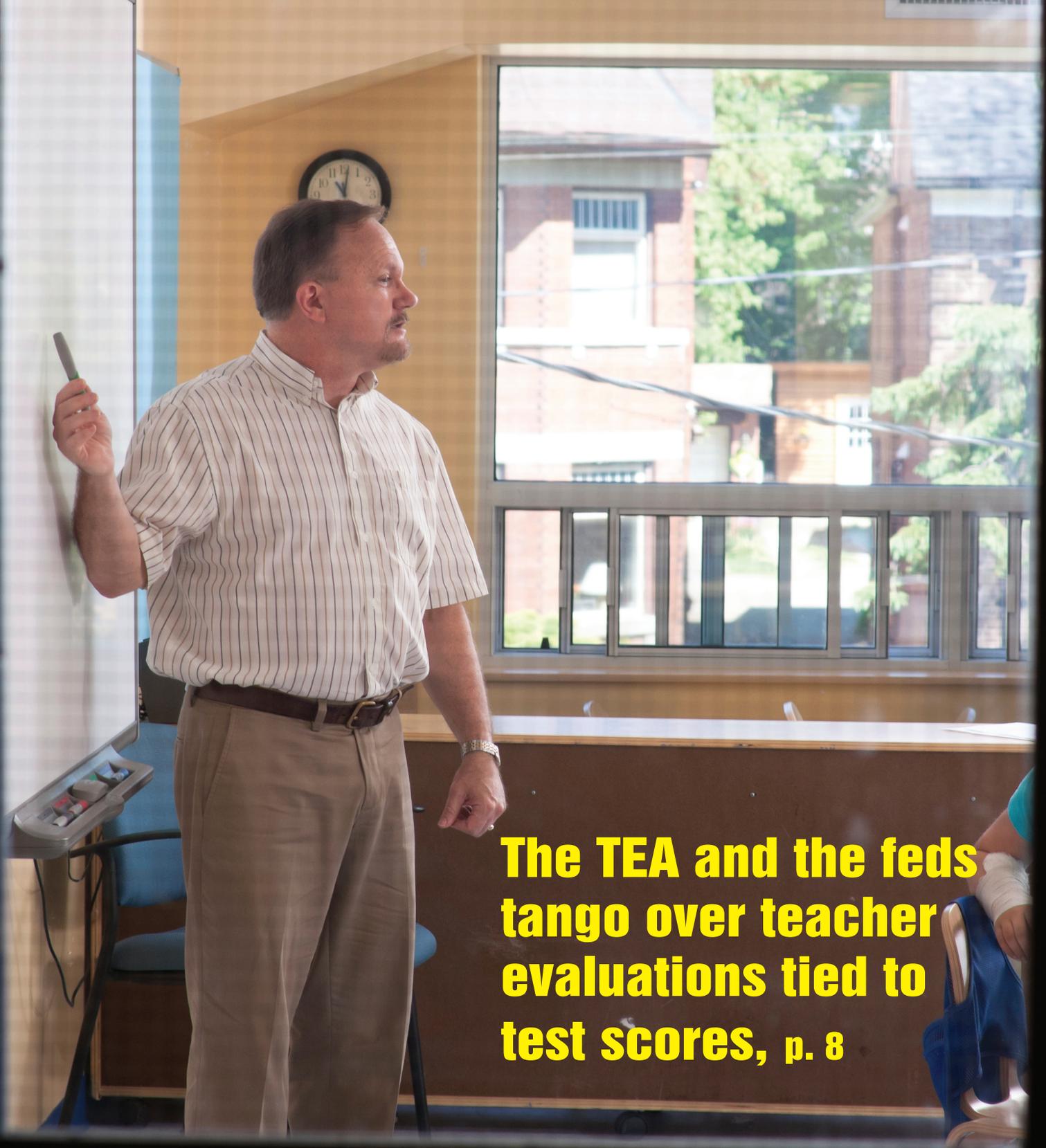




Texas Teacher

A Union of Professionals

FALL 2013



The TEA and the feds tango over teacher evaluations tied to test scores, p. 8

The authentic civil rights agenda: PUBLIC education, p. 5

Reclaiming the Promise

Our public schools represent our nation's commitment to helping all children dream their dreams and achieve them. A high-quality public education for all children is an economic necessity, an anchor of democracy, a moral imperative and a fundamental civil right, without which none of our other rights can be fully realized.

It's time to reclaim the promise of public education—not as it is today or as it was in the past, but as it can be—to fulfill our collective obligation to help all children succeed.

Reclaiming the promise is about fighting for **neighborhood public schools that are safe, welcoming places for teaching and learning.**

Reclaiming the promise is about ensuring that **teachers and school staff are well-prepared, are supported, have manageable class sizes and have time to collaborate** so they can meet the individual needs of every child.

Reclaiming the promise is about making sure our **children have an engaging curriculum** that includes art, music and the sciences.

Reclaiming the promise is about ensuring that **children and their families have access to wraparound services to meet their social, emotional and health needs.**

The promise is under attack by those who demand and pursue austerity, polarization, privatization and deprofessionalization.

By uniting our voices with parents and the community, we can reclaim the promise.

go.aft.org/promise
#ReclaimIt



Wretha Thomas, Houston Educational Support Personnel president, kicks off training on new authority for bus drivers under the Safe Schools Act. See page 9.



Keep your furry friends healthy and happy while saving big bucks on veterinary care, p. 3

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Texas Teacher

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Texas AFT represents more than 65,000 teachers, paraprofessionals, support personnel, and higher-education employees across the state. Texas AFT is affiliated with the 1.5-million-member American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.

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It's no time to sit back as a bystander



Linda Bridges
Texas AFT President

I have always believed that the power of education can change lives. I believe we have a collective responsibility to ensure that all students who attend our schools have the opportunity to succeed. Our responsibility is realized when we have great neighborhood schools, where educators have the tools and resources to meet the needs of every student.

Students do not come to us in a one-size-fits-all package. Educators see students with abundant advantages and those for whom every day is a struggle; those who worry about their ability to attend a top notch college, and those who worry about their parents getting deported.

When I was a student, my parent's aspiration for my future was tied to my education. My parents wanted me to succeed not only in school but in life. They knew that I needed to develop

The assault on public education can be found in societal factors and in an orchestrated campaign by individuals who have pushed to underfund schools, worked to declare schools a failure based on standardized tests, and moved to privatize schools.

critical thinking, problem-solving, and strategies for how to work with others in addition to my academic skills. They felt that if they did their part and the school did its part, there was no way I couldn't be successful.

When I look at what we have gone through in the last several years, I know that parents still want for their children what my parents wanted for me. However, the promise of a great public education has been under assault. The assault on public education can be found in societal factors and in an

orchestrated campaign by individuals who have pushed to underfund schools, worked to declare schools a failure based on standardized tests, and moved to privatize schools.

Let's look at some of the factors impacting schools.

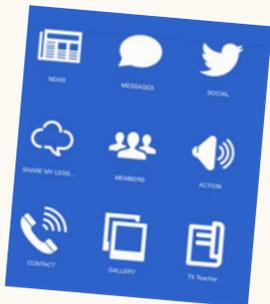
- Nearly one out of every two students in public schools in America live in poverty.
- Children in poverty come to school with one-fourth the vocabulary of children from wealthy families.
- Three out of every five teachers in America report they have children who regularly come to school hungry.
- There are more homeless families than at any time since the Great Depression.

These factors do not keep our educators from teaching and caring. Our educators are motivated to provide safe learning environments for all students and help ensure that their instructional, physical, social, and emotional needs are met. But combined with inadequate funding and other pressures, these factors certainly make the overall job of being an educator harder every school year.

With your help and involvement, we made gains in the 2013 legislative session. There is more to do! The Texas Legislature only restored 85 cents on the dollar of the funds cut in 2011. Zero percent of the pre-kindergarten grant funding was restored. Reinvestment in our public schools is still a major priority.

AFT President Randi Weingarten said this summer, "...we must reclaim the promise of public education—not as it is today or as it has been in the past, but as what public education can do to fulfill our collective obligation, our community obligation, to help all children succeed."

We need your help. You can't sit back as a bystander. You need to share with community leaders, neighbors, parents, and elected officials the good things that are happening in our public schools as well as the challenges we face. We need to enlist them in the fight to ensure all of our children get the great education they need and deserve. Are you ready to lead? 



Psst! Look for the new Texas AFT app ... Coming Soon

Check the Texas AFT Web site at www.texasaft.org in November for information on how to download the new Texas AFT app for iPhones and Droid devices.

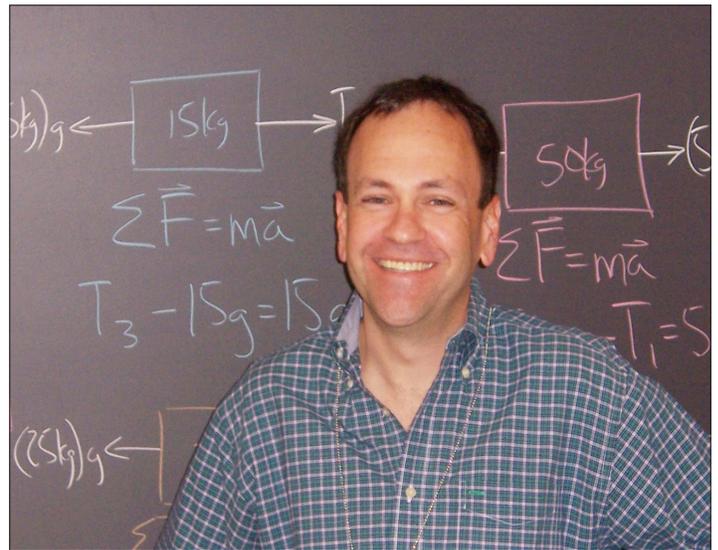
At your fingertips will be easy access to legislative news, member benefits, action alerts, photos, events, social media updates, and our publications.

Presidential award finalist: Mentoring is a powerful tool for teacher success

Texas AFT member Mark Misage is now forced to play the waiting game to see if he will be headed to the nation's capital for top honors in the 2013 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Since the committee selecting the winners is running behind and hasn't published an award schedule, it's only known that he'll find out some time next year. But he said he's happy just to have been named one of four Texas finalists for the award. If he is selected as the winner from Texas, he will be invited to Washington, D.C., for an award ceremony and presented with a check for \$10,000.

Misage—who teaches Westlake High School senior-level Advanced Placement physics in Eanes ISD, next door to Austin—attributes his success to “wonderful students with supportive families” and the power of mentoring. “Through my entire career it seems like I have either been mentored by someone or I’m mentoring someone,” said Misage, who has taught at Westlake for 24 years. (He was hired by Eanes ISD after a brief stint as a substitute in Austin ISD.)

Over his time at Westlake, mentoring has become standard practice for its science department. “Typically, when we get a new teacher coming in, they do the same thing I did when I first started teaching AP,” he said. “I sat in on one of my peer’s classes every single day. And it was amazing. That made me grow as a teacher more than anything else. There is always something new that you’re going to learn.” Misage also spends time mentoring other AP teachers around the state. And he appreciates the



Texas AFT member Mark Misage is awaiting word on the 2013 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

benefits of having other teachers sit in on his classes. “It makes you kick up your game a notch when you know that one of your peers will be in your class,” he said.

Aside from mentoring, Misage said his proudest moments as a teacher are when students stay connected and share their accomplishments, as was the case with a student who asked him to accompany her to Washington, D.C., when she received a Presidential Scholar Award.

Misage said he has been teaching long enough that he sees more and more students getting back in touch after they’ve embarked on their own careers. “I have several students who now teach physics, and one of our AP Physics teachers at Westlake is a former student of mine,” he said. 

AFT welcomes students into the union family

When you become an AFT student member, you join an organization that is dedicated to helping you manage the transition from the campus to the classroom. We are proud to be a union that takes action to work for what all schools need to succeed—smaller classrooms, teacher preparation time, quality in-service professional development, and a safe and healthy working and learning environment. As an AFT student member, you also have access to a number of useful professional benefits:

- **Teaching Resources**—Learn about the latest innovations in teaching methods with manuals, brochures and guides from the AFT educational issues

department. Visit www.aft.org for more information.

- **Professional Conferences and Workshops**—You will be invited to participate in AFT conferences on quality education, to network with teachers and stay informed about the latest classroom strategies and teaching techniques.

- **Legal Protection and Insurance**—Your membership entitles you to up to \$5,000 in legal fees under guidelines established by the AFT Legal Defense Committee. Also included is \$1 million in occupational liability insurance, covering you against accidents that may occur to students under your care at



school, claims of professional negligence and other accidents.

You’ll also enjoy many money-saving personal benefits like voluntary group insurance for life and disability, and discounts on health products and services, travel, entertainment and shopping.

Best of all, you’ll receive our publications—education news in *Texas Teacher* and *American Teacher*, plus *American Educator*, our quarterly education journal. To find out more about the AFT Student Membership Program, visit www.texasaft.org, and click on “Membership > Join the Union.”

An authentic civil rights agenda



Louis Malfaro
Secretary-Treasurer

Last month, I traveled to Brazil to represent the American Federation of Teachers at a conference of Latin American teachers, school employees and education trade union leaders who belong to Education International, the global federation of independent teachers unions. The meeting took place just outside Recife, a large coastal city in the northeast state of Pernambuco.

This region is home to two notable Brazilians: Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva,

who served as president of Brazil from 2003 to 2011 and is the former president of the Brazilian metalworkers union and founder of the Brazilian Workers Party; and Paulo Freire, the philosopher, professor, literacy pioneer and author of many books, including *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a book that has sold over a million copies worldwide.

Paulo Freire, who died in 1997, is being honored posthumously upon the 50th anniversary of his successful effort to teach illiterate adults to begin reading with 40 hours of instruction. The project, known as “Angicos” for the city where Freire first taught people to read, is hailed as one of the greatest efforts ever undertaken to eradicate illiteracy and is a testament to Freire’s work as an educator and political actor.

Here in Texas, we face the same battle against privatization, although fortunately we have held the line against these efforts and have stopped private school vouchers and some of the worst aspects of charter expansion.

Although Freire lived in exile for a number of years during Brazil’s military dictatorship, today’s democratic Brazil recognizes his legacy, and 500-plus education union leaders from across the Americas stood shoulder to shoulder at the University of Recife as a bronze statue of Freire was unveiled on the campus where he taught.

Freire believed and wrote that people had to learn to “read the world prior to reading the word.” “Education,” he wrote, “does not change the world; education changes people, and people change the world.”

Freire also wrote about “conscientizacao”, the Portuguese term that refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against what he



Parents and union members protest privatization efforts in Philadelphia.

called “the oppressive elements of reality.”

A day after I returned from Brazil I was confronted by a contradiction that has become too common in the United States—a politician invoking civil rights as a pretext for privatizing the public school system. U.S. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, fresh from leading an effort to cut funding for food programs aimed at poor children and their families, was holding a press conference at Paulo Freire Charter School in Philadelphia (a contradiction unto itself—complete with bankers and hedge-fund managers on the charter school board) to promote private school vouchers and expansion of charter schools. Cantor chose a city whose government (local and state) is refusing to provide basic funding for its schoolchildren, who are mostly poor and African American. The result are cuts so extreme that most students don’t have access to counselors, nurses, and art/music instruction, and class sizes have swelled to more than 40 students in many cases.

The bitter irony of this false invocation of civil rights by those who seek to destroy the true civil right to a free, equitable public school education was not lost on the parents of the Philadelphia public school children. Parents demonstrated outside against

Congressman Cantor and his sham civil rights message of disempowerment, privatization, and marketization of what, in a democracy, must be a free and public right: education.

Here in Texas, we face the same battle against privatization,

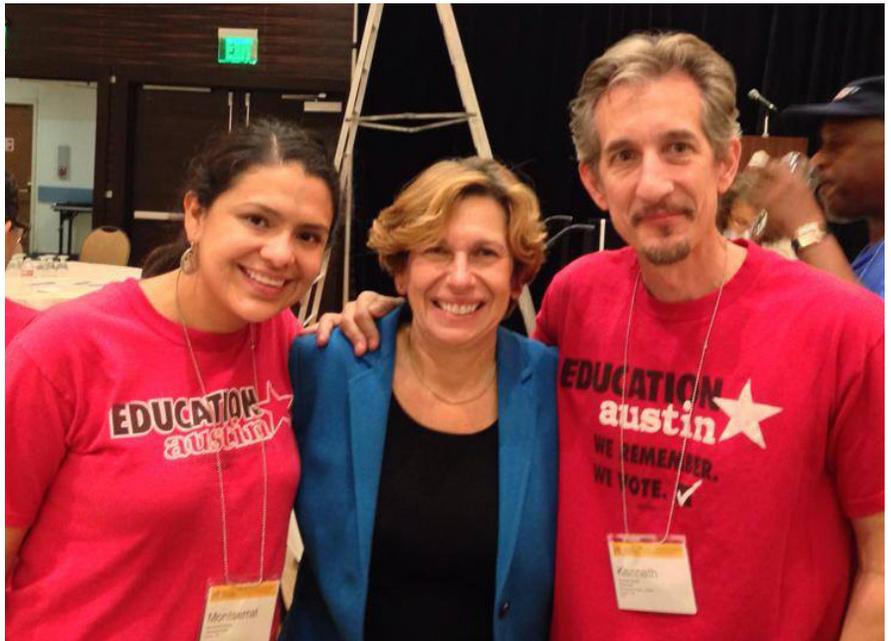


Texas AFT Secretary-Treasurer Louis Malfaro (left) with Hugo Yaksy, president of the Latin American Regional Committee of Education International, at the unveiling of the Paulo Freire statue in Brazil.

although fortunately we have held the line against these efforts and have stopped private school vouchers and some of the worst aspects of charter expansion. But one only has to look at the tragedy underway in Philadelphia to understand the potential for harm here in Texas.

More recently, AFT gathered 500 concerned union and community leaders from across the country at the AFT Civil, Human and Women's Rights Conference under the banner "Reclaiming the Promise of Public Schools." Among the identified principles that unite our union and community partners is a strong commitment to see that public schools remain public institutions. Texas AFT and our friends were well represented at this event and we are planning with parents, civil rights leaders, community organizations and other allies to defend, fund and enhance our public schools in the Lone Star State.

It behooves us all to strive for "conscientizacáo" as we fight for the authentic civil right of public education here and with our union family across the country and the world. 🇺🇸



Reclaiming the Promise

Randi Weingarten (center) kicks off AFT's Civil, Human and Women's Rights conference in Los Angeles in September with Education Austin President Ken Zarifis (right) and Education Austin Vice President Montserrat Garibay. The conference, organized in collaboration with the National Opportunity to Learn Campaign, the National Education Association, and Communities for Public Education Reform, addressed a wide range of social justice issues. The theme of "Reclaiming the Promise" guided discussions on how access to good public schools that prepare all students for college and career is a fundamental civil and human right.

MEMBER BENEFITS

Save on vet bills with pet insurance or an annual discount plan

If your pet is ill or hurt in an accident, the last thing you want to think about is money. AFT members can take advantage of two different programs to help cover these costs.

Annual Discount Program

Members pay a low annual fee that provides a 25-percent discount on veterinary medical services at thousands of clinics across the country.

There's no deductible, no paperwork and best of all, it includes discounts on pet products and a free recovery service to help find lost pets. For more information, contact Texas AFT Member Benefits Representative Barbara Lighthouse at

800-222-3827 or belightheart@texasaft.org

NEW! Pet Insurance

AFT's benefit partners for pet insurance will protect you against large, unexpected veterinary expenses when your pet is sick or injured.

The insurance covers any kind of pet—cats, dogs, horses, parrots, ferrets...you get the idea. And you can take your pet to any veterinarian you choose.

AFT members save up to 10 percent off regular premium rates and can save 5 percent more if they microchip the pet and register with a national service. Choose



from accident-only, complete coverage or a range of policies with various limits and deductibles; premiums can start as low as \$11.95/month.

Deductibles and services covered vary, so visit www.unionplus.org today to get a quote and peace of mind for you and affordable coverage for your pets.

Legislative News

The Legislature may have adjourned, but the education policy-making goes on



When the Texas Legislature finally adjourned on August 5 after going into overtime for three special summer sessions, there was a quiet but consequential transfer of power.

Entering what may be a lengthy interim between legislative sessions, lawmakers handed off the policy-making initiative in educational matters to the courts, to state and federal agencies, and to school districts. Educators will need to speak up and make their views heard in all these non-legislative forums for the sake of their students and schools.

Here is a rundown of some of the major issues, some key players who will have a big say in resolving them, and the role you and Texas AFT can play if we stand up and stick together.

School Funding

State district judge John Dietz in September confirmed that there will be a second trial in the lawsuit brought by hundreds of school districts against the inadequacy and inequity of state school finance. Dietz already held the system unconstitutional in February, but he has decided to take further evidence starting next January 21. The judge wants to gauge the impact of the Legislature's partial restoration of formula aid for districts this year as well the effect of changes in the accountability system. His revised timeline means that a definitive ruling by the Texas Supreme Court likely will not occur much before the 2015 Legislature convenes in regular session.

Meanwhile, evidence keeps piling up to show how far Texas falls short of adequate school funding. For instance, a new report from the Center for Public Policy Priorities shows that average annual per-pupil funding from all sources under

the Legislature's new budget for fiscal 2014-2015 is still \$611 below the level reached in 2008, before the Great Recession. That works out to a deficit of about \$300,000 a year for an average-size elementary school, meaning bigger classes and fewer educational personnel to help students meet rising state standards.

Texas AFT is working with allied groups to make sure that such shortcomings in state funding—and the consequent damage done in our classrooms—receive a full airing in Judge

A new report from the Center for Public Policy Priorities shows that average annual per-pupil funding from all sources under the Legislature's new budget for fiscal 2014-2015 is still \$611 below the level reached in 2008, before the Great Recession. That works out to a deficit of about \$300,000 a year for an average-size elementary school.

Dietz's courtroom. Texas AFT's legislative/legal team will monitor the court action and keep you informed as this important case proceeds.

The Push to Privatize

This year in the Legislature we managed to block most efforts to "improve" our underfunded public schools by handing them over to private operators. But legislation to expand privately operated charter schools did pass, threatening to drain dollars and students from the neighborhood schools while delivering an often inferior education to charter students, in both brick-and-mortar and online settings.

Authority to approve new charter networks now rests with the commissioner of education. In September, Commissioner Michael Williams gave initial approval to four new charter entities. His decisions next go before the State Board of Education for review in November. The elected SBOE members still retain the power to veto the commissioner's decisions on charter applications. Texas AFT and you have our own part to play, by submitting comments to the commissioner and to SBOE members on pending decisions at each stage in this process. Keep an eye out for Texas AFT action alerts!

Another part of this fight will play out on the local level, where local school boards gained new legislative authority to "charterize" individual campuses and remove the protection of state safeguards for students and teachers. Texas AFT requests your help in tracking any local proposals for such charter conversion initiated at the local level.

TRS Pensions and Health Care

In October an all-too-rare event will occur for many of the retirees who depend on Texas Teacher Retirement System pensions. Those who retired before September 2004 will begin receiving a permanent, 3-percent cost-of-living increase (capped at \$100 month)—the first permanent cost-of-living adjustment since 2001. This long-overdue and still quite modest benefit increase is a direct result of intense grass-roots advocacy by education employees and retirees across Texas during the 2013 legislative session.

Much more remains to be done



to bring TRS benefits up to where they should be for everyone who pays into the pension fund. First, though, we will have to be on guard against continued erosion of health-care benefits administered by TRS for both active and retired employees.

In September, TRS executive director Brian Guthrie forecast a shortfall of some \$1 billion for the 2016-2017 biennium for TRS-Care, the retiree health-care program. (Shortfalls for TRS-Care are a recurring feature of the program, because the Legislature has always budgeted for TRS-Care on a pay-as-you-go basis, never establishing long-term funding streams sufficient to cover retiree health costs.)

Also under scrutiny will be TRS-ActiveCare, the program providing health coverage for active employees in many school districts. Guthrie noted that recent ActiveCare enrollment trends show a noticeable drop in participation, and those dropping out appear to be healthier than those remaining.

This adverse trend might trigger an unprecedented mid-year premium increase at the February TRS board meeting—although that is by no means certain. TRS and the Legislature need to hear from us loud and clear about the harm of shifting even more of the cost of health care onto employees. Stay tuned for more on this topic. Our message: The state and school districts need to pick up more of the costs of health care.

Graduation Options— Illusion or Reality?

The State Board of Education is preoccupied with developing rules to implement new state law on graduation options under HB 5. The bill creates a 22-credit foundation plan for graduation, plus endorsements on a student's diploma that can be earned for completing additional courses reflecting career interests: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; business and industry; public services; arts and humanities; and multidisciplinary studies. SBOE members are now deciding on specific courses that will meet the requirements of each graduation option. Unfortunately, many cash-strapped districts have said they will only be able to offer one of the new endorsements—multidisciplinary studies. In districts without the necessary resources, the structure of enhanced graduation options laid out in HB 5 will be more illusion than reality.

The next step toward implementing HB 5 will be a Texas Education Agency staff draft of proposed rules addressing new graduation requirements. The Board will consider that draft at its November 20-22 meeting. If the draft receives initial Board approval, a 30-day public-comment period will follow. The Board would then adopt final rules in January. You will find information on the new graduation scheme established by HB 5 and lists of

issues to be resolved by State Board rules at www.tea.state.tx.us/graduation.aspx. Texas AFT will provide Legislative Hotline e-mail updates and action alerts via e-mail when your chance to offer public comment comes up.

Test-Driven Accountability

Texas AFT and a broad coalition of parent, educator, and community allies succeeded this year in passing legislation to reduce the number of standardized state tests students must take in high school. But the number of tests in elementary and middle school remains undiminished, and the punitive misuse of these tests at all levels in state accountability ratings has not been fundamentally corrected.

Even before the 2013 session, the Legislature had delegated excessive discretion to the commissioner of education over accountability ratings, and Commissioner Williams has used it to create a new rating system based on four “indices” of performance. The commissioner has touted it as a move away from over-reliance on test scores. But in fact three-plus of the four indices come down to some variation on the use of test scores. One measures “student achievement” in terms of STAAR test results. Another gauges “student progress” in terms of test-score gains. A third rates districts and schools on their success in “closing performance gaps” between historically higher-scoring and historically lower-scoring subgroups, again in terms of test scores. The fourth rates post-secondary readiness in terms of graduation rates and, again, test scores.

Under HB 5, by school year 2016 districts will be rated according to a new A-to-F grading system, while campus ratings will revert to the familiar exemplary/recognized/academically acceptable/academically unacceptable categories used until now. The commissioner is exhorted under HB 5 to reduce the reliance on standardized testing for school ratings, but it's largely up to the commissioner to decide how and how

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

much. The current commissioner seems to believe his four performance indices already take care of the problem, even though they rely heavily on STAAR scores.

Enforcing Student Discipline

New laws effective in September 2013 have curtailed the use of misdemeanor tickets to penalize disruptive behavior on campus or on school buses through the criminal-justice system. On the other hand, the Legislature at Texas AFT’s urging this year directed districts to change local policy and practices to address disruption more effectively through the school-based discipline system. One bill requires districts to train and retrain administrators periodically in the proper use of the Safe Schools Act, especially the provision authorizing teachers to remove disruptive students from their classrooms. Another bill requires districts to modify their local policies to reflect new authority for school bus drivers to remove disruptive students for the sake of effective discipline. Texas AFT is working to help local affiliates ensure proper implementation of these new discipline laws. For a good example of these advocacy efforts, see the separate article on page 9.

State/Federal Tango on NCLB Mandates, Teacher Evaluation

On September 30 Commissioner Williams announced that Texas has obtained a “conditional waiver” from the “Adequate Yearly Progress” ratings and other requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. U.S. Secretary

of Education Arne Duncan said the waiver was conditional and good only for 2013-2014 at this point, because the state has yet to complete new guidelines for teacher evaluation. Secretary Duncan has been using the NCLB waiver option as an inducement to states to embrace evaluation policies that give heavy weight to the standardized state test scores of a teacher’s students in evaluating each teacher.

The Texas Education Agency in its waiver request said TEA has already launched an effort to replace the existing Professional Development and Appraisal System. The PDAS has been in use since 1997 and is currently the appraisal option chosen by 86 percent of school districts, according to TEA. The agency said it wants to replace PDAS with a model more focused on “increasing student achievement” through “continual improvement of instruction by teachers and principals”—and a key part of this agenda is the development of “both a campus-wide and individual teacher value-added metric.”

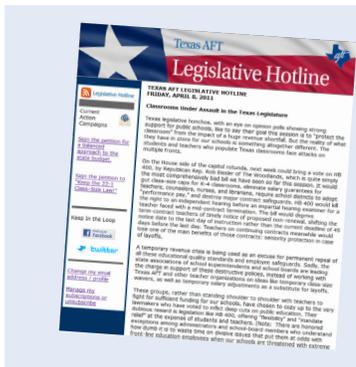
TEA says final judgments on the “appropriateness” of the value-added metric’s use in the evaluation system will be reserved until later in the process, after receiving the results of piloted use in selected districts during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. “Additionally,” TEA says, “we will begin exploring ways to provide districts with resources and guidelines for developing locally-based measures of student growth to be used at the district and campus levels.”

A recently created Teaching Standards Steering Committee, made up of

educators from around the state, will meet over the next two years to develop new teaching standards and observation rubrics and to provide input on development of the overall evaluation system. TEA promises that this process will also include an extensive public-comment period seeking further input from educators and the general public statewide.

The current TEA timeline calls for the release of draft teaching standards for public comment in December of this year. The process would continue with piloting of new observation tools in 2014 and training on new rubrics and protocols in 2014-2015. At some point during the 2014-2015 school year the commissioner would update his rules relating to teacher appraisal based on results of the pilot—presumably providing another period for public comment. Statewide rollout of a new state-approved evaluation model is slated for 2015-2016.

The entire process, including the use of the NCLB waiver to drive Texas schools toward test-based evaluations, will bear close monitoring, and Texas AFT will help you get a word in edgewise at every opportunity for public comment. The Legislature has declined to pass bills mandating a heavy emphasis on standardized state testing in the evaluation of individual teachers—a high-stakes misuse of state test scores that is not supported by educational research. The state evaluation initiative now blessed by the feds should not be allowed to become a back-door route to the same result. 



How to stay informed and weigh in on important issues that affect you.

- Subscribe to the Texas AFT Legislative Hotline to keep in the loop with important education news in daily e-mails. Visit www.texasaftblog.com/hotline to subscribe.
- Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/texasaft and follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/texasaft.



Media coverage of protests by Houston ISD drivers and members of the Houston Educational Support Personnel local helped provide momentum for passage of the new law giving bus drivers more disciplinary authority.

Local union spurs law giving bus drivers more disciplinary authority under Safe Schools Act

Thanks to grass-roots efforts from Texas AFT members, the Legislature passed a new law bolstering the authority of school bus drivers to protect students' safety onboard their buses by enforcing discipline under provisions of the Safe Schools Act.

Senate Bill 1541, which took effect over the summer, authorizes drivers to send disruptive students to the principal's office. The principal is required to employ discipline management techniques consistent with the district's student code of conduct. For serious misconduct on a school bus that would compel expulsion or disciplinary alternative placement if it occurred in a classroom, the same consequences must apply: the driver must send the student to the principal, and the principal must take the action required.

"We're going to make sure that every school in the state of Texas knows about this law and follows it," said Wretha Thomas, the Houston Educational Support Personnel president who was instrumental in pushing the need for the new law. A Texas AFT letter campaign to lawmakers and powerful testimony at the Capitol by Education Austin member and bus driver Karen Barnes also helped garner unanimous support for the bill.

Over the course of several years, student behavior had grown so out of control on some bus routes that, in one case, students jumped out the back door of a moving bus, Thomas said. But instead of holding students accountable for their behavior, school officials would punish drivers by calling them in, cutting their routes and causing them to lose drive time, she said.

"That's when we knew we were in trouble and had to get some help," Thomas said. For more than a year, HESP members staged rallies, held news conferences and tried to bring the severity of

the situation to the attention of Houston school officials, whose promises to curb threatening and even violent behavior on school buses had gone unfulfilled.

The new law will need to be implemented at the local level, first through changes in district policies and then through drivers' proper use of their new authority. To help its locals make sure the law is correctly implemented and enforced, Texas AFT issued policy guidance in August that lays out both the changes in state law and Texas AFT's recommendations for local policy. Texas AFT also held its first workshop in September to educate drivers and union leaders on the changes and how they can be implemented locally.

Texas AFT's recommended local policy language would specify that drivers may send a student to the principal's office by documenting that the student has repeatedly interfered with the driver's ability to maintain order, such as by cursing, throwing things or refusing to stay seated while the bus is in motion; by determining that the behavior is so unruly or abusive that it seriously interferes with the driver's ability to maintain discipline, such as fighting, hitting the driver, running in the aisle or blocking the driver's view; or when a student's behavior would make the student subject to removal if it happened in a classroom.

"I want to give a shout-out to all our bus drivers, aides and all the other support personnel here in Houston for the job they did," not only in getting the law passed but in performing their duties under pressure, Thomas said.

For more information on the policy guidance or Safe Schools Act trainings, contact Julie Bowman at 800-222-3827 or jbowman@texasaft.org. 

AFT launches pilot to fight human trafficking

Most Americans, if they think about it at all, might think exploitation of children is something that happens on the other side of the world. Unfortunately, thousands of vulnerable schoolchildren here in the United States are being lured into forced labor or prostitution by criminals promising them money and fame, then marketing these children through the anonymity of the Internet.

The U.S. Justice Department estimates that as many as 300,000 children in the United States are at risk of being trafficked. The average age of these children, mostly girls, is 12 or 13 years old at recruitment or abduction. An FBI sting across dozens of cities in July recovered more than 100 sexually exploited children; most were 13 to 17, though some were as young as 9.

Over the summer, local AFT leaders met to discuss ways the union can help mitigate child trafficking in the United States. AFT Secretary-Treasurer Lorretta Johnson briefed the leaders on plans to help end this scourge through a national information campaign, local partnerships, and federal and state efforts to derail trafficking.

Initial steps have been taken by AFT affiliates in several states, including New York, Ohio and Texas, and the national

"I knew there was a problem but had no idea the scope of it. Our students are living next door to these places the FBI busted."

—Gayle Fallon, Houston Federation of Teachers president



school bus routes to recruiting on school grounds, during after-school activities and in the neighborhood. With tools and training, school employees may find themselves among the nation's first responders.

Nearly a third of all calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline (888-373-7888) come from Texas, said Gayle Fallon, president of the Houston Federation of Teachers. Until recently, she had no clue that Houston is the largest point of entry in the country, due to a seaport and a network of freeways from east to west and from Mexico to Canada.

A moment of revelation came during a talk by law enforcement officers to the local labor council, Fallon said: "I will never forget the FBI agent who said that in any given month, there are 20,000 kids coming through or housed in Houston. The trade unionists know it's a problem—they see young men out on the labor sites. I knew there was a problem but had no idea the scope of it. Our students are living next door to these places the FBI busted."

The Houston federation hopes to lace together a Texas-based nonprofit, Children at Risk, with the union and the Houston schools so they can fight child trafficking together. Many captive children never even come to school—they may be dropouts or runaways, later taken into custody and charged with prostitution, Fallon said, "as if they didn't have enough to deal with."

In the fight against trafficking, AFT leaders pledged to collaborate with local law enforcement, the FBI and nonprofit groups like Shared Hope and the Polaris Project. 

Learn more about the fight against human trafficking

www.sharedhope.org & www.polarisproject.org



union is identifying three pilot sites this fall where teams will be trained to test anti-trafficking materials in advance of a national project launch next summer.

Teachers have a significant role to play in spotting child trafficking. However, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel are in just about the best position to spot signs of child trafficking in and around schools, from suspicious activity along

Fort Bend elementary receives union school grants to help commemorate March on Washington

The AFL-CIO in September awarded \$5,000 Adopt-a-School grants to each of 21 public schools across the country to support curriculum on the vital connection between workers' rights and civil rights.

AFT members work at 19 of those schools. The AFL-CIO also announced that six children of AFT members will receive \$5,000 Dreams of Jobs and Freedom scholarships to help pay for college tuition. The grants and scholarships were awarded to

commemorate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

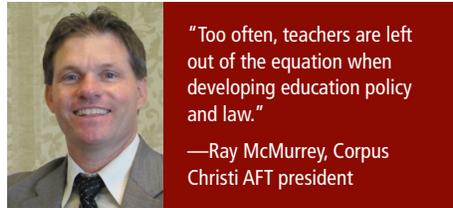
"These grants and scholarships will help today's students understand the civil rights and workers' rights struggles of the past so that they can be part of the next generation to help reclaim the promise of public education, and part of a society where there is no discrimination based on race, sex, ethnicity or sexual orientation," said AFT President Randi Weingarten.

Teacher leaders grants awarded to two Texas locals

Two Texas AFT local unions—the Houston Federation of Teachers and Corpus Christi AFT—have been selected to participate in AFT’s Teacher Leaders Program, a nationwide effort to identify and train teachers who will take active leadership roles in their schools, unions and communities.

“Too often, teachers are left out of the equation when developing education policy and law,” said Ray McMurrey, Corpus Christi AFT president. “Who knows more when it comes to teaching and learning than actual teachers?”

The unions have recruited 15 teachers in their districts to meet for a full day each month to increase their knowledge about the broad range of policies that affect our schools, and how they as teachers can lead in efforts to advocate policies that work best for student learning and



better working conditions for education employees. Teacher leaders will meet with education policy experts and receive training in:

- creating a collaborative culture;
- accessing and using research;
- reaching out to families and communities;
- becoming advocates for teachers, students and their families, and for public education;
- understanding policy issues and making recommendations to and through their unions; and

- making oral and written presentations, including using social media.

Through their participation in the AFT Teacher Leaders Program, teachers will:

- become conversant with both the local and national dialogue on education;
- develop relationships with local policy makers and community leaders;
- connect practice, research and policy; and
- serve as a sounding board and advisory group for union leaders.

McMurrey stressed quality teaching and the professional issues surrounding public education should be defined by professional educators themselves, not just foundations pushing their own “reform” agenda. “This grant opportunity is a giant step in that direction for CCAFT members,” he said. 



Texas AFT endorses Davis for governor

Texas AFT on Oct. 3 endorsed State Sen. Wendy Davis of Fort Worth in her run for Texas governor. Should Davis face no opposition in the Democratic primary this spring, she would run against the winner of the Republican primary—in contention now with Attorney General Greg Abbott and Tom Pauken, former chair of the Texas Workforce Commission.

“When we offer to stand with candidates and work for their election, we spend an enormous amount of time looking at their positions on education issues to ensure they will be effective leaders in developing policies that support our schoolchildren,” said Linda Bridges, Texas AFT President. “When we looked through everything Wendy has done for Texas education, it came as no surprise that she has always been at the forefront of the fight to help our schoolchildren and the teachers who serve them. She’s a champion for public education and a warrior in the fight to fend off efforts to defund and privatize our schools.”

Bridges said that Davis has been a proven leader in the Texas Senate on a variety of issues supporting working Texans and children. “With Davis at the helm, we’ll finally put an end to the ideological puppet show of the current



State Sen. Wendy Davis addresses a crowd of Texas AFT members at a Lobby Day Rally in March.

governor and welcome in a new era of thoughtful governance that seeks progress and solutions over party politics.”

Bridges outlined some of the highlights of Davis’s work over the past three legislative sessions:

- Wendy stood up for Texas schoolchildren with a filibuster opposing \$5.4 billion in cuts to education in 2011. She supports more investment in education and a more equitable system of funding schools.
- Wendy served on the Senate Education Committee and developed an impressive expertise on education issues. (She continued to attend committee meetings even after being ousted from the body

as punishment for filibustering the education cuts.)

- Wendy supported efforts to end the misuse of testing, pushed for more transparency in the \$500 million state testing contracts, and supported proven investments in education like full-day pre-K.
- Wendy supports teachers. She fought legislation promoting unpaid furloughs for school employees and changes that reduced their employment rights.

For more information on how the gubernatorial candidates stand on education issues, visit www.texasaft.org.



Become a founding member of the 1,000 Club:

Texas AFT under state law is not allowed to use member dues money for political contributions to candidates. So voluntary contributions from members to the Committee On Political Education (COPE II) are the only means to provide direct financial support to candidates. Additionally, Texas AFT can only solicit from its members and their immediate family members for contributions to COPE II. (If you are unsure about eligibility, give us a call and we will help you figure it out!)

For more information on COPE II, visit www.texasaft.org or contact Louis Malfaro, Texas AFT secretary-treasurer, at 800-222-3827.

Join the 1,000 Club as a founding member and we’ll send you a T-shirt showing you are ready to stand up for change at the Capitol.





How to Join...

1. Check the list of local unions and organizing committees and their school districts below. If you work in one of those districts, contact the local union or organizing committee directly.
2. If not, you will be joining the Associate Member Program. Contact us directly at 800-222-3827, or go to texasaft.org and click on "Membership."

Aldine ISD: Aldine AFT (281) 847-3050	El Paso ISD: El Paso Federation of Teachers & Support Personnel (915) 562-3738	Northside ISD: Northside AFT (210) 733-9777
Alief ISD: Alief AFTSE (281) 589-6644	Flour Bluff ISD: Corpus Christi AFT (361) 855-0482	Pflugerville ISD: Pflugerville AFT (512) 448-0130
Amarillo ISD: Amarillo AFT (806) 359-4487	Fort Bend ISD: Fort Bend Employee Federation (281) 240-1865	Round Rock ISD: Education Round Rock (512) 448-0130
Austin Community College: ACC AFT (512) 448-0130	Galena Park ISD: Northeast Houston AFT (713) 453-7500	San Antonio ISD: San Antonio Alliance of Teachers and Support Personnel (210) 225-7174
Austin ISD: Education Austin (512) 472-1124	Goose Creek ISD: Goose Creek Education Federation (281) 427-2091	Shelby ISD: Northeast Houston AFT (713) 453-7500
Bastrop ISD: Bastrop AFT (512) 448-0130	Gregory-Portland ISD: Corpus Christi AFT (361) 855-0482	Socorro ISD: Socorro AFT (915) 593-2801
Brazosport ISD: Brazosport Federation of Teachers (979) 265-9701	Houston ISD: Houston Federation of Teachers (713) 623-8891	South San Antonio ISD: South San Antonio AFT (210) 227-8083
Calallen ISD: Corpus Christi AFT (361) 855-0482	Houston ISD: Houston Educational Support Personnel (713) 660-8435	Spring Branch ISD: Spring Branch AFT (713) 468-4700
Channelview ISD: Northeast Houston AFT (713) 453-7500	Killeen ISD: Killeen Federation of Teachers & Support Personnel (254) 690-2538	Tuloso-Midway ISD: Corpus Christi AFT (361) 855-0482
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Cy-Fair ISD: Cy-Fair AFT (713) 466-1125	Lone Star College: AFT Lone Star (281) 889-1009	Waco ISD: Waco AFT (254) 755-0276
Dallas ISD: Alliance AFT (214) 942-4663	McAllen ISD: McAllen AFT (956) 682-1143	West Oso ISD: Corpus Christi AFT (361) 855-0482
Del Rio ISD: Del Rio AFT (512) 448-0130	North East ISD: Northeast AFT (210) 227-8083	
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