

*WHERE WE STAND:*  
**TEACHER**  
**QUALITY**



*A Union of Professionals*

**AFT Teachers**



*WHERE WE STAND:*  
**TEACHER**  
**QUALITY**

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## AFT CONVENTION RESOLUTION

# *The Union Role in Assuring Teacher Quality*

*Adopted July 1998*

**“The AFT believes that it is the union's responsibility to work to improve teacher quality and enhance the teaching profession.”**

### **The Context**

The goals of American education are to assure that children of all races, religions, classes and national backgrounds master a demanding core curriculum and other material to prepare them to assume their civic and social responsibilities in a democratic society, to compete in the global economy, and to benefit from postsecondary educational opportunities. Rising expectations about what all students should know and be able to do, breakthroughs in research on how children learn, and the increasing diversity of the student population have expanded the knowledge and skills teachers must have to achieve these ambitious goals.

These new demands on student learning put increasing demands on teacher unions to assist in assuring that all children are taught by qualified, competent and committed teachers. The AFT believes that teacher quality is an essential union responsibility, and so do our members.

### **The Teacher Development Continuum—A Need for Change**

The quality of the teacher workforce is influenced by a number of factors, including, in particular: who is recruited into the teaching profession; the preparation recruits receive; the standards that are set for entry into the profession; the work environment of teachers; and the profes-

sional development available to them. A glance at the current process of teacher education, licensure and continuous professional development reveals a system in flux, generally devoid of high standards and in serious need of improvement.

**Preservice Preparation.** For the past decade, teacher education has been subject to much scrutiny, and there have been continual calls for reform. Too often, a four-year undergraduate education provides little time to educate prospective teachers deeply in both the discipline that they will teach and the knowledge and skills of the teaching craft that they will need to be successful. Furthermore, changes in student populations, changes in the workplace, new knowledge about how students learn, and the need to educate all students to high levels of achievement have all created a need for systemic changes in teacher preparation.

**Entry-Level Standards.** In America, each state sets its own standards for teacher preservice preparation and licensure. In most instances, these standards are not very high. Until a decade or so ago, teacher licensure, with the exception of a few southern states, was based almost entirely on “seat diplomas.” State departments defined licensure by the number of credits taken by teacher candidates in required subject areas. Although the vast majority of states now require that prospective teachers take an examination to demonstrate content mastery, these examinations are not sufficient to assure a teaching force with deep subject matter knowledge. Often the content assessed is unchallenging, and the standard used to declare that teachers have mastered the content is too low. Yet, in the face of rising student enrollments, even these low-level entry standards are frequently waived by districts frantically seeking to hire staff to fill classrooms.

**Induction Programs and the Granting of Tenure.** If we look at countries with high-achieving school systems, we find that beginning teachers not only have solid liberal arts backgrounds, deep expertise in their subject areas, and sufficient education in pedagogy, but they also are inducted into the profession through a clinical, real-world training process. Inductees are able to develop and perfect their teaching skills by relying heavily on the expertise of their more experienced colleagues. As they become more expert, they assume more and more responsibility in the classroom.

By contrast, it is only in recent years, and in a few places, that anything resembling an induction system for new teachers has been put in place in the U.S. Induction is customarily a “sink-or-swim” event for the beginning teacher. New teachers get their teaching assignments—often including classes or students that more experienced teachers are glad to avoid—and they are told, “You’re on your own.”

**Standards for granting tenure should be rigorous.** Unfortunately, school districts are generally lax about initial assessments of teachers and often lack meaningful methods of teacher evaluation, as well as the personnel trained to do such evaluations.

**Continuing Professional Development.** Compared to practices in American business and in other countries, most school districts in the U.S. invest inadequate sums in professional development. Furthermore, the dollars that are spent are generally invested unwisely. They are often spent on one-shot workshops, unconnected to the needs of students and teachers. For professional development to be effective, it must offer meaningful intellectual content; take explicit account of the various contexts of teaching and experiences of teachers; offer support for informed dissent; and be ongoing and embedded in a meaningful way in the day-to-day work of teachers.

### **The Union Role in Assuring Quality Teaching**

To assure a high-quality teaching force, the union must play a role in developing and/or implementing quality preservice teacher education, effective recruiting and hiring practices, strong induction and mentoring programs, high-quality professional development, meaningful evaluation, and, when necessary, fair, timely intervention and dismissal procedures. Many AFT affiliates around the country are doing just that.

**Preservice Programs.** Teacher unions are taking an active role in working with policymakers and the higher education community to strengthen teacher preparation. They work to ensure quality by advo-

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***A glance at the current process of teacher education, licensure and continuous professional development reveals a system in flux, generally devoid of high standards and in serious need of improvement.***

cating, at the state and local levels, for policies and programs in regard to teacher development, licensure and continuing professional development. Teacher preparation must include a firm foundation in subject matter, a clinical, field-based approach to pedagogical knowledge and rigorous assessment of both.

**Hiring Practices.** Setting high standards for teacher preparation and entry into the profession will be undermined if those standards are abrogated in the face of teacher shortages or ineffective teacher recruitment efforts at the district level. To assure teacher quality, unions must work with the administration to halt the practice of hiring uncertified staff and of assigning present staff to teach in areas for which they are uncredentialed. Unions around the country—for example, in Los Angeles, New York City, Rochester, N.Y., Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Seattle and Minneapolis—have bargained for rights to participate in the hiring process.

**Peer Assistance and Peer Review.** In the early 1980s, teacher unions began collective bargaining for peer assistance and/or review programs. These programs address many of the weaknesses in the teacher development continuum identified earlier and speak to teachers' expressed desire that unions play a role in the improvement of teaching. These programs recognize a legitimate role for teachers in establishing and/or enforcing standards in their own profession. Programs to assist beginning or struggling teachers have also been instituted in Toledo, Cincinnati and Cleveland, Ohio; New York City and Rochester, New York; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Poway, California; the U.S. Virgin Islands and elsewhere.

These programs have much in common. First and foremost, they are all the product of collective bargaining agreements. In addition, they all:

- provide the union with at least an equal voice in the policies, practices and decisions involved in the implementation and evaluation of the program;
- provide assistance and/or review to new teachers and/or tenured teachers who are not performing at acceptable levels;
- have a process for identifying and training qualified teachers to provide peer assistance and/or review;
- have resources dedicated to implementing the program; and



■ of particular importance, they all have safeguards to due process, should dismissal or other disciplinary action be necessary.

The programs vary in regard to: who is served; the extent and kinds of services provided; whether peer assistance is confidential; whether peer assistance is mandatory; whether mentors evaluate as well as assist teachers; whether it is permissible to use such evidence in subsequent disciplinary procedures; and whether mentors make recommendations regarding termination or continued employment.

The widespread adoption of joint union-administration-directed peer intervention programs to help weak teachers gain the skills they need or, if that is not possible, counsel them into other lines of work, would do a great deal to raise the status of the profession. In addition, it would help reverse the public misperception that the union, and its advocacy of due process and a fair tenure system, works to protect incompetent teachers.

**Tenure and Quality.** While the public and AFT members agree that the overall quality of the teacher workforce is good, both believe that weak or incompetent teachers threaten the reputation of the profession and the quality of education children receive. Unfortunately the existence of some failing teachers in our schools—and the exploitation of this situation by the media, some school boards and anti-teacher forces—has given the public the impression that tenure laws inherently protect and perpetuate poor teaching. The AFT believes such a conclusion is erroneous and distracts attention from the real reforms that must be undertaken.

One problem stems from the public's misunderstanding of tenure laws. For the education system to be effective, all teachers need a fair dismissal process—one that protects them from capricious, political and intemperate firing. Tenure laws do not guarantee lifetime employment: They neither protect teachers against lay-off due to lack of work nor prevent firing for incompetence or misconduct. They are designed

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***To assure teacher quality, unions must work with the administration to halt the practice of hiring uncertified staff and of assigning present staff to teach in areas for which they are uncredentialed.***

to protect teachers from arbitrary dismissal without just cause or due process.

Where dismissal proceedings are time consuming, costly and inefficient, they need to be streamlined. In some states and districts, streamlined due-process safeguards have been legislated and/or negotiated to protect both teacher quality and individual rights.

Protecting tenure and assuring high standards of teacher quality are not mutually exclusive sectors of union endeavor. Just as teachers must be defended against unfair, unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious threats to their employment, so, too, must the efficacy of the profession be maintained. Peer assistance and/or review programs are designed to do just that. Peer assistance programs benefit teachers and the public by reducing the incidences of tenure cases through successful interventions or counseling out of the profession.

No one knows the difference between good teaching and poor teaching better than the best teachers themselves. Peer assistance and/or review programs allow teachers in trouble to be evaluated by people with expertise in their teaching field, to get help and to be observed over time—instead of the widespread evaluation practice of a single observation, usually by the principal or vice principal. Peer assistance and/or review programs provide a fairer and more comprehensive review system than most traditional teacher evaluation systems currently in use in school districts. Under peer assistance and/or review, the union balances the protection of individual teachers, the protection of the profession and the public interest.

But, some have questioned whether union involvement in peer evaluation programs, where teachers make judgments of other teachers, interferes with the union's responsibility to provide duty-of-fair representation to all of its members. This issue has been grappled with by affiliates involved in peer assistance and/or review. The union is not obligated—with regard to any issue—to take every grievance filed, nor is it obliged to contest every dismissal or disciplinary action taken against a teacher. As long as unions apply consistent, reasonable and fair principles and procedures for determining whether to contest a grievance, and as long as they make an independent investigation of the grievance, it is well within their authority to reject a poorly performing teacher's request for union assistance in a termination for poor performance

case. For example, the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers meets its imperative to protect individual rights and the competence of the profession by operating two parallel structures. One arm of the union participates in and governs the peer review process, another makes determinations about grievances, including any that stem from the peer review process. Provided that no individual serves at the same time on both arms or that the union leadership does not arbitrarily weigh in on one side or the other, the union meets its obligation to members with regard to the duty of fair representation.

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***Peer assistance and/or review programs provide a fairer and more comprehensive review system than most traditional teacher evaluation systems currently in use in school districts.***

### **Recommendations**

The AFT believes it is the union's responsibility to work to improve teacher quality and enhance the teaching profession. Therefore, we urge teachers and their unions to:

- work with universities to assure that preservice programs for teachers have high standards for entry and exit, require rigorous preparation in pedagogy and the academic disciplines, and have strong clinical components that involve exemplary teachers both at the field sites and on the clinical faculty of education departments;
- work with universities and preservice institutions and the organizations representing them, such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, to support the development of a stronger core curriculum in teacher preparation tied to the best research knowledge about effective practice;
- work with licensing bodies and professional standards boards to require that entering teachers meet high standards that include knowledge of their discipline, knowledge of how students learn and knowledge of the liberal arts and sciences as measured by valid and reliable assessments;
- work with legislators and local school district policymakers to assure that beginning teachers are given a well-supervised induction period, that all new teachers have the opportunity to observe and be observed

and mentored by highly accomplished teachers; and that only teachers who meet professional standards are awarded tenure;

- work through the collective bargaining process to develop programs that promote and assure teacher quality, such as: 1. Peer assistance programs that provide mentoring to new teachers and provide assistance to tenured teachers whose teaching has been identified as in need of improvement. 2. Internship programs that enable master teachers to assist new teachers, review their practice and recommend whether the quality of their teaching merits their being awarded tenure. 3. Peer review programs that assure that teachers who are not performing competently are identified in a fair, noncapricious manner, have the opportunity to improve their practice with intense help provided by expert peers, receive competent, fair review by peers and, if unable to meet the standards of competence, are counseled out of the profession or otherwise terminated following due-process proceedings. 4. Other methods to help assure the quality of teaching;
- negotiate contract provisions and advocate state policies that encourage teachers to seek National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification by offering financial incentives and preparation programs; and
- support state tenure statutes that provide strong due-process safeguards, with an efficient process that ensures the protection of both individual rights and high standards for the profession.

# AFT CONVENTION RESOLUTION

## *Teacher Education and Teacher Quality*

*Adopted July 2000*

### **Preface**

As we enter the twenty-first century, a variety of forces—calls for higher academic achievement for all children, demands for accountability of educational institutions and stakeholders, the recommendations of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, and new research findings demonstrating that teacher quality is the single most important school variable affecting student achievement—have focused public attention on teachers and the quality of instruction.

The urgency of recruiting and training quality teachers is underscored by demographics. Student enrollments are at an all-time high, at the same time that the teacher work force is aging, and large numbers of teachers are likely to retire in the next few years. Indeed, more than 220,000 new teachers must be hired nationwide each year in the foreseeable future if the country is to meet the educational needs of an ever-burgeoning student population. These students, the most diverse ever in our nation's history, will be required to meet higher standards for student achievement than ever before. Schools in rural and urban settings struggle to hire qualified teachers to meet their needs, and even wealthier suburban schools have difficulty finding the science, mathematics and special education teachers they need. This burgeoning demand for new teachers and an increasing demand for high quality in the teacher workforce have put a spotlight on the preparation of teachers.

For more than half a century, researchers, policymakers and the education community have grappled with the problems that beset teacher recruitment and preparation—problems ranging from difficulty recruit-

ing the ablest students to under-investment in teacher education, to lack of coordination between colleges of teacher education and the arts and sciences faculty, to inadequate pre-service time for teacher candidates to acquire the content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and clinical experience they need to be successful in the classroom. Despite these impediments, as well as constantly changing state requirements, education faculty at colleges and universities around the country have produced many thousands of capable teachers.

As the issue of teacher quality has attracted more attention, so, too, has it attracted various “solutions” for achieving that end. One thread of “reform,” paradoxically, calls for weakening the professional schools that educate teachers through the deregulation or elimination of teacher training. Advocates of deregulation propose that federal funds set aside for training should be available to any program that trains teachers, not just schools of education, but also individual K-12 schools, private companies and non-profit groups should be eligible to use the funds for “on-the-job” training, or in other ways they deem worthy. A second approach to reform aims at improving, not eliminating, teacher education.

In our view, the best way to bring an adequate supply of well-trained teachers into the classroom is not by avoiding collegiate teacher education but rather by strengthening it—by bringing higher quality, greater resources and much more coherence to the way higher education screens and prepares teacher candidates today—whether those candidates come through traditional four-year programs or alternative routes. Historically, that is the route other major professions have taken when the adequacy of their training programs was challenged. To that end, and in furtherance of the AFT’s 1998 resolution on teacher quality, a task force of AFT K-12 and higher education leaders has spent more than a year conducting a study of issues related to teacher education.

The American Federation of Teachers believes we must go beyond the current contours of teacher education and strengthen teaching as a true profession. As former AFT president Albert Shanker (1996) observed:

To be considered a true profession, an occupation must have a distinct body of knowledge—acknowledged by practitioner and consumer alike—that undergirds the profession and forms the basis of delivering

high-quality services to clients; define for itself the nature of training required of those who wish to enter the field; require rigorous training to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to practice the profession; control the standards for entry into the profession; ...induct its members into the profession in a systematic and rigorous fashion; and have the respect of the larger society.

### **Findings of the K-16 Teacher Education Task Force**

The preparation of teachers is routinely an undergraduate, four-year program of university courses that includes (1) course-taking in the liberal arts and sciences, (2) a major or minor in a liberal arts and sciences discipline and/or (3) teacher education, including a field experience in the schools. For candidates preparing to teach in elementary schools, knowledge of the subject matter is usually acquired through the initial liberal arts requirements. Candidates planning to teach in the high schools now typically major in the discipline they intend to teach. Programs vary regarding their expectations for candidates intending to teach in the middle grades. Some programs expect candidates to minor in two to four “core” subject areas (mathematics, science, history, English, the arts); others require a major in one discipline. In response to recommendations made by the Carnegie Forum and the Holmes Group, a number of teacher education programs have instituted a “fifth-year” model, expecting all candidates to complete a B.A. degree before progression into an intensive year of education courses and school-based clinical experiences.

In addition to the more traditional routes into teaching described above, since the late 1980s, states have been developing alternative routes for those individuals with college degrees who did not take the required education coursework but wish to teach. As of 1999, 40 states have alternatives to the traditional route into teaching. While alternative route teachers currently make up less than 5 percent of the current K-12

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workforce, they represent a significantly larger percentage of the “new hires, never taught” population. The candidates for alternative certification tend to be older students (Institutions of Higher Education, 1999). They also appear to attract a larger percentage of men and minorities and more science and math majors than do traditional route programs (NCEI, 2000, NCES, 1997, Universal Almanac, 1996).

Feistritzer and Chester (2000) examined these alternative programs and found that they are highly variable in rigor and quality. Some programs require participants to have a baccalaureate degree and to pass licensing tests and screening interviews to enter the classroom. Others require just a baccalaureate degree, and still others in the face of shortages do not even require a college degree. Some are well-developed apprenticeships where alternative route candidates have an opportunity to acquire pedagogical content knowledge in structured programs while receiving on-the-job mentoring. Too often, however, little or no pedagogical training is provided, little or no mentoring support is made available. New, untrained “alternative route” teachers are given emergency licenses and left to sink or swim. Alternative certification programs must require teacher candidates to pass the necessary licensing tests, as well as provide serious preemployment pedagogical training and intense supervision of initial teaching.

### **Entry Requirements to Teacher Education**

In the traditional route, all students take liberal arts and science courses in their first two years of college. Many students take these courses at a community college and complete their studies at a four-year institution. The breadth and quality of this coursework is of crucial importance to prospective teachers, particularly for most elementary and many middle school teachers who receive a great deal of the content preparation in these required courses. In too many cases, however, the general liberal arts and sciences curriculum required for prospective teacher candidates in their first two years is neither sufficiently coherent nor sufficiently rigorous.

Students are generally admitted into the college’s teacher education program at the end of the sophomore year. For many states and institutions of higher education, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standard defines the minimum require-



ment for entry into the teacher education program: basic literacy as demonstrated by a proficiency test and a 2.5 grade-point average in coursework.

### **Knowledge of Academic Discipline**

Today, despite the need for greater subject matter knowledge on the part of all teachers, only 38 states now require an academic major or its equivalent for prospective secondary teachers; and less than a dozen states require such a major for elementary school teachers. As a result, the vast majority of elementary teachers major in education rather than a discipline and about 20 percent of those candidates preparing to teach at the high school level major in education.

### **Content of Pedagogical Coursework**

A central component of virtually every teacher education program is coursework in pedagogy and effective methods of teaching. But, in the absence of an agreed-upon pedagogical core, the course content that teacher candidates receive at different colleges, and even from different instructors at the same college, can vary tremendously—not just in nuance, but in essential content regarding teaching and learning. There is, in short, no body of knowledge that the profession has determined all teacher candidates need to know. It is vital that we identify what science tells us about how people learn in order to improve the teacher education curriculum.

### **Pre-Service Student Teaching**

Although the content, quality and duration of pre-service student teaching varies greatly, almost without exception, every teacher preparation program requires, at a minimum, a 10-week student-teaching experience of all elementary, middle and high school teacher candidates.

While some colleges and the education faculty have developed excellent clinical training programs, such programs are not widely available and serve only a small percent of teacher candidates nationwide. The clinical experiences should be characterized by a careful choice of school sites, supervisory faculty and cooperating teachers, as well as continual interchange among the professionals around the goals of the

experience and the standards that must be met by students. The reality, however, is that most student teaching experiences fall far short of what is needed. Indeed, it is not surprising to learn that:

- The student teaching experience is too short to adequately prepare teacher candidates to assume full responsibility for a classroom;
- Schools where student teachers are placed are often selected because of their proximity to the campus or to students' homes or their willingness to participate, not on their academic reputations;
- The cooperating teachers who are responsible for mentoring the student teachers placed in their classrooms are frequently selected haphazardly by principals with little input from the university or the teachers in the schools regarding criteria;
- Cooperating teachers receive few or no incentives for working with student teachers, and they are not trained adequately, nor supported, by the school or university;
- Cooperating teachers' evaluations regarding the teacher candidate are often ignored or not requested;
- The supervisory faculty, often retired teachers and principals who are responsible for overseeing the student teacher placements, have low standing at the university and are often selected as a result of their availability and willingness to accept these low-paid assignments rather than their excellence as teachers and mentors;
- Supervisory faculty, like cooperating teachers, are often untrained and unsupported in their work with teacher candidates; and
- Frequently, there is far too little coordination among university faculty, clinical supervisors and cooperating teachers concerning standards of good teaching and the requirements of a rigorous clinical experience.

There is, in short, a pervasive disconnect among the professionals responsible for the clinical training of prospective teachers.

### **Exit Criteria**

To the extent that institutional exit criteria exist, they tend to revolve around state licensure requirements. In most states, those requirements include the completion of an approved teacher education program with

a grade-point average of at least 2.5, practice teaching in a school setting and passing some kind of standardized licensure test.

The current state licensure exam system poses several serious problems for those concerned about the quality of teachers entering the classroom:

- First, the tests measure low-level knowledge and skills, not the candidate's command of college-level work;
- Second, cut scores for these tests are often very low and, on occasion, are waived even at that low level;
- Third, the diverse testing and coursework requirements for licensure across the states complicates the increasing mobility of teachers, making it difficult for prospective teachers to go where jobs are available. For example, high school English teachers trained in one state may find that they are not prepared to teach in an adjacent state because the testing or coursework requirements are different even though the job of "high school English teacher" may be the same in these different states; and
- Fourth, in the face of teacher shortages, states and districts waive the weak testing requirements currently in place.

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***Graduation from a teacher education program—whether four or five years—cannot be considered the end of training for teachers.***

### **Induction Programs for Beginning Teachers**

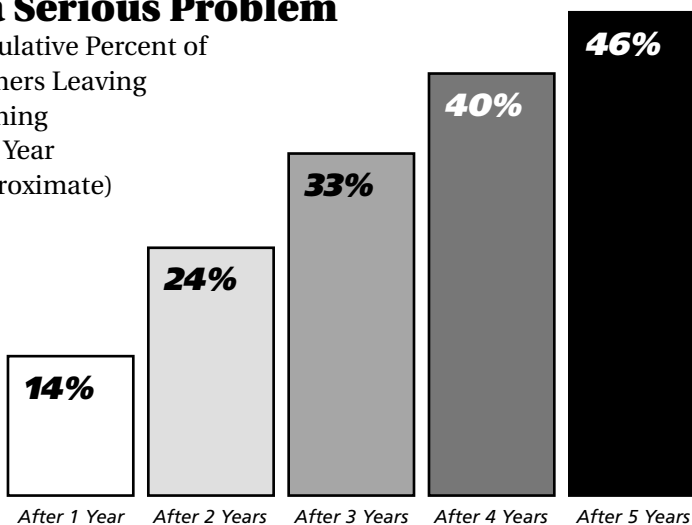
Graduation from a teacher education program—whether four or five years—cannot be considered the end of training for teachers. The demands of the precollege degree—acquiring subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and clinical training—do not allow sufficient time for teacher candidates to develop the skills and experiences necessary for completely independent practice in their initial teaching assignments, including the skills necessary to work effectively with paraprofessionals and other education support staff. Nonetheless, after graduation most new teachers are assigned a class, often with the most hard-to-reach students, and left to "sink or swim" on

their own. By contrast, other countries with high-achieving school systems induct new teachers into the profession through clinical, real-world training processes—following rigorous undergraduate academic preparation—by which inductees develop and perfect their teaching skills under the mentorship of more experienced and skilled colleagues.

A number of school districts, in some cases working in collaboration with university teacher education programs, are instituting internship programs for novice teachers. These programs ensure that new teachers have both a mentor who will assist them as they confront the hard realities of the classroom and a reduced teaching load. The reduced load allows time for professional development activities that include observing master teachers, interacting with colleagues about teaching and learning, and responding to the guidance offered by mentors who review their practice and recommend strategies to improve the quality of their classroom performance. Such programs have been instituted in Toledo, Berea, Cincinnati, and Cleveland, Ohio; New York City and

## Beginning Teacher Attrition Is a Serious Problem

Cumulative Percent of  
Teachers Leaving  
Teaching  
Each Year  
(Approximate)



Source: *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children*. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) 2003; Richard Ingersoll, adapted for NCTAF from *The Teacher Shortage: A Case of Wrong Diagnosis and Wrong Prescription*, NASSP Bulletin 86, pp. 16-31. June 2002.

Rochester, New York; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Poway, California. Research indicates higher levels of teacher retention in these instances.

### **In Sum**

While some education programs at colleges across the nation have taken significant and creative steps to reshape curricula and raise standards, most programs are still beset by problems, including:

- difficulty in recruiting the ablest students prompted in large part by low pay, poor working conditions, and lack of respect for the profession, as well as the low esteem in which teacher education courses are held at many universities;
- inadequate standards for entering and exiting teacher education programs;
- under-investment by the university in teacher education;
- poor coordination between teacher education and liberal arts faculty;
- little consensus about what should comprise the pedagogy curriculum;
- difficulty, within a four-year program, in finding enough time and the proper balance of coursework in liberal arts, pedagogy and a major in an academic discipline;
- lack of standards for clinical programs resulting in haphazard recruitment and training of supervising personnel, along with inadequate collaboration among the professionals concerning program goals, student oversight and assessment; and
- clinical experiences that often are too brief and do not require students to take sufficient responsibility for instruction.

Furthermore, alternative certification routes vary from full-fledged education programs with stringent entry criteria to nonexistent entry criteria and unsupervised emergency placements. The teaching experiences for alternative route candidates often give these teachers too much responsibility without sufficient training and mentoring.

Given these findings, the American Federation of Teachers calls for an urgent national commitment to bring higher quality, greater resources and more coherence to the way higher education screens and prepares

teacher education candidates. To that end, we make the following recommendations:

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call on education and liberal arts and sciences faculty to establish core courses in the liberal arts and sciences that college freshmen and sophomores are required to take in order to be admitted into a teacher education program and on the presidents to support the faculty in this endeavor. These courses must provide broad exposure and a sound foundation in the range of subjects and information relevant to K-12 student standards; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call for raising entrance standards for teacher education programs by requiring a 2.75 grade-point average at the end of the sophomore year as an initial requirement, to be phased up to a 3.0 grade-point average; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call upon leaders in the profession to develop a national voluntary test—not imposed by the federal government—to be used by states or higher education institutions to select candidates who wish to enter teacher education. This test would require students to demonstrate college-level proficiency in the core subject areas of mathematics, science, English language arts and history/geography-social studies; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call upon the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education to articulate higher standards of subject-matter knowledge and academic performance required of students entering and graduating from teacher education, particularly as they relate to state standards for K-12 students. In addition, NCATE needs to spell out quality standards for student teaching and other clinical experiences that include criteria for who may be a cooperating teacher or supervisor, and what role the university plays in training and coordinating such personnel; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call upon all institutions of higher education to require an academic major in addition to pedagogical studies and general liberal arts coursework for all teacher candidates—elementary, middle and high school. For vocational or career and technical teachers, these majors must be grounded in sound academic preparation combined with high occupational and technical knowledge as well as effective pedagogical skills. The major must be suffi-

ciently rigorous to enable teachers to deeply understand their content. It must also be comprehensive enough to prepare prospective teachers to help their students meet the new, more demanding K-12 education standards; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call for congressional funding to enable the teaching profession under the auspices of a respected body of scholars and educators— such as the National Academy of Sciences, the learned societies or a specially assembled body—to reach agreement on, and recommend that colleges adopt, a rigorous core curriculum in pedagogy, based on the best research into how students learn and on those content-specific teaching methods shown to be effective with students; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call for strengthening the clinical experience of traditional teacher preparation programs by building on successful models. These models include the following characteristics:

- The cooperating classroom teachers with whom prospective teachers are placed are chosen on the basis of excellence determined by a peer review process, adequately trained to assume this responsibility, and well rewarded for undertaking it;
- Education faculty are freed to spend more time with their students at their school placement sites and receive professional advancement and other rewards for doing so;
- Supervisory faculty members—the faculty members who serve as the prospective teachers’ principal link between the college campus and the K-12 classroom—are chosen on the basis of excellence in teaching and adult learning and adequately compensated for their work;
- These three sets of professionals work together from the beginning to the end of the clinical experience to develop explicit goals for the process and assess the performance of prospective teachers; and

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***The American Federation of Teachers calls for an urgent national commitment to bring higher quality, greater resources and more coherence to the way higher education screens and prepares teacher education candidates.***

**RESOLVED**, that teacher preparation should be organized, at a minimum, as a five-year process. This may take the form of a five-year university program, during which the students have opportunities early in preservice training to observe and work in schools and in the fifth year, prior to graduation, receive an intensive clinical training internship—conducted in close collaboration with the public schools—for which they are compensated. If the university program is only four years, it is essential that the school district institute, at a minimum, a year-long internship and mentoring program for new teachers; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT believes the clinical experience can best be provided in public schools where the faculty embraces the mission of preparing new teachers, has allocated resources to that mission and has developed a professional culture that supports it; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call on the teaching profession under the auspices of a respected body of scholars and educators—such as the National Academy of Sciences, the learned societies, or a specially assembled body—to develop challenging subject matter content and pedagogy (as defined by the aforementioned panel), national examinations—not imposed by the federal government—to be taken by all prospective teachers prior to licensure in their teaching field.

Current state teacher testing requirements vary greatly and often are characterized by low-level content and low cut-off scores. The national examinations would aim for a level of rigor that is consistent with what entry-level teachers in other high-performing countries are expected to know; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call for an induction program for all beginning teachers regardless of whether they have completed a four- or a five-year program. The AFT will work with school administrators and, through collective bargaining agreements, implement induction programs for novice teachers that include: a quality selection process for identifying and training mentor teachers, adequate training and compensation for those mentors, and time for them to genuinely teach and support beginning teachers; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call for alternative routes to teaching that, at a minimum, require all students to pass state teacher testing



exams in the appropriate content areas and that offer pedagogical coursework, monitor alternative-candidate performance in the classroom, and provide necessary services to support the development of effective teaching skills and strategies; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call upon university presidents to make the preparation of high-quality teachers a top institutional priority. This should be reflected in funding for teacher education commensurate with other professional training, in greater support for clinical experience programs, in strengthening relationships between the arts and sciences and education faculty, and in realigning the faculty reward structure to encourage greater involvement of faculty with their schools and community; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call on K-12 local unions to assume greater responsibility for the quality of the clinical experience by working with the district and the higher education institutions to identify and train members working in K-12 classrooms with the expertise to serve as cooperating teachers; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call on higher education unions to use their good offices to strengthen teacher education, to promote greater communication and coordination between teacher education and other faculty, to ensure contractually that the institutional reward system favors clinical work in the schools, and to encourage the hiring of excellent clinical faculty and cooperating teachers; and

**RESOLVED**, that the AFT call upon state legislatures, Congress and foundations to appropriate the funds necessary to put into place the reforms mentioned above so as to enable excellent teacher education to become the norm, not the exception.

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***The AFT calls for an induction program for all beginning teachers regardless of whether they have completed a four- or a five-year program.***

Lunch (11:15 - 11:45)  
M (1:22 - 2:10) M/T  
G (1:22 - 2:10) T/F  
L (9:54 - 10:45; 1:22 -



## AFT CONVENTION RESOLUTION

# *Professional Compensation for Teachers*

*Adopted July 2002*

**A**s we begin the 21st century, well-prepared, highly qualified teachers are essential if we are to ensure that all students achieve the high standards necessary for them to lead fulfilling lives and become productive citizens. In today's competitive marketplace, it is increasingly difficult to attract and retain the best teachers; to accomplish this, we must guarantee a salary commensurate with their education, experience and the challenging and complex tasks they perform.

We need a compensation system for teachers that has a competitive base pay and benefits for all, and, when possible, forged through cooperative labor-management relations that include multiple opportunities for teachers to advance along the salary scale in addition to seniority and education level. Given the teacher shortage and the need for highly skilled teachers who can deliver standards-based instruction resulting in improved student achievement levels, the AFT believes we must enhance the traditional compensation schedule using approaches that contribute to more effective teaching and learning.

We are not alone in our interest in improving teacher quality by enhancing existing compensation structures. School boards, administrators, state legislators, governors and business groups are proposing various strategies to promote teacher quality, several of which include recommendations on how teachers should be compensated.

The AFT has long believed that professional pay is an integral part of an educational system that promotes teacher quality. The late Albert Shanker, former AFT president, had a vision that school systems must

move beyond the “rigid hierarchy” of the traditional salary schedule and compensate teachers as other professionals in our society are compensated, when he remarked:

If we are to achieve professionalism, we have...to develop new processes, new institutions, new procedures that will bring us what teachers want in addition to what we get from collective bargaining status, dignity, a voice in professional matters, the compensation of a professional.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear, then, that AFT must take the lead in engaging our members and the public in a discussion of teacher compensation issues. Indeed:

- Teacher quality is uppermost on the reform agenda. Study after study has documented the important relationship of teacher quality to student achievement. A survey conducted by Recruiting New Teachers found that the public is aware that higher teacher salaries are critical to increased quality, and they are willing to pay more for quality teachers.
- Teachers are significantly underpaid, and the public knows it. The profession lacks a competitive edge in the wider job market. According to Education Week’s “Quality Counts 2000,” beginning teachers are paid on average almost \$8,000 less than graduates with comparable education, and that gap widens to more than \$23,000 after 15 years of teaching.
- The United States is experiencing a significant shortage of qualified teachers. Over the next 10 years, more than 2 million teachers must be hired to meet the demand for teachers caused by rising student enrollments and teacher retirements. At the same time, surveys have shown that fewer college students are interested in pursuing teaching as a career. Although some professionals unsatisfied with their jobs have moved into teaching, the majority of second-career seekers reject teaching for its low pay and tough working conditions.
- New state policies and local contract negotiations regarding professional compensation for teachers have looked at additional approaches to increasing teacher salaries. These policies include various forms of “pay for performance,” including individual and group incentives, pay for knowledge and skills, and recruitment incentives such as loan

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Shanker. “The Making of a Profession,” *American Educator*. Fall 1985.

forgiveness and low-interest housing loans.

In keeping with Shanker's vision, the AFT believes that the union should achieve professional compensation not by eliminating the traditional salary schedule but, instead, by considering ways to enhance and improve it. The AFT believes it is time to explore viable, fair and educationally sound teacher compensation options that will raise salaries while contributing to efforts already under way to assure high-quality, well-prepared teachers for all students.

Current AFT policy on teacher compensation supports the following:

- endorsing additional compensation to teachers who earn advanced certification by passing the demanding, performance-based assessments of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS);
- placing new teachers in shortage fields (e.g., math and science) further up on the salary schedule; and
- paying teachers for mentoring, peer support and other professional development activities.

Furthermore, AFT affiliates have implemented additional pay options such as:

*Pay for additional roles:* Several affiliates—Boston, Cincinnati, Dade County, Fla., Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Rochester, N.Y., and Toledo, Ohio, to name a few—offer financial incentives to teachers who take on different roles and responsibilities. In Rochester, N.Y., the long-standing “Career in Teaching” program offers a progression of job responsibilities and opportunities for professional growth throughout one’s teaching career and offers financial incentives to the top two levels of the four-level program.

*Pay for National Board Certification:* Numerous districts with AFT affiliates offer fee support and/or salary supplements to teachers seeking and/or achieving National Board Certification. As of October 2000,

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***Although some professionals unsatisfied with their jobs have moved into teaching, the majority of second-career seekers reject teaching for its low pay and tough working conditions.***

17 had fee supports and salary supplements, eight had fee supports only, and 21 had salary supplements only. In Minneapolis, teachers with National Board Certification qualify for the next lane on the salary schedule. Those already in the final lane of the salary schedule receive an additional \$1,500 per year.

*Pay for schoolwide improvements:* Several affiliates—Cincinnati, Rochester, N.Y., Boston, Minneapolis and Douglas County, Colo.—have developed schoolwide incentives to encourage teacher collaboration on improving student growth. In Douglas County, teachers set a goal, construct a plan for achieving that goal and submit a final report on the effects. A Group Incentives Board determines whether to award a bonus. In New York City, the United Federation of Teachers is experimenting with its Chamber of Commerce and school district on a plan, “Breakthrough for Learning,” that provides professional development and awards bonuses to all staff in schools that reach predetermined targets for student achievement.

*Pay for knowledge and skills:* A few AFT affiliates—most notably Cincinnati and Douglas County, Colo.—have developed innovative knowledge- and skill-based pay systems.

## **Where We Are: The Traditional Salary Scale**

Despite the innovations described above, today, and for the greater part of the last century, most teachers across America have been paid according to a salary schedule that awards compensation to teachers based almost exclusively on levels of education and years of experience. This system was originally created to accommodate an industrial model of education where teaching was perceived as requiring low-level skills. Teachers were perceived as “interchangeable parts,” each doing the same thing in isolation of their colleagues and under the watchful eyes of supervisors.

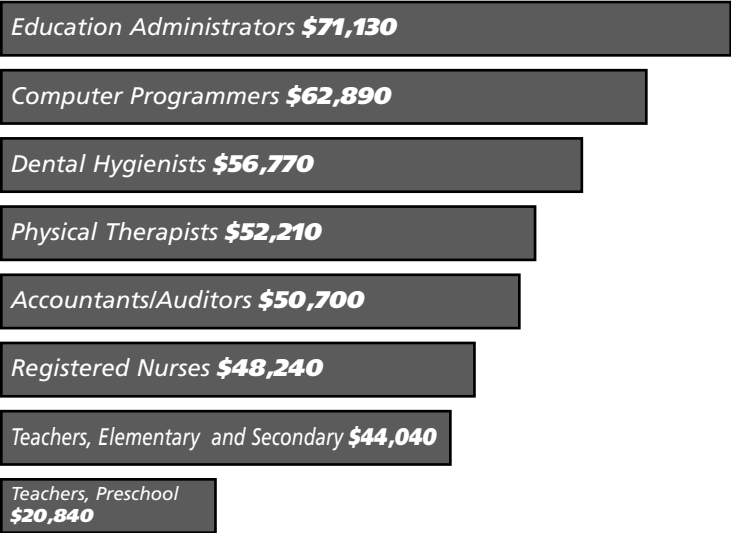
The traditional salary schedule was developed in response to discriminatory practices and to ensure fairness in the system. Implemented prior to collective bargaining, the current teacher salary system was designed to eliminate differential pay based on gender, race or educational level of students taught (elementary, middle or secondary). The current system rewards teachers with more experience and those who had attained “greater knowledge,” as demonstrated by their

earning additional college credits and degrees. In the absence of more proximate measures of teacher quality, this approach has a common-sense validity—the more you know about teaching and the longer you do it, the better you should be at it. And, this traditional salary schedule is easy to understand and administer, predictable and perceived as objective by teachers.

Nonetheless, the traditional salary schedule has several limitations. It has not produced salaries for teachers that are competitive in the current job market given their education, nor does it reflect the complexity of the work they do. In many salary schedules, it takes a very long time to reach the top of the schedule, which undermines teacher recruitment and retention efforts. As typically implemented, the traditional salary schedule does not reward additional skills and knowledge that benefit children (e.g., licensure in multiple fields), exemplary practice (e.g., attainment of National Board Certification) or extraordinary circum-

## Teacher Salaries Compared with Other Professions

(2001)



Source: *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children*. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) 2003; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics.

stances (e.g., teaching in hard-to-staff schools). It does not respond to market forces (e.g., shortages in particular teaching fields such as science, math and special education), nor does it provide incentives for teachers to assume differentiated roles (e.g., mentor, lead teacher, curriculum developer). Finally, it fails to provide incentives for teachers to acquire skills and knowledge needed to deliver standards-based instruction.

### **Failed Merit Pay Schemes**

While the AFT is encouraging locals to explore various teacher compensation systems based on local conditions, it is not abandoning the traditional salary schedule. Failed attempts to implement differentiated pay options, like merit pay systems, identified a few teachers as “outstanding” and paid them extra, rewarding teachers on the basis of supervisory ratings or student test scores. Nevertheless, these schemes have failed. Why did they fail? Research and experience show that the merit pay schemes:

- were underfunded;
- used quotas for determining quality;
- had questionable or difficult-to-understand assessment procedures for evaluating teaching, resulting in perceptions that favoritism rather than merit was driving the system;
- were designed so that either you earned merit or you didn’t—there were no gradations of merit, only “winners” and “losers”;
- gave rewards to teachers in the wealthiest schools more often than to those teaching the neediest students;
- did not improve student performance and were unconnected to outcomes; and
- created teacher morale problems stemming from the creation of unfair competition in a profession where cooperation and collaboration are valued.

### **Professional Compensation: The Requirements**

Teacher compensation should not be considered in isolation but instead must be considered as part of an educational system that includes curricula aligned with standards, continuous professional



development for teachers and paraprofessionals, and the other necessary conditions and resources to support teaching and learning. Indeed, to achieve the goals of standards-based reform, address the teacher shortage, advance the teacher quality agenda and make teaching a true profession, teachers' careers must include:

- rigorous, in-depth preparation;
- clear, enforced standards and qualifications for licensure;
- access to mentoring and induction activities;
- ongoing, high-quality professional development for all teachers;
- teacher evaluation based on professional standards of best practice; and
- professional compensation systems, with opportunities for earning additional pay, that have the potential to attract new teachers and retain experienced ones.

The following conditions and resources should be incorporated into any professional compensation system if they are not already in place:

*An adequate salary base for all teachers:* The base salary of any teacher compensation system, including the entry level, must be competitive with the salaries of other professionals to assure an adequate supply of skilled, qualified teachers and the retention of those already in the profession. Moreover, any new teacher compensation initiatives must accompany sufficient salary increases for all teachers. Indeed, the public and policymakers have come to recognize that efforts to address the teacher shortage and improve teacher quality will require additional monies for teachers. This may require additional state and federal resources for localities whose tax base cannot support such salaries.

*Sufficient funding:* If teachers are going to seek out additional professional development opportunities, take on additional responsibilities or more difficult teaching assignments, or subject themselves to the rigorous National Board for Professional Teaching Standards evaluation

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***Compensation proposals that reward teachers for their skills and abilities must be based on clear, agreed-upon standards designed by the profession.***

process, there must be meaningful financial incentives to encourage teachers.

*Credible, agreed-upon standards and measures of professional practice:* Compensation proposals that reward teachers for their skills and abilities must be based on clear, agreed-upon standards designed by the profession. The evidence upon which those standards are judged must be apparent to all, and the roles of teachers and supervisors in the evaluation system must be clearly defined.

*Clear steps to improving professional practice combined with the necessary supports:* A viable teacher compensation system must include a well-developed and adequately funded professional development system, designed by the profession, to help teachers achieve the necessary skills and knowledge to improve teaching and learning.

*Labor/management collaboration based on mutual trust and respect:* Redesigning and implementing teacher compensation systems are labor/management responsibilities. No system will succeed if it is imposed on teachers by the district or the state. It must have credibility and the buy-in of teachers, and that can best be achieved through labor/management negotiations.

*Incentives that are available to all eligible teachers:* Any teacher compensation system must be fair and open to all teachers who meet the criteria for additional pay, without quotas or reductions in individual monetary amounts as more teachers qualify.

*Easily understood standards and procedures for awarding teachers additional compensation:* Clear and concise information about proposed teacher compensation systems must be provided to all teachers.

Compensation systems could include the following components and conditions:

*Incentives that focus on the acquisition of knowledge and skills that support the goals of districts, schools and teachers:* Financial systems must be in place to encourage teachers to acquire knowledge and skills in areas that are of importance to schools (e.g., earning a second credential in a shortage field, using technology in instruction, enhancing knowledge and skills related to teaching reading, learning a new, research-based program, etc.).

*Multiple opportunities to increase teacher compensation and advancement:* Teachers should be eligible to earn additional compensa-

tion in a variety of ways. Systems might be developed that compensate teachers for advanced skills (e.g., reward for achieving National Board Certification or meeting high standards of professional practice); for acquiring new knowledge and skills; for assuming additional responsibilities (e.g., peer assistance and review, providing professional development to colleagues, mentoring other teachers, serving on curriculum committees); for working in hard-to-staff schools; and for schoolwide efforts that result in noteworthy changes in student achievement, attendance, reduced dropout rates, parental involvement or other valued educational indicators.

*Incentives for teachers who agree to teach in low-performing schools, hard-to-staff schools and/or shortage areas:* Increased compensation is necessary to attract teachers to difficult assignments and shortage areas if we are to have qualified teachers in every classroom. Such financial incentives are not, however, the only solution. In addition to meaningful pay incentives, districts must be held accountable for making such schools safe and orderly, assuring that high-quality leadership is present and that ongoing professional support is available to all staff.

*Multiple measures of student progress for schoolwide and/or group incentives:* Teachers working together make a significant difference. Compensation systems with schoolwide rewards based on multiple measures of student outcomes (e.g., standardized test scores, student work, classroom assessments), as well as other indicators (e.g., attendance rates, dropout rates, disciplinary incidents and the like) might be considered. Such programs encourage the collegiality and support that promote student growth. Nonetheless, it is critical that any schoolwide or group incentives be developed jointly by management and labor; include credible, technically defensible indicators of student progress; and assure that determinations of student progress are based on improvement, not absolute scores, with comparisons based on similarly situated schools.

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***Increased compensation is necessary to attract teachers to difficult assignments and shortage areas if we are to have qualified teachers in every classroom.***

## **AFT Recommendations on Compensation for Teachers**

The AFT encourages and will support local unions and/or state federations that choose to explore fair, flexible, labor/management-designed teacher compensation proposals that:

- provide adequate competitive base salaries, including entry-level pay
- encourage collegiality and improve professional practice and student learning.

While some districts and local unions have been moving in this direction for several years, others are just beginning to consider these issues. Depending on local circumstances and experiences with teacher compensation proposals, and mindful of the urgency of providing an adequate salary base to attract new teachers and retain qualified teachers in our profession and our schools, exploration might include increased professional compensation for:

- knowledge and skills that advance and/or address high-priority educational goals;
- schoolwide improvement;
- achieving National Board Certification;
- mentoring new and veteran teachers, providing peer assistance and review, serving as lead teachers, etc.;
- teaching in shortage areas;
- agreeing to teach in hard-to-staff and/or low-performing schools;
- assuming additional responsibilities; and
- instructional practice that meets mutually agreed-upon high-quality professional standards.

Teachers are the most basic educational resource communities provide to students. By assuring a competitive salary base and an enhanced salary schedule, together with rigorous preparation and licensure qualifications, mentoring and induction, on-going professional development and evaluation based on professional standards, all students can be afforded equal access to well-prepared, qualified teachers. Anything less denies students access to the quality education they deserve.

## AFT CONVENTION RESOLUTION

# *Union-Sponsored Professional Development*

*Adopted July 2002*

**I**n 1992, the AFT Futures I report recognized that our changing membership and work environment required changing roles and responsibilities for the union. It called on AFT to make the transformation “from a union that has learned to represent our members’ needs for fair rewards and decent working conditions, ... [to] a union that is learning to further [members] aspirations for professional growth and empowerment at the workplace.” In short, it called on the AFT to become a professional union, one that “is recognized by members and the public at large as dedicated both to the well-being of its members and to the people they serve.”

A professional union defines its mission as enhancing both the profession and the practice of its members. Basing its actions on what is in its members’ and the public’s interest, a professional union understands that improving the institutions in which members work and the services they provide are the obligation and the responsibility of both union and management. It is a union that negotiates professional issues along with salary and working conditions. And it is a union that recognizes the need to work together with management, developing bonds of trust that will allow them both to set aside old issues and focus on improvement and quality.

Taking responsibility for professional issues and the delivery of professional development is central to professional unionism. The AFT recognizes that it has a responsibility to help members, both veteran and new, do their jobs more efficiently. High-quality professional development is the linchpin of improving practice. Research indicates that

without continuous and effective opportunities to hone their craft, members will be less able to meet the expectations placed on them and less likely to stay in the profession.

Making the professional needs of members a union leader priority requires new roles for leadership. Depending on the situation, the union can do a number of things to assure that members have opportunities for high-quality professional development. They can:

- *Advocate*—All leaders can advocate for high-quality professional development. With knowledge about what good professional development looks like, leaders will be able to make the case before policy-making bodies about ways in which effective professional development increases performance. In making this case, they will be able to argue more persuasively for increased funding, support and time for members to engage in professional development.
- *Broker*—Most local and state leaders have, or can develop, the capacity to broker professional development for members with other organizations that offer such training. Assuming the role of broker enables the union to leverage existing programs to increase the array of professional opportunities available to members.
- *Collaborate*—Working with partners, including employers, the union can expand the kinds of professional development it offers. The collaborator role relieves the union of the burden of financing professional development on its own or developing the wide range of professional offerings that members need while allowing the union to be a full partner in ensuring the quality of programs to which it attaches its name.
- *Deliver*—Many local and state affiliates already offer their own union-created and funded professional development programs; however, union-sponsored programs are almost always funded through negotiated agreements with management and may be supplemented by monies from the union, private grants and the local, state or federal government.

Of course, not every local or state affiliate will be able to assume all of these roles. It takes time to reach the highest level of activity in each role. Selecting the role that is most appropriate to a local's capacity is the first step. All affiliates can assume one or more of these roles early on and

then begin the task of increasing capacity. Everyone can do something.

But if union leaders are to be effective in these roles, they will require a new kind of leadership training. Our union leaders will need to develop and enhance skills that were useful but not essential in their more traditional roles. Along with honing negotiating skills, they must:

- Become skilled at educating members on professional issues and their new roles in relationship with management. Members need to take control of their own professional development and create partnerships with management to ensure on-going quality professional development that meets their needs.
- Become adept at enhancing positive labor-management relations even in the face of hostility and rejection from management. Leaders need to make these relationships not just cordial, but productive. They need the skills to approach interactions with hospital administrators, district superintendents or government managers from a strategic perspective, with a goal in mind and a plan for accomplishing this goal.
- Learn how to build effective coalitions and partnerships with other groups and agencies having similar goals. The union cannot go it alone. It cannot be responsible for absorbing the costs associated with enhancing members' practice. Union leaders need to be able to develop partnerships and strategic alliances with other organizations and to work collaboratively with management to raise funds and develop programs around improved professional practice.
- Become more effective communicators on professional issues, both to their members and to the public. Enhancing the role of the union with regard to professional development challenges conventional beliefs about what unions do. It challenges the public perception of unions as well as the views of some union members and potential members. Effectively making the case for the union's involvement requires well-

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***Taking responsibility for professional issues and the delivery of professional development is central to professional unionism.***

developed communication skills and the ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances.

- Become more involved in the decision making that affects their members. To do this, leaders must have a command of the professional issues that members face every day—be they standards-based education, knowledge of new procedures, mastery of new technology, mandatory overtime, making choices when funds are tight and protecting budgets from random cuts and the like.
- Know how to access and use analyses of state and/or district budgets to identify potential funding sources to address professional issues.
- Become knowledgeable about professional development. They must know what the elements of high-quality professional development are and which policies will make continuous professional improvement for members possible. They must be armed with adequate information so they can be the first line of defense against shoddy programs and ill-conceived policies. They should be prepared to:
  - Advocate for high-quality professional development and, where feasible, involve the union in offering it;
  - Make strategic professional development choices linked both to members' and client needs;
  - Negotiate new contract provisions, or other labor-management agreements, that provide time, support, resources and incentives for members to engage in effective professional learning; and
  - Find means to dedicate the necessary resources to make professional development a centerpiece of union efforts to improve professional practice.

The union cannot secure high-quality professional development for our members alone, and we shouldn't have to. We can secure quality professional development if our leaders integrate professional issues into their work and develop partners who will fund and assist in delivering high-quality services to our members:

**RESOLVED, that the AFT believe that the union at all levels should elevate professional issues generally, and professional development specifically, to a more prominent role in the organization. We also**



believe that the union must support members as they improve their professional practice as it becomes part of our core mission. Achieving this vision will require a comprehensive, unionwide, sustained partnership among the national organization and its state and local affiliates.

Therefore, the AFT will:

- Develop structures to assure that helping to enhance the practice of our members permeates everything we do as an organization—from negotiating contracts to developing state legislation to choosing our professional partners. Professional issues generally and professional development in particular must be seen as fundamental to union work as are organizing, negotiating contracts, servicing grievances and engaging in political action.
- Undertake a thorough internal organizational review to better align internal structures and practices with an enhanced commitment to professional issues and professional development.
- Develop and implement new or expanded training programs for union leaders and staff that will enable them to integrate professional issues and professional development into the core of their union work.
- Review and expand AFT professional development efforts in every AFT constituency.
- Disseminate information about recognized, research-based professional development practices and programs (such as ER&D) to assist state federations and locals in their roles as advocates, brokers, collaborators and deliverers of professional development.
- Use technology to increase leaders' and members' access to, and communication about, professional issues and professional development.

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***Professional issues generally and professional development in particular must be seen as fundamental to union work as are organizing, negotiating contracts, servicing grievances and engaging in political action.***

- **Increase the capacity of the union to be effective in the area of professional issues/professional development by expanding current partnerships and developing new strategic alliances.**
- **These recommendations provide a framework for the union as we collectively strive to shape a culture of professional unionism that retains the principles on which the AFT was founded. We understand that context and circumstances matter. Not all locals or state affiliates will be able to implement every recommendation, but every local can be aware of this issue and incorporate it some way in its work.**

# Questions & Answers

## **Why is AFT concerned about teacher quality?**

Research findings demonstrate that teacher quality is the single most important school variable affecting student achievement. Well-prepared, highly qualified teachers are essential if we are to ensure that all students achieve the high standards necessary for them to lead fulfilling lives and become productive students. The AFT believes it is the union's responsibility to work to improve teacher quality and enhance the teaching profession.

## **What policies or programs would help improve teacher preparation?**

An ongoing debate exists about the best way to prepare teachers. The AFT believes that the best way to bring an adequate supply of well-trained teachers into the classroom is not by dismantling collegiate teacher education, but rather by strengthening it—by bringing higher quality, greater resources and much more coherence to the way teacher education screens and prepares teacher candidates. Preservice teachers must be liberally educated, have knowledge of the subjects they teach, and participate in high-quality, well supervised clinical settings.

The AFT recognizes that many high-quality teachers have entered the profession through alternative routes to certification. The AFT supports alternative route programs that require candidates to pass state teacher-testing exams in the appropriate content areas, provide candidates with pedagogical coursework, monitor candidate performance in the classroom, and provide candidates with the necessary services to support their development of effective teaching skills and strategies.

## **Why is AFT concerned about beginning teacher induction?**

Beginning teacher attrition is a serious problem. Nearly one in three teachers leaves the profession in the first three years. And, 46 percent of beginning teachers leave the profession within five years. Teaching is a demanding profession and the completion of a preparation program cannot be seen as the end of training for teachers. Rather, it is the beginning. New teachers need time to develop the skills and experiences necessary for completely independent practice in their initial teaching assignments, including the skills necessary to work effectively with paraprofessionals and other education support staff.

The AFT believes that all beginning teachers need to participate in well-supervised induction programs that allow them the opportunity to observe and be observed and mentored by highly accomplished teachers. The AFT calls on union leaders to work with school administrators to implement induction programs for novice teachers that include: a quality selection process for identifying and training mentor teachers; adequate training and compensation for those mentors; and time for them to genuinely teach and support beginning teachers.

## **How can peer assistance and review help AFT members?**

No one knows the difference between good teaching and poor teaching better than the best teachers themselves. Peer assistance and/or review programs allow new and struggling teachers to be evaluated by people with expertise in their teaching field, to get help and to be observed over time—instead of the widespread evaluation practice of a single observation, usually by the principal or vice principal. Peer assistance and/or review programs provide a fairer and more comprehensive review system than most traditional teacher evaluation systems currently in use in school districts. When done well, they provide high-quality professional development opportunities for new teachers. Under peer assistance and/or review, the union balances the protection of individual teachers, the protection of the profession and the public interest.

## **What is professional compensation?**

Professional compensation is a system that is built on a foundation of a competitive base-pay and adequate benefits for all teachers. Teachers are professionals and should be financially compensated for their con-

tributions to the field. Unlike merit pay, professional compensation systems adjust salaries based on a number of factors such as education, experience, the challenging as well as complex tasks they perform, and new or additional roles and responsibilities (e.g., mentoring, curriculum development) they assume.

### **Does the AFT expect all locals to support new professional compensation plans?**

The AFT expects locals to do what is in the best interest of their members, and this may or may not include developing a professional compensation system. Teacher compensation has become a major issue in the field.

Rather than have an alternative salary system imposed on our members without their input, the professional compensation resolution can help local affiliates develop systems that are sensitive to the needs of their members. This resolution specifies the conditions that must be in place for a compensation plan to succeed. These conditions include:

- An adequate salary base with sufficient benefits for all teachers;
- Sufficient funding;
- Easily understood standards and procedures for awarding teachers additional compensation; and
- Clear steps to improving professional practice combined with the necessary professional development.

### **What is high-quality professional development and why does the union need to advocate for it?**

High-quality professional development is an ongoing, research-based process of individual and collective examination of practice. High-quality professional development should:

- Ensure depth of content knowledge;
- Provide a strong foundation in the pedagogy of particular disciplines;

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***High-quality professional development is an ongoing, research-based process of individual and collective examination of practice.***

- Provide more knowledge about the teaching and learning processes and about schools as institutions;
- Be rooted in and reflect the best available research;
- Contribute to measurable improvement in student achievement;
- Engage teachers intellectually with ideas and resources;
- Provide sufficient time, support, and resources to enable teachers to master new content and pedagogy and to integrate these into practice;
- Be designed by teachers, in cooperation with experts in the field; and
- Take a variety of forms (e.g., seminars, workshops, courses).

Too often our members have been subjected to low-quality, disconnected professional development experiences. To change this, the union needs to play an active role in the content selection and the manner that professional development is delivered.

**Will this new emphasis by the union on professional development distract our leaders from focusing on the rights of our members?**

No. High-quality professional development is a benefit. Our members have a right to high-quality professional development that will enable them to meet the demands of standards-based instruction. A union of professionals supports the rights of its members and the development of their professional skills. A union of professionals advocates and negotiates professional issues along with salary and working conditions. A professional union recognizes the value of working together with management to focus on improvement and quality.

# Background Information

*The AFT has a long history of promoting quality in the teaching profession. What follows are excerpts taken from AFT president Sandra Feldman's March 2002 comments at the White House Conference on Preparing Quality Teachers in Washington, D.C.*

## Shaping Our Future

Let me say at the very beginning that although I have been a union leader for some time now—having spent 12 years as president of the AFT's local union in New York City and the last five as president of the national union—I, too, remain a teacher at heart, with first- and fourth-grade experience in the public schools of New York City. And, in my role as a union leader, I continue to spend time in schools, especially urban schools attended by poor children, the same schools that saved me and on whose behalf I have been devoted since my first astonishment at the wonders of kindergarten in PS 188 in Coney Island. That's where I was introduced for the first time to books, musical instruments and social etiquette.

Now—something you probably don't know. Like my legendary predecessor, Al Shanker, I entered teaching through an alternative route. Al's undergraduate and graduate work was in math and philosophy; mine was in English and American literature.

But New York City, which had the first—and for many years the only—entry examination into teaching, also had an alternative route. If you came into teaching through the alternative route, you were given a slightly less rigorous but nevertheless fairly daunting “substitute” examination. If you passed it, you could teach—at a lower salary and without benefits—until you passed the “regular” examination and completed

the courses required.

So—we were able to enter teaching without having gone through a teacher preparation program, on the strength of our liberal arts and subject matter education and our ability to pass a written exam demonstrating that knowledge and our literacy.

Then we were given a classroom full of kids and left to sink or swim.

I sank.

The first time I taught, despite my good education, my extreme dedication, my experience in the Civil Rights movement, my voluntary visits to the homes of my pupils and my love for each and every one of them, I dropped out after one year—just as do close to 15 percent of new teachers today.

When I returned a few years later, I had some day-to-day subbing under my belt and an assignment to a school where the teachers took me under their wing and the principal gave me time to spend in the classrooms of experienced colleagues. And this time, after my first year, I stayed, and I excelled.

So, when I speak about teacher preparation, I do so from personal experience, as well as from a lifetime spent in schools and in discourse with teachers.

Most teachers, whether they came into the profession through an alternative path, as I did, or through a regular teacher education program—as do more than 80 percent of our teachers—will tell you they felt unprepared when they entered the classroom.

This should never be the case.

Teachers are not like the Maytag repairman that we all remember from the commercials—they are not in the loneliest profession in the world—although it can feel that way sometimes. We have to do everything we can to make sure that teachers feel prepared coming into the classroom and feel supported throughout their careers in the classroom.

This is not an insignificant goal—for a whole host of reasons. Never before have there been so many new teachers in American classrooms. And never before has the need for additional teachers been so great. You have heard about the need to recruit, train, hire and retain more than two million teachers over the coming decade. And not just any teachers, but “highly” qualified, dedicated teachers in every subject, for every



school, in every city and suburb and small town in this country. At the same time, we must ensure that our current, very skilled and very dedicated corps of teachers benefits from the best and most up-to-date research about instructional strategies and subject matter knowledge.

Efforts are under way across the country to establish rigorous student achievement standards and to formulate education policies that make realizing them possible—efforts that the AFT has long supported. But we can't reach first-class standards without first-class teachers—dedicated professionals who have a wide and deep understanding of their subject and a repertoire of proven strategies for delivering it to their students.

This is a great opportunity and a great challenge. Frankly, the moment is as ripe for doing harm as it is for doing good. It won't be easy. None of the groups represented here today can do it alone. And—as our first lady has pointed out, I'm proud to say—in addition to whatever else we do, we need to raise teacher salaries.

In April 2000, an AFT task force composed of K-12 and higher education leaders delivered a report on strengthening teacher preparation and induction. The report, "Building a Profession," frankly acknowledged the shortcomings of teacher education programs and made some bold recommendations, including one calling on universities to require rigorous liberal arts and science courses for students preparing to teach and another calling for entry exams for teacher education similar to those for law and medicine.

We also called for a year of "clinical" experience—that is, an induction year on the job under the tutelage of master teachers.

The need to strengthen teacher education doesn't stop at the school-house door. One of the best ways to understand the challenge before us is to listen to teachers themselves. A poll conducted by the Albert Shanker Institute found that most teachers frankly admit that they have been prepared inadequately to teach the new higher standards. They

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***We have to do everything we can to make sure that teachers feel prepared coming into the classroom and feel supported throughout their careers in the classroom.***

warned of the need for earlier and better intervention support for their students, but nearly two-thirds told us they need more professional development, even if it means lengthening the school day or year.

So—let’s talk about the elements that would create real preparation, meaningful preparation, for teachers. I want to outline, briefly, five steps that we can and should take right now to make a concrete difference in the way teachers are prepared for the realities of today’s classrooms.

First: We must do a better job of preparing prospective teachers before they begin their careers. Good teachers need to be really well educated—as our good teachers today are. They need to know—deeply—the subject they teach. Prospective teachers should complete an academic major and have a solid foundation in the liberal arts. You can’t teach what you don’t know well.

Teachers not only must have a thorough education in the disciplines they will teach; they also must be steeped in the craft of teaching. Simply put, they need to know how to teach, which is one of the shortfalls of the alternative routes to teaching that do not involve meaningful pedagogical and inservice components. A rigorous college education is essential, but it isn’t enough when you hit that classroom. I ask any of you here to imagine yourself in a classroom—charged with teaching 25 children how to read, and knowing nothing about how they learn or what methods work. Prospective teachers must have adequate exposure to instructional strategies before taking charge of their own students. And, school districts should work with universities and alternative path programs to provide meaningful, practical experience in the classroom for prospective teachers.

Second: State licensing bodies and professional standards boards should require that entering teachers meet high standards that include knowledge of their disciplines, of how students learn, and of the liberal arts and sciences. And they should do this without requiring prospective teachers to jump through bureaucratic hoops. We lose some people before they even get to the test.

Teacher tests vary in content and level of difficulty, which is why the AFT task force on strengthening teacher preparation called for examinations to be based on agreed-upon standards developed by recognized scholars and educators, in much the same way as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards developed challenging advanced certi-

fication examinations. I know that this proposal makes many people uncomfortable, but children in every state deserve teachers who have met the highest standards of the profession.

Third: Beginning teachers should be given a well-supervised induction period that includes the opportunity to observe and be mentored by highly accomplished teachers.

It is appalling that it is not standard practice to provide immediate and ongoing support on the job for new teachers. Novices should develop and perfect their teaching skills by closely observing, meeting with, and learning from their more experienced colleagues in an organized, institutionalized program of mentoring.

Fourth: Peer assistance and peer review programs should be transformed from rare to commonplace. Peer assistance is central to improving teacher performance, and the best (and most rigorous) teacher evaluations are done by teachers who know the discipline, know about teaching, and know from painful experience the consequences they face when they share students taught by an unqualified colleague.

Fifth: Teachers in every school and district should be engaged in ongoing, meaningful professional development. Teachers need to keep current with the latest knowledge in their subject areas and with proven teaching techniques, and they need to have the time to meet with colleagues and help one another develop the best ways to reach and help their struggling students.

These principles should apply to both traditional and alternative methods of teacher preparation. And alternative program candidates—like all teaching candidates—should be required to pass examinations before being given responsibility for students.

Certainly—especially in the face of our extraordinary needs—alternative paths should be supported. But they should never become a route around standards and quality. If there are teacher education courses that are weak, irrelevant or useless, no one coming into the pro-

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***Teachers need to keep current with the latest knowledge in their subject areas and with proven teaching techniques, and they need to have the time to meet with colleagues and help one another develop the best ways to reach and help their struggling students.***

fession should have to take them. Neither alternative nor traditional paths should go there.

We have to make sure that all of our schools give all of our children—especially our neediest children—the opportunity to receive the very best education, from our inner cities to our rural areas.

Ensuring a qualified teacher in every American classroom is a major part of making that happen. But we also must make high-quality, pre-school education universally available—not compulsory—but accessible to all, particularly our neediest kids; intervene early and effectively when kids fall behind; use research-based academic programs; and provide small classes, especially in the early grades. These conditions create success, but they are woefully rare in schools serving the students who could most benefit from them.

The need for more than two million new teachers in the coming decade presents a unique opportunity. If we strengthen teacher education programs—including alternative path programs, establish solid standards for the profession, provide teachers with ongoing professional development and treat them like the professionals they are, we will be well on the road to preparing tomorrow's teachers well, while we help today's.

Let me close by making this final point. Our teachers do a yeoman's job each and every day. We entrust them with our most precious gift—our children. Why wouldn't we do everything to make sure that they have the tools and the support they need to do the very best for those children?

# Background Reading

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## **AFT Materials**

- Educational Research & Dissemination (ER&D) Program and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
  - AFT's Parental Involvement Program
  - AFT's Professional Development Programs
  - AFT's Reading Programs
  - AFT's Thinking Mathematics Program
- Beginning Teacher Induction: The Essential Bridge
- A Report of the AFT Task Force on Union-Sponsored Professional Development
- Principles for Professional Development
- A Candidate's Guide to National Board Certification
- Professional Development: It's Union Work
- Building a Profession: Strengthening Teacher Preparation and Induction
- Peer Assistance and Review: An AFT/NEA Handbook
- Mentor Teacher Programs in the States





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