

THE Leader

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American Federation of
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New Orleans Schools Still in Eye of Storm

After Katrina, charter schools and mass firings became the rule



Prekindergartners at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School for Science and Technology in New Orleans.

—Christopher Powers/Education Week

It's been five years since Hurricane Katrina ravaged New Orleans and redefined "normal" for so many people. Rebuilding the drowned city has been a slow and laborious process, and while progress has been made, one area in particular still is lagging behind: education.

Despite the diligent efforts of administrators and teachers to provide a quality education, the school system has been plagued with problems that contribute to its poor national rankings. Before Katrina, approximately two-thirds of students attended schools that were deemed failing by state standards, according to a recent *Newsweek* article. Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), the district that before Katrina encompassed the majority of New

Orleans' schools, was ranked as one of the worst in the state, and high poverty levels coupled with fractured family life made education an afterthought for most children.

After the storm, many schools were damaged if not completely destroyed, and only a third of New Orleans' student population returned to the schools in 2006. In an unexpected move, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) fired without warning more than 7,500 teachers, administrators, custodians, bus drivers, cafeteria workers and other school workers immediately after Katrina.

"Each month we had another blow," said Florida Woods, the executive
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AFSA Outlook on Education

Multiple seats in the House and Senate aren't the only things changing in Congress. Read about AFSA's outlook on education, the key legislators involved, and what policies AFSA would like to see pushed through Congress.

See page 7.

Report Details Achievement Gap



A monumental new report published by the American Institutes for Research found states are setting very low educational standards that students can meet easily, which causes state education standards to look better than they actually are.

See page 5.

Legal Advice, Union Issues Anchor Conference



AFSA members from around the country convened at the East Coast Regional Leadership Conference in October to discuss how trade unionism can protect school administrators in today's era of radical education reform.

See page 8.

Checking Out the Leader in the Mirror



AFSA President Diann Woodard

The scapegoating of public school educators for problems that our schools are facing is not a spontaneous movement for "reform." It's being driven by powerful business interests that mistake reams of standardized data for meaningful plans to turn around schools. We don't need more data—we're drowning in it.

The teachers may be the primary targets of this assault, but we're no less vulnerable to the slings and arrows being thrust at them. Our plight is even worse in some ways because the work we do makes us virtually invisible to the public and the media.

To be sure, the experiments that policymakers are saddling us with are sheer folly most often. But the folly is not always theirs alone. Regrettably, some of the foolishness afoot in our schools isn't solely due to policymakers. Or as the Great Bard once put it, there are times when "the fault lies not in the stars, but in ourselves."

In short, it's necessary to take a hard look at what some in our union may be tempted to do that could hamper our efforts to work collaboratively for positive changes that will improve school performance. Under relentless pressure from their districts, some distressed administrators are grabbing on to whatever life preserver is thrown their way.

To which we can only say, "Beware of districts bearing gifts," for districts all over the country are coming to our members and promising them deals alleging to get them the resources they need—if they'll just make a few changes to practices now in place.

They'll tell you your situation is unique. And chances are you often do feel as though you're on an island. But what the district won't tell you is that the changes they want to make violate the policies your union is advocating.

Fully aware your union will oppose the changes that violate our policies, they'll feign innocence by telling you "unfortunately your union appears to be an impediment to what 'we are' trying to achieve."

But there's more danger than meets the eye in buying into this sweet talk, because once you take one of these deals, you really will be on an island, for a couple of reasons.

First, the district may not be able to deliver on the resources it promises. Second, each one of us who abandons solidarity with our union diminishes the force of our voice in the debate at every level of government.

For example, your union gives you a voice in the AFL-CIO and that voice is heard loudly and clearly in Washington. It's no accident that President Obama went personally to address the AFL-CIO's Executive Council. Given the labor movement's crucial role in elections, the White House and Congress are compelled to take into account our policy pronouncements.

The AFL-CIO also strengthens our voice by supporting us in combating the assault on our profession, as its Executive Council did recently by passing a resolution reasserting the labor movement's commitment to a strong, universal system of public education as "the foundation of the American middle class."

When congressional leaders receive our union's letter urging support for "a strong, fairly funded child nutrition bill that improves children's access to health foods" and opposes further cuts to SNAP, that message comes with the full backing of the 13 million-member AFL-CIO.

But more importantly, you have the backing of your national union. We have resources to help you build the capacity you need to cope with the challenges you're facing and we're reaching out to make you more aware of the help we can provide.

That's why we're putting together regional conferences around the country; the first was held in Connecticut in October. There, we offered members presentations by experts in bargaining and in developing strategies to combat anti-union campaigns. (See page 8 for more).

And just as we take a stand for you and the challenges you face, we urge you to mirror the policies and principles of our union; for, no matter how attractive a district's offer may be, if it violates the basic principles we're fighting for, it's important for us to stand united in rejecting it.

So, we urge you as leaders to look in the mirror and ask yourselves: Will you stand with your union, or will you buy into the false promise of "Go it alone?" Will you stand with the AFL-CIO in the fight to save public schools? Or, will you fall prey to false prophets?

We hope you'll choose to stand with us. For, united we stand to win the voice we deserve in shaping the policies that can turnaround our schools. Only then will the needs of schools in vastly differing circumstances be properly met. Only then will children from every walk of life be given the opportunities that they deserve. ■

In Solidarity,

Diann Woodard

Working With Change

After nearly 40-Year career, educator sees constant need for improvement

Aona Jefferson is retired now, but that doesn't mean she has stopped learning. In fact, she believes everyone should be a lifelong learner.

"You should never stop learning," she said. "You only stop learning when you are dead."

Jefferson, the president of the Council of School Officers, AFSA Local 4 in Washington, D.C., worked in education for 37 years before retiring. She loved

her work and said that for some, teaching is more of a calling than a career choice.

Included in her anecdotes of classroom adventures and you-had-to-be-there moments are nuggets of wisdom collected from her years of work.

"It's important for students to know a little bit about a lot," she said. "They must be able to compete. They must be civic-minded and they must be current on what's going on."

Jefferson said educators also must be engaged in the world.

"They need to know much more than just the subject they're teaching," she said. "They are molding citizens for the future."

Jefferson's beliefs on education and best practices do not stop with suggestions on how to improve teachers. Her ideas go on to challenge the core of today's education reform ideology.

"The talk of education reform needs to be more defined," she said. "It's not clear what it's about. It needs to be a combination of curriculum changes that model lifetime trends. We need more scientists, more mathematicians."

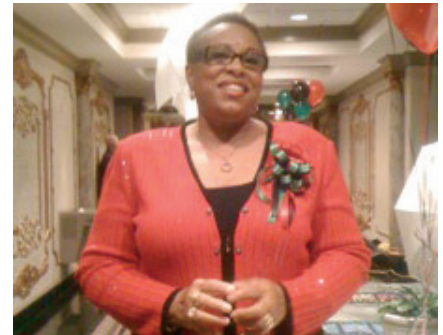
Jefferson said that overall, education needs to have more of a holistic approach. She said reform should be based on curriculum that does not teach to tests.

"Reform has to be a team effort," she said. "It can't be about firing your way to success. Upper-level [management] must understand the ideology. Weaknesses must be improved, not fired."

As president of CSO, AFSA Local 4, Jefferson knows the struggle unions face when up against difficult management. Ideally, unions and management should be able to work together under the premise that education is about the betterment of children and the future. Unfortunately,

it's the vision for the future that seems to be the cause of many conflicts.

"Union leaders are working against an administration that works against success," said Jefferson. "We all want to see success, but what does that look like?"



Aona Jefferson

One purpose of a union is to make sure people have a voice in the process, said Jefferson. Unions help negotiate and enforce a contract, which both management and employees are expected to observe. It's about fostering a good working relationship among the parties.

"Problems happen," Jefferson said. "That doesn't mean we don't all get along. It means we need to have a more collaborative environment."

Having a more collaborative environment inside and outside of the classroom can be a sign of success. Another potential sign of success is meeting standards.

"You have to have standards," Jefferson said. "I am in favor of national standards. It's a start. And we need to start somewhere."

As for the future of education reform, Jefferson said keeping an open mind is important.

"There is nothing wrong with reform," she said. "Change is the only thing we can count on, that we can depend on. Change is constant. But change can't take place in isolation. It must be done collaboratively." ■



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Relationships Pivotal in Success of Schools

Retired superintendents say trust, respect must anchor reform

Amidst the anger and confusion this era of mass reform has generated, there still is hope for those who believe the education reform movement can be forged into something positive.

And in the case of AFSA, members need not look any further for hope than their own affiliates.

"The role of a superintendent is to bring people together, not pull them apart," said Matthew Bromme, a retired superintendent and member of the CSA Retiree Chapter, AFSA Local 1. "Management needs to stop making unions the enemy. [The relationship] should be based on respect and trust."

School District 27 of Queens, the largest geographical district in New York, flourished under Bromme's supervision. The success of the district was largely a reflection of the relationships Bromme cultivated rather than the culmination of his own personal accomplishments.

"I found that if you are flexible, consistent and honest, people can work together," Bromme said.

Bromme's philosophy was shaped in part from his experience as a principal and as a union representative. He understood the value of relationships and earned his way up the chain of command. He knew that his success was contingent upon the relationships he built, and the strength of those relationships could be fortified by his actions.

"As a superintendent, you are a community-based person," he said. "Education is about bringing people together—about creating a future for the kids."

The concept that healthy working relationships are important in an education system seems to be lost on today's reform ideology. Bromme said the school system is a reflection of everyone's successes and failures, and that one person cannot be blamed or credited.

"We are pushing this CEO mentality and people are getting hired without an education background."

—Matthew Bromme, retired superintendent and member of CSA Retiree Chapter, AFSA Local 1

"We are looking at people with a corporate philosophy rather than looking at what's best for the students," said Bromme of the ideology. "We are pushing this CEO mentality and people are getting hired without an education background. You're not an entrepreneur."

Bromme said the education reform ideology seems to be driven by testing and data—two factors, he said, that are not the best way to judge a principal or a school.

"We're so focused on data and test scores," he said. "It is so much more than that."

Dr. Angelo Gimondo, also a retired superintendent and member of CSA Retiree Chapter, AFSA Local 1, said his personal philosophy was one of inclusion that set the stage for a participatory democracy.

"I was never a top-down administrator," he said. "I was a collaborator."

Gimondo was the longest-serving superintendent in New York City. He was the superintendent of Community School District 30 in Queens for nearly 18 years, and said when he first started it was one of the most overcrowded school districts in the city. The district also had one of the largest non-English speaking populations.

By the time he retired, 20 different schools or additions had been built, and the district had become one of the most academically successful in the city.

He said his strong relationships with educators, administrators and officials made everything possible.

"I had an excellent relationship with the unions," Gimondo said. "I had been involved at the very beginning in the formation of the teachers union in New York. I was part of the struggle to achieve benefits and recognition. Having been in that position, I realized how important it was, and I wasn't going to deny any other union the benefits they had earned."

Gimondo said that besides maintaining a good relationship with the community, he believed in empowering personnel.

"I don't believe in mandated, cookie-cutter programs," he said. "I am very leery of anything top-mandated without first consulting others lower in the system."

"If [all key players] are part of the process, they have a stake in making it happen," he said. "They share the mistakes and the successes."

One way Gimondo helped revive struggling schools in his district was by adopting a philosophy called the School-Based Shared Decision-Making Program. Educators and administrators were encouraged to take part in the decision-making process, and schools were in charge of identifying their needs and then creating plans they thought would work best for their situation. District 30 was a pioneer in the implementation of this philosophy, and the state later adopted the program for all schools.

Gimondo also worked to establish an identity for the district in which students and staff could claim ownership.

"We created a district logo and mission statement," said Gimondo. "It generated a sense of pride in the district; a sense of belonging. People said they felt like they were a member of a big family." Gimondo's emphasis on relationships and inclusion should be common

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*(Relationships Pivotal...
continued from page 4)*

sense—in a large system, it would seem absurd not to collaborate with others to arrive at the best practices for education. However, the current practice of permitting non-educators in high-ranking positions to make large educational decisions proves common sense is not common for all.

“I don’t believe in hiring people who don’t know every piece” of the educational system, said Bromme.

Gimondo echoed Bromme’s belief, and added that involving everyone in the system is the way to achieve results.

“The failure of educators and administrators now, before, and in the future, is to mandate everything and not include everyone in the decision-making process,” Gimondo said.

As for charter schools, Gimondo believes they are becoming popular because people have more power when it comes to making educational decisions. The structure allows for more control, which Gimondo believes is what people appreciate.

When enacted properly, reform of an education system takes time. Bromme said that it takes at least three years to start seeing changes in a school. There are numerous issues that affect how fast a school changes, he said, from budget cuts to accommodation of ESL students.

“We need to give up this idea that reform takes a year,” Bromme said. “It is not an overnight thing.”

Gimondo and Bromme’s mentality of investing in people and relationships reveals the faults of the data-driven education reform ideology.

While data and test scores are not to be ignored, these superintendents’ accounts prove that relationships are just as valuable, if not more valuable, than the charts and statistics that reformers zealously worship. ■

State Education Performance Standards Vary Widely Student Learning Expectations Gap Can Be Twice The Size of National Black-White Achievement Gap, Finds New Report

State education performance standards

can be up to four grades behind the standards set in another state, according to a new report by the American Institutes for Research (AIR).

The gap in state education performance standards is so large that in some places it is twice the size of the national black-white achievement gap.

To illustrate the differences, the report compared what is expected of students in Massachusetts with what is expected in the states with the lowest standards. The difference was stunning. What eighth graders are expected to know in the states with the lowest standards was comparable to what fourth graders are expected to know in Massachusetts.

The report, titled *“International Benchmarking: State Education Performance Standards,”* compared the proficiency standards in each state using an international benchmark based on two global assessments: TIMSS and PIRLS.



AIR Vice President Gary Phillips, the author of the report, found dramatic differences in what students are expected to learn from state to state. Many states reported high proficiency rates based on tests that entertained very low expectations.

“This is a fundamental flaw in the No Child Left Behind law because it permits states to report high levels of achievement by setting low standards,” said Phillips, who previously served as acting commissioner of the federal National Center for Education Statistics.

“It is a travesty that states choose to fool their communities by manipulating test scores rather than asking their

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Labor News

AFL-CIO to Conduct Audit, Reposition Labor Movement

The AFL-CIO Executive Council agenda in November focused on the election results and Labor 2010. President Richard Trumka indicated he would be doing an audit of Labor’s program to see what worked and what didn’t. He stated one lesson learned that we could take away from the election was that voters were angry and were not satisfied with the economy. President Trumka also stated the share of labor voters was not large enough to outweigh the non-union voters. Therefore, he said the growth of the labor movement must be a top priority.

The meeting continued with President Trumka discussing the labor movement’s agenda going forward. In the short term, we will work during this lame-duck session to move bills that the House has passed but the Senate did not, such as the Public Safety Bargaining Act, China currency and FAA reauthorization and unemployment extension. In the long term, he stated that we would work on jobs and the economy, growth and organizing and repositioning the labor movement. ■

(Student Learning... continued from page 5)

students to perform at world-class levels and investing in education strategies that have been proven to be successful," said Diann Woodard, AFSA international president. "The report shows that because our tests have no external, comparable benchmarks, it is laughable for us to assume we can compete globally when we don't even know how well we are competing with our neighbors across the street."

The report also estimated how the state AYP results would have looked in 2007 had all of the states used an internationally benchmarked common performance standard. When the data were reanalyzed, states reporting the highest levels of proficiency dropped dramatically.

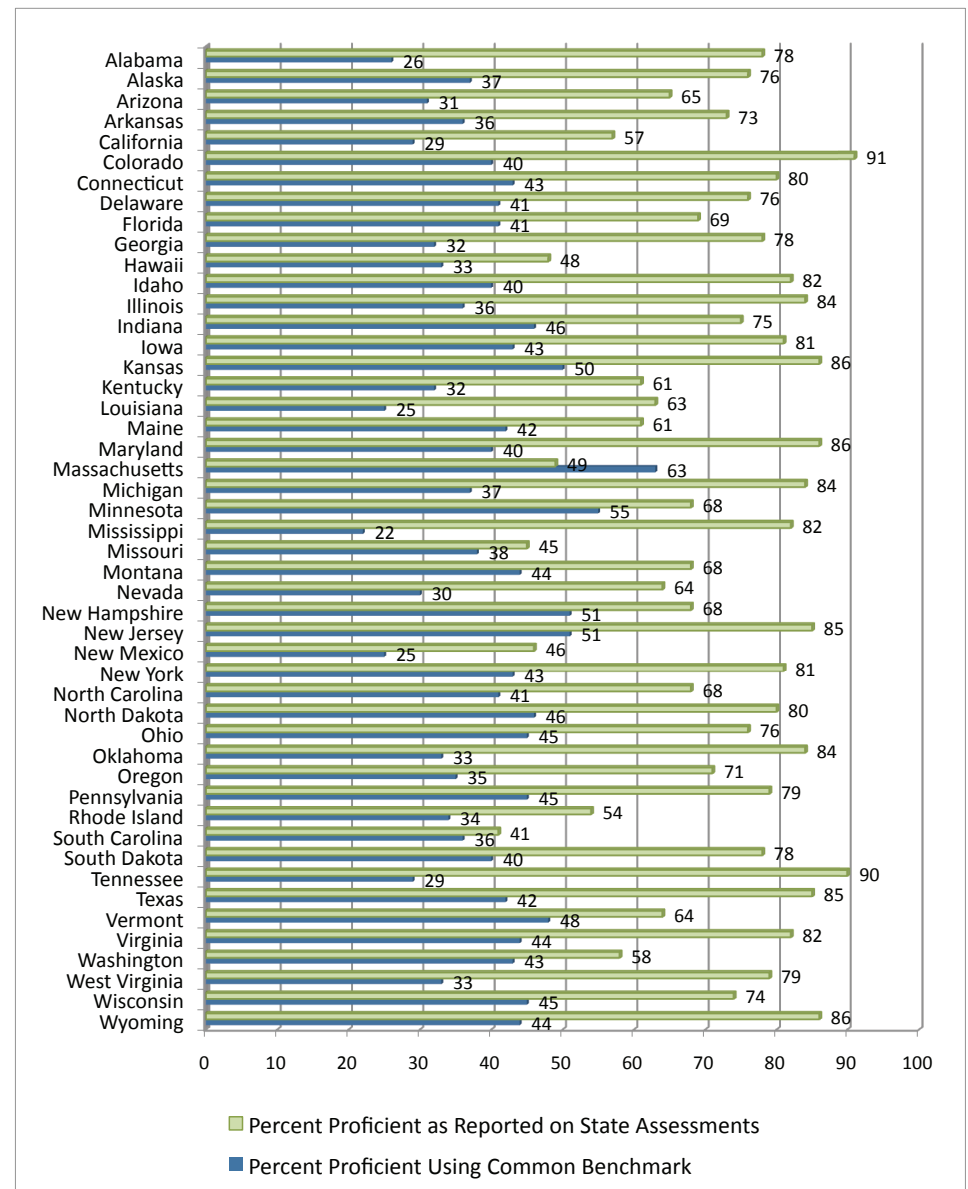
For example, in grade eight mathematics, Tennessee dropped from 88 percent proficient to 21 percent, and Massachusetts went from being one of the lowest-performing states to the highest-achieving state in the nation. Another example shows Alabama reporting 78 percent of its fourth graders proficient in math in 2007, but on an internationally benchmarked common performance standard, just 26 percent were proficient.

"One reason states set low standards is because current methods of standard setting used in the United States do not incorporate external benchmarks as a guide to setting standards," explained Phillips. "Therefore, this report recommends a new standard setting method, referred to as the 'Benchmark Method,' that uses national and international benchmarks to calibrate how high the state performance standard should be."

Woodard said AFSA would join AIR in advocating for the federal and state governments to use the Benchmark Method.

Phillips said the results help explain why the United States continues to do poorly in international comparisons.

State Assessments of 4th Grade Student Proficiency in Mathematics (top bar) vs. Student Proficiency Based on an Internationally Benchmarked Common Standard (bottom bar)



"Many states think they are doing well and feel no urgency to improve because almost all of their students are proficient," said Phillips. "They have a type of Lake Wobegon delusion where they have no idea how they stack up when compared with peers outside their own state." ■

For more information and to view the report, visit www.air.org.



AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

Outlook on Education

New Congress means potential changes

The 2010 elections delivered a wave of new members to Congress that likely will result in significant changes to our nation's education system.

Many new house members campaigned for reducing federal spending, the federal deficit and the federal role in education, and for allowing for more local control. This is in stark contrast to the record investments made in recent budget years and the funding and policies implemented through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and the Education Jobs Fund.

Educators will need to prepare themselves to see a bit more "red" this year than anticipated.

The new members' ideas for education and government spending provide little hope for increased resources. The U.S. secretary of education recently delivered a speech entitled "The New Normal: Doing More With Less," that offered his advice on how school districts should cope with less money.

Speculation also has been growing as to what the elections will mean for education reform and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), now three years overdue. President Obama and others have singled out education as one of the issues that has potential for bi-partisan action, and several Republicans share some of the president's priorities for education, such as expanding access to charter schools and holding teachers accountable for student performance.

However, there are issues that many Republicans oppose, such as the Common Core Standards (CCS) movement. Prior to the elections, many states had begun implementing Race to the Top (RTTT) reforms and signed on to the CCS initiative. After the elections, 19 state legislative chambers and seven governorships were turned over to the GOP. It is unclear what will happen in

these states during the implementation of RTTT and CCS reforms.

The new chair of the House Education and Labor Committee is Rep. John Kline (R-Minn.). Kline has been a vocal opponent of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA)—an act that AFSA supports—but has been a strong supporter of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and has advocated for fully funding the law.

"I will immediately focus this panel's work on the steps needed to restore economic certainty and promote job creation," Kline said. "Because quality schools are essential to our economic strength, our efforts will include an emphasis on education reform to ensure all students have the opportunity to thrive in the 21st century."

Rep. Kline released the committee's priorities in the 112th Congress, which include:

- Conducting robust oversight of education and workforce programs across the federal government to protect students, families, workers, and retirees; and
- Pursuing education reform that restores local control, empowers parents, lets teachers teach, and protects taxpayers.

One Senator who will continue to be a key player is Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. Sen. Harkin has been a strong advocate for more robust early childhood education and also has expressed support for more equitable funding for children who need it the most. The reauthorization of ESEA has also been a priority for Harkin.

Another important player could be Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.). He is a member of the Senate leadership, a former Secretary of Education and has a good relationship with the current administration. Alexander has

suggested Congress may focus on the "larger" issues relating to ESEA reauthorization, and could possibly take a piecemeal approach rather than passing the entire bill.

If Congress does not reauthorize ESEA by August 2011, it may not happen until after the 2012 presidential election. If that is the case, ESEA will remain the current law, and the number of schools labeled as failing will continue to grow and consequently face sanctions or termination.

Given the new layout in Congress and the new makeup of key committees, the Department of Education's 'Blueprint for the reauthorization of ESEA' may gain renewed significance. The blueprint, released in March 2010, contains many policy areas that both Republicans and Democrats support. However, there are major areas that Republicans and Democrats have yet to agree on, including expanding charter schools, the School Improvement Grants (SIG), competitive funding for Title I, and the consolidation of programs, to name a few.

AFSA has been monitoring all of these issues closely and communicating with members of congress and their staff. We have urged Congressional members to support an increased federal investment in education and high-quality early education. We also have submitted recommendations for the reauthorization of ESEA that focus on improving accountability, professional development, assessments, data, shared accountability, opportunity to learn and funding. More information on AFSA's recommendations can be found at AFSAadmin.org. ■

Legal Advice and Union Organizing Strategies Anchor AFSA Conference

AFSA members given tools to face potential challenges

When it comes to working with legal counsel, the client is always the union, never an individual member. That piece of advice and many more were provided at the AFSA East Coast Regional Leadership Conference in Connecticut.

AFSA local members, presidents and executive board members convened at the Foxwoods Resort and Casino on the weekend of Oct. 8 to discuss the importance of union representation and the current issues facing educators.

"AFSA is a trade union," said labor attorney Mark Cousins. "Solidarity is more than a word. It is a concept."

Mark Cousins, along with Richard Furlong and Bruce Bryant, all labor attorneys, led a panel discussion on how unions can better work with legal counsel. The three men provided valuable advice that no doubt would have come at a cost if it had been in an office setting.

"Making people's lives better is what [unions] are in the business of doing," said Cousins. "Affiliations are only meaningful if the labor movement is strong. This isn't about noise. This is about sending a message."



Dr. Dolan explaining to conference attendees how school administrators are affected by the restructuring of the education model.



Attendees from CSA, AFSA Local 1 at the AFSA East Coast Regional Leadership Conference in October.

All three attorneys answered numerous questions from the audience and were available after the conference for additional inquiries. Many members found the panel discussion valuable, and Florida Woods, AFSA Program Committee chair, said she was pleased with the quality of the panel discussions.

"Every one of our speakers came highly recommended," said Woods. "We wanted to focus more on the union side of AFSA rather than the education side. We want to show members what AFSA can do for them."

John Olsen, president of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, welcomed participants at the opening reception Friday evening and spoke about some of the challenges facing union members in his state and how they relate to AFSA members. Other speakers included Dr. W. Patrick Dolan, a consultant from The Dolan Group; Doris Reed, AFSA's affiliate liaison; Mark T. Gaffney, president of the Michigan state AFL-CIO; and James Dierke, president of the United Administrators of San Francisco (UASF) AFSA Local 3 and executive vice president of AFSA.

Dolan's presentation revolved around the structure of the education system and its weaknesses. "The system is not the most ideal structure for school administrators," said Dolan. Reed's presentation was not as colorful as Dolan's but was just as informative. Reed talked about her role in negotiating contracts for unions, and said she is available as a resource to contact when unions are in need of a negotiator.

Reed also distributed helpful checklists and said unions are pivotal in protecting one's rights, and urged members to stay involved in their unions and abreast of current issues.

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"Making people's lives better is what [unions] are in the business of doing. Affiliations are only meaningful if the labor movement is strong. This isn't about noise. This is about sending a message."

—Labor attorney
Mark Cousins

(Legal Advice... continued from page 8)

"If you don't organize and don't grow, [the union] will die," she said.

Gaffney and Dierke also talked about the importance of unions, with each presentation taking a different approach. Gaffney urged AFSA locals to foster active relationships with their respective AFL-CIO state locals, while Dierke highlighted the importance of using AFSA as a resource and AFSA's role in the union movement.

Many AFSA members turned out for the conference, and AFSA is hopeful there will be a strong showing at the April conference in New Orleans.

"We want our locals to know that AFSA is there for them," said Woods. "These conferences are a step in the more communicative approach we are trying

to take. With everything that is going on with education and the economy, we want to support and educate our members in the best way possible. These conferences are a great way to come together as a community and share best practices."

The next AFSA Regional Leadership Conference will be in New Orleans on April 15-17. ■



Diann Woodard, AFSA international president, addressing conference attendees.

Boston Local Reaches Deal

Federal turnaround model threatened schools, jobs

In what initially seemed like a hopeless situation, the Boston Association of School Administrators and Supervisors (BASAS), AFSA Local 6, negotiated a deal with the Boston School Committee that saved its members from potential termination after the superintendent announced plans to sanction schools designated as "turnaround" schools under the federal Race To The Top (RTTT) model.

Under the RTTT model, a school that is designated as a "turnaround" school has four options. The school can:

- close entirely,
- shut down and reopen as a charter school,
- fire its principal and completely reinvent its curriculum and culture under intense supervision, or
- opt to eliminate its principal and 50 percent of its staff.

"The problem with 'turnaround' schools is that you're bargaining against yourself," said BASAS President and AFSA Vice President Dominic Sacchetti. "We had to give up provisions that had already been negotiated in our contract."

Sacchetti said that while the Boston School Committee and its superintendent have specific criteria they use to label schools as "turnarounds," they are under no obligation to explain to the union why certain staff members are not selected to return.

"The staff [that are chosen to be eliminated] seemed to be picked at random," said Sacchetti. "Under the newly passed Massachusetts Education Reform Act signed into law in January (2010), school superintendents are under no obligation to produce a reason for terminating them."

In the spring of 2010, six schools that employed BASAS members were chosen to be sanctioned after being labeled as "turnaround" schools. BASAS fought the sanctions the RTTT model proposed. The new law provides for an arbitrator to settle disputes and facilitate negotiations. Although BASAS ultimately had to surrender previously negotiated rights, no members were laid off, an outcome that Sacchetti saw as a victory.

"We had to give on some issues or else no one would win," said Sacchetti.

According to Sacchetti, a three person panel made up of himself, a member from the school department and the arbitrator, voted on every plan the school board presented as a way to turn around a failing school. All items regarding working conditions were agreed upon, with the exception of the issue of seniority being applied to members who were not selected to remain in their designated "turnaround" school.

The school department did not want seniority protections for displaced members who may have bumping rights under the BASAS contract. In the end, the arbitrator agreed with BASAS, and displaced members in "turnaround" schools were allowed all of their rights under the terms of the new three-year agreement.

The principals of the six schools were not as fortunate as the BASAS members. In 1993, the Massachusetts Legislature removed collective bargaining rights from principals. In each of the six "turnaround" schools designated by the school department, principals were terminated, reassigned to other schools or enticed to retire. ■

Common Core Standards Come to New York

New York is among 48 states, along with two territories and the District of Columbia, to participate in the development of Common Core State Standards for grades K-12 English Language Arts and Mathematics.

New York also is among the first 32 states that agreed in the summer of 2010 to adopt the standards, which are part of an unprecedented state-led effort to improve the rigor of student learning. The initiative is backed by the U.S. Department of Education and coordinated by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The final version of the standards was released in June 2010.

This uncommon unity has to do with a very common concern over a decline in the quality of American education. Once the nation with the highest college graduation, the U.S. now has dropped to lower than 10th place among industrialized nations.

"The Common Core Standards initiative is a truly historic opportunity for states to collectively accelerate the pace of education reform by providing every student with a world-class structure for a strong curriculum," says NYS Education Commissioner David Steiner. "[This is] a structure that prepares them for college, for the global economy, for 21st century citizenship and prepares them for lifelong learning."

Current standards vary dramatically from state to state. In the long term, the new standards initiative will establish a uniform and rigorous set of expectations for what American students should know by the time they leave high school, with a focus on college and career readiness. In the short term, the standards will make it easier for children to move from one district or state to another.

Written by literacy and math experts, the new standards consist of two subject areas: Common Core State

Standards for Mathematics and Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects. This focus on literacy across the two content areas points to the importance of improving students' reading comprehension of increasingly complex non-fiction texts in social studies and science—not just in English class.

"The Common Core Standards initiative is a truly historic opportunity for states to collectively accelerate the pace of education reform by providing every student with a world-class structure for a strong curriculum."

—NYS Education Commissioner David Steiner

The standards are not a curriculum, but rather must be supported by a content-rich curriculum. As described by the Common Core State Standards Initiative website, the standards are a framework designed to "define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs."

True to their purpose, the standards point to the kinds of math problems and texts across the curriculum that a student should master at each grade level, and how students should demonstrate mastery. Educators will need support with making changes to their curricula to emphasize and improve the level of student writing, research, and critical thinking in ELA and applied problem solving in math. According to the new ELA standards,

for instance, an eighth grader would be expected to "write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence." Under the new math standards, an eighth grader would be expected to "[grasp] the concept of a function and [use] functions to describe quantitative relationships."

For many New York school leaders, Common Core professional development began as early as July and will continue through the fall and throughout the next several school years. State tests in New York are expected to align with the new standards as early as 2012. ■

New Year, New Look

AFSA is evolving. Let's face it: education is not what it used to be. Communication is not what it used to be, either. At our East Coast Regional Leadership Conference, Doris Reed said it best: "If you don't grow, you'll die." Well, AFSA is growing.

We're changing the look and feel of our newsletter and we've established a Facebook page and a Twitter account to help better connect with you. We're also redoing our website and email system to better tailor our communications.

The improvements we're making now are to help strengthen our union and nurture the relationship we have with you. We want to know how to better serve and represent you, because that's our privilege and honor as your national labor union.

We hope you embrace our changes, and we appreciate your patience and support.

Find us on Facebook at facebook.com/AFSAUnion and follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/AFSAUnion. ■

Private Money to Fund Public Schools

Newark, N.J. schools receive grant from Facebook billionaire Mark Zuckerberg

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg announced in September his gift of a \$100 million challenge grant to Newark, N.J. Public Schools.

The grant is to be dispersed over a five-year period, and is contingent upon matching grants that Newark Democratic Mayor Cory Booker has been charged with arranging. With approximately 40,000 students in the school district, the money would make a significant difference if managed properly.

Newark Public Schools is one of three districts seized by the state in 1995 after being declared in need of remediation. The Newark school board was replaced by an advisory board that advises current Newark Superintendent Clifford B. Janey.

The state recently decided not to rehire Janey, and although his contract expires on July 1, 2011, a process for identifying a new superintendent has yet to be put into place.

Republican Gov. Chris Christie, whose reach seems to extend far past the state's border, said on "Oprah" in September the money would be used to improve Newark's failing schools.

"Mayor Booker is going to be the point person, our lead guy in Newark in helping to develop this entirely new plan of how to reform the education system in Newark and create a national model," said Gov. Christie. "I'm empowering him to do that. I am in charge of the public schools in the city of Newark as governor. I am going to empower Mayor Booker to develop that plan and to implement it with a superintendent of schools that we're going to pick together."

Booker does not have any legal authority to appoint a school superintendent. The State Board of Education, with the New Jersey



Dr. Leonard Pugliese (left) and Mayor Cory Booker (right) along with various other elected officials at the kick-off press conference for PENewark on Nov. 1.

Commissioner of Education, oversees the Newark Public Schools, Advisory Board and the Newark Public Schools superintendent.

"My hope is that reform will move in a meaningful direction. ... It is clear to me that administrators and supervisors must be part of the discussion early on during the reform planning stage. In this way we can both offer our expertise and listen to the concerns of the educational community."

—Dr. Leonard P. Pugliese, regional vice president of AFSA and president of the City Association of Supervisors and Administrators (CASA), AFSA Local 20

Booker has ties to the newly created Partnership for Education in Newark, known as PENewark. PENewark is responsible for gathering data from the community on Newark's public schools. The data then will be compiled into a

report that will be used to determine what changes need to be made to the public schools.

"We're going to start with the most robust community-engagement effort the country has seen, engaging tens of thousands of residents [...] We want everybody to be invited to the table to offer their voice and define what the community standards are for Newark and our nation. We think that's going to be a powerful process that's going to create a foundation for radical reform," said Booker in a November interview with *Fortune* magazine.

Dr. Leonard P. Pugliese, regional vice president of AFSA and president of the City Association of Supervisors and Administrators (CASA) AFSA Local 20, said he is optimistic about the plans for education reform in Newark.

"My hope is that reform will move in a meaningful direction," he said. "I hope that we can work with all groups to move the district forward. It is clear to me that administrators and supervisors must be part of the discussion early on during the reform planning stage. In this way we can both offer our expertise and listen to the concerns of the educational community at large." ■

CFSA Response to Waiting for Superman

By Roch Girard, President, Connecticut Federation of School Administrators

"Waiting for Superman" is a highly charged and emotional film predicated on old falsehoods and a desire to sell the notion that charter schools are the solutions to education issues.

It depicts teachers, administrators and unions as bad while casting charter schools as good, giving false hope. The film oversimplifies the complex issues of education. It is an emotional film that does not tell the real story about public schools or offer real solutions. The film is not a documentary, but rather a propaganda ploy benefiting charter schools, all at our expense.

- It focuses on a few bad apples and does a disservice to millions of great, hardworking and dedicated teachers and administrators, who are on the front lines each day.
- It makes an "us vs. them" mentality; it causes division rather than collaboration. We believe every public school should be successful. This film makes little effort to celebrate the many public schools that are successful in America.
- The film says public education is a failed entity.
- It says minority children in urban settings are doomed to failure because of the poor quality teacher who is incompetent.
- It says teachers in public schools care more about their union and tenure rights than educating their students.
- The film does not mention the quality of life issues in the homes/neighborhoods many of the children live in.
- The film makes no mention of non-school factors that affect education directly and on a daily basis (poverty, drugs, abuse, lack of parental involvement, guns, poor nutrition, homelessness, absenteeism, etc.).

(continued on page 13)

Domingo Madera Honored

Madera vital in development of Puerto Rico's trade unionism

On Nov. 4–7, 2010, Somos El Futuro hosted the 23rd annual winter conference of the New York State Assembly and Senate and the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force at the Intercontinental Resort and Casino in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The mission of Somos El Futuro is to increase the participation of the Puerto Rican/Hispanic community in the creation of public policy and to empower New York's Hispanic communities to work toward the development of policies, laws, state rules and regulations that address the needs and issues of Hispanics across the state.

Attendees participated in panels and workshops and visited the Capitol and Ana Méndez University. Gov. Paterson and Gov.-elect Cuomo attended the conference and addressed the nearly 300 people in attendance. Also present were the Governor of Puerto Rico, Luis Fortuño, Rep. Nydia Velásquez, New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli and numerous legislators from the New York State Senate and Assembly.

A highlight of the conference was the honoring of Domingo Madera Ruiz among a select group of Puerto Rican labor leaders at the annual labor breakfast sponsored by Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) on Nov. 6. Domingo Madera, a career educator, rose through the education ranks to his current

position as head of Educadores Puertorriqueños en Acción (EPA), AFSA Local 105. The Senate of Puerto Rico recently recognized Domingo for his contribution to the labor movement and the working class of Puerto Rico. Domingo's work has been of vital importance to the development of trade unionism in Puerto Rico. ■



From left: Sonia Ivany, President, NYC LCLAA; Anita Gomez-Palacio, executive director, Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, AFSA Local 1; Domingo Madera receiving his award.

New York Local Conference Highlights Imagination and Creativity in Leadership and Education

The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA), AFSA Local 1 convened on Nov. 13 for its 46th annual conference on school leadership at the Hilton New York.

Titled *Great Schools Begin with Great Leaders: Embracing Imagination, Fostering Creativity*, the conference focused on developing imaginative thinkers—both students and educators—in New York City's public schools.

More than 1,300 NYC public school principals, assistant principals, supervisors, administrators and day care directors as well as teachers and parents met to discuss the importance of stimulating imagination in the classroom and grappling creatively with the complex education challenges confronting New York City.

Speakers included Joel I. Klein, resigning chancellor of the NYC Public Schools, Scott Noppe-Brandon, executive director of the Lincoln Center Institute, and Joseph Polisi, president of the Juilliard School.

"If we acknowledge different styles of learning, we're much more likely to recognize the original thinkers and budding artists in our classrooms, and, yes, even the rare geniuses," said Ernest A. Logan, president of CSA. "What we hope to do, in part, at this conference is examine techniques and attitudes that encourage the critical thinking needed to foster imagination, creativity and innovation so that we can maintain our nation's competitive edge."



Ernest Logan, CSA president and treasurer of AFSA, speaking to conference attendees on Nov. 13.

Polisi delivered the keynote address titled *Developing Imaginative Thinkers and Creative Students in the 21st Century*. President of the Juilliard School since 1984 and an accomplished musician and musical scholar, Polisi talked about why imagination and creativity are important for all students and to public education.

WABC-TV news anchor Sade Baderinwa moderated a panel discussion with Noppe-Brandon and Lincoln Center Institute-participating high school principals on how imagination is cultivated and sustained in an education setting.

Conference attendees participated in an array of professional development workshops and panels. Immersion sessions on using and understanding data were provided, and a session on strategies for Web-based writing instruction was available. Richard Kessler of The Center for Arts Education led a discussion called *Is There Time for the Arts in the Age of High Stakes Accountability?* and Tim Plumer Jr. of Adobe Systems, Inc. presented on integrated media projects in education with a focus on how to incorporate images, sound and video into classrooms in a way that supports all subjects.

"CSA and all other unions are mindful of the tremendous imagination, creativity and innovation that led to the development of the American labor movement," said Logan. "Unionism brought us the 40-hour work week, safety in the workplace, a minimum wage and an end to child labor. Today, when unions are so often under attack by titans of the corporate and financial sectors, we have abundant reason to come together and celebrate the brilliant movement that brought us a solid middle class."

The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) represents more than 6,500 NYC public school Principals, Assistant Principals, Supervisors and Education Administrators as well as city-funded Day Care Directors and Assistant Directors. ■



AFSA International President Diann Woodard (left) and Ernest Logan (center), president of CSA and treasurer of AFSA, speaking to Chancellor of New York Schools Joel Klein at the conference on Nov. 13.

(CPSA Response...continued from page 12)

- The film does not refer to the fact that many charter schools do not enroll special needs children, or ESL students, and that if their children are failing in the school they disenroll them or "counsel them out" and the students return to the public schools.
- The film failed to report that in many recent surveys on charter schools, many charter schools did not do any better than the so-called "public schools."
- The film does not mention these schools have big contributors and foundations supporting the school.
- Many of these schools are run by business entities with deep pockets.
- The film did not state that public schools are the foundation and cornerstone of the American story. Public school educates all of our students—not just a select few.

As stated earlier, this film does a disservice to all the hard-working teachers and administrators in our public schools. Yes, some of our public schools need reform, and many of our public schools are doing a great job and yes, some charter schools are doing a good job. However, this film is far from fair and balanced. On a positive note, we hope that the film motivates people to support real solutions to help all children get the education they deserve—not just the "lucky" few who get into a charter school. ■

(New Orleans...continued from page 1)

director of the Professional Association of New Orleans Public Schools, Inc. (PANOPSI). "Our homes were under water, our health insurance was either gone or extremely expensive, and then in November we lost our jobs."

Hurricane Katrina and the BESE's actions essentially wiped out New Orleans' education system, but that result did not dismay top education officials. "I think the best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans was Hurricane Katrina," U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said in January 2010. "That education system was a disaster, and it took Hurricane Katrina to wake up the community to say that we have to do better."

Secretary Duncan's statement suggested what many locals already knew, that the education system was inherently broken. However, it did not acknowledge the willingness and desire of the New Orleans community to contribute to the rebuilding of the system to improve the quality of education. Although many educators did not agree with Secretary Duncan's statement, they did agree with the underlying sentiment that there needed to be fundamental changes.



Secretary Arne Duncan visits Edna Karr High School in New Orleans, La.

One of the instigators of change in New Orleans is Paul Vallas, the superintendent of the Recovery School District in Louisiana (RSD).

Paul Vallas' name may ring a bell for educators familiar with Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Vallas, the CEO of CPS before Arne Duncan and Ron Huberman, had no experience in education before taking the Chicago position. After resigning from his Chicago post in 2001 and unsuccessfully running for governor against Rod Blagojevich in 2002, Vallas headed to Philadelphia, where he spearheaded one of the largest efforts ever to privatize public schools. In 2007, Paul Pastorek, the Louisiana superintendent of education, brought Vallas to New Orleans to serve as the superintendent of RSD.

Vallas' approach to New Orleans is reminiscent of his time in Philadelphia. His pro-charter ideology and uncompromising closure of schools that don't meet standards has created a system in which more than half of New Orleans students are in charter schools.

Only time will tell if these charter schools truly are better than public schools. However, with charter schools popping up left and right, one thing can be certain: the education standards among schools vary greatly. And since no set education standards exist for each school, it is virtually impossible to tell which school is better.

An imperfect system

While the New Orleans public school system may have been "a disaster" before Hurricane Katrina, the experimental model that is in place hardly can be considered ideal.

Presently, New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS) is divided into three districts: the OPSB, the Recovery School District (RSD) and a Charter district. The RSD, overseen by the BESE, was created in 2003 to help reform Louisiana's struggling schools. After its creation, five schools were placed into the RSD. Currently, charter schools outnumber the number of public schools in the city.

In the months after Katrina, state legislators passed a law that allowed the RSD to take over the Louisiana schools that were failing to meet the state education standards, the large majority

of those schools were in New Orleans. As a result, the number of schools, both public and charter, in the RSD increased overnight from five to 112.

The RSD is just as it sounds: recovering. An estimated 90 percent of the buildings in the district were labeled in poor condition before the storm, and after the storm approximately 100 buildings were damaged or destroyed. More than 80 percent of students entering the RSD are at minimum one year below their expected grade level, and more that one-fifth of the student population is two or more years older than what is typical for their grade level.

"I think the best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans was Hurricane Katrina."

—U.S. Secretary of Education
Arne Duncan

Slowly the RSD has been producing positive results. Test rates have steadily improved, and graduation rates have been increasing. However, many schools continue to fail to meet state standards, and with plans to raise the state education standards in the coming year, many of the schools may be put on the chopping block.

Besides suffering indeterminate fates, schools in New Orleans still are harboring the effects of the storm. Woods said that, among other things, the physical structure of New Orleans' public schools is a serious problem.

One of the major concerns with the shift to RSD and charter schools is the question of access to schools of students' choice. "You get all of this money to rebuild schools, and then these schools are built and opened as charter schools," said Woods.

The fact that OPSB owns all of the public school buildings in conjunction with the state may explain why restored schools are opening as charters.

"When you have millions given to the state, schools should be housed properly, not in crumbling units," Woods said.

"You drive by these schools now, and some of them are still vacant. My own building was demolished."

The charter school frenzy that seems to be sweeping the nation was instigated in New Orleans about five years ago, right after Katrina. Like the RSD, the OPSB is a mix of charter and public schools. There are 12 charter schools and four OPSB district-managed schools. Additionally, the BESE oversees two independent charter schools.

Enrollment in RSD and OPSB schools is as convoluted as the districts themselves. While all of the schools require an application, each has different qualifications. The OPSB schools do not use a lottery to choose applicants. Instead, they base their decisions on grades, residential addresses and other criteria. The RSD schools use a lottery format to choose applicants, and applicants who are not chosen are funneled to the last pick of the RSD schools.

Woods said that labeling New Orleans charter schools as better than regular public schools is inaccurate.

"Charter schools will continue to do well if they keep picking and choosing the kids they want," Woods said. "Who's to say those children are any better than other children?"

The uneven distribution of students and wealthy families among the OPSB and RSD results in the creation of schools that either are greatly surpassing state standards or greatly lagging behind. If OPSB charter schools continue to be compared with regular RSD public schools, then the argument that charter schools in New Orleans are better than public schools will remain inherently flawed.

A slow path to rebuilding

Contrary to Duncan's statements, for those fired immediately after Katrina, the education system meltdown was not the best thing that could have happened. After the mass firing, PANOPSI filed a wrongful-termination lawsuit against the BESE. Five years later, that lawsuit still is dragging on.



Downtown New Orleans experienced heavy urban flooding when its levee system failed. The flooding from Hurricane Katrina lasted for weeks.

"Many were fired or forced into early retirement," Woods said. "At one point, there was a test people had to take to get hired back. This generated feelings of isolation and betrayal among former OPSB employees and contributed to the decrease in membership of PANOPSI. The overall sentiment in the state was that being a member of a union would have further detrimental effects on your career."

"Charter schools will continue to do well if they keep picking and choosing the kids they want. Who's to say those children are any better than other children?"

—PANOPSI Executive Director
Florida Woods

Coupled with the decrease in membership in PANOPSI was the restructuring of the education system. The processes implemented were not standardized, which generated further feelings of inequity in people who already felt victimized. Woods said that when the schools were restructured as charters, former principals would often be hired on as teachers. There was no reason or order to the hiring process, Woods said.

Before Katrina, unions did not have collective bargaining rights in Louisiana, and the same still holds true for today. Despite the lack of bargaining rights, PANOPSI slowly is starting to revive its member base. Members have committed to reactivating the organization by personally reaching out to others in a one-on-one fashion, and a strategic committee recently was formed with the intent to develop an organized way to increase membership and participation.

The American Federation of School Administrators has reached out to PANOPSI in its time of need and has supported and funded the organization's lawsuit since its inception. Additionally, in the aftermath of Katrina, AFSA sent PANOPSI members funds to help get them back on their feet, and donated books, uniforms, and a washer and dryer to schools around New Orleans.

On a recent visit to New Orleans, AFSA President Diann Woodard said PANOPSI members have shown sincere dedication in rebuilding their organization.

"We spoke about the need to network with each other and the need to draw strength from one another," Woodard said. "They reminisced about the family feeling they felt in the old organization and how they wanted to create it again. By the end of the meeting it felt like a real revival." ■



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Upcoming Events

Jan. 13-17, 2011	AFL-CIO Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Observance; Cincinnati, OH
Feb. 17-19, 2011	American Association of School Administrators' National Conference on Education; Denver, CO
Feb. 22-23, 2011	Texas AFL-CIO Legislative Conference; Austin, TX
Feb. 24-27, 2011	National Association of Secondary School Principals' Annual Conference; San Francisco, CA
Feb. 28-March 3, 2011	AFL-CIO Executive Council Meeting; Lake Buena Vista, FL
March 21-22, 2011	California Labor Federation Legislative Conference; Sacramento, CA
April 15-17, 2011	AFSA Midwest/Southern Regional Leadership Conference and General Executive Board Meeting; New Orleans, LA



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