

# THE Leader

  
American Federation of  
School Administrators  
AFSA, AFL-CIO

Volume 86, Summer 2016

A NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

## Hillary Clinton for President



At our union's last convention, AFSA delegates passed a resolution to "stand in solidarity with the AFL-CIO's commitment to endorsing candidates at every level of government who are willing to put partisan politics aside and work to advance the interests of our members."

Based on these principles, the AFL-CIO did not endorse during the presidential primaries. Now, consistent with our members' vote at the convention, AFSA has joined with the AFL-CIO in endorsing Hillary Clinton for president.

"In joining the AFL-CIO's endorsement," said AFSA President Diann Woodard, who serves on the federation's Executive Council, "we are choosing a candidate who has long been an advocate for education and the well-being of children over a man whose only involvement in education has been to market a money-grubbing scheme called Trump University that is now being sued by a number of its former students for allegedly defrauding them."

In stark contrast to Trump, she said, Clinton has made it clear that strengthening community schools and giving a stronger voice to education professionals will be essential for raising children out of poverty and offering them and their families the opportunity to strive for a better life.

In announcing the AFL-CIO's endorsement, President Richard

Trumka noted that Clinton "has demonstrated a strong commitment to the issues that matter to working people, and our members have taken notice. The activism of working people has already been a major force in this election and is now poised to elect Hillary Clinton and move America forward."

"We are ready to fight hard to restore faith in America and improve the lives of all working people. Hillary Clinton has proven herself as a champion of the labor movement, and we will be the driving force to elect her president of the United States," Trumka added. "We will run a sophisticated, targeted ground campaign. And with the dire consequences Donald Trump poses for America's working families, it has to be," he said.

Woodard said the active involvement of AFSA members in generating public support and strong voter turnout for Clinton would prove crucial, as Trump's racially and ethnically divisive campaign is generating strong support among some of the more reactionary elements of society.

### Utilizing Your Retirement Benefits: AFSA Holds First Retiree Seminar

AFSA recognizes members' needs change when they join the ranks of the retired. Education on important retirement-related subjects and benefits can be key to enjoying the golden years. In mid-July, the union convened a seminar in Washington, D.C., to cover just that, in what is hoped to become an annual event.

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While students are relaxing by the pool on summer vacation, they still take missteps with email, social networks and other digital media. While they're in the pool, there needs to be someone up in the tall chair, whistle around his or her neck, on alert to keep students safe and out of trouble in deep water.

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# Keep the Bully Out of the Bully Pulpit



*AFSA President Diann Woodard*

It's 2016—only eight years since we made presidential history—and here we are once again faced with the **most important election in our lifetime.**

Let's be clear. This election is about more than differing political parties. It's about who and what America really is. It's about who and what matters in this country—a country built and populated by immigrants of every race, from all across the world.

It's about taking a stand against a candidate who spews disgraceful calls for building a wall that not only divides us from our neighbors, it casts a disturbing shadow over our belief in freedom and opportunity. A candidate who mocks those with disabilities. Who calls people rapists and thugs. Who plans to deport millions of people, dividing mothers and fathers from their children and loved ones.

What do we say to the children about this shameful divisiveness? As educators, we are nonpartisan in our efforts to help children understand democracy and the electoral process. Our role always has been to help create good citizens, teach respect for others and to help children work collaboratively in an increasingly competitive world.

Yet, it's rapidly becoming more difficult to remain neutral and teach democratic values when a Republican presidential candidate repeatedly shows he has no filter on what he says, making it all but impossible for educators to tell children how to react when they hear such inflammatory and disgraceful speech.

I can recall as a kid my parents telling me: "Do as I say, not as I do." Yet our neutrality prevents us from telling the children: "Don't bully people as Donald Trump does."

And there's no doubt the children are listening, as evidenced by a report done by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). The report found that "the campaign is producing an alarming level of fear and anxiety among children of color, and inflaming racial and ethnic tensions in the classroom."

But it is in our power as educators to make sure the children hear that they and their families are part of America, and that America won't be great without them.

The political rhetoric is causing children of color and immigrants to feel devalued and, in the worst-case scenario, they may see themselves or their parents as being sent away—no longer Americans.

So in the end, scurrilous political rhetoric is not the worst threat. The greatest danger is that good people who know better do nothing. And though we cannot, in good conscience, engage in politics in our schools and classrooms, we would fall short of the principles of our profession as educators if we failed to speak out in our communities.

As leaders there, we need to rally voting support for Hillary Clinton, if for no other reason than to prevent the disturbing divisiveness of the Republican candidate from becoming the voice of America's president. We need to work as never before to convince our friends, our families and our communities that the real America needs to take a stand against vindictiveness and prejudice.

We need to join our sisters and brothers in the AFL-CIO in electing a president who has spent her adult life working to improve the lives of children, rather than a man who is striking terror in their hearts. ■

# THE Leader

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# Utilizing Your Retirement Benefits: AFSA Holds First Retiree Seminar

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Felice Hannah, AFSA retiree outreach liaison, coordinated the attendance of specialists from AARP, Social Security, public transportation, estate planning and Medicare. Members were given information on their rights, requirements and options in their retirement journeys.

Alfredo Navarro, a senior public specialist in Social Security, explained the recent changes in Social Security and shared his knowledge about the role of the government in this process. He addressed the reasoning behind the changes and how these changes will keep individuals from taking advantage of the system. These changes, which will hinder those who abuse the system, will allow more money to flow through Social Security for those who need it.

The second session was hosted by Rita Choula, a senior adviser with the AARP Public Policy Institute. Choula provided information about family caregivers and the recent rise in their number in our society.

"Take care of yourself, so you can take care of your family," Choula said. She also reminded members it is acceptable and customary to ask for help when taking care of a family member.

WMATA Metro System Outreach Specialist Reginald Ward explained the Senior SmarTrip® card advantage and disability services offered through the transit system. Seniors often are unaware of such services, or they may have trouble finding them.

A presentation on how estates work and probate avoidance was given by Peter Antonoplos, a transactional lawyer. He discussed how probate is expensive, time consuming and subject to becoming public information; therefore, avoiding it should be a priority. Additional transactions and retirement topics addressed included health care and power of attorney.

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*Left to right top row: Alfredo Navarro, Felice Hannah, Rita Choula.*

*Left to right bottom row: Lois Hopson, Aona Jefferson*



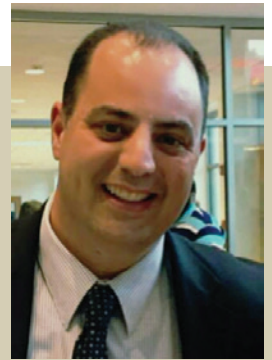
# New Beginnings for Hartford School Community

## An Interview with a Promising First-Year Principal Eager to Start Leading His Community

While most principals spend these months of break doing their usual routines of prepping for the upcoming school year, this summer those routines are a first for brand new principal Victor Cristofaro, vice president of the Hartford Principals' and Supervisors' Association, AFSA Local 22.

Cristofaro is busy preparing for his first year as principal at Burns Latino Studies Academy, a pre-K through eighth grade school in Hartford, Connecticut. As former assistant principal of Bulkeley Lower High School for eight years, Cristofaro is excited for his new role and ready to turn his vision into a reality.

Following is an interview held in mid-July with the new principal discussing his personal journey, goals for the new school year and his passion for positive change in the community.



*Principal Victor Cristofaro*

**AFSA:** How have you spent this summer so far getting ready for the school year?

**Victor Cristofaro:** "This summer I'm spending two weeks at LEAD CT, a program for new principals at turnaround schools. I'll be attending meetings to catch the school up on the Acceleration Agenda (a Hartford Public Schools program for educational equity and achievement). I've been getting the building ready—inspecting all the rooms, getting our computer labs up and running, and planning to do painting. Since I'm new here, I'm getting familiar with the intervention system, new math and literacy programs. I've also been reaching out to teachers, inviting them to come in and meet me."

**AFSA:** What are your expectations coming in as a new principal?

**VC:** "I really want to hit the ground running. On day one I want to get moving on our agenda and my vision. I want to start focusing on how we're going to increase and provide student achievement for all. That's going to be my main focus. My expectation is that I will be able to motivate my staff to get on board with my agenda, which is going to be interesting as a new principal. I'm a social justice warrior, and I believe in helping students achieve, and in serving our community and fighting for equity. I want to concentrate on what are we doing to make sure all our students achieve, how are we serving the community and how do we create

an environment that is welcoming and pleasant that these kids deserve."

**AFSA:** What ideas do you have for achieving these goals?

**VC:** "I plan on sharing my personal story with the community. I grew up here in Hartford, I was an immigrant from Argentina, an ELL (English Language Learner) student. I was raised by a single parent. I want to share my journey of coming to this country at 7 years old, not speaking the language and today I'm a school principal. I'm hoping my story inspires people to put all our efforts into students. I hope I develop empathy for our community and for the issues we have to get people on board to ultimately understand that our goal is to serve this community. I want us to focus on having a culturally competent community in a culture consisting of a positive environment that is going to want to make kids want to come to school and learn."

**AFSA:** What do you think will be the biggest challenge this year?

**VC:** "The biggest challenge I want to tackle head on is changing the culture throughout the school and in the community. I'm already talking with our staff about the message we need to deliver. I've asked that anytime they meet with parents, to make sure they've met the principal and, if not, encourage them to do so. I want them to know that I'm here to serve them and I welcome them

all to come in. My plan is to meet with every family that I have. I want the parents to know that I'm here for them and for teachers to know that our job is to serve them. I want us to be culturally proficient, understand what families are dealing with and that our community is going through a crisis. I am hoping that once we understand what kids have to go through, it will lead to conversations about how we can help and empathize with them."

**AFSA:** Do you have plans for creating or implementing programs?

**VC:** "I plan on looking at how we can improve our current programs. Some of our biggest programs include Compass Youth Collaborative [a youth development organization] and Village for Children and Families [a provider of children's support services]. I want to focus on how our school is contributing to the community and what we need to work on. My plan for improving these programs is coming up with ideas to fill in the gaps of what services we provide and what the community needs."

**AFSA:** What are you looking forward to the most as a new principal?

**VC:** "I'm excited to meet the parents and students and for them to get to know me. I have 550 students and can't wait to meet them all. So far I've met a lot of our community partners and they're fantastic. I can't wait to start sharing my message with the entire school community." ■



# PLEDGE TO BUY **UNION-MADE** IN THE USA



Did you know that for every \$1 spent on American-made goods, an additional \$1.32 is invested in the U.S. economy? So not only are union-made products better quality, they support companies that provide good jobs for working people right here in the United States.

Buying union is an easy choice, but it does take extra time to check the label. Take the pledge to take the extra effort. Because having each other's back is what being a union member is all about.

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\* Msg&Data Rates May Apply. Reply **STOP** to opt-out. Reply **HELP** or contact [info@unionplus.org](mailto:info@unionplus.org) for help. Expect no more than 2msgs/mo.



# Meet the 2016 AFSA

AFSA awards five \$2,500 college tuition scholarships every year to outstanding high school seniors. This competitive scholarship contest is exclusively for the children of AFSA members. The General Executive Board selects the winners based on academic excellence, passion for volunteerism and display of exceptional work ethic.

**"AFSA congratulates these remarkable five students on receiving their well-deserved scholarships! Our goal is to continue to provide young minds with opportunities like these to help them succeed."**

—AFSA President Diann Woodard



## Jeckmaly Torres Pabón

*AFSA member: Magaly Pabón Ramirez  
AFSA Local 105, Educadores  
Puertorriqueños en Acción, Inc.*

Jeckmaly began her school career at the age of 4 at Colegio San Jose in San German, Puerto Rico. She decided to attend Academia Sangermaña in San German before concluding her high school education at Leonides Morales Rodriguez High School in Lajas.

Jeckmaly became a member of the National Honor Society and is proud to have been the president of her senior class. She is grateful for her opportunities at Leonides Morales Rodriguez High School, and looks forward to attending the University of Puerto Rico.

Her interests include traveling, reading and listening to music.



## Emily Kemp

*AFSA member: Dennis Kemp  
AFSA Local 62, Southgate Principals & Supervisory Association*

Emily completed her diploma at Trenton High School in Michigan with a 3.7 GPA. In high school, she was active in the National Honor Society and Spanish Honor Society. Besides academics, Emily participated in marching band, concert band, soccer, swimming and varsity rowing, in which she played a key role in starting during competitions.

Her passion for swimming is demonstrated by her all-conference and all-area honors the past three years; for the last two years, she was voted the most dedicated swimmer. She competed in the Michigan high school state swimming championships in her last three years of school.

Emily is most proud of her volunteer work. She participates at her local church; serves her community in Relay for Life, Goodfellows and Santa's Cause; and tutors at her local elementary school.

In the fall she will be studying forensic biology and biotechnology in the honors program at Ferris State University. She looks forward to earning her master's degree at Michigan State University in forensic science, and to pursuing a career working in a forensics lab.

# Scholarship Winners



## Emily Davis

*AFSA member: Lisa Davis  
AFSA Local 36, Howard County  
Administrators Association*

Emily has just completed her final year at Centennial High School in Ellicott City, Maryland. She was an AP student and was involved in many extracurricular activities. She participated in National Honor Society and Horizons, a community service club. Additionally, she was a member and held executive board positions in the National English Honor Society and on the 2016 Class Board.

Emily played softball for the past 10 years, serving as captain on both her high school and travel softball team for the past two years. Besides softball, she loves to exercise, learn about nutrition and discover more about the human body.

As she enters her next four years at East Carolina University, she is excited to pursue her dream of becoming a physical therapist.



## Peter Ribeiro

*AFSA member: Denise Ribeiro  
AFSA Local 1, Council of School  
Supervisors and Administrators*

Peter has finished his high school education at Eleanor Roosevelt High School in New York City. He moved to New York City from Belo Horizonte, Brazil, as a young boy. He learned English quickly and graduated as an AP Scholar.

Peter enjoys what New York City has to offer and spends his time playing soccer, traveling, reading, writing and creating art. He was captain of his school's varsity soccer team.

Peter looks forward to attending the University of Pennsylvania for the next four years.



## Athena Haywood

*AFSA member: Natalie McQueen  
AFSA Local 1, Council of School  
Supervisors and Administrators*

Athena attended Williamsburg Preparatory High School in Brooklyn, New York. In high school, she participated in Vanguard Club and YMCA after-school leadership programs, and tutored at a local public elementary school. She is active in the YMCA's Global Teens, a program that engages youth in service learning and community service activities in local and international communities. Additionally, she works part time as a camp counselor at the YMCA and at a day care facility as an assistant.

Athena is an alumna of the Coro NYC Mayor's Youth Leadership Council and the New York City College of Technology College Now Program. She already has taken a few college courses through the New York City College of Technology College Now Program, and is excited to begin her four-year journey at Middlebury College in Vermont, majoring in language studies.

Through her various experiences, Athena has developed an appreciation of, and respect for, the diversity that exists in our society. This has fueled her interests in language studies and continued volunteer work within different communities. It is her goal one day to work by helping communities in either an academic or advocacy capacity. ■



# Student Safety Doesn't Take the Summer Off

By Rob Yoegel

While students are relaxing by the pool on summer vacation, they still take missteps with email, social networks and other digital media. While they're in the pool, there needs to be someone up in the tall chair, whistle around his or her neck, on alert to keep students safe and out of trouble in deep water.

Similarly, as more students keep school-issued devices throughout the summer, Gaggle continues to ensure their safety around the clock when they use school email and such tools as Google Apps for Education (GAFE) or Office 365.

**In just one semester this past school year, Gaggle identified nearly 7 million items in email messages, documents and images, 3,135 instances of which indicated potential suicide threats or self harm. More than 100 of these threats specifically referenced "cut myself," hate myself," "suicide" or "kill myself," resulting in an immediate call to a district emergency contact, typically a school administrator or even law enforcement.**

Gaggle is fortunate to work with thousands of schools and hundreds of districts across the country, protecting millions of students from self harm, as well as drug or alcohol use, cyberbullying, pornography and other harmful situations, while saving valuable instruction time.

Like most school districts, Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools wanted to make sure it was proactive with online student safety. After deciding to give Gmail accounts to students starting in fifth grade, the district quickly realized the controls inside Gmail and GAFE were not enough to ensure the safety of its students.

To help keep students safe, Wisconsin Rapids relies on Safety Management for Google Apps to enhance its GAFE

environment by applying additional safety controls. With Gaggle Safety Management, GAFE can be a safe digital learning environment for students to communicate and collaborate.

In our case study, "[Student Safety Doesn't Take the Summer Off](#)," you can learn firsthand how Wisconsin Rapids thwarted a student's attempt at self harm, which occurred during summer break. Our safety representatives identified the email and quickly went into action by alerting Phil Bickelhaupt, the district's director of technology. Within minutes of being contacted by Gaggle, Bickelhaupt called the county's crisis intervention hot line. "That morning, when I arrived at work, I learned that the crisis had been averted and the police were able to get to the student in time," he recalls in our case study.

Stories like these are part of a series of student online safety symposiums held around the country. If you live in the New York metropolitan area, you are invited to attend an upcoming symposium on Thursday, Sept. 29, in Edison Township, New Jersey. The event is free for school and district administrators and others responsible for student online safety. Attendees will engage in strategic and tactical discussions, learn more about keeping students safe and enjoy plenty of networking opportunities. Register by visiting <https://www.gaggle.net/explore/events/>. ■

**Rob Yoegel** is vice president of marketing at Gaggle, a provider of safe online learning products, solutions and services to the K-12 market since 1999. Gaggle's focus is, and always has been, on student safety so educators can have the confidence to allow learners to take advantage of current technology for communication, collaboration and productivity. To reach Yoegel, email him at [ryoegel@gaggle.net](mailto:ryoegel@gaggle.net) or call (800) 288-7750 x167.



## School Strives to Instill Power of Higher Education to At-Risk Students

In a city that frequently struggles with high school dropout rates, crime, poverty and gang violence, one school is transforming the community. Spencer Technology Academy Elementary School, located in Chicago's Austin community, is educating students about college before high school in an effort to lower the high school dropout rate and guide the students to better opportunities.

For the past decade, the school has held College Week at the end of the school year to motivate students to continue with their education and present options available to them.

College Week inspires students to recognize the importance of higher education and learn about various colleges and their practices. The scope of information about colleges in this event encompasses culture, mascots, school colors, campuses, admission processes, financial aid and personal branding. Students use this information to compete in a room-decorating contest. The best-represented college wins.

The week doesn't end there. Students round off their college experience by listening to alumni speakers, creating banners, visiting mascots and joining in a parade.

Shawn Jackson, former seven-year principal of Spencer Elementary and member of Chicago Principals' Association, AFSA Local 2, helped start College Week during his time there. "Understanding that some of these students didn't have access to someone who went to college, we needed to bring the access to them," Jackson told AustinTalks.org. "Despite a student's immediate circumstances, we wanted Spencer to serve as an agent of change."

### College Week Schedule:

**Day 1:** College T-Shirt Day

**Day 2:** Alumni Day

**Day 3:** Stomp the Yard, students learn about historic sororities and fraternities

**Day 4:** Homecoming Day, students vs. teachers basketball game

**Day 5:** College Week Parade

This year, Derek Grace, a local filmmaker, captured the experience of the school's 900 students. A 60-minute documentary was created to showcase the excitement of the students by following three eighth grade teachers' involvement during this week. The main goal of the film is to encourage other schools to implement a similar successful program.

"College Week the Movie" premiered on June 7, 2016; streaming for the film will continue on WORLD channel until Sept. 5, 2016. Watch the full movie at <http://video.wttw.com/video/2365768513/>.

For additional information, visit [www.collegeweekthemovie.com](http://www.collegeweekthemovie.com). ■

# Grief Across Cultures: Dealing with Cultural Sensitivity



Different cultures respond to death in different ways. Some may be expressive and celebrate a life well lived. Others may be quiet and reflective. While most school professionals are familiar with traditions of some students, they are unlikely to know all of the practices of each culture represented in their classroom or school.

For grieving students and their families, the support of school personnel is valuable and unique.

**When reaching across cultures in these situations, the following three tips can be helpful.**

## 1. Ask questions.

Ask openly when you are unsure what would be most helpful for a family or individual. For example: "Can you help me understand how I can best be of help to you and your family?"

## 2. Watch out for assumptions.

Many families blend traditions of several cultures. Assumptions about how a grieving family is expected to act because its members come from a certain culture can cloud our perceptions. We might miss opportunities to be helpful.

## 3. Be present and authentic.

Approach a grieving family with an open mind and heart. Be guided by their responses.

## Q&A About Cultural Competence

**Students in our school come from a lot of different cultures. What's a good way for me to learn about how their families deal with grief?**

We are all enriched when we learn about different cultural beliefs, expectations and traditions. Novels, movies, blogs and even textbooks about cultural differences can be sources of helpful information.

One of the best ways to learn about a family's beliefs and practices in bereavement is to ask openly. You might ask how you could best be of help to a grieving family, or ask a family member to tell you more about how they will approach the grief and remembrance of their loved one.

**If a student's culture is not familiar to me, how can I be sure I won't do something inappropriate if I reach out to the family at a time of grief?**

We've all had the experience of being clumsy at a delicate moment with a friend or family member, or with a student or student's family. This is a natural and unavoidable part of human interactions.

When a family is grieving, we feel a greater obligation to be sensitive and supportive. This sincere desire to be helpful and show genuine concern is actually our greatest asset. Even if we are not familiar with the specific customs of a family or its culture, we can be thoughtful and respectful. We can be observant. We can ask questions openly, and listen to responses carefully. These practices are experienced as helpful by almost all families, whatever their culture.

**What's the best way for me to become more skillful in supporting grieving students and families whose culture is different from my own?**

Although there are real differences in traditions between cultures, the fundamental experience of grief is universal. Rather than trying to gain knowledge about every culture, it's best to first aim to become competent in supporting a grieving individual in at least one culture. Probably your own would be a good start.

If someone is able to be thoughtful, empathic, sensitive and supportive to a grieving child of one culture, chances are quite good this person will be able to help a child of another culture.

For more guidance on addressing grief with families from different cultures, visit [www.grievingstudents.org](http://www.grievingstudents.org). The website's materials are designed specifically for school professionals. AFSA is a member of the coalition. ■

*The Coalition to Support Grieving Students was convened by the New York Life Foundation, a pioneering advocate for the cause of childhood bereavement, and the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement,*

*which is led by pediatrician and childhood bereavement expert David J. Schonfeld, M.D. The coalition has worked with Scholastic Inc., a long-standing supporter of teachers and kids, to create [grievingstudents.org](http://grievingstudents.org), a groundbreaking, practitioner-oriented website designed to provide educators with the information, insights and practical advice they need to better understand and meet the needs of the millions of grieving kids in America's classrooms.*



# Shawn Rux: A Real-Life Clark Kent

On the desk of Middle School 53's principal is a row of Superman collectibles. However, teachers, parents and students have come to realize the real Superman sits behind that desk, not on it.

Shawn Rux, a member of the Council of School Supervisors & Administrators, AFSA Local 1, has served as a catalyst for change and improvement in the school since he began there in 2011.

Middle School 53, located in Queens, New York, had long been an F-rated school and wasn't making any progress. With a low attendance rate, 22 fewer teachers than the previous school year, no office staff and constant fights, Rux had the nearly impossible mission of helping his middle school flourish—but he did just that.

In just five years, Rux and his team have raised the school rating from an "F" to a "B," despite the setbacks of a damaging storm. In one early move, he designated each grade to a different floor, reducing the number of fights almost immediately.

The advancement continued with improving attendance (currently reaching 91 percent), while suspensions dropped from 300 in 2010 to 25 this year.

It is now common to see students arrive at school early and leave late. Many students run to school each morning to receive "Rux Bux," the reward system at Middle School 53. "Rux Bux" can be exchanged for dress-down days or other treats and rewards.

Students also enjoy the art curriculum implemented under Rux's supervision. The school remains open late on the weekdays and opens on the weekends for step, drum, dance and chorus. This program has yielded several CDs that showcase a collaboration of staff and students' music production skills.

Rux set out to accomplish more than correcting the school's issues. He set his goals to encompass student prosperity and enthusiasm for their education. This is why he implemented "Swagger," which stands for "students who achieve good grades earn respect."

Teaching and motivating students about education is very important to Rux. While growing up in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, he was surrounded by crime and violence. He was fortunate enough to attend college. "I believe in the power of education," Rux says. "Education is the answer to all of our questions as well as our dreams. Education saves lives, and I am a living testament of that because education saved my life." ■

*If you would like to nominate an AFSA member for our next newsletter, please email [nspina@AFSAadmin.org](mailto:nspina@AFSAadmin.org).*

# D.C. Student Honors African American Heritage in National Google Contest

Akilah Johnson resembles any ordinary 10th grade girl, but her passion for her culture and her unique qualities shine through in her artwork, especially her drawing titled “My Afrocentric Life.”

She crafted her drawing, featuring a box braid spelling out “Google,” for the Google 4 Doodle competition—and took first place in this national contest. She attends Eastern Senior High School in Washington, D.C., which is led by Principal Rachel Skerritt, a member of Council of School Officers, AFSA Local 4.

Johnson’s artwork was chosen from among 100,000 entries from 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and Guam, and compellingly showcased a century of African American heritage, along with many other components displaying her personality.

Google users, along with celebrity judges NBA player Stephen Curry, U.S. women’s national soccer team player Alex Morgan, actress Julie Bowen and actor B.J. Novak,

chose the D.C. native’s work as the best representation of “What makes me... me.” As a national finalist, Johnson flew to Google’s headquarters in Mountain View, California, to meet the Google Doodle team; as the national winner, she earned a Chromebook and a \$30,000 college scholarship. Google also provided a \$50,000 education technology grant to her high school.

“The Eastern Senior High School community is so proud of Akilah’s accomplishment,” Skerritt said. “Her Google win exemplifies her talents as an artist and as an activist. She nurtures these skills while maintaining a rigorous course load at Eastern, as well as a commitment to her diverse extracurricular activities. We are also extraordinarily grateful that our art teacher, Ms.

Perkins, connected Akilah to this wonderful opportunity.”

“My Afrocentric Life” features African Americans Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, Ruby Bridges, Angela Davis, Colin Powell and Bill Cosby, all of whom helped to shape Johnson’s culture. Her braid flows throughout her colorful design, with additional such symbols of African American culture as the Symbol of Life; the African continent; the Eye of Horus; the word “power”; a woman’s fist; and the D.C. flag.

Johnson’s love for art started at Roots Public Charter School and Roots Activity Learning Center, and she hopes she will someday have the opportunity to provide a love for art in a studio for kids. Her future plans also include studying criminal justice or business, in anticipation of becoming a crime scene investigator. ■

*Akilah Johnson and her mother, Tikecia C. Johnson, pose in front of Akilah’s winning artwork.*



# Puerto Rico Administrators Celebrate



# 38 Years of Service to Education

Celebration, dedication and inauguration brought together more than 500 attendees for Educadores Puertorriqueños en Acción (EPA), AFSA Local 105's triennial convention on May 22, 2016. In Ponce, Puerto Rico, school leaders from all over the island joined together to celebrate by listening and enjoying speakers, presentations, forums and musical performances.

"Education of the Twenty First Century, Transformations, Challenges and Expectations...Commitment for All," governed the conversation as this year's theme. The EPA dedicated this convention to two longtime members, Nilda Ortiz and Inocencia Pereira.

Emcees Jesús García and Lourdes Heyliger started the day with an invocation, welcoming remarks and presentation of special guests. María Meléndez Altieri, the mayor of Ponce, also spoke.

In convention action, delegates approved a resolution establishing the David Malave Medal, honoring a leading educator and EPA member. In addition, Emmanuel Caraballo Quirós, Luis Orengo, José Ángel Cordero Sánchez and Justo Méndez Arámburo led a discussion on the importance of joining an educators' union and the benefits of EPA and AFSA.

AFSA President Diann Woodard and AFSA General Vice President Crystal Boling-Barton joined Local 105

members for the convention, with Woodard awarding a check to AFSA Scholarship winner Jeckmaly Torres Pabón.

"EPA was so pleased and honored to have President Woodard and Ms. Barton be a part of our convention," said EPA President Domingo Madera. "President Woodard's message was gratifying for all our members to hear."

The convention concluded with the inauguration of the new EPA Central Board of Directors. ■



*It was all smiles at the convention after AFSA President Diann Woodard presented Jeckmaly Torres Pabón with her scholarship award. Left to right: Crystal Boling-Barton, Woodard, Domingo Madera, Torres Pabón and Lourdes Heyliger.*

# ESSA Implementation Continues As Education Funding Process Unfolds

Spring and summer, known as appropriations season inside the Beltway, has proved to be particularly busy this year as Congress deals with funding education under tight budget caps, with little room for increases from fiscal year 2016 levels. Making this year's funding outlook even stickier, Congress must tackle how to fund the newly enacted Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The administration's implementation of ESSA continues at a snail's pace, making it harder for the Department of Education to pass final regulations pertaining to all major areas of the law by the time a new president enters office, which also will delay state implementation.

## ESSA Implementation

On May 26, the Department of Education issued draft regulations that would implement Title I of ESSA. The draft regulations focus mainly on state accountability systems and report cards.

Three hot-button issues addressed by the regulations include:

- how states must handle schools that fail to assess 95 percent of all students and 95 percent of all students in all subgroups in math and reading/language arts assessments;
- how states identify schools in need of additional support, called "support and improvement" and "targeted improvement"; and
- how states ensure academic achievement, high school graduation rates and English Language Learners (ELL) proficiency rates weigh most heavily among the multiple factors in differentiating successful schools from those falling behind.

AFT raised concerns about the proposed regulations that would penalize Local Education Agencies (LEAs) for low participation rates, saying they "inflamm[e] the problem by suggesting punitive consequences for those who are so frustrated by the misuse and

high-stakes nature of standardized testing that they want to opt their kids out."

AFT also objected to the short amount of time a district has to identify schools that need assistance, or schools that need "comprehensive and targeted support and improvement," arguing that districts will revert back to test and punish accountability systems if not given enough time to implement a new system. The proposed regulations would require that states identify these schools every three years, starting in the 2017–18 school year, with one exception: schools with chronically low-performing students do not need to be identified until the 2018–19 school year.

On Capitol Hill, reaction to the proposed rules hewed closely to party lines. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) blasted the rules as transgressing the goals and spirit of ESSA, saying: "I am disappointed that the draft regulation seems to include provisions that the Congress considered—and expressly rejected. If the final regulation does not implement the law the way Congress wrote it, I will introduce a resolution under the Congressional Review Act to overturn it."

House Committee on Education and the Workforce Chairman John Kline (R-Minn.) reserved the right to object to the proposed rules after further study. Kline also indicated he would hold a hearing on them soon. Senate HELP Committee Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-Wash.) and House Committee on Education and the Workforce Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-Va.) generally praised the proposals.

## Education Funding and Appropriations

The full Appropriations Committees in the House and Senate have approved the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS-Ed) funding

bills. The big priorities—the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Zika prevention measures and opioid abuse prevention—were the same in the House and Senate, with both chambers allocating massive amounts of funding to combat the epidemic of opioid abuse, including millions in funding for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Both bills contain gigantic increases for NIH—\$2 billion in the Senate and \$1.5 billion in the House—and provide millions in funding to combat opioid abuse. All Democratic amendments failed during the House markup—the more partisan bill of the two—including an amendment to eliminate all 15 policy riders and one by Rep. David Price (D-N.C.) that would have restored funding to the Title II Teacher Quality Partnership program. Unfortunately, K–12 education funding did not fare particularly well in either of the bills due to the lower allocations for the LHHS-Ed bills.

The biggest victory for many education advocates in the K–12 space is the \$1 billion funding level for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant Program (SSAEG) under Title IV, Part A of ESSA in the House bill. Compared with the Senate's \$300 million allocation and the president's request of only \$500 million, this allocation—although roughly 66% of the \$1.65 billion authorization level—is welcomed by the advocates for the 25-plus programs consolidated into the block grant. The discrepancy in funding levels between the House and Senate for this program is likely due to the fact that SSAEG was a huge priority for Kline, a key author of ESSA.

Particularly painful was the approval of a \$200 million cut in the Senate and a \$300 million cut in the House for Title II, which provides support for principal recruitment, retention and professional development. This decrease lowers the program's overall funding level from \$2.25 billion in FY 16 to \$2.05 billion in the Senate and \$1.94 billion in the House for FY 17. AFSA, the

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) issued a joint statement expressing grave disappointment with the funding cut, stating: "Falling so short of the FY 2017 authorized level—and worse, reversing progress on federal support with a dramatic reduction from FY 2016 levels—sends a clear message to school leaders and teachers: We will invest in a law that holds you accountable, but not one that builds the skills you need to successfully implement the law." The impact of this lower funding level means states are going to be less likely to take advantage of the 3 percent set-aside under Title II-A of ESSA at the state level for principal professional development, given there is less money to allocate at the local level.

On a more positive note, the Senate committee recognized the importance of Title II-A's optional state set-aside for principal professional development. As a direct result of AFSA's collective

lobbying efforts with NAESP and NASSP on behalf of school leaders, the bill's legislative report language asks the Department of Education to issue guidance informing states they can use Title II A funds to support principals:

*"ESSA includes new provisions to promote the use of [Title] I and [Title] II funds to support principals and school leaders, including an optional 3 percent set-aside of [Title] II-A funds for such activities. Many [s]tates already use these funds to support principals and school leaders, but all [s]tates would benefit from clear guidance and examples of how [s]tates and LEAs could best use these funds to support effective strategies in this area. Therefore, the [c]ommittee strongly encourages the [d]epartment to issue guidance on the importance of strong school leadership, and how [s]tates can use existing resources to support principals and school leadership, including examples of best practices."*

Unfortunately, the School Leadership Recruitment and Support Program (SLRSP), the only dedicated federal program geared toward supporting principals, was totally eliminated in the House bill. And even more bad news for principals in the House bill, unlike the Senate bill, is that there was no report language that highlights the ability for states to take advantage of the new set-aside under the law. Overall, this bill is disappointing for AFSA, but there is some hope that both the SLRSP and the report language remain in a final bill.

The appropriations process is not over yet, as both chambers have to pass a final spending package that has to be sent to President Obama's desk for signature into law by Oct. 1, 2016.

Given that this is an election year and the appropriations process has not been completed on time for the last several years, it remains likely a continuing resolution will be passed some time in the fall. ■

## HILLARY CLINTON FOR PRESIDENT

*continued from page 1*

She cited the chilling affect that Trump's scurrilous rhetoric already is having on students, such as children of immigrant families, some of whom are so frightened by the Republican nominee's rhetoric they feel compelled to carry documentation of their citizenship on them. "It's terrible," Woodard said. "These children are living in fear their parents may not be there when they get home."

Woodard said Trump's idea of making America "great" was clear in his refusal to reject his endorsement by the leader of the Ku Klux Klan. "I see what it means," she said, "when I see people driving around my neighborhood with Confederate flags flying on their cars. We simply can't afford to put our country in the hands of a man who inflames that sort of prejudice." ■

## UTILIZING YOUR RETIREMENT BENEFITS: AFSA HOLDS FIRST RETIREE SEMINAR

*continued from page 3*

As the seminar came to an end, Chris DeYoung, director of the Health Insurance Counseling Project at George Washington University, took the floor to talk about Medicare and the State Health Insurance Program. He explained the differences in, and misconceptions about, Medicare programs, and explained the requirements involved in applying. An important and often unfamiliar topic discussed is opt-out doctors. De Young emphasized for members that an opt-out doctor, a doctor not accepting Medicare, must require you to sign a paper acknowledging he or she is an opt-out doctor before you are able to be charged for the visit.

"It is important to let our members know about their benefits, and the only way to let them know is through workshops like this," said organizer Felice Hannah. ■

For more information, visit:

Social Security:  
<https://secure.ssa.gov>

Family Caregiving:  
[www.aarp.org/caregiving](http://www.aarp.org/caregiving)

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PRINCIPALS

MONTH



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