

THE Leader

A NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

DCPS Announces Plans to Close 20 Schools

Jobs for members and programs for needy students endangered

Members of the Council of School Officers (CSO), AFSA Local 4, in Washington, D.C., are in danger of losing their jobs after DC Public Schools (DCPS) announced its proposal to close 20 schools, 18 of which would close as early as the fall of 2013. These schools are suffering funding and student enrollment shortages, largely due to the increasing number of students heading to charter schools.

"Many of our members will be affected since they are non-classroom employees," said Aona Jefferson, CSO president. "The school system will only have concern for classroom teachers and those directly connected to the students."

While DCPS presents the closures as a solution to address underfunding and underenrollment, referring to the plan as "an opportunity to stabilize a system of traditional neighborhood schools," it is in fact an example of bad judgment and shortsightedness.

"If school closings are used to eliminate significant numbers of jobs, then there is a real concern that the remaining employees in the consolidated schools will not have the time

or resources to provide the type of support needed by students and their families," said Jefferson at a Nov. 19 D.C. Council hearing on the closures. "They're [DCPS] using this as their hiring practice of choice and a solution to any budget problem they encounter, especially when it comes to providing services to the special education and special needs population, our most needy and most deserving students."

There is also concern the DCPS is trying to bypass union contracts in a manner similar to what Local 1 members experienced in New York City this year (see page 11 for the full story).

DCPS Chancellor Kaya Henderson has stated her plans to finalize the list of proposed school closures by January 2013. ■



Photo: Zaiouk Webdesign

AFSA Officers and GEB Members Demand a Voice for Principals at Fall Meeting

At AFSA's Oct. 2 fall meeting, the officers and GEB members did not hold back from voicing their concerns regarding the current policies in place for education.

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Deceiving the Public: Corporate Lies Lead to Prop 2's Failure

On Nov. 6, voters across Michigan came out to support their choice for president, and to determine whether Proposal 2 would pass, protecting a right that has been severely threatened across the country—collective bargaining.

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A Full Year: AFSA in Action 2012

It's been a busy year! Check out some of the highlights from this year's long list of accomplishments.

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The Stakes are High

As a nation, we continue to emphasize standardized test scores as the key evaluation tool for our education system. While accountability is necessary, the current testing models do not accurately reflect our students' potential or the effectiveness of our educators. As legislatures continue to make test scores the focal point of their solutions for education reform, our students' futures are put on the line as teachers lose control over what and how they can teach in their classrooms.

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Impoverished Policies Belie Inspired Rhetoric

When President Obama took the stage at McCormick Place in Chicago to celebrate his re-election, he declared, "Hope is that stubborn thing inside us that insists, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us as long as we have the courage to keep reaching, to keep working, to keep fighting."

We can be assured the president undoubtedly will prove formidable in defending and advancing the concerns of America's middle class as continuing attempts are made by radical conservatives to undermine Medicare, privatize

Social Security and use the so-called "fiscal cliff" to eviscerate social programs.

For these reasons—and many more—the president's re-election was cause for considerable relief for professional educators, as a Romney presidency would have radically accelerated the pace at which our schools are being privatized.

Unfortunately, it is relief that is necessarily tempered by evidence the administration's policy decisions more often reflect the substance of Mr.



AFSA President Diann Woodard

Romney's push for privatization than the spirit of the president's hopeful Election Night rhetoric. Instead of consideration, encouragement and training, public school educators all too often have been fed a discouraging stream of indictments, as though we are singularly responsible for student performance.

The absurdity of these indictments lies in the fact that a community school represents an edifice of hope, especially in communities where, as analyst Richard Rothstein wrote recently, "poverty combines with chaos at home, adult illiteracy, neglect, unaddressed health issues, constant dislocation and crime" to create classrooms teeming with children who truly are disadvantaged.

These are the children we must help, yet the community schools they depend on are being targeted for closure and destruction by so-called "school reformers" whose views are not much different from those professed by the Obama administration.

As a result, all too many community schools once representing hope no longer stand at all. They have been torn down by advocates of further privatization and charters, despite growing evidence that students in these alternatives perform no better than those in the public system.

My high school in Detroit is no longer there. Advocates of corporate reform did not think it was needed anymore;

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Surviving Hurricane Sandy

We would like to recognize the many AFSA members whose lives were disrupted by Hurricane Sandy. As Ernest Logan, president of CSA, Local 1 in New York said, "Hurricane Sandy has changed our lives."

While Sandy destroyed buildings and displaced families, it serves as an important reminder of AFSA members' passionate dedication to their communities; these members have exemplified the true meaning of unity throughout this regional disaster. We heard numerous reports of members volunteering their time to shelters and elsewhere as schools closed or served as evacuation centers for displaced families. "Thank you to those workers from across this great country who are helping to restore normalcy and stability to the affected areas," said Len Pugliese, executive director of the City Association of Supervisors and Administrators (CASA), AFSA Local 20.

As Hurricane Sandy creates additional obstacles to hurdle in the fight to improve education for our nation's children, we stand by our brothers and sisters and will be working on creating opportunities to support them through this difficult time. Currently, we recommend:

- Donating to help CSA members affected by Sandy at www.csa-nyc.org/node/902.
- Donating to help families in affected areas at UWSandyRecovery.org or text RECOVERY to 52000 to make a \$10 donation.

While these are both great resources for individuals in need, they are not the only opportunities to help. We encourage all members to reach out and provide help in any way they can as these communities make their way forward on the full path to recovery.

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Local Files Class-Action Lawsuit Against Maryland County Board of Education

Alesa Smith had worked in the Prince George's County (Md.) Public Schools' Communications Department for almost 11 years. Despite her history of excellent performance evaluations, the 43-year-old African American woman was let go, while two of her white, male, less-senior colleagues were kept on and promoted with better pay.

Smith is among more than 800 members of The Association of Supervisory and Administrative School Personnel (ASASP), Local 109 who filed a class-action lawsuit against the county board of education (PGCPSB), alleging violations that include age and race discrimination, as well as breaching collective bargaining agreements.

"Promotions and demotions are determined by whim, with little and often no regard for the language included in negotiated contracts over these last 20-plus years," said AFSA's National Service Representative Doris Reed. "The decision to move our issues to an outside venue is directed by a history of absolute arbitrary and capricious acts of violations to the negotiated agreement between this union and the many members of the board of education."

The contract negotiated between ASASP and PGCPSB specifies that, "In making determinations on individuals to be RIFFED (reduced in force), the Superintendent will take into consideration the total length of service since most recent date of hire in any position for which ASASP has been designated as the exclusive representative." Despite

this agreement, the school board terminated 27 Prince George's County Public Schools employees in the spring of 2011, based on claims of financial trouble, while it kept on and even promoted workers with less seniority.

As settlement for their violations, ASASP is asking for PGCPSB to pay \$500,000 in damages, and for the court to grant class members \$100 million for "lost wages, benefits, interests, costs and expenses and reasonable attorney fees and other liquidated damages."

While ASASP acknowledges the lawsuit could result in "subtle and not so subtle adverse actions" against its members, Dwayne Jones, president of ASASP, expressed his belief that a lawsuit is the only solution for moving forward.

"This union has determined that the only relief we can hope to achieve must be delivered to us by the decision of a judge, or jury, in a district court of Maryland." ■



AFSA Officers and GEB Members Demand a Voice for Principals at Fall Meeting

At AFSA's Oct. 2 fall meeting, the officers and GEB members did not hold back from voicing their concerns regarding the current policies in place for education.

"We're the ones that are suffering the most from Race to the Top," said Executive Vice President Jim Dierke at the fall meeting of AFSA's General Executive Board (GEB). "I am not seeing anything from Race to the Top that talks about professional development activities for administrators. We really need to have the department take a very good look at what the requirements are and what assistance and what mentors you can give to administrators."

Dierke's remarks came as officers and the GEB met with Eric Waldo, deputy chief of staff for Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, in Washington, D.C.

AFSA GEB members recounted to Waldo how the department's policies were impacting schools in their

areas, and Waldo discussed several of the Department of Education's major initiatives, including its third Annual Bus Tour, the latest information on the NCLB waivers and the outlook for ESEA reauthorization.

Ernest Logan, AFSA treasurer and president of CSA, AFSA Local 1, voiced his concerns about funding awarded to states through such programs as Race to the Top. Logan recommended the department play more of an oversight role and track the funding after it is delivered to the states.

"I am watching when federal money for early childhood goes into these blocks and people play games with it," Logan said. "With all of this money coming here, I want the federal government to have more of an oversight role of the money they are sending to make sure

it's being utilized the way the secretary and the president says it should be."

President Woodard discussed the importance of involving principals in education reform discussions, such as the Department of Education Labor-Management Collaboration conferences.

"They (the states) look at us as if we don't really matter," she said. "The teachers are telling you everything about us, but we're not being able to speak up for ourselves, because no one ever comes to us or includes us in the conversation."

President Woodard also detailed her concerns about the effects of the department's Race to the Top program, including its requirement that states agree to such stipulations as eliminating seniority, making test scores a major part of the evaluation process and replacing principals to qualify for grants.

"An unintended consequence of Race to the Top has been that because states have lost so much money, in order to qualify for Race to the Top and all of those competitive grants, people have had to do things in their states that are union busting."

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—President Diann Woodard

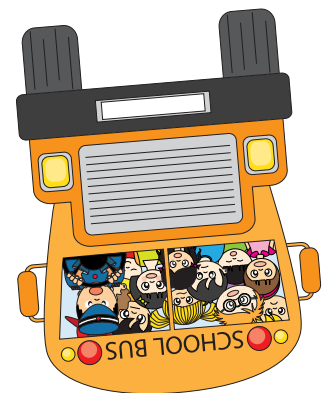
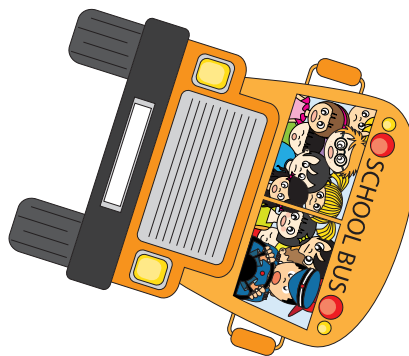


Illustration: Mike Leht, NotionsCapital.com

Deceiving the Public: Corporate Lies Lead to Prop 2's Failure

On Nov. 6, voters across Michigan came out to support their choice for president, and to determine whether Proposal 2 would pass, protecting a right that has been severely threatened across the country—collective bargaining.

After a long, hard and expensive battle, the proposal, also known as the “Protect Our Jobs” amendment, did not pass, to the disappointment of many union leaders. If it had passed, the right of public- and private-sector workers to bargain collectively would have been added to Michigan’s state constitution. Many advocates of the proposal are pointing to a misleading campaign as the underlying reason behind the failure of the proposal in a predominantly working-class state.

“We were tremendously outspent by our opponents, with \$12 million in advertising spent in the last few weeks alone,” said Dave Heckler, president of AFT-MI. “The ads that they had were full of lies and made the argument that it (Prop 2) was not about collective bargaining. The polls showed that the more people knew about it, the more they supported it.”

In a September press release from one of the proposal’s major opponents, Michigan’s Gov. Rick Snyder said, “I am a supporter of collective bargaining, but Proposal 2 would amend our constitution to change the way bargaining would work in our state. It could lead to unlimited wage increases and early retirements with lavish pensions—all at the taxpayers’ expense.”

Other opponents such as Rich Studley, president and CEO of the Michigan State Chamber of Commerce, referred to the proposal as a “money grab” and

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—Dave Heckler, AFT-MI president



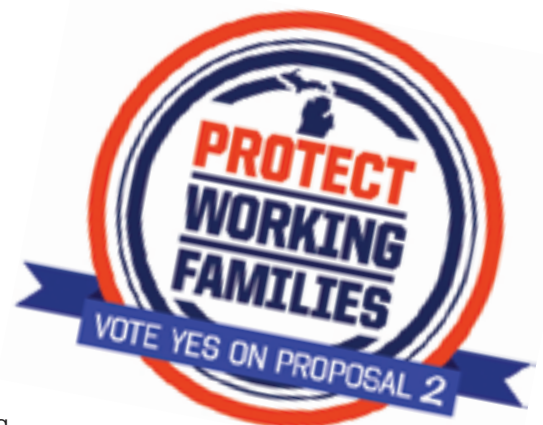
a “power grab by organized labor.” In an interview with *The Hill* newspaper, Studley even called the measure “economic development suicide” for the state.

According to a poll conducted by Progress Michigan, 70 percent of Michigan voters surveyed said they supported collective bargaining, while 55 percent of this voting population voted no on Proposal 2, suggesting a potential disconnect between the information that was provided about the proposal and its actual content. Progress Michigan’s poll also showed bipartisan support for “the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively,” with 85 percent support from Democrats, 77 percent support from Independents and 48 percent support from Republicans.

Although Proposal 2 did not pass, supporters of the proposal are feeling positive about the outlook of collective

bargaining’s future, calling for the labor movement to continue its unified approach to addressing the threats against working Americans.

“I have never seen the mobilization or this kind of unity in the labor movement,” said Heckler. “We must keep this momentum up to ensure we don’t lose any more rights.” ■



A Full Year: AFSA

It's been a busy year! Here are just a few of this year's actions and accomplishments:

AFSA endorses Rep. Judy Biggert's (R-Ill.) Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011, which would amend the current U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations to allow the service providers best equipped to assess individual homeless situations to determine whether a child should be eligible for HUD homeless services. The amendment also would provide communities with the necessary flexibility to serve and house families, children and youth who are most in need of housing and other services. This amendment was forwarded to the full committee, but will need to be reintroduced in 2013 to pass.



President Woodard sends a letter to all representatives urging their opposition to Rep. Paul Ryan's (R-Wis.) Fiscal Year 2013 budget plan. Rep. Ryan's plan would have consolidated education with training, employment and social services into one budget function that would be cut by approximately 20 percent. The plan also would have cut Medicare, Social Security and other essential programs and services. This budget plan was rejected by the Senate.



Photo: Gage Skidmore

JANUARY

AFSA President Diann Woodard's letter to the editor, "It's time for serious ideas to fix our education system," is published in *The Hill* newspaper in response to an op-ed piece by Juan Williams of Fox News that blamed public schools and educators for the problems in education and called for increased privatization and competition as the solution.

The South Windsor (Conn.) Administrators Association joined AFSA as Local 127.

FEBRUARY

AFSA endorses Rep. Joe Baca's (D-Calif.) Physical Education to Create a Healthier Nation Act, which would require schools to provide students with minimum requirements for physical education, and also recognizes the need for students with disabilities to have a physical education plan included in their Individualized Education Plan. This act has been referred to the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, but it will need to be reintroduced in 2013 to pass.



MARCH

in Action 2012

AFSA joins the National Safe Schools Partnership (NSSP), a coalition of nearly 100 organizations consisting of leading national education, health, civil rights, youth development and other organizations committed to ensuring America's schools are safe for all children.

President Woodard travels to St. Croix in defense of members of the Educational Administrators Association (EAA), Local 100 who received letters of disciplinary action in part due to their union affiliation. Woodard pledges AFSA funding in support of their case.

AFSA endorses the film "Bully" and releases a joint statement with AFT on the subject. AFSA also begins working with The Bully Project.



President Woodard speaks at a Wayne State University conference on the public sector and collective bargaining, saying "An injury to one is an injury to all. And unless we stand united in solidarity to challenge every last attempt to replace our commitment to public good with the push for private gain, it's more than our jobs that will be lost."



APRIL

MAY

AFSA endorses Sen. Tom Harkin's (D-Iowa) Rebuild America Act, which would provide much-needed funding to state and local governments to:

- hire educators;
- offer training for school leaders and teachers in critical areas;
- provide desperately needed funding to modernize our nation's schools;
- strengthen Social Security and retirement;
- make child care more affordable while increasing the quality of care; and
- revitalize manufacturing schools;

The Rebuild America Act also would empower workers to stand up for fair wages, benefits and working conditions, as well as ensure employers that violated these rights would face real penalties.

This act has been referred to the Committee on Finance.

Through the unrelenting work of Jimmy Gittings, president of AFSA Local 25, and the infusion of \$50,000 in support from the AFSA board, two administrators placed on unpaid leave for unfounded cheating accusations are recommended by two hearing officers to be reinstated, citing a "crude" and "incompetent" investigation at a Baltimore elementary school. While this was a major victory, the City Board of School Commissioners has chosen to ignore the hearing officers' recommendations. Gittings and AFSA continue the fight to ensure these administrators' stories are heard.

Crystal Boling-Barton, president of the Buffalo Council of School Administrators, Local 10, is featured in a "Go Red" campaign billboard for the American Heart Association.



AFSA General Executive Board votes unanimously to endorse President Barack Obama for re-election.





Seven terminated educators from AFSA, Local 17 in New Orleans are awarded \$1.3 million in lost wages and benefits by a Louisiana court, capping a seven-year class-action lawsuit battle waged by a legal team including AFSA's lawyers.

AFSA holds its 13th Triennial Constitutional Convention in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where members were provided with dynamic speakers and sessions, and where AFSA delegates adopt several resolutions supporting such key issues as collective bargaining rights, leadership development, Social Security/retirement benefits and bullying in schools. Delegates choose AFSA's leaders for the next three years, including re-electing President Woodard and other officers and General Executive Board members.



AFSA endorses the National Resolution on High-Stakes Testing, which is currently supported by almost 400 education organizations nationwide and stands for revamping current policy to include multiple forms of evidence outside of student test scores when evaluating educators.

The Branford (Conn.) Administrators Organization and the Norwalk (Conn.) Public Schools Executive Support Group (ESG) join AFSA as Local 128 and 129, respectively.

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

AFSA joins a nondefense discretionary coalition (NDD) and signs on to an NDD letter urging Congress to avoid the sequester by passing a "balanced approach to deficit reduction that does not include further cuts to NDD programs." The NDD group was formed to protect discretionary programs from being decimated by sequestration. Learn more about the NDD coalition at http://publichealthfunding.org/index.php/ndd_united1/.

The Council of School Supervisors & Administrators (CSA), Local 1, in New York City partners with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) for victory in a 24-school turnaround case. (See story, page 11.)

AFSA secures new union liability coverage for AFSA locals, providing each local affiliate in good standing with up to \$2 million in coverage for wrongful acts, wrongful employment practices and wrongful offenses related to the union business of the local affiliate. This new coverage also provides up to \$250,000 of individual labor leader coverage for up to four designated leaders per affiliate.

President Woodard sends a letter to all senators urging support for Sen. Patty Murray's (D-Wash.) amendment to require the Office of Management and Budget to submit a report to Congress detailing the impact of sequestration cuts for both nondefense discretionary and defense programs. This amendment since has been passed.

President Woodard and members of the Council of School Supervisors & Administrators (CSA), Local 1, head to Philadelphia for the Stand For America rally where President Woodard signs America's Second Bill of Rights. More than 40,000 union members from across the country join together for this event.



2012



President Woodard marches with CSA locals in the New York City Labor Day Parade.

AFSA's officers and General Executive Board (GEB) meet with Eric Waldo, deputy chief of staff for policy and programs at the Department of Education, at their annual meeting to discuss concerns for the accountability of education spending and the need to include administrators in discussions related to education reform. Waldo voices his commitment to including administrators in education reform conversations moving forward (See story, page 4 for more details).

Through a targeted action alert, members send hundreds of messages to their legislators demanding them to take action to avoid sequestration cuts set for Jan. 2, 2013.

AFSA's partnership with The Bully Project, along with additional assistance from AFSA Secretary Wendi Caporicci, leads to 14,000 Oakland middle and high school students viewing "Bully."

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

AFSA endorses Rep. John Sarbanes' (D-Md.) Instructional Leadership Act of 2012, which provides principals with the ongoing training and support they need in instructional leadership. This legislation remains a work in progress.

President Woodard speaks at a Michigan State AFL-CIO Leadership Meeting in Detroit, where she spoke on the need to pass Proposal 2 (see story, page 5), and spoke about the important role collective bargaining plays in giving union members a voice.

President Barack Obama wins re-election for another four-year term. AFSA was proud to endorse the president, and thinks this is a victory for public education, working families, the middle class and an economy that works for all. We look forward to working with the administration to improve these policies with the same fervor with which our members worked to secure the president's re-election.



AFSA adds employment-related liability coverage to the existing occupational liability policy, providing up to \$1 million of protection against civil actions and up to \$15,000 of defense costs for employment liability acts.

Issues to Follow in 2013

Make sure to stay up to date on these key issues facing public educators in the new year

Fiscal Cliff/Sequestration Issues

Should Congress fail to agree on a plan to address our nation's long-term debt, an automatic sequestration takes effect Jan. 2, 2013. Unless Congress acts to stop it, this sequestration will wipe out funding for public schools and essential federal programs.

- AFSA believes in taking a balanced, responsible approach to reducing our nation's debt and is a member of the Non-Defense Discretionary Coalition, which is composed of hundreds of organizations working to oppose these drastic cuts.
- Show your support for education and essential programs by sending a letter to your members of Congress today at www.AFSAadmin.org/stop-sequestration.

ESEA/NCLB

The latest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), measures school performance under Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Schools that do not meet AYP are subject to a series of escalating sanctions. In addition, NCLB requires all students to be proficient by 2014.

Without reauthorization, there is uncertainty about the standards of the current accountability system. Principals ultimately are held accountable under NCLB, yet they are not provided with the resources, capacity, training and professional development needed to succeed with the new responsibilities added under NCLB.

With a new Congress convening, there is renewed hope that ESEA will be reauthorized. However, with a Republican House and Democratic Senate being

retained in the new Congress, reauthorizing ESEA could prove difficult. Because Congress has yet to reauthorize ESEA, the Department of Education began granting states waivers from the law and the system of sanctions.

Waivers

Waivers grant states relief from NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and its requirement that all students be proficient by 2014, in exchange for adopting policies outlined by the Department of Education (DOE). The DOE currently has approved 34 states plus the District of Columbia for waivers.

- To receive a waiver, states must agree to certain education reform policies. These include adopting College- and Career-Ready Standards and Assessments; Developing Systems of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability and Support; and Evaluating and Supporting Principal and Teacher Effectiveness.

AFSA has expressed concern that a new evaluation system based largely on test scores would do little to solve the issues created by NCLB.

"Moving from a test-based system that unfairly evaluates schools to one that unfairly evaluates individual educators would be counterproductive and not in the best interest of schools and the students they serve," said President Diann Woodard.

To learn more, go to www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility.

Race to the Top

There are many AFSA members who work in schools that have received Race to the Top funds, and who are working hard to implement these policies

successfully. However, AFSA thinks all students deserve access to a high-quality education, and that any approach to education centered on a competition innately will result in winners and losers.

AFSA will be watching to see whether the administration continues to pursue a competitive approach to education policy and whether there will be enough funding and enough congressional support for it to continue moving forward.

School Improvement Grants (SIG)

AFSA has expressed concern with the four models of "improvement" (Turnaround, Transformation, Restart, Closure), which require the removal of the principal and up to 50 percent of the school's staff.

AFSA will be watching to see the level of emphasis the administration places on the four turnaround models as part of the SIG program in President Obama's second term.

Learn more about the SIG at www.ed.gov/blog/2010/03/whats-possible-turning-around-americas-lowest-achieving-schools/.

Sign Up for AFSA Action Alerts

To stay up to date on these issues and for opportunities to get involved with advocating for policies that support educators and students, sign up for AFSA's Action Alerts at www.AFSAadmin.org/issues-advocacy/take-action. ■

CSA Partners With UFT for Victory in 24-School Turnaround Case

Members of the Council of School Supervisors & Administrators (CSA), Local 1, in New York City are celebrating a major victory after New York State Supreme Court Judge Joan Lobis overturned the city's attempt to re-staff 24 schools in a "turnaround" effort. Testifying on the case were Ernest Logan, CSA president, and Bruce Bryant, AFSA's general counsel.

CSA partnered with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) to take legal action in May after the city closed 24 schools, reopening them all only one day later with new names. CSA and UFT members declared the 24-hour closing and name change a "sham" to get around collective

bargaining agreements, avoid evaluation negotiations and to "cherry-pick staff members for replacement."

"They [city officials] were manipulating a closure scheme to improperly invoke the excessing clause," said CSA Counsel David Grandwetter. "Excessing rules were developed to fill vacancies; they were not intended for the city to use in creating vacancies."

After the hearing, case Arbitrator Scott Buchheit sided with CSA and UFT, writing, "The union argues persuasively, with ample legal precedent, that it is not a proper exercise of the DOE's management rights to excess employees when done primarily for purposes of

circumventing the contractual and statutory seniority rights of those employees." Shortly after stating his decision, the city appealed the ruling, arguing that Buchheit had overstepped his authority.

During the July 24 appeal hearing, Judge Lobis said, "I believe that the arbitrator was within his authority to determine the grievance...The arbitrator's determination does not usurp any lawful authority of the DOE, nor was it counter to public policy."

Lobis rendered her decision less than a half-hour after the lawyers presented arguments and found "no basis to reject the arbitrator's findings." The city has once again filed a notice of appeal. ■



Sorry WE'RE
CLOSED?

The Stakes are High

Standardized tests are staging a hostile takeover of American education

As a nation, we continue to emphasize standardized test scores as the key evaluation tool for our education system. While accountability is necessary, the current testing models do not accurately reflect our students' potential or the effectiveness of our educators. As legislatures continue to make test scores the focal point of their solutions for education reform, our students' futures are put on the line as teachers lose control over what and how they can teach in their classrooms.

Standardized tests fail to measure students accurately and equally. According to a 2009 attitudes and social cognition study by Gregory M. Walton and Steven J. Spencer, psychology professors at Stanford University and The University of Waterloo, negative societal stereotypes against African Americans impaired their performance on academic and standardized tests.

"Like the time of a track star running into a stiff headwind, such performances underestimate the true ability of stereotyped students," the study stated.

The researchers selected academically strong female and male black and white students from Stanford and presented them with familiar material through multiple experiments with and without introducing a stereotype trigger. As a trigger, students in the test group were told they would do poorly on the exam.

African American students in the test group showed signs of anxiety, and in

some cases took on a victim's identity. They also spent more time incorrectly working on problems, and overall performed worse than white students in the test group who remained unaffected by the trigger. The study also suggests that being the minority in a group or class can produce deficits in cognitive function.

Beyond the issue of stereotypes influencing test performance, opponents of high-stakes testing argue that test-and-punish policies have not improved the quality of public education and that with the inflated importance of test scores, teachers have no choice but to teach to the test. While opposition to this testing boom existed before No Child Left Behind, the fight against high-stakes testing has gained tremendous momentum in recent months. In a collective movement against the dangerous standardized testing trend, many groups and organizations have signed on to the National Resolution on High-Stakes Testing, which calls for representatives at the federal and state level to "reduce the testing mandates, promote multiple forms of evidence of student learning and school quality in accountability, and not mandate any fixed role for the use of student test scores in evaluating educators." AFSA joined the movement and signed the resolution on June 22.

Teachers and school administrators are not alone in fighting against invasive testing measures. Parents are perhaps

the greatest opponents to standardized testing. This spring, parents in New York organized a boycott of a "field test" designed to create new standardized test questions. Parents have held their children out of tests in Washington State and parents in California and Colorado are working on opt-out options for standardized testing in similar acts of protest.

This rising tide of parent and educators fighting back against overbearing testing measures is a national trend. "I feel that the push-back by educators and parents comes from several areas of concern," explains AFSA Executive Vice President James Dierke. "Too much money and time has been spent on teaching to the test, cutting back on school activities and programs like art and music, computer technology, the social sciences and in most cases science, in order to feed the testing mill in language arts and mathematics. You have to have a balanced approach to learning. Teachers and administrators see this and parents are starting to understand this as well."

President Woodard added, "There is a role for standardized tests to play in public education, but the current system in place is ineffective and perpetuates funding inequity among American schools. It is a good sign that parents and educators across the country are taking up arms and fighting to put the education of our students in the hands of quality, experienced educators. Instead of focusing on the outcome of a test, we should be concerned with educating our teachers and administrators on how to combat stereotypes and how to reinforce learning environments that provide all students with equal performance opportunities." ■



Photo: Renato Ganzoza

Looking for Common Core Solutions in Project-Based Learning

Over the last decade, project-based learning (PBL) has gained a second wind as schools across the nation look for new ways to address diverse learning styles. Unlike traditional methods, PBL avoids typical recall-of-information assessments and pushes students to think critically and collaborate with peers. Through group projects and presentations, students use demonstrations that allow them to apply and reflect on what they learn.

"PBL allows the kids to put what they learn into practice," said Dr. Sandra Inga, STEM director for the Hartford (Conn.) Public Schools. "Instead of teaching math and science as separate entities, it gives them the opportunity to do projects where both subjects are involved."

As schools prepare for the new Common Core State Standards, many are implementing PBL into their curriculums. "That application of learning is a higher need as we transition to the Common Core," said Calvin Baker, superintendent of the Vail (Ariz.) School District, in a recent story for *District Administration* magazine. Baker is introducing PBL at all grade levels to promote "rigor and relevancy."

Not all administrators are sold on the PBL method yet, due to its "open-minded" layout and current lack of



Photo: woodywonderworks

assessment structure. This is far different from the current education makeup of No Child Left Behind, which has encouraged districts to keep a close eye on test scores as a way of tracking where they stand and where they need to go.

To better understand how to assess students through PBL, and to align material to the Common Core State Standards, creators of PBL are working with 20 teachers from across the nation on a yearlong Deeper Learning Initiative. The project will continue throughout the 2012–2013 school year and feature work with such consultants

as The Stanford University Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity to ensure the rubrics and expectations used across all PBL projects are equally measurable. Results from the Deeper Learning Initiative are expected in the summer of 2013.

Even with the assessment issues, Inga thinks PBL is worth the risk and has enough benefits to prevail as the teaching style of the future.

"I definitely see it as the way to go," she said. ■



ATTENTION AFSA MEMBERS

AFSA Scholarship applications are due **March 1, 2013**. For details, visit AFSAadmin.org/scholarship2013.

they tore it down. When they tore it down, they tore down the community.

Their corporate model holds educators accountable for all that ails our society, but as school leaders we have limited influence and little, if any, control over these circumstances. Indeed, our profession is held accountable as the sole agent of change, but what is needed is for our leaders to change their attitudes and listen to those of us on the front lines, rather than to those who lack experience as educators, let alone any experience or contact with communities suffering under economic and social strains.

When Secretary of Education Arne Duncan dismisses the significance of social disorder and poverty by declaring that “poverty is not destiny,” is he speaking from experience? Has he observed firsthand, as we do, the growing social and economic challenges that define far too many children’s destinies?

Far too many policymakers fail to understand that education is more dynamic than the person who provides it. It takes place in settings run by school leaders who need training in a host of disciplines to achieve the success being demanded of them.

The challenges of changing school cultures require systemwide solutions, an approach the corporate model of school “reform” fails to recognize. Rather than parrot the arguments of the data-driven corporate reformers, the federal government needs to encourage accountability by ensuring the states invest in training for school leaders.

The cruelest irony of the corporate model of school “reform” is that it fails to invoke the one thing that has distinguished the performance of American corporations—well-organized, well-trained professional management of

“Rather than parrot the arguments of the data-driven corporate reformers, the federal government needs to encourage accountability by ensuring the states invest in training for school leaders.”

—President Diann Woodard

operations. General Motors wasn’t saved by tweaking the performance of workers on the assembly line or condemning plant managers; an entirely new strategic approach to achieving the company’s objectives was put in place.

The accountability needs to be in the system, not in the performance of the individual child. There needs to be a commitment at the federal level to improved inputs, such as ongoing professional training for school leaders, the people actually running the facilities.

School leaders need training in how to manage a small corporation, because that’s what a school is. Training in budgeting, in situational leadership, in community assessment of what does or doesn’t need to be provided for successful turnarounds.

Each community is so unique, school leaders also need training in determining what kinds of instruction are necessary to achieve a consistent curriculum, based on the population of their communities and the children in their schools. They need training in how

to create the nuances that reflect their community’s circumstances. One size does not fit all, and turning around a school is not a one-shot deal. Ongoing training, networking and mentoring are essential for continued improvement.

“We are an American family,” Mr. Obama said during his victory speech on Election Night, “and we rise and fall together as one nation and as one people. We want our kids to grow up in a country,” he added, “where they have access to the best schools and the best teachers.”

Until the president’s Department of Education starts requiring states to invest in the leadership training, early childhood education and broad-based curriculum necessary for schools in impoverished communities to achieve what is accomplished in richer schools, his inspired call for creating opportunity for all children will continue to amount to little more than lofty rhetoric. ■



Coming to you soon...

Keep your eyes open for AFSA's website update, which will provide you with more opportunities to stay informed on AFSA's actions and positions on key issues. The new website also will provide you with more opportunities to get involved in supporting the issues that matter most to AFSA and its members.



AFSA OFFICERS AND GEB MEMBERS DEMAND A VOICE FOR PRINCIPALS AT FALL MEETING

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Waldo emphasized the Department of Education does want to hear from all stakeholders and from people in the field. AFSA greatly appreciated Waldo's attendance and looks forward to continuing the dialogue with the Department of Education on key education issues.

The GEB and officers also heard from Steve Walker, deputy national political director of the Democratic National Committee (DNC). Walker thanked school administrators for the critical role they play in implementing the administration's education policies, and for providing children with a safe place to learn.

Walker discussed the importance of the fall election for education, children, working families, retirement security, health care, the economy and the future of our nation. Walker reiterated that education is a top priority for President Obama.

After hearing from Waldo and Walker, the officers and GEB reviewed several important pieces of legislation,

including the Instructional Leadership Act of 2012 (H.R. 6376) sponsored by Rep. John Sarbanes (D-Md.), which would provide grants to train principals in instructional leadership.

For many years, AFSA has called for meaningful, high-quality professional development opportunities for principals. Sarbanes' measure would help ensure principals have the support, training and resources they need to succeed. The legislation also recognizes that professional development for teachers alone cannot ensure success for our schools. "I thank you for recognizing the great importance of supporting our nation's principals and public schools," said Woodard in AFSA's letter of endorsement for the leadership act.

"No Child Left Behind charged school principals with additional responsibilities and it's critical to provide them with the training and resources they need to meet these requirements," said Rep. Sarbanes. "Ensuring that principals are strong instructional leaders, as well as

competent administrators, will no doubt improve the quality of our schools. I sincerely thank the American Federation of School Administrators for endorsing the Instructional Leadership Act and helping to do all we can to support America's educators."

AFSA looks forward to working with Rep. Sarbanes' office, as the bill likely will need to be reintroduced next session.

The GEB and officers also reviewed the Educator Preparation Reform Act (S. 3582) sponsored by Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.). The bill would "require principal residency programs to prepare principals for success in the high-need schools in the partnership by engaging residents in rigorous graduate-level coursework to earn an appropriate advanced credential while they undertake a guided principal apprenticeship alongside a trained and experienced mentor principal." AFSA still is reviewing the legislation, and is pleased Sen. Reed recognizes the importance of meaningful training for principals. ■

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Dec. 11 **AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Conference, AFL-CIO, Washington, D.C.**
- Jan. 21 **Presidential Inauguration**
- Feb. 7–9 **AFSA General Executive Board Meeting, Washington, D.C.**
- Feb. 21–23 **AASA National Conference, Los Angeles**
- Feb. 24–25 **AFL-CIO Executive Council Committee Meetings, Buena Vista Palace Hotel, Lake Buena Vista, Fla.**
- March 1 **Deadline for AFSA Scholarship Applications**

