



Union Messenger

"A Union of Professionals"

December 2010

WSTU Calendar

December

12/6—571 EB Meeting - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.
12/6—571 HOR Meeting - Westmont - 6:45 p.m.

January

1/10—571 EB Meeting - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.
1/10—571 HOR Meeting - Westmont - 6:45 p.m.

WSTU OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY-FRIDAY 9:00 AM—5:00 PM
THE LOCAL 571 OFFICE MAY BE CLOSED
ON SCHOOL HOLIDAYS, PLEASE CALL
AHEAD.

Union Messenger

Jane Russell, President
Alice Kautsky, Vice President
Sandra Erickson, Treasurer
Cathleen Pope, Secretary
Jonathan Pazol, Financial Secretary
Ed Hohman, Legal Defense Secretary &
COPE Chairperson
Tom Smith, IFT Field Service Director
Mike Linder, IFT Field Service Director
Judy Jennings, Office Manager
Julie Masterton, Office Secretary
Andrew Bendelow, 571 Web Administrator
Angel Holmes, 571 Union Messenger Editor

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Social Media Pitfalls: Educators Beware

by Angel Holmes

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and MySpace ten years ago none of these social networks existed, but today they are some of the most effective ways to communicate. On Monday, September 20, Michelle Federici, of the IFT Department of Political Activities, conducted an informative workshop for WSTU Building Representatives entitled "Electronic Media and the Teacher". Michelle gave a brief description of each type of social media and continued the workshop with the following statistics:

- 50% of adults visit social networking sights
- 39% read blogs
- 23% contribute to discussion groups and
- 37% upload photos for website sharing



Educators utilize social media for various reasons: to communicate assignments to students, as an informal information source regarding upcoming events, and to enhance teaching strategies. Educators do not have the right, however, to post pictures or any written communication in which the employer deems inappropriate. This may leave educators asking the question, "What about my right to free speech?" In the context of social media, the teacher is considered a public employee and as such "free speech" is limited. In fact, the employer has the ability to restrict speech of a public employee UNLESS

- The employee is speaking as a citizen and the topic is a matter of public concern or
- If the individual is speaking as a citizen on a matter of public concern, ONLY THEN will the court balance the employee's free speech interest against the employer's interest in efficiently providing services

The following case study demonstrates the employer-employee speech restriction in action. In Spanierman v. Hughes, Spanierman was a non-tenured high school teacher who developed a MySpace page that was intended to communicate with students about homework, to learn more about the students in order to relate to them better, and to conduct casual, non-school related discussions. A colleague of Spanierman's came across the site where he witnessed nude photos with inappropriate comments as well as personal conversations with students. Here is an excerpt from Spanierman's post:

Spanierman: "Repko and Ashley sittin in a tree.
K I S S I N G. 1st comes love then comes marriage. HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! LOL"

Student: "dont be jealous cuase you cant get any lol :)"

Spanierman: "What makes you think I want any? I'm not jealous. I just like to

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Can't Skip a Beat

from your president

November 2, 2010, Election Day has passed. Many of us would add, "and not a moment too soon." All the robocalls, the mailers, the radio and TV ads, the rhetoric, and the name-calling became almost overwhelming. But sometimes, it is the results that are overwhelming.

Those who chose to vote made a point. We received many thank you notes from elected officials expressing their appreciation because they believed that union members helped push them into the winner's circle. Statistics tell us that when union members come out in force to vote, they can affect the results by 2 to 5 percentage points.

Through its grassroots process, the IFT endorsed both federal and state candidates. Of the state candidates the IFT endorsed for state officers, Supreme Court, and both the Illinois House and Senate, over 70% were elected/re-elected. This was in no small part due to your overwhelming help and support.

But the election is over and now it is time to get down to the business at hand. Almost daily in the newspapers or on radio or talk-shows, the story is that our pensions are still in jeopardy. School and pension funding, teacher tenure and evaluation, and how students with chronic disorders are dealt with during the school day, are just a few of the issues that are being targeted.

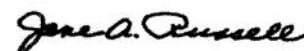
The list of wants and needs grows larger by the day. The Illinois legislature has been back in session and moving forward with its own list of important legislation to pass. That is why we must remain vigilant in monitoring proposed legislation being considered during the lame duck session. Continue to refer to the IFT website, www.ift-aft.org, for news about issues and legislation. If the call goes out asking you to contact your legislators about proposed legislation that is important to us, please respond with e-mails,

letters, calls and/or local legislator office visits.

Those who work to discredit our public schools, education workers, and even our union, are adept at delivering their message. Oscar winning Director Davis Guggenheim's documentary, "Waiting for Superman", follows five children and their families hoping to avoid the "bad" local public school and instead be chosen to attend a charter school. This film could certainly be considered one of those anti public school messages. The attempt to discredit public education hasn't skipped a beat, and neither should we.

Thanks for your involvement during the election and your continued interest and concern for our students, schools, and families. We look forward to continuing our work together in 2011.

In unity,



Local 571 President

***Happy holidays from the officers and staff
of the West Suburban Teachers Union.***

***Local 571 and the IFT offices will be closed on December 23, 24, 30 and 31 for winter holidays and New Years.**

Social Media Pitfalls: Educators Beware

by Angel Holmes

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have fun and goof on you guys. If you don't like it. Kiss my brass! LMAO"

As a result, Spanierman's contract was not renewed and the school board's decision was upheld by the courts. Be it personal, work related or for union communications, educators need to be aware of the consequences that follow the posting of any material that could be perceived as inappropriate to students, parents, colleagues or the employer.

Michelle Federici likened social media to a bad tattoo, "once you put it out there, you can't get it back" and thus concluded her presentation with the following advice to teachers:

DO

- use privacy settings to keep your information as private as possible

- treat everything you post as potentially public
- use web searches to find information posted about you by others
- print a copy (the online version may disappear)

DON'T

- post anything offensive
- friend your students
- use your full name as your username

Pat Wagemann, of the PAEC Council, attended the workshop and commented that the information given was "informative, relevant, and something that she could share with her colleagues". The workshop ended with a brief overview of student issues that included social networking, sexting, and cyber-bullying, followed by a question and answer period. To access additional case studies and to view the complete PowerPoint Presentation on "Electronic Media and the Teacher" log on to www.wstu571.org.

Local 571 ER&D Course

Description & Registration - Winter 2011

Reading Comprehension Instruction

This course focuses on the research and exemplary practices that help students acquire strong reading comprehension skills. Participants examine, discuss, and evaluate the appropriate application of a range of instructional strategies in the teaching of comprehension skills. Strategies are presented for increasing student comprehension of both narrative and expository texts, including content area textbooks. The course is appropriate for all K-12 teachers who need to help increase their students' comprehension of text.

Dates: February 3, 10, 17, 24, and
March 3, 10, 17, 24 (8 sessions)

Times: 4:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Location: Robert M. Healey Conference
Center

500 Oakmont Lane
Westmont, IL 60559

Registration Cost: \$50 (includes materials & light dinners)



College Credit Option

Participants can earn:

- two (2) graduate credits from Governors State University for an additional cost.
- two undergraduate credits from Prairie State Community College for an additional cost.

Costs for college credit will be available at the first class session. Participants may sign up and pay at that time.

Registration Deadline: Friday, January 7, 2011

Interested members may download the registration form on the West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571 website at www.wstu571.org or call Local 571 at 630-468-4098 and ask to have the form mailed to you.

Putting Teaching Quality First

By Bonnie Saracco

The *Race to the Top* competition for federal education dollars has targeted due process and seniority rights, putting the issues of teacher tenure and evaluation at the front of our professional concerns. Eighteen months ago AFT President Randi Weingarten characterized this situation as “a freight train coming at us.”

During last summer’s ER&D Annual Network Conference, AFT Educational Issues Department staff members Angela Minnici and Justin Stone dealt with this issue in their presentation *An Introduction to AFT’s Continuous Model for Teacher Development and Evaluation*.

In today’s public media drumbeat, teachers can be identified as either good or bad by test scores. A value-added model of student growth is proposed as the gold standard for these determinations. The premise is that if we can immediately remove the easily identified bad teachers, our education problems will be solved.

This theory needs a reality check. Valid teacher evaluation is much more difficult and complex than looking at test scores. Rather than belonging to static and mutually exclusive categories of either good or bad, teachers develop a large array of various skills throughout their careers. There are a myriad of validity and other statistical problems with value-added models of teacher evaluation. Moreover, only a minority of teachers work in positions that produce longitudinal test data at all.

Research has shown that the best way to improve student achievement is to extensively support and develop teachers, as is done routinely in high performing countries. The most effective steps to improved teaching quality are better mentoring and more time for collaboration. Despite media claims to the contrary, extra pay for student achievement on tests and alternative routes to certification do little to improve learning.

AFT, with its vast store of expertise about good teaching, as well as its power to collaborate with stakeholders and to institute reforms through negotiation and legislative efforts, is the organization which is best positioned to advance systematic teacher evaluation reform.

Research has shown that the best way to improve student achievement is to extensively support and develop teachers, as is done routinely in high performing countries.

As part of this process, AFT has put together both an ad hoc teacher evaluation committee and an advisory panel to look at the role of teacher evaluation in systemic reform. Both groups are composed of a diverse group of experts.

These panels have proposed ten critical principles for teacher evaluation systems, based on the belief that the primary goal of teacher evaluation must be to increase student achievement by improving teaching practice.

The principles state that sound evaluation systems are developed collaboratively with teachers as professionals, as is standard practice in other professions. Evaluation systems have to take the realities of career continuum into account. Evaluation should be both formative and summative, and must be based on best practice standards.

The panel’s most challenging conclusion is that evidence must be drawn and validly assessed from multiple measures, a difficult requirement that has rarely been implemented, and which needs considerable teacher input to work.

Now is the critical time for us to participate in this conversation, which will determine the future of our profession.



2010-2011 Scholarship Opportunities for Local 571 Union Members and/or their Children or Legal Dependents



- **AFT (American Federation of Teachers) Robert G. Porter Scholars Program**

- ◇ Four-year, \$8,000 post-secondary **scholarship** (\$2,000 per year) to students who are dependents of AFT members
- ◇ One-time \$1,000 **grant** to AFT members to assist with their continuing education

2010-2011 applications are available in November 2010 on the AFT website at www.aft.org/benefits/scholarships.cfm; or by e-mailing porterscholars@aft.org; or by mailing a post card to: Porter Scholars; 555 New Jersey Ave., NW; Washington, DC 20001 (requests must specify whether applicants are seeking the one-time grant for AFT members or the scholarship for their child).

- **AFT Union Plus Scholarship Program** - \$500 to \$4,000 one-time cash award for undergraduate study beginning in the fall of 2010 - open to AFT members, spouses, and dependent children. Go to <http://www.unionplus.org/college-education-financing/scholarships> to download the application. If you do not have internet access, call Local 571 at 630-468-4098, or e-mail jmasterton@ift-aft.org for an application form. **Applications must be postmarked by January 31, 2011.**

- **IFT (Illinois Federation of Teachers) Scholarships - applications available now. Applications must be received in the IFT office before 5:00 p.m., Friday, December 3, 2010.** For an application, go to www.ift-aft.org/benefits/scholarships.aspx. If you do not have internet access, call Local 571 at 630-468-4098, or e-mail jmasterton@ift-aft.org. Please specify which form you want.

- ◇ **IFT Carl J. Megel Special Education Scholarship** - one-time award in the amount of \$1,000 - open to children of currently employed active members in good standing or deceased members who were in good standing at the time of death - children must be high school seniors who will graduate in 2011 - children must presently be enrolled in a special education school, class, or program - not open to students who plan to teach in special education.
- ◇ **IFT Robert G. Porter Scholarship** - \$6,000 award (\$1,500 each year for four years) provided student is enrolled full-time at an Illinois public university and maintains a "C" cumulative average - open to children of currently employed active members in good standing or deceased members who were in good standing at time of death - applicants must be high school seniors with a cumulative "B" average.

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- **West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571, Mary Wheeler Scholarship Award** - six \$1,650 one-time awards - open to high school seniors graduating in 2011 and whose parents or guardians are members in good standing of Local 571. Applicants must plan to continue their education in the fall of 2011. Request application via e-mail at jmasterton@ift-aft.org, call 630-468-4098, or visit www.wstu571.org.
All application materials must be postmarked on or before March 1, 2011.
 - **West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571, Jo Ann Horowitz Scholarship Award** - One \$1,500 scholarship will be awarded in 2011 by the West Suburban Teachers Union to a current undergraduate college/university student pursuing a career in teaching or in Women's Studies. Eligible recipients include any member in good standing, or the child/grandchild of a member in good standing of the WSTU, Local 571. Request applications via e-mail at jmasterton@ift-aft.org, call 630-468-4098, or visit www.wstu571.org.
All application materials must be postmarked on or before March 1, 2011.
 - **CFL (Chicago Federation of Labor) William A. Lee Scholarship Program** - ten (10) \$1,500 one-time cash awards, five random drawing, five academic - open to high school seniors who will graduate in 2011 from Chicago-area high schools whose parents are union members in good standing - send **written** request for application form to William A. Lee Scholarship Committee after January 1; Chicago Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO; 130 E. Randolph St., Suite 2600; Chicago, IL 60601 (When writing for the application, indicate whether you want to participate in the academic competition or the random drawing.) **After January 1, you may also obtain the application online at www.chicagolabor.org. Application deadline is March 1, 2011. Please note: On the application form, the Union Affiliation is the West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571, IFT/AFT.**
 - **Thomas H. Reece Scholarship** - a one-time scholarship of up to \$2,000 will be awarded each year to a CTU/IFT member or his/her child who is currently enrolled in a public university with a declared education major or enrolled in a Master of Education program. **Information will be available on the IFT website (www.ift-aft.org) when application is available.** Please check the website frequently.
 - **Loan Forgiveness Program**
Visit <http://www.aft.org/yourwork/tools4teachers/funding/index.cfm> for information.



West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571

IFT, AFT, AFL-CIO
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'Tis the Season

By Angel Holmes



Thanksgiving has past and you've just finished up the last of your turkey leftovers so now what? It's time to shop! There are only a few weeks left until the gift giving holidays and for those of us who didn't finish our shopping before Halloween, we have got a lot of work to do. It is important however, that we be creative in our gift giving.

I have received some of the most treasured gifts this year alone and they were not given for any particular reason and did not require lots of cash. There is a lovely substitute teacher who picked fresh flowers from her garden, put them in a nice soda bottle, and brought it to school for me to sit on my desk. At the beginning of the school year a colleague brought in little bags of homemade trail mix, which couldn't have come at a better time because I didn't eat breakfast that morning and I was starved. Another colleague gave me a nice thank you note for copying some documents. And yet another colleague once sensed that I was having a rough day and simply offered me a hug.

One of the most amazing things that our President, Barack Obama, has encouraged since he has been in office is for citizens to get out and volunteer more. During the holidays, this could not be a more perfect gift. Homeless shelters see more needy patrons during the winter months than they do throughout the entire year. Donations of food, clothing, gently used coats, and toiletries are in high demand. This would be a great opportunity for families to spend time together to help out at a shelter in their community; to give back to those who have found themselves in a position of need this holiday season. Some of the most rewarding times that I can remember, have been spent giving my time to help someone else. If you have not tried it, consider volunteering - you might find that it is the best gift that you will give this year.

As we anxiously await the return of our troops from Iraq, we continuously support them by sending care packages.

This is another way that you can give during the holiday season. Many organizations are accepting donations of items and would gladly accept your gift of time to help prepare the care packages for shipping.

For some the holidays are not a joyous time. Perhaps there is a feeling of being overwhelmed with gift giving. Maybe this is the first year without a loved one and that has made the time particularly difficult. Whatever the reason may be, please know that there is help if you need it. Contact your local benefits department and take advantage of employee assistance programs, should you find this time of year to be unusually stressful. Here is a short list of ways to stay depression and stress free during the holidays:

- * Be Optimistic
- * Make Time for yourself
- * Keep track of your spending
- * Spend time with family and friends
- * Look for activities that are free
- * Share holiday tasks with others
- * Be realistic about what you can accomplish
- * If you are feeling lonely, try volunteering

Have a safe and happy holiday season!



