



Union Messenger

January-February 2009

Workers' Comp Law & Grievance Training Kick Off New Year for Council Leaders

Legal presentations and workshops to improving the ability of Council officers and representatives to deliver the best information and advice to members began the new year for Local 571. Partners from Cullen, Nicholson, and Menchetti, a Chicago law firm specializing in workers' compensation law, met with the Local 571 House of Representatives on January 12. Two weeks later, 50 leaders from 14 Councils were represented at a workshop on grievances and how to best advocate for members.



Council leaders take notes as attorney Stephen A. Yokich explains the typical grievance and arbitration process at the January 26 workshop.

Reforms in 2005 improved the protections and benefits offered under Illinois worker's comp law. Some education employees have used their group medical plan when an injury/condition should have been claimed under workers' compensation. The law requires a worker to report an injury to her/his employer within 45 days. Employer policies vary, some employers may demand report within a day or two of an injury.

Stephen A. Yokich, of Cornfield & Feldman, also commented on issues unrelated to grievances. In response to questions, Yokich addressed concerns about how to best represent members during formal (disciplinary) meetings and DCFS investigations. See your Council president for additional details.

Governor Quinn Talks On Public Education

In his first press conference as Illinois governor on January 29, Patrick Quinn expressed the need for a strong system of public education, from early childhood through post-secondary. "...we really have to understand that jobs follow brain-power, and if we're going to have jobs, we have to have smart people from early childhood," said the state's new chief executive.

"We have a good state and we're gonna be even better." More about the new governor and a link to IFT president Ed Geppert's statement are available on the IFT website.

While Gov. Quinn has asked to delay delivery of the Fiscal Year 2010 budget message from February 18 to March 18, the multi-billion dollar deficit facing Illinois in the current fiscal year needs to addressed by the governor and General Assembly.

(Continued on page 3)

Inside this issue:

- From your president... 2008 In Review2
- NCLB Task Force.....2
- Demographics of Academic Failure.....3
- Professional Development Lessons3
- Union Membership Up.....4
- Retirees Council News & Activities4
- Fight For America's Future.....5
- Notice of Nominations & Election.....6
- Local 571 Scholarship Deadlines6
- AFT Member Benefits6
- Calendar and Reminders6

Illinois Plans Tightening Academic Standards Joins American Diploma Project

The Illinois State Board of Education has joined over 30 other states involved with the American Diploma Project (ADP). Along with California and Florida, Illinois has started a process that involves reviewing and revising what students need to know and must be able to do to be successful in college and their future careers.

States joining the ADP agree to develop learning standards based on national

(Continued on page 5)

Union Messenger Now Online

Issues of the *Union Messenger* are now available on the Local 571 website. The newsletter's overall look is improved by color photos and graphics. Live links to websites, email addresses, and additional information provide convenience.

New issues will be posted on the day the print version is distributed to Council representatives, normally at the Local 571 House of Representatives regular meetings.

2008 In Review—A Good Year?

from your president

A year ago this month, the West Suburban Teachers Union held its 14th Convention, amending the *Local 571 Constitution and By-laws*. The 70th anniversary of the Local was celebrated two months later with more than 200 members attending. Local 571, West Suburban Teachers Union, received its charter on May 18, 1938, from the American Federation of Teachers. Starting with a mere handful of members, the Local has grown to represent over 5200 teachers, support staff, and other education workers organized in 23 councils and covering 15 school districts in western Cook and eastern DuPage Counties.

Representing Local 571 at the AFT Convention in July, 48 elected delegates voted amendments improving the *AFT Constitution and By-Laws*, passed resolutions, and elected three women to the highest AFT posts: Randi Weingarten, president; Toni Cortese, secretary-treasurer; and Loretta Johnson, executive vice-president.

The 2008 convention theme, “**greater than >1 one**” was aptly recognized as Randi Weingarten, in her first speech as AFT president, stated that the union’s most urgent priority was overhauling the federal education law, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). “For many AFT members, (this) has become a four-letter word.”

The most remarkable and exciting political campaign of the 21st century occurred last fall. The work of Local 571 and IFT members, as well as members from many other labor organizations, had a significant impact on the outcome. The election of Illinois Senator Barack Obama, the first African-American U.S. President, and the defeat of a proposed Constitutional Convention were important IFT goals.

November’s election also produced changes in the Illinois legislature, particularly for the leadership of both Houses and both political parties. The 2007-08 Illinois legislature session was generally disappointing. Hopes are higher that new legislation in 2009 will have a positive impact on the educational issues we now confront.

The replacement of the governor may make such work difficult but not impossible. Perhaps with new leadership this legislature will find ways to work together in a more amicable way, educating Illinois students and the state and moving, in general, forward.

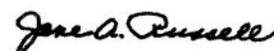
Over the last several years, an increasing number of retired members have continued their union involvement. The Retirees Council, now with over 500 members, is currently Local 571’s fastest growing council.

It is through the tireless efforts of the officers and members of every council that our federated local remains a vibrant part of the Illinois Federation of Teachers, the American Federation of Teachers, and the Illinois labor movement. WSTU officers and staff will continue to serve our members with help in negotiations, legal assistance, and political action, and provide a myriad of other vital benefits to WSTU members and their families.

There is much to do. Together, with your continued guidance and perseverance in helping to educate our students and your continued support and participation - through your council and Local 571 - we will continue into the new year with hope that things will be better for our members, our students, our families, the state, and the nation.

Very best wishes for a healthy and productive 2009!

In unity,



Local 571 President



NCLB Task Force Sees Opportunities in 2009

The AFT's No Child Left Behind task force is looking at what appear to be promising opportunities for common ground among the union, the new Congress, and the Obama administration when it comes to supporting and improving schools. At its regularly scheduled webcast meeting on January 14, the task force discussed in detail the 10 smart investments in school improvement outlined by AFT President Randi Weingarten in her November address at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Task force members also reviewed recent developments on Capitol Hill, particularly efforts to aid schools and public agencies through a federal economic recovery package, and Senate testimony by Chicago public schools chief and Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

The Demographics of Academic Failure

by Bonnie Saracco

Academic failure is a serious problem for American schools. The U.S. Department of Education reports that nearly half the adults in America are either illiterate or only literate enough to perform basic tasks.

A National Institute of Child Health and Human Development study concluded that approximately 40% of American adults struggle too much with reading to enjoy it. U.S. 12th graders score in the lowest quarter of the 18 nations participating in international TIMMS testing of math and advanced science.

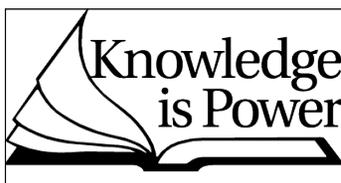
These high levels of academic failure undermine society and threaten the survival of public education. They also provide public education's detractors ammunition to push for moving funding dollars elsewhere.

The strongest predictor of academic failure is poverty. But, even though socioeconomic level directly correlates with the achievement ranking of schools, poverty itself is not a direct cause. The relationship of poverty to academic failure hinges on whether a family's poverty is temporary or spans generations. Temporary poverty has little effect on student achievement; generational poverty locks students into a cycle of failure.

The educational level of parents is a critical factor in student achievement. Children who grow up in families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children hear an average of 616 words per hour. Children in working class families hear an average

of 1,251 words per hour. Children of professional parents hear an average of 2,153 words per hour. The connection between these differences and school achievement is straightforward.

English language learners make up a student population that is growing faster than the student population as a whole. To build English proficiency, teachers must be skilled at using research-based strategies with these



students. These include creating nonlinguistic presentations, providing extra communication practice, simplifying texts, and using

culturally appropriate teaching methods.

Most classes contain students with significant academic deficiencies that are independent of these factors. These students are often characterized as having learning disabilities.

Fortunately, recent research concludes that none of these factors impede student achievement to the extent that teachers cannot help each type of student learn better. Research strongly suggests that, despite demographic factors, teacher quality has a tremendous effect on academic achievement.

But, teachers cannot work alone. They need the training and support to use strategies based on the most valid research about effective teaching and instructional design.

Local 571's ER&D classes focus on giving teachers the research-based, practical knowledge they need to meet these challenges.

Report Offers Lessons for Professional Development

A recent report by the National Staff Development Council finds that the United States provides teachers too little professional development, and what is provided often lacks key elements proven to raise student achievement.

AFT president Randi Weingarten says the report, *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad*, "offers a blueprint for better professional development for teachers and, ultimately, better student achievement.

"Those who look to international comparisons of student achievement also should study the results of this report, which provides a likely explanation for why some countries perform better than the United States," Weingarten says.

"The report highlights the desperate need for more and better support for teachers in order to foster teamwork among teachers, give them a voice in school decision-making, and tightly focus professional development on their academic subjects. Each of these is a critical, research-based measure that would improve teacher quality and student learning. One finding highlights the gap between where we are and where we need to go: Research shows that 50 hours per year of professional development is needed to improve student achievement, yet most teachers in this country receive no more than 16 hours.

"Recently, some policymakers have proposed so-called teacher quality reforms that, perversely, would make the teaching profession less attractive, undermine teacher morale and collaboration, and do nothing to help teachers teach and students learn. This report points to a better way forward,

(Continued on page 4)

(Governor Quinn Talks... Continued from page 1)

With the House and Senate back in Springfield, the real work of fixing Illinois' fiscal problems begins. The IFT will fight for adequate revenue, but every member can play an important role in the funding campaign. Watch for updates on the IFT website, in future issues of *Inside IFT* and in *IFT Insight* magazine.

Union Membership Up for Second Straight Year

The latest figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show union membership in the United States rose significantly in 2008, growing by 428,000 members to 16.1 million. The percentage of the workforce that is unionized grew from 12.1 percent to 12.4 percent last year, continuing a second year of growth.

"Today's numbers confirm what many working people already know—that if given the chance, American workers are choosing to join unions in larger numbers," says AFL-CIO president John Sweeney. "Workers in unions are much more likely to have healthcare benefits and a pension than those without a union; in today's economy, that's the difference between sinking and swimming."

The financial advantages of having a union on the job were clear in 2008. Last year, median weekly pay for union members was \$886, compared with \$691 for those who were not represented by unions.

The growth in union membership comes at a time when workers say they want and need unions. Seventy-eight percent of the public supports legislation that will make it easier for workers to bargain with their employers, and 60 million workers would join a union today if they had the opportunity, according to recent research by Peter D. Hart Research Associates.

Much of the union membership increase came through growth in unionized industries, especially in the public sector. Analysts estimate that only a small percentage of the growth came from workers forming new unions through the company-dominated National Labor Relations Board process. Only 70,000 workers were able to form a union through the NLRB process in 2007, for example. Today, most workers who form new unions do so after their employer has agreed to recognize their union through a majority sign-up process.

Union membership among women grew again in 2008, continuing a trend. The percentage of female workers belonging to unions increased to 11.4 percent; women now comprise 44.5 percent of union membership, representing four consecutive years of increase in the overall share of union members.

A factor that may have led to the growth in union membership, despite the economic downturn, is the increased job security afforded by a union contract. Similarly, research shows that unionized companies are not adversely affected more than non-union companies in economic downturns. A BLS press release includes details on the 2008 figures. [AFL-CIO press release]



Local 571 Retirees Council News

Information important to retirees could fill this entire *Union Messenger*. The articles below, and others, are available on the Retirees Council page of Local 571's website: <http://www.wstu571.org>.

- 5.8 PERCENT SOCIAL SECURITY COLA FOR 2009
- SENATE RECOVERY BILL INCLUDES PROVISIONS FOR SENIORS
- 2009 MEDICARE PART D COSTS
- HOUSE DEMOCRATS ELIMINATE MEDICARE TRIGGER
- MEDICARE ADVANTAGE CUTS, REFORMS EXPECTED
- PRIVATE FEE-FOR-SERVICE PLANS HAVE HIGH DISENROLLMENT RATES
- NEW LAW AIDS GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN
- AARP ENDORSEMENT OFTEN BOOSTS INSURER PREMIUMS

2009 IFT Retirees Chapter Activities

Month	Event	Date
February	<i>Design For Living</i> —Peabody Estate	2/13
March	<i>Curtains</i> —Drury Lane	3/25
April	Medicare/Social Security Seminar*	4/16
May	CMS/TRS Seminar*	5/19
June	Chicago Botanic Garden	6/10
July	<i>Macbeth</i> —Peabody Estate	TBA
August	Eldercare/Long-term Health Seminar*	TBA
September	<i>Cabaret</i> —Drury Lane	9/16
October	Two or Three-Day Galena Trip	TBA
November	One-Day Lincoln Museum Visit	TBA
December	<i>Thoroughly Modern Millie</i> —Drury Lane	12/10

(Lessons For Professional Development... Continued from page 3)

and we hope policymakers embrace the research-based measures described in this report, which have proven successful in other nations.

"In addition to working to change state laws and collective bargaining agreements to promote better professional development, the AFT has its own research-based professional development programs, works with school districts to establish peer assistance and review programs that improve teacher evaluation and support, and even provides training for America's teachers in 'lesson study,' a form of professional development that is popular in Japan and featured in this report." [AFT press release]



Fight for America's Future

IT'S DOLLARS AND SENSE

The AFT, on January 14, began a national campaign to fight for America's future by strongly supporting a national economic recovery plan and other efforts that make smart investments and mitigate the need for any further cuts in education, health-care, and other essential services.

"A well-crafted federal economic stimulus package is absolutely necessary to stem the economic tidal wave spreading across America," says AFT president Randi Weingarten.

"The solution isn't just about dollars but about the kind of smart investments that will help slow the economic free-fall, and strengthen education, healthcare and public services... to preserve opportunity in this country."

The AFT campaign is called "Fight for America's Future: It's Dollars and Sense." An integral part of the campaign is swift passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009—a bill that will provide states some immediate fiscal relief and make investments that will strengthen the economy in the long term.

Overall, the recovery plan will provide vital aid to children, students, and



The Hauser Middle School auditorium stage contains only a few of 60,000+ food items collected by students and staff in the week before winter break. Non-perishable donations filled auditorium aisles stacked on choral riser shelf units and occupied half of the main entrance hallway. Teachers at Hauser are part of the Riverside Council of Local 571.

workers as well as create jobs and jump-start the economy.

The plan includes about \$170 billion for education in a "stabilization fund" to help states restore money that has already been cut, assure grants for local school districts based on Title I and IDEA formulas, fund interest-free school construction bonds, provide more money for Pell Grants, and increase funding for early childhood and college infrastructure programs.

The union's legislation department reports that AFT activists already have sent more than 7,000 letters to Congress urging passage of a recovery plan and that the campaign will likely surpass anything the AFT has ever done in terms of letters sent.

Members can learn more about the "Fight for America's Future" plan at www.aft.org/fight4america. Regular *Union Messenger* updates will be under the "Fight For America's Future" logo that banners this article.

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(Illinois Joins ADP... Continued from page 1)

benchmarks. Illinois will be among the first using international models to review and revise state standards.

ADP is an initiative of Achieve, Inc., a non-profit organization created by the nation's governors and business leaders. Work on revising Illinois Learning Standards, developed in 1997, is expected to last 18 to 24 months. The overall goal is to produce "fewer, clearer, and higher" state learning standards and promote rigor and relevance in curriculum.

Notice of Local 571 Nominations and Election

Local 571 West Suburban Teachers Union IFT-AFT

In accordance with the Local 571 constitution, the membership will elect executive board officers in late April–early May 2009. Nominations are now being accepted through March 9 for the following six offices:

President (1)	Vice President (1)
Treasurer (1)	Secretary (1)
Financial Secretary (1)	Legal Defense Secretary (1)

The term of office is for two (2) years beginning on July 1, 2009. Officers of Local 571 shall be automatic delegates to the conventions of the AFT, IFT and Local 571.

All Local 571 members, in good standing, are eligible to be nominated as Local 571 officers. Nominations must be printed or typed and include the nominee's name, school district, and office sought.

Nominations must be received in the Local 571 office on or before March 9, 2009. Nominees will receive a written acknowledgement of receipt. Please submit nominations to Local 571 office manager Judy Jennings at: jjennings@ift-aft.org or by USPS addressed to:

Judy Jennings, Office Manager
West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571
500 Oakmont Drive, Westmont, IL 60559

Voting by secret ballot will take place within each Council of the West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571. Each Council's officers will notify members of the location(s) and date(s) in May for voting. Members who need additional information about the election, or the duties of each office, may contact Local 571 at 630-468-4098.

Officer duties are described in the Local 571 constitution and are available online at www.wstu571.org.

Local 571 Scholarship Applications Due

March 1 is the application deadline for the Local 571 Mary Wheeler and Jo Ann Horowitz scholarship programs. The Mary Wheeler Scholarship is a one-time award of \$1000. Six scholarships are authorized. Eligibility is limited to high school seniors who are children of Local 571 members.

The \$1000 Jo Ann Horowitz Scholarship is awarded to a student pursuing a teaching or women's studies program. To be considered, applicants must be a Local 571 member, child, or grandchild who is a current college or university student. For more information phone the Local 571 office at 630-468-4098, or go to the Local 571 website: <http://www.wstu571.org>.

AFT Member Card/AFT Benefits—Financial Services

With the state of the economy today, we're all looking for ways to stretch our dollars. AFT+ member benefits offers a range of financial products and services to do

just that, including credit counseling, loans, and online tax preparation. For more information, visit AFT Members Only at: <http://www.aft.org/members>.

WSTU Calendar

February

2/7-8—IFT ULI - Westmont
 2/9—571 EB Meeting - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.
 2/9—571 HOR Meeting - Westmont - 6:45 p.m.
 2/21—TRS/Social Security Seminar (for teachers retiring within 2-3 years) - Westmont - 8:30 a.m.

March

3/9—571 EB Meeting - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.
 3/9—571 HOR Meeting - Westmont - 6:45 p.m.
 3/19-22—AFT PSRP Conference - Baltimore

April

4/20—571 EB Meeting - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.
 4/20—571 HOR Meeting - Westmont - 6:45 p.m.
 4/25-26—IFT ULI - Westmont

WSTU OFFICE HOURS

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

Reminders...

571 TRS/Social Security Seminar
Reservation deadline February 13

Local 571 Executive Board Officer Positions
Nomination deadline March 9

CFL William A. Lee Scholarship
Application deadline March 2
AFT Robert G Porter Scholarship
Application deadline March 31

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