



Union Messenger

April 2009

Illinois to Receive \$9 Million for Improved Education Data Infrastructure Federal grant to “improve data use and analysis to better prepare students for success”

Reading Comprehension & Instruction Class Graduates



Completing Local 571's winter 2009 Reading Comprehension and Instruction course are participants from many of the Local's Councils. Standing (l to r): Bonnie Saracco and Cathleen Pope, Local 571 ER&D coordinators; Jane Russell, RCI course instructor; participants Martha Venes, Jerry Vicino, Annie Baumann, Peggy Koucky, Andrea Fielder, Colleen Grober, Carrie Bonine. Seated: Dora Ramirez, Sylvia Sandoval, Reyna Ordonez, Terry Land-school, Bonnie Corsere, Mirela Mehmeti, and Staci Scapardine. Rachel King and Gene Marie Szukala are not pictured. See page 3 for summer course announcements and page 8 for other summer professional education opportunities.

The federal grant promised is intended to support work already underway to establish a “Longitudinal Data System” aimed at tracking the academic progress of each Illinois student from preschool through college.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) announced the grant April 6, but implementing the system has been underway for many months.

The grant and pending state legislation will allow the ISBE to begin taking integrating student-level data and connecting it to data from other parts of the agency including professional staff (teachers and administrators). Students will be assigned a number when first enrolled in a public school.

Detailed reporting of public school performance is a requirement of the federal stimulus package.

The IFT is committed to any such system being used appropriately.

Inside this issue:

- From your president... Mom Was Probably Right2
- ER&D: The “Big Idea”3
- Summer Course Registrations Open3
- Not Only For Retirees News4
- AFT Member Survey Invitation4
- Fight For Illinois’ Future - Pensions.....5
- IFT Legislative Forum Planned.....6
- Online Mandated Reporter Course.....6
- Financing College: Loans6
- AFT Member Benefits-Books.....6
- Calendar and Reminders6

ISBE Looking For Applicants to Shape State Certification Tests

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Division of Illinois Educator Certification is looking for experienced K-12 certified educators to serve on assessment development process committees reviewing test fields for the Illinois Certification Testing System.

The conference at the Springfield Crowne Plaza on May 13-14, 2009, will feature representatives from Evaluation Systems (ISBE’s

(Continued on page 4)

Elmhurst Council News Makes Chicago TribLOCAL



Council president Nan Loerop (center right) and Colleen Gaughan (far right) present the Yorkfield Food Pantry with a \$1700 check representing the efforts of Elmhurst Council members in a February donation drive. Their story was published in the Chicago Tribune's local supplement.

Mom Was Probably Right

from your president

Whenever I learned something “the hard way” my mom would say, “See, I told you so.” Prior to learning whatever it was “the hard way” mom protectively tried providing guidance. In my case, it didn’t work well. I heard “See, I told you so” numerous times in my life.

I swore I would never say that to my own children, but somehow at this time, I feel like mom is standing next to me again and I hear her repeating those words.

Our issues in education remain the same, but with the state budget in crisis, the level of concern is the greatest it has ever been. The big issues are the state budget, education funding, and our pensions.

Following are some “I told you so” comments gleaned from past *Union Messengers*, “from your president.”

On properly funding education in Illinois

- **August/September 2006** “...encourage (Illinois legislators) to pass a fair and balanced state budget that fully funds education needs, health care, and social services, as well as address meaningful property tax relief.”
- **May/June 2007** “Don’t leave Springfield without it! We need to remind Illinois legislators that bills need to be passed that adequately fund school districts as well as higher education, and the pension debt needs to be paid down.”
- **August/September 2007** “Remember, we asked for a state budget with reassurances for education and educators. We will be asking representatives and senators why legislation providing predictable and sustainable funding sources for Illinois education failed to pass.”
- **March 2009** “Even though there may be an influx of federal dollars into Illinois, the budget will still need to be balanced and state debts paid.”

On our pensions

- **June 2005** “...I read how the governor and my state representatives want to make ‘adjustments’ to the pension systems.”
- **December 2005/January 2006** “The IFT Legislative Department worked with the governor and many legislators to keep our pensions intact. Although not successful in all areas, the damage was minimized by its efforts and those of WSTU members who called, wrote, e-mailed and personally met with local legislators.”
- **April, 2006** “The state of our pension funds, state funding of education, and state funding in general are inextricably tied together. The funding issue is complicated, and the potential solutions may be difficult.”
- **May/June 2008** “We pay into the (pension) system with every paycheck. We have, or are paying, our fair share. We

also know that the system has been underfunded and needs to be fully funded to meet its obligation. ...The fight must be to continue the public pension system and have it fully funded.”

On contacting legislators

- **October/November 2005** “The chance to interact and develop a dialogue with Illinois legislators provides an avenue for our Local 571 members to discuss relevant issues and concerns about education.”
- **April, 2006** “We, as IFT members, should look forward to being key players in the issues that most affect our members as well as Illinois school children.”
- **February 2008** “Let’s continue to talk to and encourage politicians who legislate laws and provide funding that deeply affect the schools and programs, students, and education workers. Did you write or call your local representative about an issue important to you?”


Clairvoyance is not in my nature. However, statements I made in the past need to be repeated. Attacks on education and educators are greater now than before. We absolutely must be involved. The time is now.

Don’t leave this to the teacher in a classroom across the hall, the secretary in the office, the special education aide with her one-on-one student, the maintenance worker in the gym, or the cafeteria worker in the lunchroom.

The outcome of this political crisis affects all of us, now and in the future. Ask your council president for details about how you can be involved. If we work together on the IFT “*Fight For Illinois’ Future*” campaign, maybe “I told you so” will have the positive outcome forecast.

- **January/February 2009** “Hopes are higher that new legislation in 2009 will have a positive impact on educational issues we now confront.”

In unity,



Local 571 President



The Employee Free Choice Act Better Jobs and a Strong Economy

Gives the choice to workers for a secret-ballot election or majority sign-up to form a union.



Make your voice heard!
Your U.S. senators need to hear from you.

Call your senators at www.aft.org/efcacall
Write your senators at www.aft.org/efcaletter

The Big Idea

by Bonnie Saracco

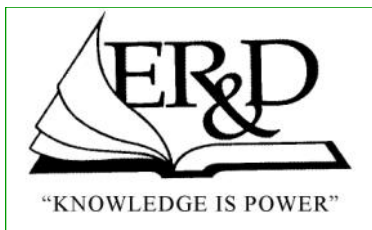
Good teaching depends on an organized curriculum. Our ER&D Course, *Instructional Strategies that Work for All Disciplines*, focuses on five steps to organize content for learning. They are the Big Idea, the Course Organizer, the Course Map, the Unit Organizer, and the Lesson Organizer.

Efficient organizing for learning starts with the Big Idea, the overarching concept that gets the most mileage out of the least instruction. The Big Idea is the most important information that a student needs to master to learn the content. All other topics should be related back to the Big Idea.

How do we decide which aspects of content are the Big Ideas? Content area experts play a major role in the decision. For example, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' Standards has determined certain aspects of mathematics, such as estimation, graphing, and probability, to be crucial.

Estimation is important because of its broad application. Estimation is sufficient for many real-world problems, and is also useful to double-check problems that require precise answers. So, estimation is a Big Idea under which other math concepts can be organized.

You can also find the Big Ideas by determining the essential questions for the content. In social studies, the economy is a Big Idea. Decision-making, money, international trade, and government operations are all concepts that can be taught related to the Big Idea of their effect on the economy. This is far more efficient than teaching them as unrelated separate lessons.



After identifying the Big Ideas, a Course Organizer can be produced. The Big Ideas are written as the Course Questions. Then the Course Standards, including high-stakes tests and alternative assessments, are listed, along with the grade equivalency of each assignment.

Course Maps list the assignments in a logical sequence, and Unit Organizers outline the schedule. The schedule is based on the relationships of the ideas, and ends with the students writing self-test questions. Finally, the specific learning tasks are listed on Lesson Organizers.

Teachers use a Course Progress document to track student progress and determine grades. Students are encouraged to keep graphs to monitor their own progress.

During our *Instructional Strategies* course, offered again this summer, participants will get the materials and practice to become skilled in all of these organizational techniques.

Summer Local 571 ER&D Course Registration Now Open

Instructional Strategies That Work for All Disciplines

Dates and Times—6 sessions:

June 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 2009 (8:30 a.m.—2:00 p.m.)

September 26, 2009 (8:30 a.m.—11:00 a.m.)

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Friday, May 22

This course provides practical applications of instructional strategies that are outlined in the research base on effective instruction and have been proven to support student learning. At the center of this course are cognitive strategies that foster critical thinking and the transferability of skills learned. Course participants will learn how to organize content for learning and develop or evaluate scoring guides for student tasks. These strategies can be applied in K-12 settings and are particularly helpful for students with special needs.

Managing Anti-Social Behavior

Dates and Times—6 sessions:

August 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 2009 (8:30 a.m.—2:00 p.m.)

September 26, 2009 (12:00 p.m.—2:30 p.m.)

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Wednesday, July 1

The anti-social actions of a small but powerful number of students in school not only put their academic success at risk but threatens the learning environment for everyone. This course presents research on emotional and behavioral problems of students who consistently act out. Participants will learn strategies to reduce and/or prevent the occurrence of disruptive or dangerous outbreaks.

Location: Robert M. Healey Conference Center
500 Oakmont Lane, Westmont IL 60559

Fee: \$50.00 per course, materials/lunch included

Workshop credit: 30 CPDUs or 30 PTPs

For additional cost, participants can earn:

2 Governors State University graduate credit hours, or
2 Prairie State Community College undergraduate credit hours

Participants may enroll and pay for university or college credit hours at the first class session.

Download application form(s) at www.wstu571.org

Or email Judy Jennings at jjennings@ift-aft.org
or by phone at 630-468-4098

News Not Only For Retirees...

Itaught for 39 years (and) have since been “retired” for 15 years. In those 54 years I have never seen attacks on our pensions such as we are witnessing. Worse, these attacks are not coming from incompetent back-benchers but from major party leaders. Although our pension has been underfunded by the state for decades, Governor Quinn wants to raise the percentage that active teachers must pay from 9.4% to 11.4% - probably the highest rate in the nation.

Illinois Senator Bill Brady (R-Bloomington), a declared Republican candidate for governor in 2010, has submitted two bills that would change our pension from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan.

We must take immediate action to protect ourselves. That is why I’m stressing that we all attend the coming event, “The Legislative Forum on Pensions” hosted by the IFT. Twenty-five state senators and representatives from our area have been invited. This will be held at the IFT offices at 500 Oakmont Lane in Westmont on Monday, May 4, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

This forum may be inconvenient to attend, but if these bills become law, imagine the “inconvenience” that they will present for the rest of your life.

Matt DuPree

President, Retiree Council

Editor’s note: Matt DuPree’s complete letter to Retiree Council members will be mailed on letterhead. The edited version above reflects the likelihood that active members may suffer more from changes under discussion than current retirees. See details on page 5.

Recent articles on topics important to Local 571 retirees, are available on the Retiree Council page at www.wstu571.org. Additional information about each of following resources is also provided on the Local’s site:

Alliance for Retired Americans - Friday Alerts

- Join the ARA at: <http://retiredamericans.org>

AFT Retirees e-Newsletter

- Join AFT Retiree e-News at: www.unionvoice.org/aft_retirement/join

Breaking news on Illinois' financial plight and information on threats to pensions go to www.ift-aft.org and click the banner "Fight for America's Future."

National Association of Letter Carriers, AFL-CIO



Saturday, May 9, 2009

Ask your mail carrier about the 17th annual food drive.

The largest one-day food drive in the nation.

Food goes directly to needy families and local food banks.



(State Certification continued from page 1)

testing contractor) who will guide the work of educators serving on content advisory and bias review teams and committees.

Participants will receive CPDU credits, substitute reimbursement for their school district, travel and meal reimbursements, and hotel accommodations for the two-day commitment.

The ISBE is particularly interested in finding as diverse a group of educators as possible for this work.

Interested candidates should contact IFT Legislative Director Lydia Bullock at: lbullock@ift-aft.org.

Additional information about the Illinois Certification Testing System, application instructions, and an application form can be found at:

www.ilrecruit.nesinc.com

The application can be downloaded and printed. Completed applications may be FAXed to Evaluation Systems.



Tell the AFT how healthcare costs are impacting your job...

Your union wants to hear from you about how healthcare costs are affecting you and your family.

Visit AFT Voices to share your opinion on the challenges you face by answering the survey question posted on: www.aft.org/voices/survey3.htm

AFT member comments from previous questions, and other surveys, polls and activities are also available.

A link to AFT member surveys is also posted on www.ift-aft.org. Your participation ensures that your voice is heard.

Thank you for taking the survey and sharing your views.

Fighting For Illinois' Future: Playing Politics With Education-Related Budget Proposals

Governor Patrick Quinn's original budget proposal provided K-12 education with \$173 million in increases but proposed educational employees return \$180 million to the state in a *twenty percent* greater salary retirement contribution. For those in higher education, the governor proposed \$40 million in increases but took back \$80 million by raising salary retirement contributions *twenty-five percent*. When taken together, educators faced \$47 million in cuts.

Although the apparent failure of Quinn's income tax increase to find support throws the entire budget proposal into question, it may be best to regard each element of the original proposal as a *continuing* threat. As abhorrent as some changes may be to educators, they may have an appeal for those who are less informed or unsympathetic to education workers.

Local 571 and the IFT are encouraging members to visit or phone their local state legislators at their local offices to express our concerns. A set of PDF "talking points," each keyed to a particular issue, is available on the IFT web site. Look for the *Fight For America's Future* banner. IFT homepage links to *No more pension cuts* (March 30), *IFT Insight* (March 26), *TRS opposes cuts to state pension funding* (March 19), and *State must face pension obligations, not cut workers' benefits* each provide additional information.

IFT legislative staff continue to represent member interests in Springfield. However, legislators are more influenced by vocal constituents from their own districts. A link on www.wstu571.org allows members to enter an address and immediately receive contact information for their elected representatives.

Topic in Discussion	Currently	Quinn Proposal
Teachers Retirement System (TRS) Contribution-current members ¹	9.4 percent of salary	11.4 percent (+2% of salary)
State University Retirement System (SURS) Contribution-current members ¹	8 percent of salary	10 percent
Multiplier Change	2.2 percent of salary	2 percent of salary
Normal retirement age ²	Age 60 for full benefit w/o penalty	Increase retirement age to 67 for full benefit
Final salary average ³	Last 4 years (typical)	Last 8 years
Final salary averaged with ³	additional duties, overtime, etc. included	Base pay only, no add-ons.
Maximum annuity ⁴	35 years of service	35 years of service
Maximum annuity ⁴	75% (TRS); 80% (SURS)	70% (both)
Cost of living (COLA) adjustments ⁵	3% annually, compounded	Half of CPI, capped at 3%
TRS/SURS contribution for new members ⁵		Decreased by 1% of salary (8.4%/7%)

¹ **The member contribution rate for TRS and SURS would rank among the highest rates in the country.** TRS would be number one or two in the nation for educational employee pension contributions. There are questions regarding the constitutionality of this proposal. Some question if increasing the contribution for current people qualifies as a diminishment of one's retirement benefit which is prohibited under the Illinois Constitution.

² **Retirement age with full benefits equalized to the age used by social security.** Full social security benefits are currently received at age 67, or at age 62, with a severe penalty. This would require individuals to work as many as 12 years without earning any additional pension credit. Applying this to TRS would mean that a 22 year old going into teaching would max out their pension benefit by age 57. They would then be required to work an additional 10 years (free) to receive their unreduced annuity at age 67.

³ **Final Average Salary** would only include base pay and would not include any other forms of payment, i.e. overtime, extra duties, or other compensation.

⁴ **Maximum annuity** kept to 35 years, but the maximum annuity could only be 70 percent of salary. TRS members currently get 75 percent and SURS members can get 80 percent.

⁵ **Cost-of-Living Adjustment in Retirement (COLA) adjusted to a simple COLA equal to half of CPI (capped at 3 percent).** The 10-year average for CPI is approximately 2.5 percent, resulting in an average COLA of 1.25 percent. The governor's proposal impairs a retiree's retirement security by severely reducing future cost-of-living adjustments.

Pension Funding Proposals	Provide a fiscal year 2010 contribution of \$1.7 billion. This is a \$2.3 billion reduction in the certified amount of \$4.01 billion.
	Suspend all remaining pension payments for FY 2009 on March 31, 2009. This is approximately a \$700 million funding cut.
	The governor does not have a pension funding plan or proposal for the years beyond 2010.

Summary: The governor's budget siphons \$2.85 billion of obligated pension payments to pay for other government items.

The "pension holiday" is justified by claiming benefit changes "saves" the state \$162 billion over the next 35 years. Quinn claims that cuts to our future members' pension benefits entitle him to take this "pension holiday" even though savings from benefit cuts will not materialize for another 25 to 30 years. This continues to defer the issue of pension funding to the next budget and the next generation. Additional details and updated information are posted on www.wstu571.org and www.ift-aft.org.

IFT Plans Legislative Forum on Pensions

The Illinois Federation of Teachers and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 31 will host a Legislative Forum on pensions on Monday, May 4 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Robert M. Healey Conference Center. All Local 571 members are welcome.

Approximately twenty-five local Illinois senators and representatives are invited to speak to member concerns/questions about our pensions. We hope to “pack the place,” demonstrating the degree of educator concern about the issue. Information about this event will be forthcoming from Council presidents and posted on the Local 571 website. Reasons for member concern are listed and explained on page 5.

Illinois DCFS Offers Online Mandated Reporter Training

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services has created an online Mandated Reporter course that complements the training offered by many school districts.

The purpose of the course is to help Mandated Reporters understand their critical role in reporting child abuse.

Self-paced, interactive “lessons” earn CPDU credits and a certificate of completion in sixty to ninety minutes.

For more, including downloadable resources, go to the DCFS website at: www.dcfstraining.org/manrep/index.jsp or “Useful Links” on www.wstu571.org

Financing College During A Down Economy

Private credit for student loans has declined nearly 30% in the past year. Many lenders no longer offer student loans. The following may help parents plan for student needs:

- The US government has increased unsubsidized Stafford loan limits by \$2000. Interest on subsidized loans has been lowered to 5.6% for 2009-10.
- Lenders look for the least risky borrowers. Improve your credit score.
- Student wages, before being considered assets, will increase from \$3750 to \$6000 over the next four years.

More details are at www.wstu571.org.

AFT Member Card/AFT Benefits—Powell’s Books

AFT+ member benefits include Powell’s, the highly acclaimed online bookstore and the largest unionized bookstore in the country.

A recently expanded inventory of new and used textbooks gives AFT members taking college and graduate classes an alternative to college book-



store selections and prices. Orders totaling \$50 or more receive free economy shipping.

To browse and securely purchase from Powell’s extensive selection of new and used books use the special AFT+ web link at **AFT Members Only** at: www.aft.org/members

A portion of each sale made through the AFT+ link goes to the AFT Disaster Relief Fund.

Coming in the May/June Union Messenger:

- AFT Great Lakes Union Leadership Institute (August 3-5) announcement
- Local 571 officer election results and 2009 scholarship award recipients
- AFT summer volunteer and professional development opportunities
- Free museums and summer educator and family diversions
- IFT Retiree Chapter vs. Illinois Retired Teacher Association: Which to join?

WSTU Calendar

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

May

5/11—571 EB Meeting - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.
5/11—571 HOR Meeting - Westmont - 6:45 p.m.
(571 proposed budget presented to HOR)

June

6/8—571 EB Meeting - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.
6/8—571 HOR Meeting-Westmont - 6:45 p.m.
(Vote on 571 proposed budget)

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...

Earth Day 2009
April 22

Teachers Week
May 3-9

Legislative Forum
May 4 - Robert M. Healey Center - 6-8 p.m.

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
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Judy Jennings, Office Manager
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Mike Dale, *Union Messenger* Editor
Andrew Bendelow, 571 Webmaster



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