

West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571, IFT, AFT, AFL-CIO

Union Messenger

"A Union of Professionals"

Uncharted Territory—School Safety

November Calendar

11/1—Ex.Bd Mtg. (5:30 p.m. - Westmont)
 11/6-7—IFT ULI (Westmont)
 11/15—Deadline for filing IRS forms for
 Councils that closed their books in June

Union Messenger

Rachel Esposito, President
 Kyle Stern, Vice President
 Sandra Erickson, Treasurer
 Cathleen Pope, Secretary
 Eugene Poull, Financial Secretary
 Brett Blair, Legal Defense Secretary
 Shavonne Henry, COPE/PAC
 Chairperson
 Tom Smith, IFT Field Service Director
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 Julie Masterton, Membership Secretary
 Patty Clancy, Office Secretary
 Andrew Bendelow,
 571 Web Administrator
 Robin Hancock,
 571 Union Messenger Editor

The months since March of 2020 have been taxing on us all in so many ways. We continue to use our knowledge and resources to navigate through this uncharted territory. We have learned a lot about ourselves, our members, and our communities. As we continue to receive updated guidance from ISBE, our leaders continue to negotiate using the most up-to-date information possible. Every district is struggling to carry out the Governor's Executive Orders and implement the directives. This is definitely an uphill battle and I do not believe we have seen the peak, yet.



guidance does allow for at-home tests to be used. The district is not obligated to perform and/or fund testing for staff, but this is a negotiable item. Therefore, staff who do not receive the vaccine may be responsible for testing. Testing must be completed weekly for the foreseeable future. The process and impact of testing and exclusions are negotiable issues.

Recently, we received clarifications on some of the issues we have been experiencing in our districts. We now understand that employees fall into one of three categories: fully vaccinated, unvaccinated and complying with testing, and excluded. There are no exceptions for anyone who wants to opt out of testing. Again, the district and the Union can decide what kind of tests will be permissible. The



We all knew our biggest challenges would be social distancing and mask wearing. Social distancing has been inconsistent in most schools at all grade levels. Keeping just 3 feet apart is nearly impossible throughout the entire day. Proper mask wearing has proven difficult for students and staff alike. According to the most recent ISBE update, ventilation is even more important in areas where social distancing is not possible. Reporting and documenting lapses in protocol, e.g. improper mask wearing and inadequate social distancing, are imperative to keep schools safe and give the opportunity for improvement.

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Your council leaders have been working tirelessly to obtain the highest level of protection for both our members and our students. A layered approach is clearly the best way to return to school safely. ISBE has created a FAQ document that has some helpful answers as well as reiterates the importance of a layered approach which includes vaccinations, frequent testing, universal mask wearing, adequate ventilation, and social distancing. I am proud of the work we have accomplished. Local 571 will continue to support our council leaders and members as we continue this journey.

Rachel Esposito
 President

West Suburban Teachers Union

Members Engaged



Members of the Cicero Council attended a Chicago White Sox v. LA Angels baseball game with Senator Melinda Bush on September 14th, as part of a fundraiser event for the COPE/PAC Committee.

Thank you for the wonderful night, Melinda!

Your new friends,

Nicole & Nicole from the IFT, Local 571



Nicole Arguelles and Nicole Gamez
(Cicero Council)



Melinda and friends waiting for the
sweets cart in our suite



Nicole Gamez (Cicero Council),
Senator Melinda Bush, &
Nicole Arguelles (Cicero Council)

Message from the IFT—September 2021



Let's work together to keep schools safe

School vaccine and testing mandate begins this week

This is the first week of Governor Pritzker's vaccine and testing mandate for educators and school staff. We know that school districts and higher education institutions across the state are working hard to comply. At the same time, we mourn the tragic loss of life of educators, students and their family members and vow to do all we can to keep everyone healthy and places of learning safely open.

We are supporting our local unions, councils, and chapters throughout Illinois to ensure that good agreements are in place both to comply with the mandate and to offer our members clarity and security. One challenge, for instance, is the scarcity of COVID tests in certain parts of the state. We remain in close contact with the governor's office and the Illinois State Board of Education so that we can advocate for your needs and keep you informed.

We know this may be a tough week for some members and leaders. Please know that our union is working to ensure your well-being. Keeping everyone in our schools, colleges, universities, and communities safe is our priority. We are talking to the governor's office and legislature about

other steps that we might be able to take to keep communities safe and our jobs more manageable. And we will soon be holding a town hall conversation for all local leaders (stay tuned for more details).

Science tells us that vaccines, along with all the other mitigations we know of, are the best way to keep schools open, and soon, even more students will be eligible for vaccination. We all hope that there is a light at the end of this COVID tunnel. But until we get there, we must work with our employers and the state to comply with this legal mandate and assure that our workplaces are safe and healthy.

We understand that all this can be adding to your stress at the beginning of the school year, always a stressful time even in the best of years. Rest assured that our union is working to keep your workplace safe and protect our students, families, and communities.

As always, thank you for all you do. Stay well.

In solidarity,
Dan Montgomery, IFT President

<https://www.ift-aft.org/post/let-s-work-together-to-keep-schools-safe>



Legislative Director Report

October 2021

Nicole Burr

I have been so uplifted to hear about the change our union members have been able to enact through legislation, that I felt it was important to share the news with our entire WSTU membership. This way we can see the power of the union at work and understand why it is so important to have our voices heard. This story was shared by Max Schoenberg and edited for the Messenger article.

In May 2016, a teacher in Wood Dale District 7 gave birth and wanted to use paid sick leave when school resumed in August so as to be with her child. The District denied her request, with the argument that the window was 30 days from date of birth. The teacher filed a lawsuit, but the state Supreme Court upheld District 7's interpretation of state law.

In 2020, an ETC member wanted to bring an infant into her home through the foster care process. She requested paid leave. Foster care is a qualifying reason for unpaid leave under FMLA, but unfortunately for our member's family, there was nothing in state law to assist this teacher with paid leave. State law identified birth and adoption as qualifying reasons, but not foster care. Thus, our member did not have access to the paid leave that she would have had if the newborn had been formally adopted or if the member had been the birth mother.

At the Council level, steps were taken to remedy the inequality by bargaining an expansion of parental leave into the current collective bargaining agreement. Our CBA now provides the paid leave opportunity to fathers and mothers, for birth, adoption or foster care.

At the Local level, the review of school code and its history during the 2020 foster case prompted the Local and Council to recommend that an expansion of parental rights be addressed through legislation.

At the state level, the IFT legislative team sought partners in the legislature who understood the need to modernize and expand parental leave to support all educators' families.

As a result of months of effort working vertically through the Union organization, we are pleased to report that legislation has been signed into law that has remedied both the issues raised by our internal 2020 case and the Illinois Supreme Court ruling on the 2016 case. [Public Act 102-0275](#) now expands parental leave to include foster care, and also allows educators to use paid leave even if there is a holiday or break between the date of birth/adoption/foster care and when school is in session.

If this story has inspired you, and you would like to have your voice heard, please tell us your thoughts on current legislation. **We want to hear what you have to say, so we can pass it along to our legislators.** Please use the Google Form [here](#).



Hispanic Heritage Month

We celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 to October 15) to recognize the achievements and contributions of Hispanic American champions who have inspired others to achieve success. The observation began in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period. It was enacted into law on August 17, 1988.

To learn more about Hispanic Heritage Month, go to <https://www.hispanicheritagemonth.gov/>

Halloween is Sunday, October 31



Visit these websites for Halloween and fall activities:

<https://kidsareatrip.com/7-family-fun-fall-activities-in-chicago/>

<https://www.funtober.com/halloween/illinois/>



Member Benefit Reminder

Reduced Admission Movie Tickets



For Union Members only. Available for
AMC and Marcus Theaters
Theater location and movie ticket order forms
available at www.wstu571.org




NOTE: 2021 IFT PSRP/ Public Employees Conference Has been CANCELLED

Due to low enrollment and the continuing concerns about Covid-19 and in-person events, the IFT PSRP/Public Employees Conference that was scheduled for October 22-23, 2021 will be cancelled. The conference will be rescheduled for the Spring of 2022.

Things to Do in the Fall

1. Clean the gutters.
2. Wash the windows inside and out.
3. Order Firewood.
4. Clean the Chimney
5. Make a batch of chili.
6. Buy spicy scented candles. Pumpkin spice, apple spice, etc.
7. Replace or clean furnace filter.
8. Haul out the blankets for the couch.
9. Check foundation for places mice can get in.
10. Put outdoor cushions away while they're dry.
11. Make a list of the indoor jobs you want to get done before spring. Good bye ferns, hello mums.
12. Cover up your outdoor air conditioning unit.
13. Empty any ceramic or clay pots outside that are too large to bring indoors. If you don't they'll freeze and crack.
14. Book an appointment to have your winter tires put on.
15. Sign up for a fall class.
16. Plant your spring bulbs like tulips, crocus and daffodils.
17. Ask a neighbor if they need help with anything.



The first Sunday in November is when Daylight Saving Time **ends** in most areas of the U.S., so in 2021 we'll "fall back" one hour and return to Standard Time on **Sunday, November 7, 2021, at 2 a.m.** Be sure to set your clocks **back** one hour before bed Saturday night!

Thursday-November 11 is Veterans Day



What's Missing from the Messenger?

Is there something innovative or exciting happening at your school? If so, we want to hear from you!

Email your news to Robin Hancock at: 571editor@gmail.com

We Want To Hear
From You



We're on the Web!!!
www.wstu571.org

West Suburban Teachers Union Local 571
500 Oakmont Lane
P.O. Box 390
Westmont, IL 60559-0390
Phone: 630-468-4098 Fax: 630-468-4088
E-mail: resposito571@ift-aft.org