The changes in brain structure and chemical activity caused by child maltreatment can have a wide variety of effects on children’s behavioral, social, and emotional functioning.

– Understanding the Effects of Maltreatment on Brain Development
Children’s Bureau/ACYF/ACF/HHS
Issue Brief, April 2015
For some time now teachers, especially in kindergarten and first grade, have been seeking help from their union because they have students in crisis in their classrooms. They talk about kids who have chronic behaviors, who are out of control and who are disturbing the learning of the rest of the class.

Exasperated, they call with stories of students’ anti-social behaviors (like running, hitting, biting, kicking and foul language) directed at the other kids, the educational assistant and teachers. They recount daily events with kids who throw things and tear up the entire classroom. These behaviors are all well beyond the skill set and experiences of even the most experienced teachers.

Frustrated with the lack of systemic support, they call—sometimes crying, often ready to quit; always in desperation—because when kids are in crisis, teachers are in crisis. I started asking my colleagues, other union presidents from around the country, if they are hearing the same thing from teachers in their districts. Yes, they have, indeed—and mostly in the early grades. Our society is undergoing tremendous strain and our existing systems are not set up to productively deal with the changing needs of our students.

That is why we asked union members from across the District to join an ATF Task Force called, Classrooms in Crisis. The task force, whose work is reported in this edition of the Teachers’ Voice, focused on early childhood students—not because the issues teachers are dealing with are confined to these grades, but because these are the teachers who are dealing with this growing problem first. First, because:

• early childhood grades are often the initial setting in which these behaviors manifest;

• if a special setting is needed, the referral and diagnostic works starts there; and

• these teachers feel abandoned by the system: overwhelmed by the demands of maintaining a productive classroom program while simultaneously battling behaviors and documenting ad nauseam.

The work of the task force is by no means intended to minimize the issues that older children have when they walk into our classrooms. These, too, are as important and must be addressed. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 1 in 5 American children ages 3 through 17—about 15 million—have a diagnosable mental, emotional or behavioral disorder in a given year. Mental health problems may actually start much earlier than previously thought, as early as age two. Teenagers are some of the most vulnerable. About 50 percent of cases of mental illness begin by age 14, according to the American Psychiatric Association.

It is my hope that if we can positively change the way we support the kids and the teachers in early grades, fewer students will be identified as needing special education and more students will be productive learners in later years.

What we can’t do is pretend that our systems, designed for mostly compliant and caregiver students, are adequate for today’s needs. Task force members suggested starting with:

• A change in focus from ‘function’ of behavior to the possible ‘cause or root’ of the behavior. When the definition of behavior is changed, the adult response is more likely to start from that definition. The question should be, “What’s going on with this student?” vs. “What’s wrong with this student?”

• A common language, that takes the condemnation or judgment out of describing the behavior, shifting how we respond. Many of the behavior terms include descriptors like “defiant, disrespectful, poor-poor, manipulative, provoking, apathetic, showing no remorse, or willful.” To start from that viewpoint, minimizes or misses a more accurate description if it started with, “…as a result of the trauma experienced by the student, the associated trauma behavior includes:

• hitting others, throwing chairs, naming from class, etc.”

• When children are oppositional or defensive, it’s also important to recognize that such “bad behavior” may repeat action patterns that were established to survive serious threats, even if they are intensely upsetting.

As our system gains more financial resources from the state, we must dedicate more personnel to supporting the teachers as they attempt to reach all students—ignoring the kids in crisis. Let’s change “Kids in Crisis = Teachers in Crisis” to “Kids with Supports = Supported Teachers.”

In Solidarity, Ellen

“The Issue

Across the District, there are classrooms in crisis. Teaching and learning in some classes are being held hostage by the extreme behaviors of one child. In growing numbers, some students in general education classrooms are chronically disruptive, volatile or at times, violent. Often, but not always, these children are very young and having their first experiences with school. Teachers are upset, frustrated, frightened, angry, hopeless and sad when these kids are in their classrooms. They don’t know how to address the social, emotional and learning needs of their whole class while at the same time addressing the extreme needs of the one child who is both in crisis and creating crisis. It is likely that the child is acting out of pain—the pain of trauma.

According to recent data, more than half of all U.S. children have experienced some kind of trauma in the form of abuse, neglect, violence, or challenging household circumstances—and 35 percent of children have experienced more than one type of traumatic event.

Traumatic childhood events can include abuse and neglect, living with someone who has an untreated mental illness, the death of a parent, or living in extreme economic insecurity. These adverse childhood experiences, also known as ACEs, often manifest outwardly, affecting students’ relationships and interactions.

It is true that families living in poverty are more likely to encounter multiple traumas over many years. In addition, once a family lacks monetary resources, they are less likely than those who are more affluent to have access to the resources to successfully deal with traumatic experiences. Yet, we must emphasize: ACEs are not just experienced by students in poverty.

New Mexico has an ACE rate of 18 percent—one of just two states higher than the national average of 11 percent. “Child well-being advocates pushing to expand childhood programs argue that New Mexico’s children are marinating in a stew of toxic stress that not only affects their health, but also underlies the state’s poor educational outcomes” (Sylvia Ulloa, New Mexico In Depth, Feb. 13, 2018). In school, a student with ACEs may act out in class or may manifest their trauma in more subtle ways—like failure to make eye contact or acutely anxious behavior.

For the purposes of this position paper, we are focusing on the behaviors that are more outward and disruptive, like chronic outbursts, running from class, throwing objects or furniture and violence against other students and adults. These behaviors, and others, may be the actions of only one student—unfortunately, a student who is capable of disrupting the learning of 20+ other students in the class. Our system is not yet effectively responding in a way that supports both the teacher and the child.

Many teachers have known for years that trauma interferes with a kid’s ability to learn. The game-changing current research explains why childhood trauma has such tragic long-term consequences: Toxic stress physically damages a child’s developing brain.
Critical executive functional skills for behavior and learning can be impaired by ACEs. Each type of executive function skill draws on elements of the others.

Working memory governs our ability to retain and manipulate distinct pieces of information over short periods of time.

Mental flexibility helps us to sustain or shift attention in response to different demands or to apply different rules in different settings.

Self-control enables us to set priorities and resist impulsive actions or responses. Lack of these skills often manifest as:

- aggression (bullying)
- attention-seeking
- suicidal thoughts
- lack of impulse control
- inappropriate behavior with peers and staff
- difficulty differentiating between what is wrong and right
- lack of self-regulation
- lack of appropriate coping skills
- lack of understanding of self emotions
- confusion with appropriate social response

Children aren’t born with executive function skills; they are born with the potential to develop them. According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (developing-child.harvard.edu), if children do not get what they need from their relationships with adults and the conditions in their environments—or (worse) if those influences are sources of toxic stress—their skill development can be seriously delayed or impaired. Adverse environments resulting from neglect, abuse, and/or violence may expose children to toxic stress, which disrupts brain development and impairs the development of executive function.

The future of any society depends on its ability to foster the healthy development of the next generation. Extensive research on the biology of stress now shows that healthy development can be derailed by excessive or prolonged activation of stress response systems in the body and brain. Such toxic stress can have damaging effects on learning, behavior, and health across the lifespan. Early experiences affect the development of brain architecture, which provides the foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health. Just as a weak foundation compromises the quality and strength of a house, adverse experiences early in life can impair brain architecture, with negative effects lasting into adulthood.

Learning how to cope with adversity is an important part of healthy child development. When we are threatened, our bodies prepare us to respond by increasing our heart rate, blood pressure, and stress hormones, such as cortisol. When a young child’s stress response systems are activated within an environment of supportive relationships with adults, these physiological effects are buffered and brought back down to baseline. The result is the development of healthy stress response systems. However, if the stress response is extreme and long-lasting, and buffering relationships are unavailable to the child, the result can be damaged, weakened systems and brain architecture, with lifelong repercussions.

Children with toxic stress live their lives in flight, flight or fright (freeze) mode. They respond to the threat of a world as a place of constant danger. Young brains overloaded with stress hormones are unable to function appropriately and so, of course, they can’t focus on school work. They fall behind in school or fail to develop healthy relationships with peers or create problems with teachers and principals because they are unable to trust adults. For the very young, these feelings can show up in the classroom as anger, violence and an inability to self-regulate. Older children often find solace in food, alcohol, tobacco, methamphetamine, inappropriate sex, high-risk sports, and/or work. They don’t regard these coping methods as problems. They see them as tools to escape from depression, anxiety, fear and shame.

Unfortunately, families living in poverty, as we know many of our families are, often suffer multiple kinds of trauma over several years. If trauma takes an enviable access to the resources that may facilitate the successful negotiation of their traumatic experiences. Thus, many students from traumatic backgrounds have difficulty adapting to the school environment. In growing numbers, those are the students we are teaching in our classrooms.

Teachers are not trained as behavioral or therapeutic specialists. Teachers with a chronically disruptive, volatile or violent student are responding to what they know: classroom management strategies that have worked well for many years, but which don’t work in these crisis situations. Common techniques like setting clear expectations, consistent rules and routines, and parent communication rarely, if ever, are effective.

What is trauma? When we hear this word, we tend to think of severe neglect or abusive experiences and relationships. This is not necessarily true. A traumatized brain can also be a tired, hungry, worried, rejected, or detached brain expressing feelings of isolation, worry, angst, and fear. In youth, anger is often the bodyguard for deep feelings of fear.
Executive function and self-regulation skills are critical to the success of our children. Without these skills, children cannot control their behaviors and thoughts. They are more likely to engage in disruptive behaviors, which can negatively affect their academic performance and social interactions. Here are some ways to support the development of executive function and self-regulation skills:

- Provide opportunities for children to practice self-control and decision-making. This can include simple tasks like choosing which toy to play with or deciding what to wear.
- Encourage children to set goals and work towards them. This can help them develop a sense of purpose and motivation.
- Teach children how to manage their time and prioritize tasks. This can include setting a daily schedule and breaking tasks into smaller, more manageable steps.
- Foster a positive and supportive environment. Children need to feel safe and secure in order to develop these skills.

By focusing on the development of executive function and self-regulation skills, we can help our children succeed in school and in life. Let's work together to give every child the tools they need to thrive.
We know that children’s health and well-being are intimately linked to their ability to learn and grow—and, ultimately, to gaps in achievement and equity that plague too many communities. Yet, too many obstacles still stand in the way as we fight to ensure everyone can climb the ladder of opportunity.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) maintains its strong commitment to children’s health. Our resolve weaves through our work: growing community schools, improving access to school nurses and health professionals, retrofitting school buildings and promoting green cleaning, serving school meals high in nutrition, and reducing child labor and trafficking.

**Mental Health**

Mental illnesses such as anxiety, oppositional defiance, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, depression and grief affect more children than physical health issues, but schools are poorly staffed to address these needs. For example, for every student who receives special education services for severe emotional disturbance, there are up to 10 more who need these services but do not receive them. Without adequate care coordination, kids with mental health disorders are more likely to drop out of school, use and abuse illicit substances, and engage in risky and self-injurious behaviors. Respondents are not satisfied with current staffing levels of mental health practitioners: less than 1 in 5 report that their schools’ policies and programs adequately and appropriately address students’ mental health needs. This dissatisfaction is linked to a widespread perception that children’s mental health issues are both more prevalent and more severe than in the past. Many respondents feel uncertain in their abilities to handle “student behaviors that appear out of control and stem from what I assume may be mental illness,” in the words of one teacher and coach for grades 3-5 in St. Paul, Minn. Beyond safe and responsive staffing, many respondents seek skills training to better understand how to handle students’ mental health needs and their impact on behavior.

**Equitable Access To Care**

A record high 13.9 percent of children have health insurance, and nearly all children have a usual place of care. Still, too many children do not actually see health-care professionals, and too many visit the emergency room with severe needs. Good health lays the foundation for school attendance and sustained academic success, yet many children lack access to high-quality healthcare in schools.

Survey respondents see dysfunctional family relationships and/or resource-poor home environments as the primary cause of students’ struggles at school. As a result, they stress the value of whole-family approaches, especially for mental health, that make sure both children and parents receive appropriate services. More than half of the respondents wish to expand the role of full-time, trained health professionals, and nearly all children have a usual place of care. Yet many children lack access to high-quality healthcare in schools.

**Food Security**

Food insecurity plagues too many children. Research links poor nutrition and hunger to poorer physical health, impaired social skills and mental health issues. In school, food insecurity contributes to delayed mental proficiency, higher likelihood of repeating a grade, and slower math and reading progress.

While the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 took a bold step forward in the fight for children’s nutrition and hunger, the nation must invest in 21st-century kitchen equipment as well as full-time positions and training for food service workers. In addition, survey respondents value nutrition education and access to healthful foods. AFT members also support structures that ensure all children have regular, nutritious meals, including the National School Lunch Act of 2010 took a bold step forward in the fight for children’s nutrition and hunger, the nation must invest in 21st-century kitchen equipment as well as full-time positions and training for food service workers. In addition, survey respondents value nutrition education and access to healthful foods. 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Appropriate ECE Strategies

In 2008, Albuquerque Teachers Federation (ATF) published a Position Paper on Early Childhood Education based on an ATF-sponsored symposium entitled, “What Happened to the Childhood in Early Childhood?” The experts presenting were APS early childhood educators who were also officers of the union. The discussion centered on early childhood practices steeped in experience and research that have been rapidly disappearing from our classrooms. The recommendations are as relevant today as they were 10 years ago—especially now as more young students enter our classrooms with fewer social and emotional skills and an increase in adverse childhood experiences.

The paper, adopted as an ATF policy by the Fed Rep Council, notes that researchers (NAEYC, 1998, 2000 and, Shonkoff, J.P and Phillips, D., 2000) have identified four essential domains that early childhood teachers must weave development—physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development—are interconnected as the purpose of education and how learners who may be experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences, it will be important to keep these recommendations in mind.

Recommendations

It is the position of the Albuquerque Teachers Federation that the students in APS early childhood classrooms would benefit socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically by returning to developmentally-appropriate practices. We request that the administration of APS support early childhood educators by:

1. Adequate time for:
   - Unstructured play of recess
   - Providing children with the opportunity to actively explore, manipulate and interact with their environment.

2. Content is integrated.

3. Assessment that is embedded in instructional time, active and based on demonstration.

4. Curriculum provides opportunities to support children’s home culture and language while also developing all children’s abilities to participate in the shared cultures of the program and the community.

Rigid adherence to a core reading program.

Skilled development is embedded in the age-appropriate integrated experiences.

Whole group and teacher-led instruction as the dominant teaching strategy.

Hands-on, small-group activities that are designed to develop rich teacher-student and student-to-student language.

Over-emphasis on reading and math to the exclusion of other subjects.

Leaver-centered programs that include: silence, social studies, art, music, dance, movement, puppetry, dramatic play, cooking, games, story time and field trips.

Reduced/no time for recess and classroom play.

Adequate time for:
- Unstructured play of recess
- Providing children with the opportunity to actively explore, manipulate and interact with their environment.

Content is compartmentalized.

Hand-on, small-group activities that are designed to develop rich teacher-student and student-to-student language.

Assessments that are decontextualized, abstract, and take large amounts of instructional time.

Curriculum is based solely on pre-packaged programs.

Let’s provide more opportunities in school so children learn how to make decisions and develop an internal locus of control. This way, a child can influence events and outcomes in their own lives and in return, we will have more children who are potentially less anxious and depressed, all of which inhibits their true potential as human beings. It’s time we rethink the purpose of education and how invaluable free play and recess can be for all children. Their mental health and lives may depend on it.

In any conversation about mental and emotional health act must include the well-researched area of recess for optimal learning. Because of the pressure to show increased academic accomplishment, there has been a trend to abolish recess in favor of more instructional time. In 2006, the ATF Federation Representative Council passed the motion Recess is Good for Kids. This motion continues to guide our union’s agenda for contract negotiations. The motion makes the following points, supported by research:

- Recess gives children time and opportunities to develop healthy bodies and practice life skills, such as cooperation, communication and problem-solving.
- Brain functioning, attention, memory, social and emotional development, and language development are enhanced by physical exercise.
- Performing complex movements, like throwing a ball or playing tag, engages the same area of the brain (the cerebellum) that is involved in problem-solving, planning, and sequencing.
- A person’s capacity to master new and remember old information is improved by biological and chemical changes in the brain caused by exercise.
- Ultimately, recess is an essential component of the total educational experience for elementary-aged children.

Kids Need Play & Recess

Their Mental Health May Depend on It

Peter DeVill, Education Week (6/1/18)

I believe there is one noteworthy reason that has contributed to this mental health crisis like no other: recess and play are on the endangered species list in our public schools. If school leaders don’t act now, they will soon be extinct. Over the past fifty years in the United States, recess and children’s free play with other children has declined significantly.

I implore superintendents and principals to focus on the benefits children receive outside of the classroom and on the playground.

Indoor/outdoor free play and recess benefits the development of physical, emotional, academic and social skills.
Roughly half of American school children have experienced at least some form of trauma — from neglect, to abuse, to violence.

In response, educators often find themselves having to take on the role of counselors, supporting the emotional healing of their students, not just their academic growth.

— Secondary Traumatic Stress for Educators: Understanding and Mitigating the Effects, Mindshift, Oct 2018

Social Emotion Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Schools and districts across the nation are now emphasizing SEL as critical to developing competencies that, in addition to academics are necessary to succeed. Effective SEL programming begins in preschool and continues through high school and is based on the fact that students’ ability to learn well depends not just on instruction, but also on factors such as the school climate, a sense of belonging with peers, positive relationships with educators, and the feedback they receive.

In “Applying an Equity Lens to Social, Emotional, and Academic Development” (Simmons, D. N., Brackett, M. A., & Adler, N. 2018, Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center, Pennsylvania State University), the authors note that, “Poverty sets up children, especially students of color and marginalized youth, for a lifetime of disadvantage, by limiting their access to quality education, health-care, and necessary social and economic resources. Exposure to poverty in early childhood impacts brain areas related to stress regulation and emotion processing.”

...EXPOSURE TO POVERTY IN EARLY CHILDMHOOD IMPACTS BRAIN AREAS RELATED TO STRESS REGULATION AND EMOTION PROCESSING.

The authors assert that for all students to benefit, SEL must be grounded in a larger context of equity and justice efforts within public education. Importantly, these efforts should not be viewed, as a corrective measure for students of color and marginalized youth, but rather as an opportunity to ensure all children experience the benefits of a quality education that includes opportunities for social, emotional, and academic development.

Some school districts are starting to use instructional techniques that address SEL and there are now SEL assessments tools. These SEL assessments are often coupled with school climate surveys, which offer the children an opportunity to tell adults where there may be culture or safety issues at school.

COPE

IF... THEN...

By Sara Attleso, ATYCOPE Chair, Kennedy MS

Due to writing, editing, and printing deadlines, this article was being written exactly 32 days before General Election Day — November 6th. You will likely know the outcomes of the federal, state and legislative races before you see this edition of the Teachers’ Voice in your mailbox. So, instead of writing in a way that presupposes an election outcome — 2016 comes to mind — I will write a conditional column rather than a celebratory one.

IF you were fed up with seven years of that other — better — election evaluation system and you attended the AFT NM/ATF Early Vote Rally and March and voted that day, THEN you are a major factor in the effort to bring a fair evaluation system to our state.

IF you believe that “school grades” are just another tactic in the blame-and-shame strategy of those who would privatize public education and you made sure everyone in your household and extended family voted, THEN you are the kind of defender of public education we need now and in the years ahead.

IF you were tired of years of education budget cuts and decided to support our endorsed candidates for statewide offices and the NM House of Representatives, THEN you have ensured that New Mexico’s children will have greater opportunities as they attend the well-funded public schools they deserve.

IF you were troubled by recent national education and other public policies and you took steps to become informed on those issues and support federal Candidates who see the world differently, THEN your belief in our democratic system of government and your actions to preserve it are a model for all to follow.

Finally, on a personal note, IF you volunteered in the labor 2018 effort this election by phone banking, canvassing or contributing to candidates who truly support public education and labor — even for a few hours or with a few dollars — THEN you have my deepest personal appreciation. Please know that, because you generously offered your time and hard work, New Mexico’s children will have better schools and a brighter future. IF not starting next year, THEN one day soon.
ATF website at www.atfunion.org. A comparison chart can be accessed on the program’s website.

Each category of coverage. The insurance plans will “optionally” lose lunch and pre-park due to the sometimes-intensive needs of their students.

With the current teacher shortage as severe as it’s ever been, we’ve received a number of reports that people working in these programs have NEVER received their lunch or pre-park. The specific programs this applies to are the following: KG1 and 2, SE5 2 or more, and SE52 and 2.

You are entitled to every 220 minutes of work or a duty-free lunch, please contact your union.

2019 Insurance Premiums

APS announced that insurance increases will be in January. The proposed increases vary depending on the category, with its highest employee plan enrolled. For example, for a Individual Employee coverage (no dependents), there would be a $11.6 increase per pay period, while a Family Plan (Employee + 2 or more dependents) would have a $16.55 premium increase for each pay period. The increases will start with the January 4, 2019 paycheck.

It’s important to note that APS is “self-funded” for its medical, prescription drug, and vision plans. That is, the District pays all claims for a plan, not the benefit carriers. APS receives a legislative appropriation for its benefit plans, which is not always sufficient. This situation reflects a nationwide problem of health coverage costs increasing at a double-digit rate.

On the heels of our first raise in four years, it’s disheartening to see the same of that hard-earned increase get gobbled up by rising insurance costs. And while everyone received a gross pay increase of at least $76.92 per check, it would be nice to keep every needed cent.

ATF has developed a chart showing the current (2018) premium amounts compared with the proposed 2019 premiums for each category of coverage. The insurance premium dollar figures are shown “per pay period” as well as on an “annual” basis. This comparison chart can be accessed on the ATF website at www.atfunion.org.

Advocacy

Special Education Overages

In mid-September, we distributed a flyer explaining the two ways in which Special Education teachers can be paid for caseload shortages. Shortly after that flyer went out, APS held a meeting with head teachers who were told that APS memo on Special Education was wrong and time sheets would not be accepted. To be clear, our memo included information on current contract language, by which APS cannot refuse to abide.

Right now, there are two ways to be compensated for Special Ed overages:

1) A 1.0 FTE vacant position is divided up among staff as 2.0 FTE extended contracts, or;
2) You can submit time sheets for doing the tasks (IEP meetings, Progress Toward Goals, FBA/BIP, REBDs, etc) related to any student added to your caseload over your 1.0 FTE.

Special Education teachers with overages who do not receive a 2.0 should submit time sheets to Karen Rudys, Executive Director of Labor Relations at rudys@aps.edu. If you need a timesheet, please visit atfunion.org and look for the APS forms section under “Downloads.”

Below is the formula to help you figure out what constitutes a full case load (1.0 FTE):

Each A level student is .028
Each B level student is .042
Each C level student is .067
Each D level student is .125

Evals, Injunctions, and Power

For the past six years, ATF has been inundated with reports of summative evaluations that contain flawed data, great observation scores with poor STAM scores, teachers attached to incorrect lists of kids, or incorrect attendance scores. Teachers have overwhelmingly reported their frustration with a system that does not reflect their abilities. What hurts the most is the confusion we all experienced when we try to reconcile the principles of the current “gotcha” evaluation system and our understanding of what an evaluation is for—meaningful, useful feedback that leads to professional growth.

The constant flaps and capricious nature of the state Public Education Department’s (PED’s) system is the reason AFT NM and ATF sued the PED and won a preliminary injunction to prevent any employment consequences from affecting teachers.

Over the years, ATF was able to prevent the evaluation system from becoming law, and we filed a motion asking the First Judicial District Court to prevent the PED from using individual Value-Added Method (VAM) scores as a basis for removing teachers from Los Padillas or Whittier Elementary Schools. We were confident that the Court would decide to defer a decision on the Union’s motion until the trial on the overall validity of the system, currently set for this week.

The Court made clear that it would like to hear more evidence on imminent harm and intends to “proceed with a trial on the merits and will defer ruling (on the Union’s motion) to that time.” Based upon the Court’s determination to hold this issue open for a few more weeks, the Union is confident that the PED will not act upon its threats to remove teachers from Los Padillas or Whittier Elementary Schools. A two-day hearing, the judge decided to defer a decision on the Union’s motion until the trial on the overall validity of the system, currently set for this week.

If you haven’t already, it’s time for you to join the movement. Join your union so that, together, we can continue fighting for respect and dignity in our profession. Visit the ATF website at www.atfunion.org to join.

Our work is not over! Now that we have elected our preferred candidates, we must hold every single one of them accountable for passing and signing legislation that preserves, protects and promotes our public schools.

The ATF COPE Committee is seeking Legislative Liaisons to be ATF ambassadors to New Mexico State Legislators before and during the 2019 Legislative Session. Travel to Santa Fe is not required to become a liaison.

What does being a Legislative Liaison entail? You will work with an assigned legislator to inform them about our union’s legislative priorities. You will help legislators make more informed decisions by telling your personal stories about how legislation will impact your classroom, school or role group.

If you are interested in becoming an ATF Legislative Liaison, email act@atfunion.org.

The Last VAM

After seven and a half years of classroom observation from the Maritimes Administration, it may seem hard to believe that the era of test-and-punish for educators and students is almost over. The summative evaluation you received in September of 2018 will be the last test-score based teacher evaluation you will receive. Thanks to a lawsuit brought by your union, this sham-of-an-evaluation system was not able to hurt anyone’s professional careers. Thanks to our lawsuit, we saved hundreds of jobs across the state that inappropriately labeled teachers as “minimally effective” based on student achievement data when we waited for a new framework. This monumental case prevented this administration’s horrible evaluation system from becoming law.

Federal Separation: motion to change Parent VUE

At their November Council meeting, Fed Reps passed a motion objecting to a potentially harmful privacy intrusion by APS involving on-line registration of students. In one APS ParentVUE webpage, parents are asked to provide the usual information to register their students for school. But one question on the form asks for the “Birth Country” of the student and provides a drop-down menu with the United States as the top item. If a birth country other than the U.S. is selected, then the parents have effectively provided information that could raise questions about the immigration status of the child and themselves.

In the current national climate of unprecedented mistreatment of immigrant families, this request for “birth country” information may be experienced by many families as an intimidating act. This act would provide information that could impose their undocumented status. Furthermore, the motion affirms the Union’s collective aspiration for APS to be a public school district that welcomes all students and families in everything it does.

The motion directs the Union leadership to send a letter to the APS Board and Administration denouncing this violation of its own policy and requests the immediate removal of the “birth country” question in its registration forms.

Issues

Occasional NOT Always

All teaching staff that are currently working in any APS District Programs as described in the APS/ATF Memorandum of Agreement Article 11.B.1. are eligible to receive a 0.05 difference for the “occasional loss of lunch and prep.” This difference is not applied to any student added to your caseload over your 1.0 FTE.

AFT COPE Seeks Legislative Liaisons

We can’t provide teachers who don’t have the students who are needed. It’s a nationwide problem," says West Virginia’s Concord University President and Vice President of Academic Affairs Peter Wisco. The shortage of education majors—and subsequently, of teachers—in Virginia and West Virginia is emblematic of a problem experienced across the country. The APS and our partners are working to implement tools that help educating teacher in-residence programs in counties hit hardest by the teacher shortage. By providing resources, mentoring and financial incentives to would-be teachers, we can inspire the next generation of teachers.

AFT Members Taking Navient to Court

A class-action suit filed on federal court by nine members of the AFT in four states, on behalf of all and other similarly situated public servants, alleges that student loan servicer Navient has raised borrower fees in public service professions, keeping them from accessing a public loan forgiveness program that best to its pockets. Instead, Navient recommended less effective remedies—service could ensure millions in service fees. AFT President Randi Weingarten said, “Navient, rather than fairly its responsibilities, instead decided America’s public servants and public servants-to-be, under the wing of the Department of Education. But what goes around comes around—and it’s very past time that Navient faced up to its lies.”

Devastation By Debt: AFT Members Speak Out

This summer, the AFT conducted a survey to determine the effects of student debt on AFT members who struggle financially. The results were overwhelming. Nearly every person surveyed (97%) said student debt has increased stress in their lives. The vast majority (80%) say they’ve lost sleep (47%) or have less (52%) to spend. Other common comments included.: The survey shows that student loans, originally designed to help low-income people access higher education, can be an unmanageable and life-altering burden.

Fed Reps Act – Motion to Change Parent VUE

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Studies show it offers important cognitive, social, emotional, and physical benefits, yet many schools are cutting down on breaks to squeeze in more lessons, which may be counterproductive.

—The American Academy of Pediatrics

PROMOTING EDUCATION AND UNION

Recently, ATF coordinated with Mission Graduate, which conducted a career fair at Rio Grande High School. Our union hosted an information table and held breakout sessions with students promoting careers within education. ATF even reached out to our teachers and invited them to attend and promote professions ranging from educators to school mental workers and more.

Along with making a difference in their community and potentially doing work they would be proud of, students who had never given their career options a second thought were thrilled hearing about careers where they could realistically live a middle-class lifestyle and do something they loved.

If your school is planning on hosting a career day event, please let us know! We’d love nothing more than to promote good middle-class professions as viable career options to our students.

For almost a decade, the Colorín Colorado website has offered information and resources on what works for ELLs. www.colorincolordo.org—a partnership project of the AFT and Reading Rockets for PreK-12 educators—offers the most comprehensive resources online to help educators teach ELLs and reach their families.

COLORÍNCOLORADO.ORG

Search more than 420,000 FREE lesson plans and activities including curated collections and resources for mental health.

SHAREMYLESSON.COM

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