

“ There is no “I” in teacher,  
but there are a lot of “I”s’ in initiative.

Janet Montoya Schoeppner  
ATF Executive Vice-President

”

TEACHERS’ VOICE



PROFESSIONAL  
PROGRESSIVE  
UNIONISM

**Dec. 2008**



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**albuquerque teachers federation**

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## Teachers Are Able and Willing, But...

By Ellen Bernstein, ATF President



As teachers, we have always been able and willing to work long hours planning engaging lessons, preparing materials and assessing student work. We have been willing and able to volunteer for school and district committees, attend open houses, curriculum nights, carnivals, sporting events and more.

As teachers, we know that the 6.5-hour duty day was designed to limit non-teaching time mandates, but not to define the amount of time it really takes to do our jobs well. We have always worked far beyond the number of hours in our contract. We know that our schools, our district, and public education has survived and thrived because of teachers' willingness to volunteer their time.

We all want to contribute to our school and to the community in which we work. We have willingly volunteered our time, effort and expertise to the success of our students, our school, and our district. And, as teachers, we are what we hope our students will become—lifelong learners. We love to talk about our craft with our colleagues and learn new techniques that enhance our ability to teach.

But, there is a limit and many teachers are reaching it. I am now regularly getting calls from teachers and whole school staffs who say they can't do one more thing. The amount of paperwork, data collecting and charting, testing and re-testing that they are doing has sent them over their limit. I have found that some of the teachers are just trying to accommodate the mandates and initiatives that keep coming from the feds, the PED, the legislature and the district. I have also found that some schools are taking on even more in an attempt to make AYP next year and avoid being placed on the "shame and blame" list. This effort, while honorable, is futile given the statistical set up that is inherent in the AYP model.

As teachers, we know that students learn most and do best when we spend the instructional time necessary to go deeply into the concepts important to understand the content. Before NCLB, we learned how important it is to teach less broadly in order for our students to learn more deeply. We learned that coverage is the enemy of understanding.

The same is true for adult learning. As we are expected to apply new techniques and embrace the initiatives that our leaders believe are important, we must be allowed the same basic respect as learners that we show our students. We don't overwhelm them and then admonish them for not trying. We make our learning assignments doable and meaningful. And, as the leader of our classrooms, we must know our subjects well in order to teach them well. The same must be true for building principals as they work with us on new expectations and initiatives.

It is time to put a moratorium on new initiatives. We cannot be expected to incorporate mandates in a meaningful way if, instead of receiving the time and support necessary to do new things well, the next new thing is soon added. Principals need time to understand the expectations themselves before placing them on us. Teachers need time to work together to determine how to incorporate initiatives into our teaching, and we still need the time to plan, prepare, assess and teach.

Teachers are willing and able...but there are limits. Our district would be doing a service to all teachers and all of our students by embracing the idea of a "No More Initiatives" Initiative.

Ellen



The ATF Federation Representative Council just passed a motion (presented below) entitled, "No More Initiatives" Initiative. The motion is intended to send a message to the leadership of APS that we need help. Although APS is not directly responsible for creating all of the initiatives and requirements listed in the motion, we believe they can help us by creating an initiatives hiatus so that we—their employees responsible for successful implementation of much of what is listed—can better manage all that we are required to do.

### "No More Initiatives" Initiative

Whereas, in order to teach well, teachers must spend time planning, preparing and assessing student's work; and,

Whereas, teachers are also currently working to learn, implement, master and adhere to the following initiatives, programs, reforms and mandates:

- RTI
- CCI
- R1, R2, CA Requirements
- SBPR
- Curriculum Mapping
- Walk Through
- SAT
- Vertical Teaming
- AIMS
- America's Choice
- Block Schedules
- A2L
- AIPs
- Professional Learning Communities
- Mid-term Progress Reports
- DRA Rubrics
- Evidence Folders
- Pacing Guides
- Core Programs
- Intervention Programs
- Teaching with Fidelity
- Attending PD
- Collecting and Recording Data
- Volunteering for committees and goal teams
- Short Cycle Assessments
- Parent contacts
- ...and more!

Therefore be it resolved, that the ATF President and ATF staff work with the APS administration on a "No More Initiatives" Initiative.



## Teachers VOICES



Barbara Petersen

Barbara Petersen, Valle Vista ES

A Halloween poetry slam! Here, even the most struggling readers are standing in front of the class wanting to read more. Teams of students joyfully choral reading or transforming a poem to make it their own. **But, don't tell anyone, because it took us off of the pacing guide!** The most appalling

assault on teachers, at this point, is coming in the guise of many "good ideas". Who can argue with wanting every student to accelerate in their progress? Who can argue with having high expectations for all? Who can argue with giving extra support to students who are struggling?

Well, of course, no one. Long before the assault of the initiatives, teachers have been working day in and day out to create that reality. But where are the resources? Where

“ The most appalling assault on teachers, at this point, is coming in the guise of many 'good ideas'.”

is the recognition of children's total needs, from language to economic to emotional to physical? Why are teachers, and no other entity, held responsible for children's lives and progress? And, when and by whom was it decided that the value of children's lives needs to be measured by quantitative data points?

Loretta Shiver, Susie Rayos Marmon ES



Loretta Shiver

Often times, principals are not well-versed or experienced in district initiatives and are unable to implement or support them well. Schools are scrambling to provide intervention strategies without adequate guidance or support from the district, and desperate and fearful administrators are second-guessing and micro-managing teachers' efforts. This results in frustrated and exhausted

teachers who are not given adequate time and opportunity to either choose what might be best for their students or follow through on a plan of action.

For example, principals are now mandating PLC (Professional Learning Communities), and then seem to be disregarding the attributes of PLCs that make them successful. For example, it clearly states in the PLC literature that

“ This results in frustrated and exhausted teachers who are not given adequate time and opportunity to either choose what might be best for their students or follow through on a plan of action.”

professional learning communities are based on supportive and shared leadership, collective and collaborative creativity, supportive conditions and shared personal practice. Unfortunately, the spirit and the intent is lost when teachers are told what they will be studying rather than allowed to plan their own work collaboratively. The effort is no longer a PLC but just another exercise in compliance and a waste of teachers' time. And, when mandated PLC meetings take place during instructional time and teachers are required to plan for a sub in order to attend, students suffer.

Continued on page 2

“ I equate the many initiatives mandated for schools to the quest for the “magic pill” to “cure” our educational ills. ”

## Leila Pochop, Jimmy Carter MS



Leila Pochop

Americans have the reputation of being dependent on pills to cure any and all ills. I equate the many initiatives mandated for schools to the quest for the “magic pill” to “cure” our educational ills. Yet, educators, who are the experts by virtue of our education and training, do not prescribe these “educational pills”. Neither are these initiatives based on developmental and educational research. It is so very disheartening to see educators being dismissed as the problem. Educators have the answers for the many and complex educational woes. We are very much a part of the solution.

## Carrie McGill, Zia ES



Carrie McGill

I have volunteered for years, knowing that this is what makes me a great teacher and an active member of any school where I have worked. Up until about 6 years ago, I was able to decide how to use those volunteer hours before school, after school, weekends, and often holidays. I did it, and still do it today as a choice. But, every time I have something new handed to me, the person doing it assumes I work over my contract hours—they are counting on it. **Everything besides implementing curriculum and assessing student's progress is done outside of my contract time!**

I have always been willing to put in every minute I can for my students. I believe in many cases I have saved the lives of many children over the 25 years I have taught, because I taught during the day and did all else before and after school. So, when I go to bed at night and think I didn't even stay at home with my child when she had the chicken pox, or I did not go to her last four doctor appointments to get hearing aids, I think, well, professionally, I have done something good for society, and I can live with myself.

“ Now, I am giving my time not for what I decide is best for the learning of my students but for what a principal, instructional coach, superintendent, state board, legislator, and the President, have decided was best. ”

The best of us, I believe, stand before our students, prepared with inspiring lessons, interesting explorations, powerful messages, and undivided attention so that they can become lifelong learners. But now, I am giving my time not for what I decide is best for the learning of my students but for what a principal, instructional coach, superintendent, state board, legislator, and the President, have decided was best. I can no longer justify giving up my own life for what this profession is requiring me to do.

If we can't fight the madness of NCLB, let's at least stand up against those making decisions that are counting on our volunteer hours.

# Teachers VOICES



## Ray Quintana, Sandia HS



Ray Quintana

NCLB performance requirements; an added graduation requirement in science without increased equipment and supply funding; unfunded mandates for AP, distance learning, and/or concurrent enrollment classes for each high school student; full inclusion model with Special Education “consultants”; state mandates for 40% of class time spent in a laboratory setting where facilities, equipment, and supplies are insufficient for that purpose. And, the most outrageous idea to come down the road in the past 15 years is the idea of a mandatory A-B block schedule that increases our case load by 13 % and which decreases our instruction time by 6.3%.

“ I have always thought that the key to education reform is fewer students per teacher. ”

If a student isn't successful in school, the onus of responsibility falls on the teacher. Never mind about the items just presented. Never mind that this teacher has known him only 9 months of his fifteen years of life on this Earth. If a student can't or won't perform, it's his teacher's fault, and the teacher needs to be remediated with lesson study PD, differentiated instruction PD, collaborative learning communities, or some crazy PD coming in out of left field.

I have always thought that the key to education reform is fewer students per teacher. Does anyone remember the one-room schoolhouse where the teacher was autonomous; where the teacher had the same students year after year; and who, because she knew her students so well, could easily differentiate instruction, and could allow for mentoring of younger students by older students? I think the satellite offices in the district should be converted back into classrooms, and these people should be required to carry student caseloads. Then, we could have smaller classes and smaller schools. We could really have small learning communities for specialized training in a variety of job-related skills while they reduce overall case loads for overburdened teachers like me.

“ For the reading assessments this year, teachers had to enter for RDA each item of the rubric for DRA and EDL. Have teachers become data entry clerks for RDA? ”

—Mary Sue Garwood, East San Jose ES

“ No new initiatives may be introduced or required mid-year which may constitute an interruption of instruction. ”

## Sondra Lawson, Jimmy Carter MS



Sondra Lawson

It just seems like most administrators are flailing around in the dark about what the PED wants them to do. So, I thought about looking at our PDP as a way to balance the accountability our administrators want with the idea that teachers should be allowed to chose one initiative and get a handle on it before the next one comes along. So, here is my idea:

Whereas, we as teachers are constantly working to improve our personal practice and are required to write a yearly Professional Development Plan in conjunction with New Mexico teacher competencies; and,

Whereas, our evaluations are based on this PDP, and teachers should be involved each year in deciding which initiatives the school has included in their school EPSS plan and be allowed to identify professional development goals based on these initiatives. Teachers should be allowed to choose which programs or educational strategies to implement based on goals identified in their PDP. Teachers should make the final choice as to whether implementation of any initiative has been beneficial to the classroom environment they have developed and may document this experience as part of their yearly PDP.

Whereas, teachers should have a voice in these choices before purchases are made which affect the structure of the classroom and teaching time.

And, whereas, teachers make an investment of class time to teach instructional procedures to students at the beginning of the school year;

Therefore, be it resolved, no new initiatives may be introduced or required mid-year which may constitute an interruption of instruction.

Gotta go! I have to get back to my grading, lesson plans, and implementing about 100 new directives.

## Pam Irvin, Alamosa ES



Pam Irvin

Teaching with fidelity leaves no room for teaching with creativity. There are teachers that are told to teach only reading and math and to forget about science and social studies, because those scores don't count on the test. Being a veteran teacher that has taught prior to NCLB, I can remember when I was still able to teach to the standards and not be a standardized teacher. I feel for the new teachers that have not had any other experience teaching than having to follow every teacher's guide to the letter. This leaves the students bored and unable to think creatively. In addition to this, there are the countless hours spent working on SAT packets, AIPs, RTI interventions, training on the SBPR, training on site visits and walk-throughs when time could be better spent preparing meaningful lessons for students.

“ I can remember when I was still able to teach to the standards and not be a standardized teacher. ”

## issues

### Pay Check Reminder

Employees **without direct deposit** are reminded that the January 2, 2009 pay check **will not be issued early** on December 19, 2008 as has been done in the past. That check will be available upon your return to work from Winter Break on January 5, 2009. For those who have direct deposit, that check will be deposited on January 2.

### 2009-2010 School Calendar

A recommendation on the 2009-2010 traditional school calendar has been made by the calendar committee and will be submitted to the APS School Board for consideration. The proposed traditional calendar would have the first day of school for students begin on Monday, August 17, 2009. Employees would report on Thursday, August 13 and Friday, August 14 for registration days. No determination has been made yet regarding an earlier start for any professional development requirements.

Vacation days off in the first semester include:

- Labor Day—Monday, September 7, 2009
- Fall Break—Friday, October 9, 2009
- Veterans Day—Wednesday, November 11, 2009
- Thanksgiving—Wednesday, November 25 through Friday, November 27, 2009
- Winter Break—Monday, December 21, 2009 through Friday, January 1, 2010

Vacation days off in the second semester include:

- Martin Luther King Day—Monday, January 18, 2010
- Presidents Day—Monday, February 15, 2010
- Spring Break—Monday, March 15 through Friday, March 19, 2010 (coincides with UNM Spring Break)
- Vernal holiday—Friday, April 2, 2010

The last day of school will be Friday, May 28. Memorial Day falls on Monday, May 31. Any snow make-up days would occur on June 1, 2, 3 and 4.

### Semester Grades—Due When?

As Winter Break approaches, teachers have questions about when they must turn in grades. Sometimes, a principal will erroneously state that grades are due on the day before the break starts. It is helpful to review the specific language in the APS/ATF Negotiated Agreement that guides the process. Below are key excerpts from Article 5.1 on reporting grades for the elementary and secondary levels.

- Parent conferences and issuing of report cards will not occur until after at least one workweek (5 workdays) after the reporting period has ended, except for the final reporting period when report cards at the elementary level will be issued on the last scheduled day of school.
- Teachers who must complete data entry for grades on the School Max system shall not be required to have the data entry completed in fewer than three (3) workdays after the nine week grading period ends except at the end of the school year. [Historically, this has been interpreted to mean the **end** of the duty day on the third day back from Winter Break—which, this year, is January 7.]

Fed Reps are asked to make sure this clarification is understood by the administration and staff members at their school. If there is a need for more information, please contact the ATF office.

## advocacy

### Grievances Over Pay For Teachers

Two grievances have recently been filed by ATF over compensation paid to high school teachers at two separate locations.

At one school, a group of teachers filed a grievance over not being paid the correct amount of money owed them for teaching during their preparation periods. Our contract language requires the district to compensate teachers who teach during their contracted preparation time two-tenths (.2) of their base salary. In this case, the teachers were only paid one-tenth of their base pay. ATF is still seeking a resolution but is prepared to go to an arbitration hearing.

At another high school, thirty-six (36) teachers will receive compensation for being required to work during their preparation time. This was a one-time occurrence, which resulted in the teachers being paid at their hourly rate of pay for the lost time.

### Early Childhood Update

ATF teacher leaders presented our position to the Board of Education and later had a meeting with APS Superintendent Winston Brooks, Chief Academic Officer Linda Sink, and Elementary Superintendents Raquel Reedy and Diane Kerchen.

As a result of the conversation, we created the "ATF/APS Agreements about Early Childhood Education". A hard copy was distributed to the ATF Fed Reps, and it can also be found on our website at [www.atfunion.org](http://www.atfunion.org). We hope that the agreements can support teachers in grades Pre K-3 to focus more on developmentally-appropriate practices in this age of skill and drill.

## organizing

### Got Issues? Get Organized!

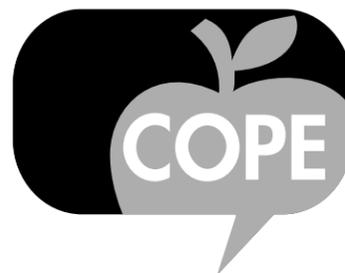
ATF President Ellen Bernstein and the ATF staff have been working with schools around the district on organizing around their issues. When our Fed Reps and members contact our office with concerns about issues that potentially affect several people in the school, we set up a membership meeting at that school to start looking into situations.

'Union' means that we work collectively, not alone, to accomplish our goals. The power that a school staff can have when people come together and problem-solve is great. There is no power, and no way to resolve issues, when teachers are isolated and fearful of speaking their minds.

### Membership Drive

All ATF members are eligible to participate in the membership drive. If you recruit a new member, be sure to write your name in the margin on the left-hand side of the application. You will be entered into the grand prize drawing each time you recruit a new member. We'll hold the drawing at the May Fed Rep Council meeting. The winner will get a choice of:

- Dinner and a Movie – 2 movie passes & a gift card for \$25 to a local restaurant (9 sets)
- Family Memberships to BioPark, Explora & Natural History Museum
- School Year of Massages – 9, one-hour massage gift certificates
- Isotopes Tickets for 2 – tickets to 18 games in the 2009 season!
- \$300 gift certificate toward a land or cruise vacation package from CruisePlanners



### Election Reflection

#### Sara Attleson, ATF COPE Chair



Sara Attleson

Occasionally, a colleague will ask me: "What exactly does the ATF Committee on Political Education (COPE) do for me?" After spending the last five months working with the Labor 2008 program, I can confidently answer that question: *More than one would ever imagine.*

ATF-COPE was an active participant of Labor 2008.

Labor 2008 is AFL-CIO's national program that worked on campaigns of endorsed candidates. Candidates were endorsed on their pro-labor views as well as their advocacy of public education. Labor 2008 was strictly a member-to-member campaign on which we began our work in early June. Please remember that your ATF membership dues were not involved in this program in any manner. ATF-COPE is funded by **voluntary** contributions only.

We had many ATF volunteers who called four nights a week and walked every Saturday and Sunday. Tiffany Fiser of AFT-NM was the coordinator in Congressional District 1, and we were fortunate to have her. She ran an exceptional program as we consistently had ATF members canvassing in their AFT blue shirts—an awesome sight.

Thank you to all the volunteers, especially to those volunteers who seldom missed one night or more of calling as well as knocking on doors Saturdays and/or Sundays. The "regulars", who deserve much recognition and gratitude for their dedication, include: Barbara Ayres, Elynn Cowden, Fonda Kirchmeyer, Rod Kirchmeyer, Kim Whitman, Barbara Petersen. Stephen and Lora Part never missed helping with a mailing, and Pam Irvin did a great job writing out postcards. Ellen Bernstein, ATF President, also made phone calls and walked for our endorsed candidates. ATF member, Kelly McMahan, put in long hours of walking for one of our local endorsed candidates, Bill O'Neill. Obviously, her time spent dodging barking dogs and frustrated voters "paid off", because we now have a new advocate in Santa Fe for public education from House District 15.

Ten of our thirteen endorsed candidates in the metro-area won their races. These candidates are Senator-elect Tim Eichenberg, Rep. Al Park, Rep.-elect Bill O'Neill, Rep.-elect Ben Rodefer, Rep. Jimmie Hall, Rep. Ernest Chávez, Rep. Ed Sandoval, Rep. Miguel García, Rep.-elect Karen Giannini, and Rep. Mimi Stewart.

For me, one of the most impressive parts of Labor 2008 occurred on Election Day. ATF members who had never in their lives called or canvassed showed up to *Get Out The Vote* (GOTV). One of these was Joe "the Teacher" Freeman who showed up at 8:00 a.m. and asked, "Here I am, what do I do?" The energy given to GOTV on Election Day by our members was overwhelming. There are still many ATF members who took part in Labor 2008 whose names I have not mentioned. I would like to thank all of you for giving your time to elect candidates who are labor-friendly, as well as public education advocates. Now, we are at the next step in the process—holding our endorsed candidates to their promises and doing what we can to assist them.

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

## news



### Saturn is Out of This World!

Saturn of Albuquerque hosted a wonderful reception for ATF members at their dealership on October 22. Cori Galles and Steve Lippert, General Manager, had put together a school supply fund drive during September & October, asking Saturn customers to make donations, which the dealership matched. ATF members who were present at the reception were entered into a drawing for one of three \$300 gift cards to Staples, purchased by Saturn of Albuquerque. Congratulations to our winners: Pamela Irvin (Alamosa ES), Vandy Lujan (EG Ross ES) and Scott Virtue (Polk MS)!

Saturn of Albuquerque has a generous program exclusively for ATF members. ATF members receive Employee Pricing, and the dealership will donate \$50 to Dial-A-Teacher, ATF's free homework help service, for every member purchase!

### Sandia Labs Continues to Support Dial-A-Teacher

ATF would like to thank Lockheed Martin/Sandia National Labs for continuing to provide support for ATF's Dial-A-Teacher homework hotline. The generous \$10,000 grant will provide funds for marketing and promotion of this free statewide community service.



**Dial-A-Teacher is here for your students!**

Homework Help  
is Available Monday–Thursday  
5:30 PM – 8:30 PM

**344-3571**

Licensed teachers who are ATF members are here to help.  
In English and Spanish.



### AROUND THE NATION What's Your Priority?

Now that Barack Obama has been elected the next President of the United States, what do you think his administration's top priority should be, and why? AFT wants to hear from you! Visit AFT Voices ([www.aft.org/voices](http://www.aft.org/voices)) to share your opinions on the challenges you face in the workplace.

### New Title I Regulations Don't Address Law's Problems

AFT president Randi Weingarten says that the new Title I regulations announced by the Bush administration on Oct. 28, just a week before the presidential election, demonstrate that the administration "continues to put the interests of conservative ideologues over those of students and their families".

### Weingarten Urges Quick Action To Strengthen Economy

AFT president Randi Weingarten urged Congress to invest in jobs, education and healthcare as part of the federal response to current economic difficulties. Testifying on Capitol Hill at an Oct. 29 House Ways and Means Committee hearing on economic recovery, job creation and investment in America, Weingarten said, "The simple fact is this: Education and the economy are intertwined. Neither is strong when the other is weak."

"Difficult times demand bold action," she added. "The boldest action that you can take now is the simplest: Invest in the foundations of our country's strength—jobs, education and healthcare."



## atf is 46!

Happy Anniversary!

Our union was chartered on November 10, 1962. ATF is proud of our 46-year history of advocating for educators.

## TEACHERS' VOICE



albuquerque teachers federation  
professional | progressive | unionism

### PRESIDENT

Ellen Bernstein

### EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Janet Montoya Schoeppner  
Adobe Acres Elementary School

### SECRETARY

Pamela Irvin  
Alamosa Elementary School

### TREASURER

Paul Roensch  
Manzano High School

### MEMBERSHIP VP

Robin Gibson  
Sandia Base Elementary School

### HIGH SCHOOL VP

Cathy Taylor  
Valley High School

### MIDDLE SCHOOL VP

Angela Reynolds  
Truman Middle School

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL VPs

Loretta Shiver  
S R Marmon Elementary School

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