

The Human Side of Schooling

 **ALBUQUERQUE
TEACHERS FEDERATION**

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021
ATF President's Message
"The Human Side of Schooling"

Students in the Center:
An ATF Practitioner Cadre

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The Human Side of Schooling



By Ellen Bernstein, ATF President

Our system of public education is about 200 years old. It was born out of the Industrial Revolution in the latter half of the 18th century that transformed our largely rural, agrarian society into an industrialized, urban one. As industrialization changed the way we worked it also created the need for more universal schooling.

And so, our education system was modeled after the philosophies and efficiencies of scientific management in which a product's uniformity and quality could be programmed by carefully specified procedures.

Factory owners required docile, agreeable workers who would show up on time and do what their managers told them. Sitting in a classroom all day with a teacher was good training for that. This factory model legacy is a system in which we batch process students on an assembly line of grades based on age. As in factories, if the assembly line of learning is moving "too fast" for a student to "keep up" they don't fit in. Human needs and idiosyncrasies muck up the works.

Pandemics muck up the works even more. And, although the last 2 years have been deeply difficult, this intrusion in the status quo is also an opportunity. Human needs are now front and center as important in our schools. Perhaps if we take advantage of the moment, integrating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) will be as important as testing was during No Child Left Behind.

Our students are certainly demanding a change, currently evident in increased problematic behaviors. But addressing those behaviors by making schooling more human runs counter to how our systems are structured and have been "functioning" for a very long time.

How do we move past the factory model of public education? How do we transition from testing as the foundation of teaching and learning to relationships as the core productive and essential foundation? We put students in the center and we humanize education.

When we do that, our work is more fulfilling, students learn more and do better, and we leave the legacy of kids as widgets and test takers behind. Now while we're still in the middle of a worldwide pandemic this is the time for change.

"A Review of Educational Research analysis of 46 studies found that strong teacher-student relationships were associated in both the short- and long-term with improvements on practically every measure schools care about: higher student academic engagement, attendance, grades, fewer disruptive behaviors and suspensions, and lower school dropout rates. Those effects were strong even after controlling for differences in students' individual, family, and school backgrounds."

— *Why Teacher-Student Relationships Matter*, Sarah Sparks, Ed Week, March 2019

Scholars, researchers, and prominent educators are all writing about SEL, affirming the need and providing us with road maps. Of course, we can't make these changes in isolation from each other. Our system is too fixated on coverage teaching, textbooks as curriculum, and mandated assessments that don't inform our teaching and do not provide anyone with a complete picture of our students.

We must give ourselves permission to work with our fellow educators, to make collaboration meaningful and own this moment. If you want to be engaged and motivated join us in our conversations through our ATF *Students in the Center* work. The educators crafting opportunities to learn from each other are featured in this addition of the *Educators' Voice*.

If you are looking for information and inspiration, read the most recent edition of AFT's *American Educator*, in particular Pamela Cantor's article. Members have this publication mailed to your homes; others can access it online at aft.org/ae/fall2021.

Pamela Cantor, MD, is the founder and senior science advisor of Turnaround for Children; she is also a governing partner of the Science of Learning and Development Alliance and a visiting scholar at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. In the article All Children Thriving: A New Purpose for Education she notes that,

Public education in the United States was designed long before researchers and practitioners had an understanding or knowledge of developmental and learning science and therefore was based in part on a set of false assumptions.

aft.org/ae/fall2021/cantor

She then helps all to understand the why and the how of humanizing school so that students do not just survive, they thrive! When I read this article and the others in the *American Educator* I was renewed and invigorated to keep working toward the human side of education to promote student centered learning.

I believe this shift is not only best for students. It will start to solve our pipeline problem. I know a new generation of educators will be attracted and will stay in public schools in which their own humanity and the humanity of their students is central in their work.

Join this effort, think deeply about your practices, question our traditions, assumptions, and mandates. Learn together about what it takes to humanize education and put students in the center.

In solidarity,

Ellen

Students in the Center

An ATF Practitioner Cadre



In 2019, the Albuquerque Teachers Federation started a practitioner-led initiative, called *Students in the Center*. The intention was to provide our fellow educators with support for student-centered practices focused on six areas:

Last year our work became even more salient as students, families and educators struggled with new pandemic realities. We found that more than 50% of educators surveyed across the district indicated interest in participating with other educators in opportunities for professional development in one or more of our six focus areas.

- Social Emotional Learning
- Restorative Justice Practices
- Students' Mental Health and Drug Intervention
- Trauma Informed Teaching and Schooling
- Developmentally Appropriate Early Childhood Practices
- Intersectional Education

Survey results included:

62% - pandemic had moderate to severe negative impact on their students mental and/or physical health

77% - pandemic had moderate to severe negative impact on their students learning

79% - pandemic disproportionately affected marginalized and/or disadvantaged groups

The goal of the *Students in the Center* cadre is to provide engaging conversations and resources that provoke us all to move past the factory model of education transforming post-pandemic education into a system in which we are able to prepare students to be *caring, competent, critical thinkers and fully informed, engaged, contributing* members of society.

The ATF *Student in the Center Cadre* is collaborative, educator-led program. Our conversations have been:

- Participant driven in a safe and supportive environment
- Focused on problem solving
- Opportunities to discuss with peers
- A space to engage others with different perspectives and experiences

We invite our fellow educators to join us in conversations that focus on a range of current educational issues that intersect with Social Emotional Learning, such as restorative practices, educator self-care, community building, equity, and trauma. Sign up on our website or through one of our emails advertising our sessions and bring your successes and challenges so that we can all learn from each other as we move through another year of learning.

OUR MOTIVATION

How can we redesign schools to be:

- **STUDENT-CENTERED** in ways that support the whole child's social, emotional, cognitive, moral, and identity development;
- **FOCUSED** on deeper learning that meets the demands of today's society;
- **CULTURALLY** and linguistically connected and sustaining;
- **GROUNDING** in collaboration among students, staff, families, and communities; and
- **EQUITABLE** in the opportunities provided and outcomes achieved?

Darling-Hammond, L., Schachner, A., & Edgerton, A. K. (with Badrinarayan, A., Cardichon, J., Cookson, P. W., Jr., Griffith, M., Klevan, S., Maier, A., Martinez, M., Melnick, H., Truong, N., Wojcikiewicz, S.) • 2020
Restarting and reinventing school: Learning in the time of COVID and beyond • Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute



The Power of Relationships

Adriana Kerr
NBCT, Special Education SEL Resource Trainer

As a Special Education SEL Resource Teacher, I have had many opportunities to model the power of relationship building with our students with special needs. I have trained, discussed, and sometimes argued with others the importance of building student relationships before expecting students to be able to make academic gains.

Research shows that students who feel safe and supported by adults are better able to learn. Studies have also shown that positive social interactions in the workplace create a more engaged and productive atmosphere.

I joined this cadre shortly after schools were shut down due to the pandemic. Through the cadre work, I built new relationships with educators in this district who I did not know, who have different roles than I do, and who work at schools that I do not support. I have relearned the power of building relationships with not only my close colleagues, but with educators throughout the district.

As educators we often spend our careers isolated, away from other adults, immersed in the lives of our students. When we began doing our work from home, behind a screen, we no longer ran into our colleagues in the hallway or parking lot. Our staff meetings were different and contact with our colleagues was inconsistent. We had to start doing things differently.

Initially, this cadre set out to provide information and lesson plans, but we quickly learned what was missing was connection and conversation. The cadre was brought together by a shared interest in putting students' social emotional wellbeing first. Together we learned that building trusting relationships with our colleagues is critical if we want to have serious conversations about bias, trauma, mental health, substance abuse, and social emotional learning.

Life online as well as back in a school building has proven difficult and many inequities and outdated practices in education have moved to the forefront. Maya Angelou said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

Individually we see that there are problems. Collectively we can find solutions, but before we can have a serious exchange of valuable information, we must take the time to build rapport. We must take the time to build relationships. Relationships should be the basis for learning, not just for our students but also for us as educators.



We have been on a treadmill of short-term fixes, pretending that if we just get the right test, the right incentives, put the right pressure on teachers and students, they will achieve what is good for them, like it or not. But we are realizing what we should have known all along: that you can't widge your way to powerful learning, that relationships are critical for learning, that students' interests need to be stimulated and their selves need to be recognized.

The same is true for teachers — they need to feel physically safe, they need support, they need their work to be recognized and honored, and they need working conditions that make it possible for them to succeed. All of this is doubly true in high-poverty communities, where in the name of urgency, we have moved the furthest from taking a human approach to both students and teachers.

It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity not only to reopen and recover, but to reimagine our schools in a way that makes every public school a place where parents want to send their children, educators and support staff want to work and students thrive. This is our moment.

— Randi Weingarten, President, American Federation of Teachers, May 13, 2021



Resilience with Students in the Center

Bonnie R. Chavez, *Sandia High School*

We hear about resilience often these days. Often it is described as an individual trait of stress resistance, toughness or a "pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps". While a determined attitude and healthy coping skills can certainly be advantageous, these concepts of resilience seem to put the responsibility solely on the individual to do the bouncing back from adversity.

The environments and communities we create are stronger than any individual capacity to build resilience in the midst of near constant challenges and stress. Organizational/community resilience points to shared responsibility for one another and our students in our journey through stress and trauma. Picture the difference between a chain and a tightly woven net. The second allows that not every link can be strong all the time so the load is spread and has some overlap and backup. How do we as educators weave that blanket of resilience in our environments?

Five research-based principles guide fostering community resilience:

PREDICTABILITY.

Good teachers have always used routines, signals, and communication strategies to make the classroom a safe and predictable environment for learning. Drills give some predictability in emergencies. When events outside of the routine occur, we can still communicate with students and parents to let them know what to expect.

EMPOWERMENT (CONTROLLABILITY).

This includes giving options, input, and agency in navigating stress. Sure, there are a lot of things not in our control, but we can still provide choices about how we respond to those events (such as how to hold a memorial after loss or choosing which stuffed animal to bring when evacuating from a natural disaster.) Belief that our actions make a difference is essential to learning. Without some control, we will learn helplessness which seriously impedes future learning capacity.

RELATIONSHIPS.

We can get through so much more when we are supporting and striving with the person to our left and our right. We stay healthier, we heal better, we experience less pain, and we look forward to showing up when we have strong positive relationships in our schools. When relationships break down, risk of despair and suicide go up. Relationship-building time, activities, and the ideas discussed throughout this issue are not fluff or sidelines; they are absolutely central to resilience and our education mission.

TRUST.

It begins with relationships but extends to bigger systems. Will my administration back me up? Will my Chromebook turn on? Will the legal system give me a fair hearing? We live in a time when many people have lost trust in a variety of those systems we used to collectively share and count upon in society. Trust is essential to resilience. Consider the ways to rebuild and foster trust in our classroom communities.

MEANING.

This can be enhanced by explaining the purpose for the activity, effort or challenge. We want to understand our mission, how we fit into the process and why we are sacrificing for a goal. After trauma, finding shared meaning and understanding of events has proven critical to preventing longer term difficulties.

You have been applying these principles daily to give students some predictability, power, relationships, trust and meaning. You may want to take a moment to consider how your actions create an environment that allows your students and school community to bounce back from difficult situations. Once you look, you may see even more opportunities to weave that resilience in your school. Thank you for all you are doing!



Building a Restorative Community

Jillian Evans, MA, LPCC, LPAT, ATR-BC
School Counselor, Longfellow Elementary School

We have experienced the need to adapt our plans during the last year and a half. What we may not have realized is that this time to adapt has allowed us the opportunity to refocus on the basics of relationship building in our school communities. During the last school year, I had the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues throughout the district, who participated with the Students in the Center Cadre. What I learned through interacting with my colleagues is that the skills I already teach and model in the classroom, specifically mindfulness and social emotional learning, are some of the foundational skills for building restorative communities. The work of creating a restorative community requires us to be proactive and connect with each other consistently. In order to effectively use restorative practice techniques there need to be strong relationships to begin with.

Looking back to the fall of 2020, while working with the Students in the Center Cadre, it became apparent that our students continued to crave peer relationships during remote learning. The structure of our day didn't always have as many opportunities to connect as we have while in person. Like many educators across the district, I was able to help students maintain and build peer relationships through optional social experiences like lunch bunch and after-school virtual activities. Upon returning to in-person learning our students demonstrated a need for us to continue the work of building connections and relationships. As I learned more about building restorative communities through the work of the cadre, I realized that building this type of community aligns with the needs of our students. Restorative communities focus on making, developing and maintaining relationships through skills-building. I have also learned that many of our authentic daily interactions with students are organically setting the stage for restorative communities, even if we are not aware of it. When we become aware of the necessary skills, we can enhance this work.

This semester, I have chosen to focus on the beginning restorative community skills of building empathy and self-awareness through mindfulness with my students. As an elementary counselor, I have the opportunity to teach classroom lessons in each grade. During these lessons I help the students make connections with empathy towards the characters and relate these skills to real life situations. The students are able to use these skills with each other outside of the lessons. The students are able to develop their empathy skills, not only for relationship building, but also for learning the value of understanding and caring about how someone else in our community is feeling. When our students feel seen and understood by each other, they are able to build restorative communities. During each lesson I am able to incorporate mindful activities, again not just for the sake of "mindfulness" but so that the group can understand how mindfulness can help us become more aware of our thoughts, actions and impulses. It is with this self-awareness that our students are encouraged to participate more authentically as members of a restorative community.

By taking the time to slow down and reinforce the positives, we can tune in on the strengths that our students have gained. I have learned that no matter what area each of us is compelled to focus on, the work needs to start with a foundation of strong relationships. This school year, my goal of working to build connections as a school community will cultivate relationships during our subsequent years. Just like our students, we have gained strengths that should be acknowledged and encouraged to grow.

“ Relationships, environments, and experiences will: drive the expression of each child’s genetic endowment and epigenetic attributes, harness the malleability of their bodies and brains, and nurture the fullest expression of what each child becomes. ”

– All Children Thriving: A New Purpose for Education
Pamela Cantor, AFT American Educator, Fall 2021

aft.org/ae/fall2021/cantor



Resiliency and Relationships

Michael Klein, Psy.D., NCSP
School Psychologist, Northeast Diagnostic Center

How are you (we) doing? As educators, we often ask students in our classrooms and schools to reflect on this question. We try to fit in time for our students to have the opportunity to engage with the complicated topics of mental health, wellness, self-awareness, stress management, decision making, getting along with others, and so much more. Far too often, such topics have been a secondary consideration to ensuring that all the core academic content and skills have been taught, retaught, and drilled into our collective memory. However, this pandemic, despite all the stress, chaos, uncertainty, anxiety, isolation, and other adversity it has entailed for many, has also created new opportunity. In coping with a pandemic, we built up our resilience, as did our students. We learned how to handle the new normal of virtual classrooms and meetings. We found ways to make connections with others and form relationships with our students, even when it was really challenging. In our experiences, we learned about our emotions. We learned how to navigate a changed social landscape. We practiced our decision making, our self-awareness. We took the time to prioritize working on our social-emotional well-being and development.

I first opened and read an email from Ellen in June of 2020 looking for educators interested in a Social Emotional Learning project. As a school psychologist who has worked closely with educators and students on developing positive social emotional skills in several different educational settings, the prospect of engaging in such work again was highly motivating. The pandemic, and its effects on schooling, were still looming question marks at the time. Would we be virtual? What even does virtual learning mean? How would we educate kids, and how would they learn? I joined the project, and connected with a diverse group of educators with unique areas of passion and interest but similar goals; how can we put our students in the center of our work as educators? Just as the pandemic presented us with constant changing situations and challenges, so did our work. Like many others at the start of the 2020-2021 school year, we were preparing ambitious sets of digital resources, which were going to help keep everyone afloat as we dove into the new school year.

It didn't take long to realize that such an approach had fundamental flaws. The issue wasn't a lack of available resources. In fact, it seemed that everywhere you looked there was an overload of information of what we were supposed to do. What we found was lacking, which was supported by input from educators across our union and district, was meaningful ways to put the information we lump into the category of professional development into actual practice. It was not long after that we began to explore a new approach, and that was to have conversations with our colleagues and coworkers. How better to both develop relationships and practice those critical social-emotional learning skills than to talk to others, to listen to them, to make connections with their experiences and incorporate their knowledge alongside our own?

Our sessions were small but engaging. Relationships were the center of our work. I recall on one day in the spring of 2021, having a conversation on mindfulness. At first, my co-facilitator and myself had one high school teacher join us. The two of us spent a good bit of time just troubleshooting and problem solving with this teacher, and the others that joined soon after, on how she could possibly get high school students returning to the classroom after months of being online to take a moment to work on mindfulness. What activities could this teacher try that adolescents would respond to, how could the teacher respond to anticipated challenges or resistance? This remains one of the more powerful examples for me of how much learning and development can come from our relationships and engagement with others.

Our cadre work continues, and the longer I work with my colleagues, the more I find myself learning from them as much as I may teach others. As we now step into another new territory, the concept of what education may look like in a post-pandemic world, I am hopeful that we can take advantage of an increased public awareness of the importance of social-emotional/mental health and wellness. I am hopeful that we can continue to form relationships with those around us, learn from one another, and advocate for positive and powerful changes in our classrooms, school and district to put our students in the center of education.



Deconstructing Safe Zones Examining the Barriers to Creating Truly Inclusive Schools

Bren Vitter, Social Studies Teacher, Kennedy Middle School



The nation has been rocked by recent social and political events surrounding racism, police brutality and wokeness which have taken a front seat in our country's collective identity. Meanwhile, an equally damaging and dangerous effort to erase individual identities is happening across the country - and you will only notice if you are paying close attention.

In June 2020, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 in the landmark *Bostock v. Clayton County* case that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act protects LGBTQ+ people from discrimination in employment. From the moment SCOTUS ruled on *Bostock*, an explosion of state-level anti-LGBTQ+ legislation occurred. Much of the legislation has focused on transgender and gender nonconforming (GNC) persons.

This summer, the Department of Education (DoE) extended the *Bostock* ruling to apply to Title IX of the Civil Rights Act. Title IX protects educators and students from sex discrimination in schools. The DoE application of *Bostock* to Title IX expands sex discrimination to include sexual orientation and gender identity. In response to this decision, 20 states have filed a lawsuit against the DoE on account of an overreach of power. The same 20 states have also passed new legislation that allow LGBTQ+ youth to be discriminated against on a whole new level. It includes everything from banning youth from playing sports to penalizing medical professionals and parents who are providing comprehensive healthcare to transgender and GNC minors.

A Hostile School Climate

Every two years, the Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) administers their National School Climate Survey, which collects data about the unique experiences and needs of LGBTQ+ students and suggests interventions schools, districts, and states can implement to improve school climate. Twenty years of GLSEN data have tracked an increase in supportive and inclusive school resources while LGBTQ+ students' negative experiences have remained fairly consistent.

In 2017, GLSEN released their State Snapshot to demonstrate how participating states were measuring up. The State Snapshot for New Mexico recognizes our students face high incidences of harassment at school with limited access to supportive and affirming resources. GLSEN calls on state policy makers, educational leaders, and other stakeholders to make critical changes to our educational system in order to create safe and affirming learning environments for our LGBTQ+ students.

NM	NAT'L	GLSEN NEW MEXICO SNAPSHOT
percentages	percentages	
91	70	REPORTED HEARING "GAY" USED IN A NEGATIVE WAY REGULARLY
83	62.2	REPORTED HEARING NEGATIVE REMARKS ABOUT GENDER EXPRESSION REGULARLY
58	62.2	EXPERIENCED AT LEAST ONE FORM OF ANTI-LGBTQ+ DISCRIMINATION AT SCHOOL
62	46.5	TRANSGENDER/GNC STUDENTS WERE UNABLE TO USE THE SCHOOL RESTROOM ALIGNED WITH THEIR GENDER
53	42.1	TRANSGENDER/GNC STUDENTS WERE PREVENTED FROM USING THEIR CHOSEN NAME AND/OR PRONOUNS IN SCHOOL
9	12.6	REPORTED ATTENDING A SCHOOL WITH A COMPREHENSIVE ANTI-BULLYING/HARASSMENT POLICY THAT INCLUDED LGBTQ+ IDENTITIES/EXPRESSIONS
12	10.6	REPORTED POLICIES THAT SUPPORTED TRANSGENDER/GNC STUDENTS
48	53.3	REPORTED ACCESS TO A GSA OR SIMILAR SUPPORTIVE STUDENT ORGANIZATION
36	39.8	REPORTED HAVING SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION
20	19.8	REPORTED POSITIVE REPRESENTATION OF LGBTQ+ PEOPLE IN SCHOOL CURRICULUM
61	61	COULD IDENTIFY 6+ SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS

LGBTQ+ Students in the Center



On September 30, Students in the Center hosted the first-ever conversation focusing on LGBTQ+ educator and student identities in schools. Deconstructing Safe Zones was a 90-minute problem-solving session around the barriers we face as LGBTQ+ educators and allies in being visible on campus and

creating truly inclusive and affirming spaces for students and educators. During the conversation, we identified a plethora of barriers that prevent us from centering LGBTQ+ identities in our schools:

- Unsupportive administration
- Lack of information, training, professional development
- Community resistance/hostility, de-prioritization
- Skepticism, misconceptions, and microaggressions
- "Not appropriate" for school and/or age
- Lack of skills, terminology, language
- Navigating difficult conversations
- Lack of family representation
- Lack of visible LGBTQ+ representation on campuses with adults and in curriculum
- Reconciling LGBTQ+ identities with religious beliefs

Safe Zone in Schools

We have all seen these badges hung up on classroom doors and walls, in virtual classrooms and on email signatures, but what do they mean?

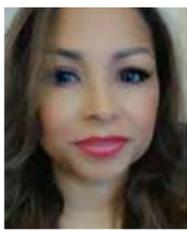
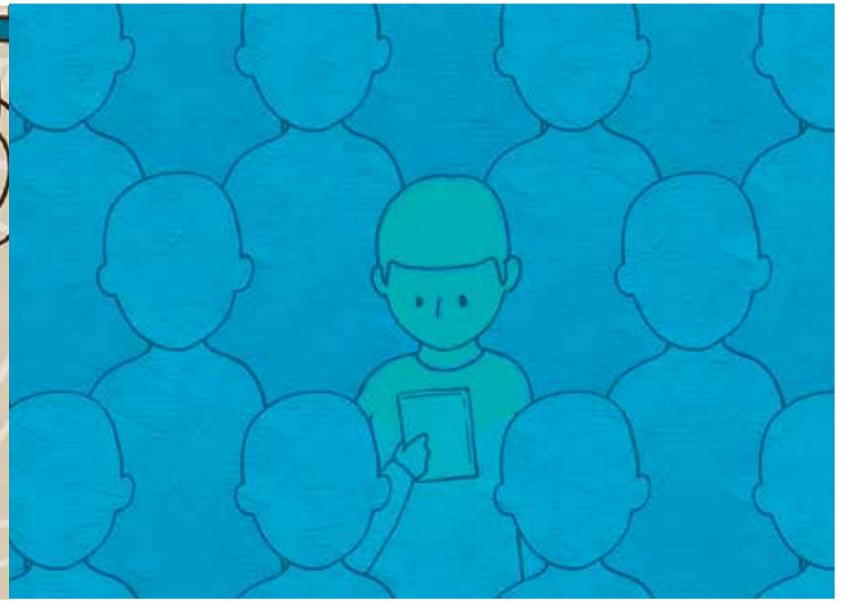
Our conversation centered on the APS Safe Zone program. The purpose of a safe zone is to create a safe, positive, and affirming environment for LGBTQ+ students in schools. The goal of the program is to use the badges to identify adults on campus who "attend 1-2 district meetings per year for professional development, resource sharing, and networking" (APS).

The following consistencies among schools were noted:

- Most schools witness a mass use of Safe Zone posters on classroom doors and walls without any context to what the poster means.
- Few educators have attended regular, annual training around Safe Zone and how to be an ally for LGBTQ+ students.
- Students have never received any training or information about what Safe Zone is, how to access it, or why they need it.

The program is meant to easily, safely, and anonymously identify for students who the safe adults are in their school. In schools where every staff member receives a Safe Zone banner without proper training and commitment, LGBTQ+ students are left to navigate the dangerous landscape as if the banners did not exist at all. However, true safe zones are being created by educators who are opening space and taking risks in their classrooms and schools. Often, these educators are working alone against misinformed and resistant administrators, colleagues, and families.

Schools need to provide spaces for LGBTQ+ educators and students to be safely visible and affirmed. The *Bostock v. Clayton County* case has opened opportunities for schools to become truly inclusive and affirming spaces for all. As educators, we need to move through discomfort and vulnerability to ask the hard questions and step out of ignorance. Students in the Center plans to continue this important conversation this school year with ongoing dialogue. ATF is moving this work forward by creating new structures to support our LGBTQ+ educators. Our students need our protection; our colleagues need our backing.



Building A Strong Foundation In A Broken World

Tatia Harris-Lipe, LCSW, CCTS-F
School Social Worker, Certified Clinical Trauma Specialist-Family, Volcano Vista HS

Human behavior is not mechanical but grows in the way in which it is oriented. As a moth returns to the flame, so can a human repeat his folly without knowing why he is doing so when it is all he knows. Stress is something we all face; however, not having the protective factors or resiliency to overcome emotional pain and suffering leads one to repeat the unhealthy survival mechanisms that we have learned to survive. Relationships matter and resilience empowers an individual to accept, adapt and overcome a situation. We are not all born into this world resilient; instead, it is built into us by our caregivers even while we are still in the womb. Being thrust into a broken world full of uncertainty, loss, and fear of sickness without knowing what the next day holds can be traumatic for anyone. It is especially true for an adult or child who has previously been exposed to adverse childhood trauma and has not learned how to cope with circumstances outside their control.

All things grow from a seed, and seeds need water to grow. The same can be said for developing a relationship. I have a heart for helping and love to see the spark when students find their place. The most rewarding part of my job is planting seeds that positively impact a child's future. Relationships are like the water that sows the seeds and provides the essential elements that nourish student development. Our relationships can foster resilience because, as educators, we come from a place of teaching. The stages of growth and the process of getting there are sometimes uncomfortable. Students In the Center has enabled me to incorporate some of my education, training, and experience. Specifically related to the many facets of trauma work to increase awareness and help educators become more cognizant of how much our personal experiences can unknowingly impact our relationships and day-to-day interactions with students, primarily in light of the changing times.

In our conversation titled "Decluttering the Mind," educators learned about the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES) and had the opportunity to participate in an experiential activity to find their scores. In doing so, participants were better able to understand the correlation between how childhood trauma impacts life, relationships, and the ability to learn. By recognizing the complexity of the connection between people and their social environment, we remain sensitive to the impact of suffering and the social-cultural factors that can impact student performance. Educators took time to self-reflect on how their own Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) can be triggered in the classroom.

We comfort and counsel others only as we continue to receive ongoing comfort and counsel. We continue to develop our character and understanding of others through self-awareness while simultaneously building relationships that foster growth and increase resilience. Other conversations touched on vicarious trauma/compassion fatigue and the importance of self-care, which we will continue to discuss in future discussions.

Regardless of our role within the school environment, relationships are the foundation, and students are the glue that connects us all within our community. As educators, what we do flows from our calling to equip students with the knowledge and lessons they will take into their adult lives. The relationship grows from a seed that is watered and becomes the foundation. From this place, we can engage others in meaningful conversations, share tools, means to accommodate, and strategies to manage and overcome barriers that can help students to be successful.

OUR GOAL To provide engaging conversations and resources that provoke us all to move past the factory model of education transforming post-pandemic education into a system in which we are able to prepare students to be caring, competent, critical thinkers and fully informed, engaged, contributing members of society.

The ATF Student in the Center Cadre is collaborative, educator-led program.



Modeling Humanity: Building The Capacity for Empathy

Mackenzie Agudelo
Special Education Teacher, Eisenhower Middle School

Spend any length of time in a school building this year, and it is clear that relationship building has never been more crucial. In some ways, it has never been easier. Many students and teachers alike have craved human connection for the past year and a half and are now getting to put their energy into forming new relationships. But in many ways, relationship building seems more difficult. It requires more intentionality. Virtual life left gaps in the communication and collaboration skills necessary for authentic connection. Not to mention the collective trauma of living through a pandemic and its effect on how we relate to one another. Relationship building is hard. But it is important.

When we build intentional relationships with students, not only do we show them that the adults at school deeply care for them, we model what healthy relationships look like. In these relationships, we have the opportunity to model empathy and help students build the capacity to empathize with each other.

Empathy seems to be a theme this year. It keeps popping up in conversation. Conversations with coworkers about the lack thereof after a long, frustrating day when it seems like the demands keep piling on with no regard for our time or sanity. Conversations with students about the impact of vandalizing school property on not only the building, but the humans who work to keep it running each day. Conversations with fellow Students in the Center cadre members about restorative practices and the necessity of teaching students relational skills and not assuming they know. It turns out that both 2nd graders and 8th graders still need support with acknowledging their mistakes and apologizing for them. I think a lot of adults do as well.

This year has been difficult in so many ways. Personally, I feel the challenges of this year are far greater than last. While it is fulfilling to be in the classroom with kids, I long for the days before we had to manage a revolving door of quarantined students and keep up to date on new procedures and online systems while simultaneously tending to the needs of students in front of us. Never before have I written so many IEPs in the first month of school (and the sub plans for when I am attending each of them!) It is simply exhausting and I know I am not alone. APS educators, along with educators around the country, are superstars, even if on most days it sure does not feel like anyone sees that.

Now more than ever, a little empathy goes a long way. But empathy is not a given, we must work hard to intertwine it in all that we do. We must teach students what it means to have empathy and give them the language needed to express it.

An administrator at my school recently talked about the importance of helping students develop empathy as they transition back into "normal" life. I was incredibly excited to hear an administrator talk about this topic, as it is always refreshing when people in our district embrace the type of work we are doing in our cadre and union as a whole. She talked about having restorative conversations with students when handling behavioral consequences and showing students our human side. We need to model what it looks like to express how someone's actions made you feel. Teachers and administrators are not robots, and it does no service to put on the façade that we are.

Each time I meet with my fellow *Students in the Center* cadre members or help host a *Students in the Center* conversation, I feel invigorated. This discussion with my admin was no different. It was a reminder that there are so many educators in our city who are dedicated to teaching the whole child and meeting students where they are. I am grateful that our union organizes events to connect educators with a common goal to vent, brainstorm, and dream big together. I hope that our Students in the Center conversations continue to grow as we build a network of educators working towards empathy.



Issues + Advocacy + Organizing

Issues

Teacher Evaluation Q&A

Being an educator has always been a challenging job, but the past year and a half have been, quite frankly, excruciatingly difficult. It's no wonder that the coming of evaluation season and a new process adds stress to our already overloaded coping mechanisms. And, although the current evaluation system does not share the punitive nature of its predecessor under the Martinez administration, teachers are justified in feeling like subjects under a microscope. This is, of course, exacerbated by our commitment to giving our all to every student each day. We all want our evaluation scored to reflect that effort and that dedication.



Teacher Self-Reflection

Carol Ann Tomlinson recommends using rubrics with students where the student reflects on where they are, explains indicators that represent their current strengths and stretch to achieve the next level of competency. The self-reflection piece of the evaluation is based on this same principle.

The self-reflection portion of the evaluation consists of each element of the four Domains. For each element, you will reflect and determine your level of achievement (Not Demonstrating, Developing, Applying, or Innovating.) You will then provide evidence for why you have scored yourself at that level and articulate what you need to move to the next level. It's a good idea to use language from the rubric where you have scored and where you are moving to help formulate your response. Here's an example:

I am Applying because I have taught my students "Talk Moves" so they can interact with their peers in a significant way, and I use the Frayer model to increase my students' understanding of academic vocabulary. I would like to work with students on their self-reflection of their learning and progress, to move to Innovating.

From your Self-Reflection, identify one area you would like to focus on to improve your own teaching and student learning in your classroom. This will become the focus of your SMART Goal.

Ideas: Using Formative assessment to guide instruction, participating in and applying PD on a specific curriculum, increasing use of student collaboration, managing classroom procedures more efficiently, providing differentiated instruction, using higher level questions, implementing student self-assessments.

Completion of the Self-Reflection portion is mandatory, but it will not be scored.

We have received reports that some teachers have "saved" their work in the Self-Reflection part of Elevate NM only to find that their work is not saved at all. We wanted to share the following ideas and information about the Self-Reflection portion of the evaluation:

- The self-reflection tool is not scored by evaluators. It is for a teacher's personal use.
- We recommend that teachers work on the statements for the self-reflection on a Word Doc, then copy and paste it all at once into the NMPED form. Some people have lost their work when they logout and come back.
- Teachers can give specific evidence on 2-3 indicators that place them at a certain level, and again, say 2-3 things you would do to move to the next level. This is not formal. You may write in an informal voice. This work can help you identify and flesh out SMART goals.
- This self-reflection should work for you, to help you identify and validate the good things you are doing in your teaching and help you to identify areas you would like to work on.

The rest of the evaluation components are the same as last year: walkthroughs and observations.

APS Due Dates:

Fall Evaluation Elements

(Date range indicates window for completion)

October 13 – December 17

- Walkthrough 1
- Teacher Self-Reflection and BOY PDP
- BOY PDP – Evaluator Scoring and Feedback

December 17

- Observation 1 for Level One Teachers

Visit atfunion.org for more information on writing smart goals.

Health Insurance Premiums Increase

Until all Americans are covered by universal health care, we will most assuredly see yearly rises in insurance costs. This year all employees covered by APS insurance will see their premiums rise by 4.5-5% from last school year. Below is an explanation of next year's insurance premium increases:

- **Individual Plan:** \$6.05/check= \$145.38 annually
- **Double Plan:** \$12.12/check= \$290.82 annually
- **Family Plan:** \$16.36/check= \$392.64 annually

By contrast, the average licensed educator (making \$50K/yr.) received a 1.5% "raise" from the state legislature which equals about \$28.85 per paycheck or \$750 annually.

You can bet that ATF will be lobbying for significant raises for educators in the coming legislative session. Get involved. Get active. Join COPE at atfunion.org!

Can You Feel It?

If the start of your school year feels extra stressful, you aren't imagining things. We have heard from many of you with scenarios similar to this:

I'm in the middle of teaching reading, my students are working productively, while I instruct a small group, when my principal shows up at my door with six more students. These aren't my classroom students, but my colleague's students who has had to stay home today as she is ill. I have 27 students in my class. There is no possible way to fit in six more students, never mind that they don't have desks. My fourth graders look puzzled. The fourth graders who are now standing at my door look decidedly uncomfortable, but here we are. We have no substitutes, our EAs are stretched thin, and there are no options.



Why Does It Feel So Hard?

With staffing shortages in all positions, our schools are struggling to provide in person learning. But you already know this as some of you are teaching during your prep covering for colleagues or vacancies. Others of you desperately need a mental health day but don't take one because you know the added stress it will place on your colleagues.

In Special Education, we are currently short more than 100 district educators. Very few individuals are stepping forward to take these positions, and some holding the positions are currently exiting the district. Our Special Ed educators are taking on heavier caseloads and more responsibilities with no relief in sight.

Your Work is Vital

When a business can't find enough employees to run their business, they may cut their hours or close. We can't do that. We continue to show up every day, with an expectation from our employer, students, community, and ourselves.

While there are no easy solutions, we want you to know that your union sees you. We see you coping with the stresses of working during a pandemic, making up for massive shortages in every employee role group, and guiding students back to community building. We THANK YOU.

LETRS Training

Last May, we wrote to first grade teachers about the dyslexia screener and the Learning Essentials for Teaching of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training that has been mandated for all first-grade educators by state law.

In that letter, we explained that our union had taken a strong position against the passage of the law in 2019. Unfortunately, our lobbying efforts failed. The LETRS training is underway again and we have received questions. ATF has spent time having conversations with both APS and PED to get you the best, most accurate answers.

LETRS Training 9-2021

Q: WHAT IS THE PAY RATE FOR LETRS TRAINING, STIPEND OR REGULAR HOURLY?

A: Hourly pay. Teachers should submit their timesheets to their principals. APS is currently working to refine this process. Payroll is aware that LETRS training will be paid at the hourly rate.

If you have mistakenly been paid at the stipend rate of \$22.00/hour, contact Diane Madrid in APS payroll (madrid_d@aps.edu or 872-6889). She can work with the teacher and principal to correct this.

APS is working to ensure that those who were mistakenly paid the stipend rate (\$22.00/hour) instead of hourly pay last year are paid the difference this year.

Q: IS PART OF THE LETRS TRAINING VOLUNTARY OR IS IT ALL PAID?

A: LETRS coursework requires a great deal of time outside of the training. Back pay for last year and future pay for this year should be honored. While ATF is currently negotiating this with APS, participants might receive compensation for about 10 hours beyond the time spent in direct training.

Teachers may submit a timesheet to their principals for last spring if they have not already done so.

APS is seeking approval for use of federal money to pay teachers at their hourly rate for the required training and coursework that exceeds 10 hours and falls outside of duty day. They hope for final approval any day now.

Q: ARE TEACHERS WHO MOVE GRADE LEVELS FORCED TO FINISH TRAINING? WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES IF THEY DO NOT?

A: Yes. The law and the rule state that all elementary school teachers, including English language development teachers or teachers of English as a second language, must have professional development in structured literacy.

PED designed the training that APS is using as a cohort model. That means that even if you transfer grade levels you are asked to continue the training with your original cohort under the assumption that you will have to do the training anyway as grade levels are phased in.

The consequences are not outlined in rule or law and would be based on the employer, in this case APS.

Q: WHAT ARE THE NUMBER OF HOURS OF TRAINING REQUIRED FOR TEACHERS WHO WORK LESS THAN FULL-TIME?

A: The training is not required for part-time employees.

Q: WHY DO KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS HAVE TO START THIS TRAINING IN OCTOBER AND SECOND GRADE TEACHERS IN JANUARY?

A: That is the phase-in plan that APS and the PED agreed to. They will phase in 3rd, 4th, and 5th also. This includes Gen and Special Ed, Interventionists, Resource teachers, and anyone who has anything to do with the teaching of reading.

As far as I can tell, the only employees that are exempt are those within one year of retirement.

Q: HOW CAN A TEACHER MAKE UP MISSED TRAININGS?

A: There is a sign-in for make-up classes through the LETRS site. If a teacher is too far behind to make up trainings, APS can work with PED to change cohorts.

“ Research emerging from the science of learning and development shows positive, supportive relationships build strong brain structure and buffer against adverse experiences. Stable, caring relationships with teachers and other adults are also linked to better school performance and engagement. Even one stable relationship with a committed adult can help buffer a child from the effects of serious adversity. Being in a supportive community—including a virtual one—has even stronger effects on healing. ”

—Supporting a Restorative Opening of U.S. Schools • Learning Policy Institute, Jennifer DePaoli, Laura E. Hernández, Linda Darling-Hammond authors.

Advocacy

The structure of Instructional Councils (ICs) in our schools was developed to model and reflect collaborative, democratic processes for making decisions at the site level. Conducted as intended, ICs represent different role groups with transparent processes. How is the IC working at your school?

Does your Council have protocols or established ground rules that help it function? Is it made up of at least 50% teachers? Does it meet regularly? Are you aware of its decisions? Are you and/or your colleagues represented? Asked for feedback or suggestions? Are parents, students, or community members also involved? With the broadest spectrum of voices and experience actively participating, your IC serves to not only empower, but to transform the often-inherent culture of a “top-down” leadership model into a collaborative one with an emphasis on consensus building.

When adopting a decision-making model, there are several advantages to using consensus versus the traditional majority vote rule:

- Creates an atmosphere of inclusive participation that helps to engage and empower group members;
- Requires a commitment to work together and increases cooperation;
- Bridges significant differences through shared understanding and discussion;
- Results in more effective implementation because the entire group has taken responsibility, as well as action, for its decisions.

As an IC member, it is your right, as well as your responsibility to insist that the IC addresses school issues which fall within the scope of instructional improvement, e.g. 90-day plans, the school budget, school/duty schedules, sub coverage/plans, school discipline, and the gathering and interpretation of student performance data and test results.

ICs may also have the flexibility to utilize, from time to time, other types of decision-making models should the need arise, e.g. majority vote of the IC, vote of the entire staff, adoption of the committee vote or recommendation. If an impasse is at hand or there is a “time-sensitive” issue which cannot wait for the next meeting, the principal has the authority to make the decision. This, of course, should be utilized only as a last resort. As you and your colleagues gain more experience with collaborative decision-making, the easier the process will become.

All ICs must be transparent and open about their work. Agendas with meeting dates and times, meeting minutes, and member information should be regularly published on all school-related, media formats. ICs will vary in participants and size. If you are a member who represents others, meet with your constituents regularly, and effectively share their ideas or concerns with the other Council members.



When reflecting upon your IC’s work, take the time to celebrate:

- the positive influence you had;
- the noticeably healthier change in the school’s climate;
- colleagues who are appreciated and respected;
- greater student participation; and
- more active family engagement.

Not recognizing your IC by this description? Never fear! Your ATF Staff, along with APS, will gladly provide the necessary training and support you will need to not only get your IC up and running, but to help the process become progress for one and all.

E&RSE CREDs and CERTS

This awesome benefit was won by your union to help with attracting and retaining all of the essential and related practitioners (E&RSE) ATF represents across APS. This includes Counselors, Nurses, Social Workers, Athletic Trainers, Physical Therapists & assistants, Occupational Therapists & assistants, Speech Language Pathologists, School Psychologists, Diagnosticians, Transition Specialists/Rehab Counselors, Audiologists and Sign Language Interpreters.

Basically, ATF members in these role groups are surveyed once per year to provide their input on a mutually agreed upon list of “additional relevant professional certifications and credentials.”

For a submission to be considered for the list it must meet the criteria stated in the Negotiated Agreement language found in Article 11. Although all E&RSE’s are eligible for this benefit, only ATF members are asked for input as their membership is what made this possible. This list is then mutually agreed upon each year by ATF and APS.

Applicants may submit for up to 10 differentials per school year. Submissions are accepted twice per school year, once during the fall semester and once during the spring semester. You can read about how to access credential and certification differentials by looking Article 11.B.1.f.5 of the APS/ATF Negotiated Agreement.

Cameras in the Classroom

Last year a special education teacher reported that a camera had been installed in his classroom. Alarmed, we took up the issue with the district. We explained that cameras are terms and conditions of employment a thus subject to negotiations.

After many months and failing to come to a solution during negotiations we went to mediation. As a result, APS and ATF have now settled on the agreements summarized below:

- Cameras in the classroom may not be in use for any reason without the express written consent of the educator.
- The video and/or audio from the camera may only be used in defense of the educator in legal/employment matters unless the employee has done something illegal.
- The recordings shall not be used in any way for evaluations or observations.

Organizing

Labor and Social Justice: Two Movements, One Goal

Why do workers form unions? Is it to fight for better pay? Is it to unite and advocate for better, safer working conditions? Is it to have a collective voice at the negotiating table and at the ballot box?

The answer to each of these questions is a resounding YES, but your union is about so much more. The Labor Movement and movements for social justice are inextricably intertwined. Workers’ rights are civil and human rights. That is why we so often band together with other like-minded organizations to make change in our communities for all people.

We know that the Labor Movement has fought for and attained a 40-hour work week, retirement benefits, employer-paid health care, an expanding social safety net, and the list goes on. But what is your local union’s role in national movements? To answer that question, check out the Albuquerque Teachers Federations Policy Handbook on our website, atfunion.org.

The ATF Policy Handbook outlines our Fed Rep Council’s leadership devising our union’s stances on important issues in our city, state, and nation. Our Fed Rep Council sets the course of our union.



Over the past ten years, the Fed Rep Council has passed motions supporting staffing for all students’ needs, teaching democracy in the classroom, the freedom to teach real history and deal with the legacy

of racism in our country, the global climate strike, marriage equality (before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on this), tax relief for working families, raising the minimum wage, paid sick leave for all workers in our city, ethnic studies, public education as a civil right, and the importance of counting every person through the U.S. Census. We have also taken stands against White supremacist hate speech and hate crimes, gun violence in our schools and community, for-profit prisons, and child detention. This is not an exhaustive list of the positions we have taken, but it definitely shines some light on the course we have laid and will continue to take in support of social justice for all people.

If you value any of these ideals, union membership is more important today than ever before. While our nation is divided on many issues, our union stands strong for doing the right thing for the community we serve. We stand shoulder to shoulder to fight for better working and learning conditions for all students and staff. We demand respect for every individual in our schools and our community.

Help us expand democracy and justice for all in our schools and our community. Stand in solidarity with your colleagues and friends to build a world-class education system in APS. Join your union today at atfunion.org/join.



COPE

The Cost of Human Capital

Sara Attleson, Kennedy
MS, ATF COPE Chair

The 2022 Legislative Session begins January 18 and closes February 17th. This is a short session of only 30 days and the focus will primarily be on budget rather than policy issues. Speaking of the budget... New Mexico finds itself flush with nearly a 1.4 BILLION dollar windfall. For the past 2 years, the legislature has funding programs NOT people.

We, as union members, will hold Governor Michell Lujan Grisham to her stated public education priority by requesting she put money into PEOPLE rather than programs again this session. While her administration has enacted some programs we can and do support, the reality is without humans to run the programs, the programs are doomed to fail.

In the past two years educators have received a paltry 2.5% increase in salary. For the 2019-20 school term, the Legislature included in the budget a 4% increase in salaries for educators. However, they backtracked due to pandemic uncertainty and cut the increase to only 1%. For the 2020-21 school term, educators saw only a 1.5% increase in their paychecks.

It’s time for the governor and the New Mexico Legislature to invest wisely in PEOPLE, the people who educate, feed and deliver our students to our school sites during and beyond this public health crisis. Please be involved in the political process as we lobby our legislators and the governor in this short session. Watch for emails and texts to your personal emails/phones with links to quick direct actions.

Our voices are many and when we lift them up together, we are powerful.

Around the Nation

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten issued the following statement after the U.S. Department of Education acted to repair the nation’s broken Public Service Loan Forgiveness program:

For years, educators, nurses and public employees advocated fiercely to force the federal government to fulfill the bipartisan promise of public service loan forgiveness. Today we breathe a collective sigh of relief as the Kafkaesque system that dashed the dreams of far too many finally starts to be dismantled.

PSLF was created to ease the burden of student loan debt for a generation who’ve dedicated their lives to serving the public and who were on the frontlines of our pandemic response. Now, more than ever, we owe it to them to erase their debt and repair a broken process that placed their future in the hands of inept and fraudulent loan servicers.

The AFT repeatedly highlighted the absurd administrative hoops and glitches that saw people get denied if their servicer entered the wrong number on a form or misspelled the name of their employer or counted their payments incorrectly.

The AFT will continue to ensure that our members can access these changes and will fight on their behalf for past wrongs to be righted. These wounds will take time to heal. But the Biden administration’s decision to act is a giant step in the direction of both basic fairness and legislative intent.

November

- 2 Election Day: 7AM - 7PM
- 9 Fed Rep Council: 4:15 - 6:30P
- 10 Dossier Overview
4:30 - 7P • Members: Free / Non \$65
- 11 Veterans/Armistice Day
- 13 National Board Component 4:
8:30A - 12P • Members: \$50 / Non \$75
- 16 Students in the Center:
"Exhausted and Stressed? Can
SEL Really Help?" • 4:30 - 5:30P • Free
- 18 CPS Overview
4:30 - 6:30P • Members: \$10 / Non \$65
- 22-23 Parent/Teacher Conferences: No Classes
- 24-26 Thanksgiving: No Classes
- 20-31 Winter Break: No Classes

December

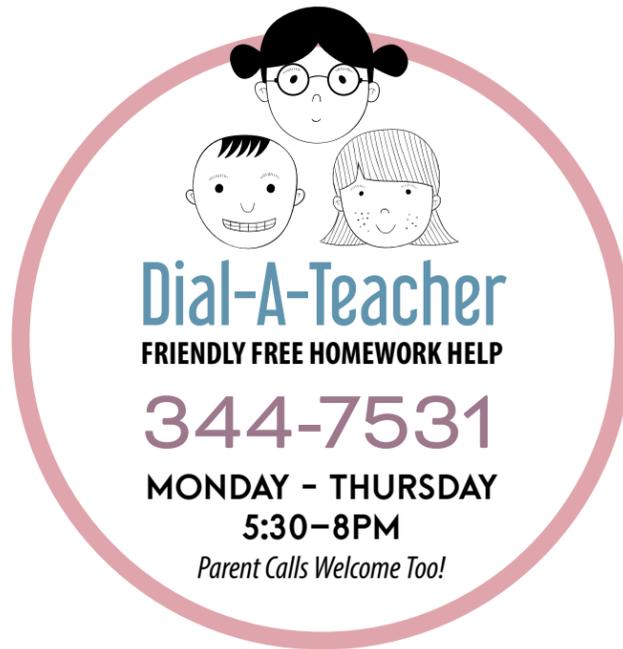
- 4 National Board Renewal Class
8:30A - 12P • Members: \$75 / Non \$100
- 7 Fed Rep Council: 4:15 - 6:30P
- 11 Dossier Writing Workshop
1 - 3P • Members: \$90 / Non \$180
- 14 Students in the Center
4:30 - 5:30P • Free
- 20-31 Winter Break: No Classes

January 2022

- 3 Professional Development Day
- 4 First Day of Second Semester
- 4 Fed Rep Council: 4:15 - 6:30P



Please watch for information about whether the listed ATF events will be held in-person, on-line or both.



Announcements



Voluntary Support

Are you struggling in one or more areas of instruction? Do you need help with your self-reflection, PDP or Smart Goals?

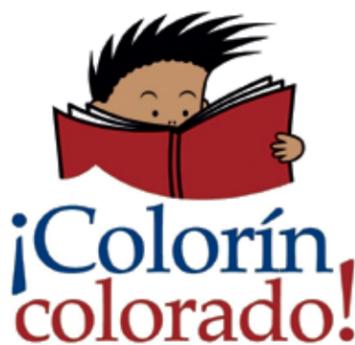
To request help, contact Ree Chacon at chacon_am@aps.edu or 505-253-0335 x 67055. All support is confidential.



What Educators Need to Prioritize Health and Well-Being

Even before the pandemic, educators were feeling stressed out, overworked, underappreciated and underpaid. We have rightly focused on student mental health as we head back to school, but educator health and well-being are equally important. So, AFT launched a new campaign to promote educator health and well-being.

The launch of the AFT's campaign will focus attention on your needs and how we can better support our educators' mental, emotional and physical well-being. We invite you to visit sharemylesson.com.



The AFT, along with their affiliates and researchers, have developed resources to help school systems succeed in educating all students. Colorín Colorado is the nation's leading bilingual website for serving educators and parents of English language learners (ELLs).

¡Visit Colorín Colorado Today!

ATF UNION



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