



The Vanguard



American Federation of Teachers

NORWALK FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

NORWALK FEDERATION OF RETIREES
AFT Connecticut

January 2019

Norwalk, Connecticut

Volume LII, No. 6

FROM MY VIEWPOINT

Happy New Year and Welcome Back to school!

We will continue to fight for your rights in 2019, just as we did in 2018. I want to let you know about a very positive outcome related to the 2018 NFT Insurance grievance, which changes the way that the State Partnership Plan (SPP) ages young people off the plan. This is a benefit to our members with children who are covered under the plan. You may recall that last year under the SPP, young people were covered until the end of the month of their 26th birthday. Beginning on January 1, 2019 the SPP will continue health insurance benefits for every dependent child to the end of the year following his/her birthday at age 26.

During our insurance grievance, we took pains to point out that state mandates require coverage to the end of the year following the 26th birthday. We presented testimony that representatives from the state and the School Board had assured us that state mandates were being followed. The SPP website even stated plainly that all state mandates were being followed. But in fact, they were not. Now we have better coverage that reflects what we were promised, and the website has been updated.

Here are the words from the State Comptroller's Office: "Effective January 1, 2019, CT Partnership Plan group medical, pharmacy and dental & vision (if applicable) coverage for eligible dependents will continue through the end of the calendar year in which the dependent reaches age 26. For example, a dependent that turns age 26 in February 2019 will remain on coverage through December 31, 2019. Partnership groups will be responsible for terminating the dependents at the end of the calendar year in which they turn 26 and providing a COBRA Notice at that time. Additional information regarding the timeline for processing the dependent terminations is forthcoming."

Mary Yordon
NFT President



NFT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING DATES 2018-2019

January 15 (snow date January 16)	April 23 (Food Drive)
February 12 (snow date February 13)	May 14
March 19 (snow date March 20)	June 4

All meetings are held at West Rocks Middle School in the library at 3:45 p.m. except for the March 19 meeting, which will begin for high school NFT members at 3:15 p.m.

FROM YOUR STEWARDS' HANDBOOK

Page 15

Teacher Evaluation

1. If a teacher disagrees with an observation or an evaluation, he/she should meet with the observer and attempt to have the inaccuracies changed or modified.
2. If the observer is unwilling to change or modify the observation or evaluation, a written response should be attached which is objective, factual, honest, and complete. The response should be reviewed by the NFT building steward(s) **BEFORE** being turned in.

OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESS AND INJURY

Even after three years, I am constantly amazed at the broad spectrum of issues that come across my desk. I have much to learn. We have many who feel that their damp, dusty, or moldy classroom is contributing to poor health, sometimes in serious ways. We also have had rooms with raccoons, bats, birds' nests and bees as well as leaking roofs, windows, and overflowing sewage.

One thing I've recently learned is that it is essential to complete a worker's compensation report of occupational injury or illness right away if you have an illness that you believe to be caused by your work. A school nurse should be able to provide you with a form.

If you file a Worker's Comp claim and it is denied, our NFT attorney can in many instances help you to file an appeal or challenge this claim, at no cost to you.

Mary

PAYCHECK DEDUCTIONS

Health insurance premium deductions are taken from all regular paychecks. The only pays that are not affected by health insurance premiums are summer paychecks.

NFT dues and Teacher Retirement Board contributions are taken from twenty pays. These are not deducted from the third August or third March paychecks.

THE SILENT STRIKE: TEACHER ATTRITION AS RESISTANCE

Taking to the streets in protest is not the only way teachers react to poor working conditions. The recent wave of teacher strikes and walkouts across the United States is focusing much-needed attention on the concerns of public school educators. By what seems to many like a sudden wave of discontent hasn't come out of nowhere. In fact, for years we have been ignoring a huge silent protest right in front of our eyes: the increasing number of teachers leaving the profession.

Over the last 30 years, teacher attrition rates have increased to the point that most teachers now leave the job before making it a career. While the typical teacher once had 15 years of experience, now that number is under five, meaning that teaching is not a long-term profession for most. But we don't view this change as a protest of or challenge to our education policies and practices. My research has convinced me that we should.

Jeremy Glazer
Phi Beta Kappan, November 2018
 article summary

2018 - 2019 DATES TO REMEMBER

Women's March in Hartford, New Haven, and Washington, D.C.--January 19, 2019
 January NFT General Membership meeting--January 15, 2019 (January 16)
 February NFT Executive Committee meeting--February 6, 2019 (February 7)
 February NFT General Membership meeting--February 12, 2019 (February 13)

KNOW YOUR CONTRACT

ARTICLE IX LEAVES OF ABSENCE

1 g. When a teacher is absent from work for reasons of personal health for more than seven (7) consecutive days, the Superintendent or his designees may require the teacher to submit a written statement from a physician stating the reason for absence and the length of time he/she anticipates the teacher to be unable to return to work. The Superintendent, or his/her designee, is authorized with the teacher's consent, to communicate with the physician to seek, at the Board's expense, his/her opinion of the probable duration of the teacher's disability. Such information received shall be treated as confidential in nature. The Board reserves the right to require after seven (7) consecutive school days of absence, that the teacher be examined at the Board's expense, by a physician of the Board's choice in order to determine eligibility of the teacher to continue to receive sick benefits. In cases where the Board does not designate an examining physician, the Board shall reimburse the employee for reasonable and customary cost of the physical examination.

In addition, the Superintendent or the Director of Human Resources may require a signed statement from a licensed physician to verify the nature of absences when he/she has reasonable suspicion of a pattern of abuse or sick leave. In all such cases, the Federation shall be notified of such verification requirement.

THE AGREEMENT CONCERNING ENCORE

The terms of Encore have shifted several times over the last three years. The Tentative Agreement of August 29, 2017 documents the most current agreement for Encore courses. This document was signed by the Board and NFT, then ratified by the Board and a September vote of the General Membership of the NFT. This agreement is most notable for providing for the transition to the new insurance plan but also regulates Encore. The agreement is posted on the district's HR website with contracts and other documents.

Teachers who develop Encore courses continue to be paid for this, as required by terms of the agreement.

Here is the relevant paragraph which begins on Page 6: *"6. 'Encore' activities will be offered once per week for 45 minutes in each middle school (except teachers with more than three preparation periods shall be exempt from Encore activities). Teachers will be paid \$500 to develop their activity as an extension and hands-on application of the core-curriculum subject taught by the teachers. Encore activities will not be treated as separate courses. These courses will be graded Pass/Fail or by using another student accountability measure approved by the Superintendent, and shall not factor into teacher performance evaluations. In the 2017-2018 school year, such Encore activities shall commence six weeks after the start of the school year."*

PICKETS, PROTESTS, AND PROGRESS

"For American public education," AFT President Randi Weingarten writes, "2018 was a turning point. At the year's outset, #RedForEd was a hashtag; at the year's end, it's a movement." In her latest *New York Times* column, Weingarten calls 2018 the year when the unlikely became possible in American education. Looking at the year ahead, she urges readers to draw inspiration from the young people standing up against gun violence, the educators who ran for office, and the teachers who rose up in defense of their profession and their students. They proved that, by coming together, we can achieve what would be impossible for individuals on their own.

Inside AFT, December 21, 2018

NFT Maternity Liaison and FMLA Contact**Katie Okrentowich****Brien McMahon High School****mrs.okrentowich@gmail.com****(203) 243-4762****ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: KIDS IN LA DESERVE BETTER**

Unless there are dramatic shifts in the negotiations, United Teachers Los Angeles members will strike on Jan. 10, 2019. Last weekend, AFT President Randi Weingarten joined 50,000 UTLA members, students, and allies as they marched through downtown LA. They've worked tirelessly to persuade Los Angeles Unified School District officials to reduce testing, improve school safety, increase pay, and boost charter school oversight and accountability. But school officials have claimed poverty, despite a nearly \$2 billion "rainy day fund" that could be tapped to lower class size and provide all schools with at least one full-time nurse, counselor, and librarian.

*Inside AFT, December 21, 2018***SCHOOL OF DISTINCTION**

We are once again finding out about essential changes proposed for our schools through the newspapers and Facebook parent pages. This administration has so little regard for teachers that they do not seek even the bare minimum of communication about the million dollar efforts to improve instruction of the high needs students in our classroom.

The NFT is seeking to clarify the implementation steps and impact of the school of distinction conceptual model proposed for Brookside, Jefferson, and Kendall. Elements of this model were presented to the Board recently and include a year-round calendar, 5 extra days of instruction, 12 extra days of professional development, a longer school day, new curriculum for math, music, and language arts, continuous progress monitoring, and school uniforms.

We know that many of you are concerned about arrangements for child care and elderly. Some are concerned about where their career is headed and how much more change and turmoil is tolerable. Some express skepticism about the effectiveness of the model, which seemed to them thrown hastily together. A survey of NFT members in one school indicates that there are very few at this point who are committed to staying with the experimental model if it comes to their school despite the laudable goals.

The district has the unilateral right to set the curriculum, the student day, and the student year. We have the obligation to staff our schools. We have a right to participate in the making of recommendations in the selection of instructional materials, curriculum changes and implementation, and educational facilities. We have the right to negotiate the impact of changes if they impact existing contractual agreements.

Are our parents with students in two school buildings aware that they may soon face weeks of vacation in October and March for one child and April vacation for another? Commenting on parent community buy-in, Dr. Adamowski is quoted in the *Hour*: "We have to realize this may not be what people want because, quite often, the customer doesn't know what they want, they know what they have. And they're not able to appreciate the effect of something until they actually try it and do it and see the results," Adamowski said during Tuesday's meeting, "If we simply had people do what they want, we would just do more of the status quo."

It is truly shocking to hear our families given so little disregard. This is new.

Spring 2019 MCLA Three Graduate Credit Courses:

Web Technology for All Classes	January 12, 13, 19, 20, 21
Modes of Learning: Classroom Methods	January 26, 27 February 2, 3, 9
Creativity in the Classroom	February 16, 17, 18, 23, 24
The Motivation of Student Achievement: Employing Film	March 2, 3, 9, 10, 16
Multiple Intelligences: Logical Understanding	March 23, 24, 30, 31 April 6
The Classroom Beyond Testing	April 13, 14, 27, 28 May 4

Contact Stu Schwartzman at www.StuUedu.com for further information, full 2019 course schedule, and registration.

HOW OUR WORD CHOICES CAN EMPOWER OUR STUDENTS

Since the words we use when writing about students can influence how they think about their learning, their work, and themselves, it's important that we choose our words carefully.

Part of our job as teachers is to write about our students--from completing end-of-semester progress reports to commenting on their essays, emailing their parents, filling out paperwork for their IEP's, and providing reference letters for their college applications, summer programs, scholarships, and job searches. What we write about our students has enormous potential to affect their lives.

Teachers sometimes describe students as nice and lovely or as having a bright smile or a cheerful disposition, but using an adjective that could just as easily describe room décor makes it sound as if students are there to please the teacher instead of to learn. Adjectives become particularly problematic when they convey race and gender biases or represent our subjective judgments. My *imaginative* might be your *irrelevant*.

We can also use verbs to name behaviors. To replace your adjectives with verbs, try asking yourself what students do to make you describe them in a particular way.

To create vivid visual images, we need specific nouns. We might name student work products: (poem, cell, model, integer), materials they use (writer's notebook, graduated cylinder), or topics they studied (lizards, Mount Fuji).

In many communications about students, we deliver information about what the student has learned or does well alongside information about what the student still needs to learn or improve. Conjunctions - words like *and*, *but*, *while*, *although*, and *unless* - relate such pieces of information to each other. The conjunctions we choose can reveal our attitudes towards students and shape their attitudes towards themselves, their learning, and our classes. More important than putting praise or criticism first is putting the student's strength in the sentence's main clause.

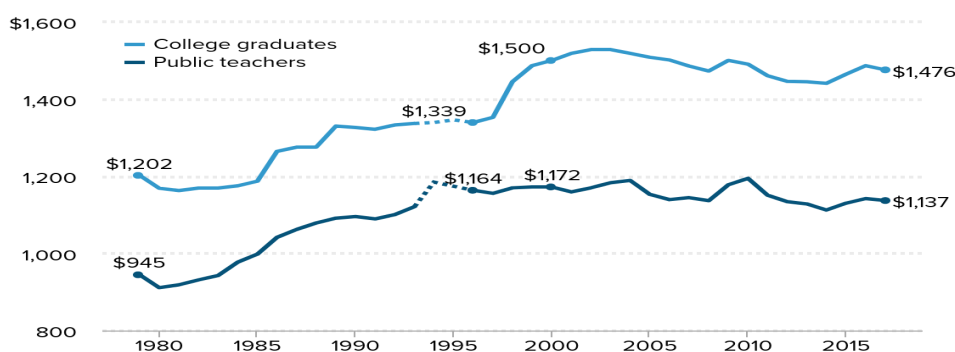
When we use adverbs - pursuing a topic curiously, using materials resourcefully, sharing courageously - we are showing our readers the qualities of action that matter to us.

We can also pay careful attention to when we use the pronoun *I* in our communications about students. I no longer write sentences that express my approval. "I love how Tayo acknowledges his peer's perspective while also asserting his own." Sentences like these make it sound as if the purpose of student work is to please me rather than to give students opportunities to practice important skills and create meaningful products.

We can regularly review our communications about student within a group that already works closely together, such as an academic department or a grade-level team, and structure our discussions such that teachers can reflect critically about their own work while expressing curiosity about each other's.

article summary
Phi Beta Kappan, November 2018

Average weekly wages of public school teachers and other college graduates, 1979–2017 (2017 dollars)



Note: Teachers are elementary, middle, and secondary public school teachers. "College graduates" excludes public school teachers. Non-imputed data are unavailable for 1994 and 1995; data points for these years have been extrapolated and are represented by dotted lines (see Appendix A for more details).

Source: Authors' analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data

Economic Policy Institute

FROM THE HUMAN SERVICES COUNCIL:

We are extremely grateful for your generosity and commitment not only to the children and families we serve but also to our community. Every holiday season Children's Connection collects and distributes gifts for close to 3,200 children who have been abused, neglected, or are living in emergency housing, group homes, or shelters throughout lower Fairfield County. Thanks to your support the Children's Connection is able to continue to support young children when they need it the most and continue to work towards our mission of creating a world where no child is harmed and no family is left without guidance.

Throughout the year, Children's Connection works in cooperation with social service providers, police, hospitals, and state agencies to investigate, substantiate, and respond to the needs of abused children and their families with a continuum of integrated services.

On behalf of the Children's Connection and the many children who will benefit from your generosity and commitment to making the world a better place, thank you.

Sincerely,
Kari Pesavento, Director.

Union Members Save with Union Plus

Programs like car buying services, scholarships, travel & entertainment deals, credit cards, and much more!

LEARN MORE ▶

aft
A Union of Professionals
AFT+
Member Benefits

AT&T DISCOUNTS
Save 10% on the monthly service charge of qualified wireless plans* and 10% on select accessories.

TAX PREPARATION TIP

KAHAN, STEIGER & COMPANY, P.C., certified public accountants and participants in the NFT/NFEP discount program again for 2018 is offering NFT/NFR members substantial discounts for their tax preparation and other accounting services:

1. Up to one hour free of professional consultation per year to be applied toward services billed by Kahan, Steiger & Company, P.C.
2. A 15% discount on standard billing rates for services actually rendered.

Services are to be engaged on an individual basis and such services *must result in some billable amount* to each individual. The one free hour of consultation is *not* to be used by an individual to obtain information regarding his or her tax concerns and then go elsewhere, or to review a tax return prepared by someone other than a Kahan Steiger employee.

All members interested in these accounting and tax services should contact Dahl Bowser directly to coordinate such services.

1100 Summer Street
P.O. Box 3227
Stamford, Connecticut 06095-0227
(203) 327-5717 <http://www.kahansteiger.com>