FROM MY VIEWPOINT

Many NFT leadership and members are concerned about the budget for 2020-2021. The best outcome in the budget process comes from the city working carefully with NPS in a relationship of mutual trust and respect. That is not what appears to be happening. Dr. Adamowski’s practices and the actions of the Board of Education over the past few years make this very difficult. This will not be an easy year.

The NFT advocates for reasonable funds from the city, and then we ask for reasonable allocation of those funds from the Board. We want to maintain classroom size and classroom resources. We believe that if cuts must be made, they should be made far away from the very slender school-based budgets. The city has begun to question the data and the spending. Many have noticed consultants, food trucks, personalized lunch bags, consultants, furniture showing up unclaimed on loading docks, frequent catered events at the Norwalk Inn, consultants, expensive trips to far flung places, $80,000 in gift cards, and other fairly lavish expenditures.

Some very good expenditures have been made, and the full picture is complex. We are hopeful that a new superintendent will restore good working relationships to bring us to a different type of conversation with the city. We are hopeful for a budget that will preserve the basics and trim the fat. We are grateful for the budget work that is being done by the elected officials on the current Board of Ed, and the working professionals at City Hall who support them.

Mary Yordon, NFT President

SUPPORT RE-ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

This is the beginning of election season. Candidates for the Fall 2020 election are announcing and forming their election committees. The State of Connecticut has a wonderful program to provide public financing for elections. This enables more regular working people to run for state office and evens out the chances for regular people—not just deep pocket donors—to have an impact on local elected officials.

Candidates need to raise a certain number of donations, as well as a certain minimum amount, in their voter zone. The faster they do this, the faster they can hire campaign managers and focus on things other than money and fundraising.

Some of our elected officials have spent a good deal of time and attention on the needs of education and have considered our viewpoints. This is the season to make sure the right candidates get a strong start and get re-elected. A $5-$250 donation can have a big impact right now because it helps a candidate qualify for public financing.

Each campaign has different needs at this point and may be at a different stage of needing either voters in the correct precinct, or total dollars, or both.

Please consider donations to your local state-elected officials. Look up their campaigns. Make a donation to help them move beyond fundraising and tackle the issues. If they have already qualified, offer to help out their campaigns. There is much to do. And remember to register to vote!
ADDRESSING CORONAVIRUS

What can NFT members do to stay healthy and help students stay healthy?

Practice and encourage good hand hygiene. Students should be reminded of the importance of thorough hand washing in school and at home and given additional time and opportunities to wash their hands during the day. Instruct students to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the bathroom and before eating. For more information and resources, such as posters, see www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html.

Remind students to avoid touching their faces, particularly eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Students and staff should be encouraged to stay home from school for any respiratory illness and consult their healthcare provider. I’ve asked the Chief Talent Officer to consider the attendance policy in light of the threats of contagious illness. A recent informative AFT bulletin available here.

THE END OF THE ADAMOWSKI ERA

As of this writing, there are 70 days left until Dr. Adamowski’s last day in June. But who’s counting?

Dr. Adamowski is known for leaving a place just as the magic of his promises starts to wear off—when the community realizes that the emperor has no clothes, that the data has been carefully selected, and that the promised outcomes have not been achieved. Is that where we are in the trajectory of his career here? The statement below was made to the Norwalk Board of Education by a New London parent, who came to address our Board just after they voted to approve Dr. Adamowski’s hire.

“I felt compelled to support the statement the local union made so astutely last month regarding what is known by each district Dr. Adamowski has had a hand in— that is, his strong-arming and authoritarian method of management, or as the NFT put it, “management by fear.” This crushes teachers and entire districts to the point where they have a form of PTSD once he is done. Yes, he won’t be here long. It’s an MO that we can trace back to the 90’s in Cincinnati. That is where merit pay began. It actually has no research behind it to make teachers perform better, and it was passed by New London’s board because they barely understood what was in the Strategic Operating Plan. That happened in Hartford as well. In New London, he [Adamowski] attempted to start a local charter that thankfully failed. He attempted to bring in TFA [Teach for America], which thankfully failed. He successfully passed student-based budgeting, which exacerbated inequalities. He joined AIR in 2004. You know that organization delivers SBAC now. A past speaker/teacher/adviser in the now infamous administrator training organization SUPES Academy in Chicago which is currently wrapped up in an FBI investigation.

My recommendation, my advice, as a parent from New London, one of the past districts that was crushed, is to scrutinize every bullet in your Strategic Operating Plan. Demand and genuinely listen to public and union input. Reach out to past districts and do your research on each initiative. The public and union should have the expectation to be at the table and not at the door waiting to enter on a platter. Every harmful bullet I’ve mentioned was passed by a board, either by a budget line item, contract clause, or resolution, an item in your board meetings. You can prevent it in the future to your district. And I hope you do. Thank you.”

April 2016

AFT CONNECTICUT STATEWIDE RETIREEs CONFERENCE

AFT CT will sponsor the 2020 Statewide Retirees Conference on Wednesday, May 13, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Manor Inn, 1636 Meriden-Waterbury Turnpike, Plantsville, CT. Registration and breakfast begin at 8:30 a.m. with lunch also provided. Space is limited; register before April 30 by phone at 860-257-9782 or online at https://leadernet.aft.org/webform/retirees-conference. Make your $10 check payable to AFT Connecticut at 35 Marshall Road, Rocky Hill, CT 06067.
KNOW YOUR CONTRACT
Article XIII: Transfers: 3

Certificated personnel who desire a change in grade and/or subject assignment or who desire to transfer to another building shall file a written statement of such desire with the Human Resources Office no later than June 15. Such statement shall include the grade and/or schools (in order of preference, if the teacher has preferences) to which he/she desires to be transferred.

HEALTH INSURANCE FORM 1095c

Form 1095-C documents provide proof of insurance and may be needed in some instances. Mostly, an individual just needs to have this document and hold onto it. Our 1095-C will be mailed by the end of March by the district. You may wish to double check that the address on file with Munis ESS is correct.

In the meantime, if you have someone asking for proof of insurance now, your pay stub documents your health insurance deductions and so can be used to establish coverage.

PROFESSIONALISM

What is professionalism? The Connecticut Code of Professionalism defines professionalism in about 1000 words. I recommend that you all take a look. Refresh yourselves on why we are given the high privilege of guiding this city’s young people. NFT members achieve a high level of professionalism here in this district. It’s not something to sneeze at.

Professionalism is continuing to perform a job at the highest level possible despite being undermined in various ways. Teachers who teach in leaky rooms. EL teachers who give their all to a caseload of 200 students. School counselors whose jobs are switched around so much they don’t have a solid set of known students at the beginning of a school year. It is hard to maintain professionalism under these circumstances.

Professionalism is also setting high standards for yourself, which means continuing to educate yourself year after year to meet the challenges of a changing job. Ramping up on the new technology. Taking a course to learn new approaches and understanding. Mapping out the units and lessons of a new curriculum. It takes professionalism to continue to do this year after year. Sometimes you have to step it up, and our NFT teachers have been doing this for the last few years of upheaval.

Finally, professionalism means that you are sensitive to the impact you are having on those around you. A lapse in professionalism leads to offended colleagues and families. Professionalism means that even if you are having a bad day, or a bad week, your students and your colleagues hear an even tone, moderate language, and see sensible behavior.

The NFT is committed to advocating for improvements in working conditions and careful defense of the protections in the contract. The NFT has been working to make sure the district hears how much we are doing to rise to the needs. Nonetheless, I notice the toll it is taking in mental health, and resulting professional conduct, of our members. I invite you to take good care of yourself so that you can maintain your energy and excellence right through until June. Take a good weekend break. Reach out to a colleague and organize a “restorative moment” together. Reach out for help if you need it before you need representation.

Mary Yordon

RALLY IN HARTFORD FOR LOBBY DAY

Monday, April 20, 2020 marks the date of the annual CEA Lobby Day in Hartford. This is an opportunity for AFT retirees to support CEA efforts to stand up for teacher retirement benefits such as our pension, support the funding of retirees’ insurance, remind legislators to implement the 50% tax exclusion of our pension, and pass the proposal to bring our COLA in line with the investment assumption rate. These issues effect all teacher retirees in Connecticut regardless of union or association affiliation.
AFT 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ENDORSEMENT

In March 2019 the AFT charted a very different approach to our 2020 presidential endorsement process than in previous cycles with an emphasis on member engagement first and foremost. And to date, that has generated an unprecedented level of engagement, both with our members and with all of the Democratic presidential candidates. We tried, by the way, to engage Donald Trump over the last three years on issues of common concern, but he never bothered answering our letters. And Betsy DeVos has demonstrated over and over her antipathy toward public education, student borrowers, educators and school staff.

More than 300,000 members have engaged personally in our election 2020 work so far. And while we are not monolithic, we are one when it comes to our desire to do everything we can to get Trump out of office and to unite behind the Democratic nominee.

As the primary and caucus season heats up, we devoted our most recent executive council meeting to reviewing the candidates’ positions and track records, and our members’ feedback on them. We have had unprecedented direct member engagement with the 2020 candidates: 10 separate candidate town halls, five regional meetings (to date—there are more on the way!), multiple telephone town halls with hundreds of thousands of members around the country, member surveys and polls, and our Public Education Forum 2020. And this doesn’t include what many of our states and locals have done.

While our members have diverse views on who should be the Democratic nominee, there is no question that AFT members from all over see Donald Trump as an existential threat to the values and aspirations of our families, our communities, and those we serve. And while our members have a respect and admiration for Mayor Pete Buttigieg, Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Tom Steyer, they gravitate toward Vice President Joe Biden, Sen. Bernie Sanders and Sen. Elizabeth Warren because of their leadership in public education, affordable higher education, healthcare, labor and civil rights.

Therefore, our executive council is encouraging our members to actively support Biden, Sanders and/or Warren because they share our values, have demonstrated effective leadership through their records, have earned significant support within our membership, and are best positioned to achieve meaningful and lasting victories on the issues that matter to us most.

This resolution encourages members and leaders to become engaged and even provide individual support as they feel compelled to voice their own preferences. Since we’re encouraging members to get involved in one (or more) of these three campaigns, I wanted to suggest three things you can do:

• Run to be a delegate to your party’s national convention, and encourage your members to do the same. Visit AFTvotes.org or contact the AFT’s political department at aftvotes@aft.org for more information.
• Volunteer for a campaign. We encourage you to check out:
  o joebiden.com/take-action
  o berniesanders.com/volunteer
  o elizabethwarren.com/volunteer
• Submit a blog post for AFT Voices about why you support a specific candidate.

As educators, healthcare providers, and public employees, we have a great responsibility, beyond voting and encouraging others to vote: We are trusted messengers at a time of significant disinformation campaigns that have sown mistrust and division in our country. We know it will be an intense year ahead and the stakes couldn’t be higher. Thank you for all you do, and will do, for our union and our country. The country needs you, and we are so grateful for you.

In unity,
Randi Weingarten, AFT President
AFT CONNECTICUT SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Two scholarship programs are available each year exclusively to retired and active members of AFT-affiliated unions including the NFT. The application windows are open now through early and mid April for each of these valuable benefits.

AFT Connecticut awards two scholarships annually--one for union members to further their own professional learning and the other for their spouse, domestic partner, or children's education.

Click here for more on both AFT Connecticut scholarships, including application forms.

As affiliates of our national union, members are also eligible for one of 10 grants of $1,000 each to assist with their continuing education. Plus their dependents may apply for an $8,000 scholarship awarded each year to four high-achieving high school seniors.

Click here for more on our national AFT education grants, including online application access.

Wednesday, April 1 is the deadline for both of AFT Connecticut's scholarships and applications for AFT's Robert G. Porter Scholars Program are due Tuesday, April 14. Plan now to take advantage of both program's benefits!

Inside AFT, February 25, 2020

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
Stuart Schwartzman, Ed.D.
www.StuUedu.com

We had an excellent start to our 2020 schedule. If you are not familiar with our program, Massachusetts College (MCLA) employs distance learning, a program utilizing museums and attractions locally. These three graduate credit courses are presented over five weekend days. Hundreds of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York teachers have earned MCLA credits that have allowed them to raise their salaries quickly.

Each course begins at Christ & Holy Trinity Tower Classroom, Westport, 9 a.m. You may register at StuUedu.com or at the first session and find a full schedule of this session's courses there. Throughout the year we offer MCLA three credit graduate courses presented locally over five days, twenty times; it is possible to earn 60 credits in a calendar year.

Please contact me with any questions. I hope to see you soon.

NEW MCLA GRADUATE COURSES OFFERED IN 2020

Below is a list of the 2020 MCLA graduate courses for salary advancement offered by Stu Schwartzman. For further information, contact Stu at SASetc@aol.com or 203-613-7948.

Methods and Materials for Teaching Gifted Children  March 14, 15, 21, 22, 28
The Greening of the American Classroom  April 4, 5, 6, 11, 12
The Civil Rights of Teachers and Students  April 18, 19, 26, 26 May 2
Photojournalism Topics for Every Classroom  May 9, 10, 16, 17, 23
The Impact of Immigration on Class Presentations  May 30, 31 June 6, 7
Multiple Intelligences: Spatial Understanding  June 13, 14, 20, 21, 27
How Sports Can Influence Achievement  June 22 – 26
Web Technology, Part II (no prerequisite)  July 6 - 10
Problem Solving Methods: Employing Nutrition  July 11, 12, 18, 19, 25
Developing Critical Thinking Skills: Situation Analysis  July 20 - 24
Methods for Strengthening Curriculum: Diversity Training  August 1, 2, 8, 9, 15
Utilizing Museums  August 10 - 14
Utilizing Humor to Advance Curriculum  September 12, 13, 19, 20, 26
Ethics for Classroom Teachers  October 3, 4, 10, 11, 17
A New Mind for the Classroom: Right-brain Thinking  October 17, 18, 24, 25, 31
How Educational Research Can Impact Classrooms  November 7, 8, 14, 15, 21
The Efficient Use of Television for the Classroom  December 5, 6, 12, 13, 19
AFT CONNECTICUT OFFERS CPR REFRESHER

If your American Safety Health Institute (ASHI) certification in workplace first aid is expiring soon or has expired in the last two weeks, you may renew your certificate at no cost for members at a hands-on refresher course in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), and basic first aid on Tuesday, March 10 from 4 - 7 p.m. at the Soifer Conference Room on the second floor of AFT Connecticut union headquarters at 35 Marshall Road in Rocky Hill.

To register, call 860-257-9782. A light dinner will be provided. Bring your current or recently expired ASHI certification to participate.

SUMMER PROVIDES HELP TO REDUCE STUDENT LOANS

AFT is fighting on many fronts for a future free from the overwhelming burden of student loan debt: in the courts, in Congress, and at the ballot box. We are doing something more immediate for AFT-affiliated union members and offering a free subscription to Summer, a trusted online platform that can help simplify and navigate student loans.

Click here to start saving today — it only takes five minutes to get started!

Summer is already working with union members like you to help them reduce their student loan burden. Members last year received early access to the benefit, and more than 3,000 have begun to work on income-driven repayment or loan forgiveness online.

TAX PREPARATION TIP

KAHAN, STEIGER & COMPANY, P.C., certified public accountants, will be participating again in the NFT discount services program for 2019-2020 and offering all NFT / NFR members a discount for their tax preparation and other accounting services of:

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 06905-0227
(203) 327-5717 http://www.kahansteiger.com