



*A Union of Professionals*

# Professional Learning & You





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## **OUR MISSION**

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

**As a member of the American Federation of Teachers**, you have access to a variety of programs and resources designed to enhance your professional growth. Many of these opportunities are detailed here. For more information, visit **[www.aft.org/education](http://www.aft.org/education)**, email **[edissues@aft.org](mailto:edissues@aft.org)** or contact your local union.

By addressing the professional needs of our educator members, we are able to help them become even more successful in their careers; in their union; in the institutions in which they work; and in serving the students, families and communities they serve.

# The AFT Professional Learning Program

The AFT has long recognized that the union's responsibilities go beyond the traditional "bread and butter" issues of salary and benefits. The AFT Professional Learning Program represents one of the union's major efforts to improve student achievement by making a difference in practitioners' performance and professional growth. This program of more than 20 courses:

- Is rooted in evidence-based educational, cognitive and social science research.
- Is guided by cutting-edge experts in the field and designed by frontline educators who know firsthand what goes on in classrooms and schools every day.
- Provides educators with the necessary tools and resources to make complex decisions and select the most effective strategies for meeting individual students' academic, social and behavioral needs.
- Connects excellent teaching practice with broader education policy issues and campaigns.

## **Our professional learning and engagement program is based on the train-the-trainer model of professional development.**

- This model allows for internal capacity building and enables affiliates to meet the unique needs of their school community.
- When professional learning is led by peers from similar backgrounds, contexts and experiences, participants are more likely to buy into the process and incorporate new knowledge into their practice.
- AFT trainers assist in the development of coursework and deliver training through the AFT's Professional Learning Summer Educator Academy or locally based trainings. There are also opportunities for participation in member-led web-based professional learning and seminars.

## Union-sponsored professional learning strengthens our relationship with our members and is an indispensable tool for building broader, deeper support for the union.

- It provides a direct way for more members to get to know the values of our union as a professional organization dedicated to enhancing both the profession and the practice of our members.
- It opens up lines of communication for work-site leaders to reach out to colleagues and conduct member-to-member outreach around professional issues.
- It creates networking opportunities for members to meet other members and build a stronger union!

To see our catalog of course offerings, go to [www.aft.org/sites/default/files/aftplprogram.pdf](http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/aftplprogram.pdf).

## Customized Professional Learning

In addition to our 20-plus courses and Summer Educator Academy (see page 10), the AFT offers customized professional learning opportunities to meet diverse teaching and learning needs, such as:

- The **Promoting Students' Social-Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health** workshop focuses on identifying and understanding common childhood mental illnesses; understanding research on adverse childhood experiences and trauma, as well as their implications for practice; and creating and implementing strategies for supporting students and ourselves in the challenging work to help them thrive.
- The experience of loss can have a profound impact on the social, emotional and academic elements of a child's life. A 2012 survey by the AFT and the New York Life Foundation showed that 7 in 10 teachers have a grieving student in their classroom, but few know how to provide support. Adults' skillful and informed responses can provide stability during a difficult time. In the **Supporting Grieving Students** workshop, participants will learn the important role of school personnel in supporting grieving students, what to say and what not to say to a grieving child, how to advocate for peer support, and how to provide support over time.

- **Strategies for Student Success** is a high-quality, research-based program that consists of three hour modules that create a manageable way to connect with educators. These modules address teaching and learning in a way that benefits new and veteran teachers alike. The content in the modules can be tailored to benefit individuals, groups and the whole school.
- If your district is using a student learning objectives (SLO) process that your members have been trained to use, our **Informing Instruction: Linking the Assessment Process to Teaching and Learning** course can be used to ensure new employees understand the process or as a refresher for veteran educators. Fully understanding the SLO process will give participants the confidence to take control of it and use it as a tool for success in the classroom.
- The AFT's **Instructional Supports Workshops** are designed to meet the needs of educators who are looking for strategies and instructional practices on implementing academic standards that they can learn and apply right away in their classrooms. Workshops include:
  - Formative Assessments
  - English Language Learners
  - Considerations for Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings
  - Differentiating Instruction
  - K-12 Writing
  - K-12 Science

## **AFT Professional Learning Online**

Through this web-based platform, members are able to access content to help them learn new techniques and skills and to get tips that will help them create classroom environments that foster success for their students. The AFT eLearning platform also provides a space where educators and locals can connect with their peers and colleagues from around the country and access support, the latest research and more.

The site hosts a variety of professional learning opportunities, including webinars, self-paced courses and blended learning. Topics range from student learning objectives to the appropriate uses of assessments for educators. Affiliates can contribute to



the site by adding their online offerings to the platform or announcing face-to-face offerings that will be available to members in their district.

This site is free to AFT members and locals. Go to [AFTeLearning.org](https://AFTeLearning.org) to create your account or contact [elearning@aft.org](mailto:elearning@aft.org) for more information.

## **Union Leadership Institute**

Union leaders and activists have access to a wealth of expertise and experience through AFT UNI, which offers courses and programs covering every major skill needed these days: in communications, community engagement, organizing, member engagement, leadership development, politics and legislation, strategic research, and union governance and administration. And there are specific topics—such as fostering early literacy or protecting healthcare access for working families—to help us serve the people who depend on us even better.

When you participate in one of these courses, you'll expand your skills and knowledge and build a community of colleagues. Participants will leave their AFT UNI course or program with new ideas, resources and strategies—and renewed energy and optimism for the work they do in their union and in their profession.

Many courses can be customized to your affiliate's needs and brought right to you.

For more information, go to [www.aft.org/AFTUNI](https://www.aft.org/AFTUNI).

## AFT Teacher Leaders Program

The Teacher Leaders Program identifies and brings together a select group of educators, and supports and empowers them to assume active leadership roles in their schools, unions, communities and beyond.

The AFT noticed the lack of teacher voice in education policy discussions in our country and decided to do something about it. Why weren't experts in the classroom being asked for their input on how to ensure that our children have the best opportunities to learn? To help address this question, the AFT designed the Teacher Leaders Program in 2011, based on Ellen Meyers' Teachers Network, to help prepare educators to facilitate discussion of the issues that affect our profession—both locally and nationally. To date, more than 1,000 individuals from 30 locals have participated in the program.

Teacher leadership embodies the idea that classroom teachers can become formal, recognized leaders within their schools and communities while still maintaining their in-the-classroom status. Teachers who feel passionate about education—and want to continue working with children—can become coaches, peer evaluators, mentors, specialists in curriculum and instruction, advocates, activists, union leaders, teachers on special assignment, fellows in state or national programs, “teacherpreneurs,” National Board Certified Teachers, teachers of the year, and more. This program helps educators find their niche and follow their passion.

For more information, email Marjorie Brown at [mbrown@aft.org](mailto:mbrown@aft.org).



# AFT-Sponsored Conferences

## AFT TEACH Conference

TEACH (Together Educating America's Children), the AFT's biennial educational issues conference, brings together educators from across the country for workshops, discussions and speakers. The conference attracts more than 2,000 participants, including AFT members, state and district administrators, school board members, and representatives of the higher education, business and social services communities nationwide.

TEACH offers:

- Turnkey tools and resources to use back home;
- Ways to engage on issues facing your students, school or community;
- Hands-on sessions;
- Networking opportunities; and
- Thought-provoking speakers.

Learn more at [www.aft.org/teach](http://www.aft.org/teach).

## AFT Center for School Improvement Leadership Institute

The CSI Leadership Institute, created in collaboration with the United Federation of Teachers Teacher Center and AFT national partners, focuses on helping teams discover how to collaboratively create sustainable systems change—around the issues impacting their own schools' students, educators and families. Through intensive work sessions, teams strengthen their collective leadership capacity, as well as learn how to lead and facilitate school transformation that results in improved student performance and improved teaching and learning environments; the teams dig deeper into their local data and integrate strategies to improve school culture and climate, always with an eye toward sustainability. Participating teams engage in interactive and informative sessions such as:

- Capacity-building toward strong and effective labor-management-community teams through the integration of key components such as team building, communications and data-informed decision-making;

- How to develop shared values and shared decision-making that will lead to long-term systemic change at the school or district level;
- Capacity-building on culturally responsive pedagogy, restorative justice and trauma-informed practices; and
- How to harness the power of youth activism and voice to create change in the community and the classroom.

## **AFT Professional Learning Summer Educator Academy**

This nine-day academy provides union-sponsored, research-based professional learning that addresses the complexities of teaching. The program is designed to help local unions build the capacity to deliver high-quality professional learning services to all educators—teachers, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel. The AFT collaborates with leading education researchers to synthesize and apply research-validated best practices. Classroom-based activities help participants connect the research findings to their daily work, including small group interaction, role-play, case studies, simulations, Socratic seminars and shared reflection. This comprehensive and intensive training prepares these educators to return to their locals as facilitators in specific course areas. These individuals, in turn, train others to facilitate sessions at the local level in a pyramiding effect designed to reach larger numbers of participants.

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## **AFT Innovation Fund**

The AFT Innovation Fund, open to affiliates at the state and local level, works to identify, nurture and bring to scale union and educator-led innovations in public education. Through this funding, the AFT provides a platform for its local affiliates and members to lead and engage partners in improving outcomes for our members and the people and communities they serve.

The majority of the fund's resources are distributed as grants to affiliates to be used to plan and carry out their work. In addition, the fund's staff and other AFT departments provide technical assistance to help

grantees carry out their work through monthly calls, periodic site visits, and connections to experts and resources.

For more information, go to [www.aft.org/bigbet](http://www.aft.org/bigbet).



## Shaping the Future

### Educators Rising

To broaden and diversify the teaching talent pool, we need to start early and grow our own. The AFT is proud to partner with Educators Rising (formerly Future Teachers of America) to support elective courses and career academies for high school students to explore teaching. The EdRising Academy curriculum and “Beginning to Teach” micro-credentials can help you get a program started in your school/district.

The AFT is collaborating with Educators Rising to recruit union leaders to plan and spearhead implementation of Educators Rising programming.

For more information, email [dkrusema@aft.org](mailto:dkrusema@aft.org) or go to <http://educatorsrising.org>.

### Grow Your Own Program

Teacher diversity matters. Numerous studies indicate the benefits for students of color who attend schools with a significant concentration of teachers of color who share their cultural, linguistic, racial

and national background. The AFT recognizes that diversity is a key component to equality and opportunity and strongly believes in diversifying the teaching workforce through Grow Your Own programs—a promising practice for recruiting people of color to the profession. GYO is a recruitment strategy designed to address teacher shortages and teacher diversity gaps that are especially prevalent in underserved communities across the country.

For more information, email Dyan Smiley at [dsmiley@aft.org](mailto:dsmiley@aft.org).

## Online Resources

### Share My Lesson | [www.sharemylesson.com](http://www.sharemylesson.com)

The AFT's free award-winning lesson-sharing website provides anyone who works with students support and a place to collaborate on new ideas and best practices to enhance the profession and the larger community. With more than 1 million members, Share My Lesson is where teachers, parents and school staff can:

- Find thousands of standards-aligned, preK-12 lesson plans, activities and professional development webinars that span the curriculum and content areas.
- Access high-quality resources from content partners like Colorín Colorado, First Book, Student Achievement Partners, the Anti-Defamation League, Facing History and Ourselves, Teaching Tolerance and PBS NewsHour Extra.
- Participate in discussions via new communities and get resources for issues like bullying prevention, creating a safe and positive climate, engaging parents, meeting the needs of diverse English language learners and helping students cope with traumatic events.
- Search lessons by grade and subject.
- Contribute their finest, most effective work to support colleagues across the country.

### Colorín Colorado | [www.colorincolorado.org](http://www.colorincolorado.org)

ColorinColorado.org is the premier national website serving educators and families of English language learners in grades preK-12. Colorín Colorado has been providing free

research-based information, activities, and advice to schools and communities nationwide for more than a decade.

To support these educators and parents, Colorín Colorado offers free multimedia materials such as classroom videos, toolkits, research-based articles, multilingual tip sheets, newsletters, featured books and authors, and social media. The site also provides information about topics such as reading together at home and creating a welcoming classroom environment.

Colorín Colorado is a bilingual website in English and Spanish, and offers basic content in 11 other languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Korean, Diné (Navajo), Russian, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

## **First Book | [www.firstbook.org](http://www.firstbook.org)**

The AFT and First Book are working together to put our shared values into practice by supporting inviting, inspiring and stimulating learning environments for our students, members and communities in need.

Through our partnership, we support:

- Children's well-being with access to new high-quality books as well as school supplies and basic-needs items at 50 to 90 percent off retail costs and in some cases for free;
- Powerful learning with First Book Marketplace books and resources to support hands-on learning opportunities and community-engagement activities;
- Building teacher and school staff capacity by highlighting new and diverse authors and books, along with tip sheets and suggested activities; and
- Fostering cultures of collaboration among students, educators, community partners and parents to help all students succeed in school and life and reach their full potential.

Together, the AFT and First Book have partnered to distribute more than 5 million books to classrooms and programs serving students and families in need, and connected thousands of educators and staff to ongoing resources. We'd like to help you as well. Register today at [www.firstbook.org/AFT](http://www.firstbook.org/AFT).

## Share Your Voice

AFT members have great expertise and passion, and we want to help you share that energy, experience and wisdom with a wider audience. There are a number of opportunities available for you to share your voice to help improve our schools and communities.

### Become a Professional Learning Trainer

Are you interested in delivering AFT professional learning courses? Opportunities are available to join our trainer cadre to deliver courses face-to-face, virtually, locally or nationally. To learn more about the program and the application process, check with your local leader and email [edissues@aft.org](mailto:edissues@aft.org).

### Start Blogging

The posts on our Schoolhouse Voices blog (<https://medium.com/school-house-voices>) are in large part written by teachers from around the country, with some additional commentary by AFT leaders and staff. Our teacher bloggers are sharing their experiences in the classroom—from their thoughts on how the Common Core is working, to their reflections on professional learning, to their successes and struggles working with students of all backgrounds and abilities.

If you are interested in adding your voice to the blog, email [edissues@aft.org](mailto:edissues@aft.org).

### Connect with Us on Social Media

Tell us what you do on social media, and we can follow you! If you have your own blog, website, Facebook page or Twitter account, let us know. We will follow you, and might even feature you in an upcoming newsletter or article.

 [www.facebook.com/AFTteach](http://www.facebook.com/AFTteach)

 [www.twitter.com/AFTteach](http://www.twitter.com/AFTteach)

## Newsletters & Publications

### American Educator

As an AFT member, you already should be receiving this quarterly magazine. If you are not, please email [ae@aft.org](mailto:ae@aft.org).

### AFT Teachers Professional Learning Newsletter

Sign up to receive this e-newsletter, which highlights the work our members and leaders are doing regarding professional issues. Each issue includes tips you can use with your students or share with your colleagues. Upcoming training sessions and events are also listed as well as links to new resources.

Subscribe online at [www.aft.org/education](http://www.aft.org/education).

### Other Publications

AFT members may request complimentary copies of AFT reports and brochures. To see the latest offerings, visit [www.aft.org/education/publications](http://www.aft.org/education/publications).

Most publications are available for download, but hard copies can be requested at [edissues@aft.org](mailto:edissues@aft.org).



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