



A Union of Professionals
Aldine AFT
 Local 6345 / AFL-CIO

local Voice

February 2012 / www.aldineaft.org

Events & Activities

AFT Steering Committee Meeting
 February 16
 Aldine AFT Headquarters
 5:00 p.m.

President's Day
 February 20
 Office Closed

FLSA Workshop
 February 23
 Aldine AFT Headquarters
 5:00 p.m.

Aldine AFT New Constitution Ratification Election
 March 8
 Greenspoint Mall - Community Room
 5:00 p.m.

Spring Break
 March 12-16

Be sure to check our "Calendar" section at our web site to learn more about our upcoming events.

Make Your Appointment Today

Call us today to schedule an appointment to meet with one of our local staff representative. Don't worry about traveling to our local office as we will come to you.
Call us at 281/847-3050 today!



Aldine AFT
 Local 6345 / AFL-CIO
Vilma Morera
 Aldine AFT Organizer
vmorera@aldineaft.org

A Big Win for Fairness Union Enforces Federal Fair Labor Standards Act

Gloria Zavala is a hardworking and dedicated employee of Aldine ISD who has worked as a custodian for more than seven years. Three months ago, Zavala transferred to Orange Grove Elementary to be closer to her home and to continue her service with the District. Throughout her career, Zavala has always exceeded expectations, but her work experience began to change dramatically at her new campus.

In January, Zavala contacted her union, Aldine AFT, to describe what she felt was a hostile working environment. Her supervisor was directing her to work overtime with no additional pay, perform duties which she was not medically able to complete, and to complete tasks well above a normal workload. As a result, Zavala described that she was being set up to fail and that her supervisor's ill temperament towards her was only making matters worse. She made attempts to resolve these matters with her building principal, but in the end, nothing was done.

Zavala said that after talking with her principal, her supervisor became even more upset. "I did what I was supposed to do, but nothing seemed to matter. Things just got worse, and my health was starting to suffer."

Aldine AFT filed an association grievance on behalf of all custodians in the District and on behalf of Zavala on January 9. The union claimed that numerous violations of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) had allegedly occurred, and that the District's policies concerning overtime pay were also in violation. AFT additionally challenged the District's practices of how it was directing custodians to record their hours worked and raised the issue of whether these same practices existed at other campuses.

After meeting with Dr. Archie Blanson, Aldine ISD Deputy Superintendent, on January 13 in an attempt to informally resolve this matter, both AFT and Zavala received the resolutions which they were seeking. Dr. Blanson outlined his goals to provide a fair working environment for all employees. In the meeting, Dr. Blanson directed Emitte Roque who serves as the Executive Director of Buildings and Properties to immediately take action to comply with federal regulations.

As a result of the informal meeting, AFT and Zavala received approval for all nine requests for resolution. The following briefly outlines the approved resolutions:

- Zavala is to be provided a new time card to record overtime hours worked and is to be compensated at the overtime rate. (Continued on page 2)



Gloria Zavala is pictured in front of her new campus, MacArthur HS, after winning her January grievance.

Fair Work for Fair Pay

(Continued from page 1)

▶ All Head Custodians will be retrained on the proper process of recording hours worked and how to advise employees as required by FLSA.

▶ All custodians will be advised to complete their individual time cards daily and submit them at the end of the week each Friday to reflect “all” hours worked.

▶ The workload at Orange Grove Elementary for custodians will be immediately redistributed as it was deemed “unfair”. New work schedules will begin the following week.

▶ Zavala’s medical restriction will be recognized and followed by the District.

▶ The Department of Operations Executive Director is directed to speak with Orange Grove Elementary supervisors about proper ways to treat employees.

▶ Zavala will have an option to transfer immediately if she chooses to accept.

▶ FLSA posters, as required by law, were found not posted in custodial areas. Posters will immediately be provided in both English and Spanish.

▶ All custodians will be advised on the location of FLSA posters on their campus.

“Because I stood up for my rights, I was finally able to win respect in the workplace,” said Zavala. “My union’s assistance gave me the support I needed to take my complaints to the top. I encourage each and every custodian to join me in my efforts to be treated as a professional. I invite my coworkers to join me and the AFT.”

Tanner Williams, Texas AFT State Representative who assisted Zavala, stated that the outcome of this case was a result of collaboration. “We should thank Dr. Blanson for his willingness to investigate our concerns and to work with us to resolve this matter,” said Williams. “Together, through a labor-management discussion, we gave Ms. Zavala, and custodians throughout the district, the professionalism and respect they each deserve.”

Aldine AFT has now launched a new campaign titled, “Fair Work for Fair Pay.” AFT is asking all hourly District employees to complete a short survey to describe their work experience. The campaign will also provide educational opportunities for employees to learn more about FLSA and their rights under law. The online version of the survey and FLSA materials may be found at www.aldineaft.org.

“It is our goal to ensure that each employee understands their rights, and to be sure that no other dignified worker is suffering because of the actions of their supervisor. This is our opportunity to start a proactive conversation with the District and to continue to give each person the fairness they deserve,” said Williams.

As of today, Zavala has accepted a transfer to MacArthur High School. She stated that she is excited about her new opportunity to continue to serve the children of Aldine ISD.

Teachers Overpaid? The Public’s Not Buying This Nonsense: New Opinion Poll

Perhaps you recall last fall’s strained attempt by purported scholars at the American Enterprise Institute and Heritage Foundation to make the case that American teachers are overpaid. Well, a new survey of public opinion on the issue published this week shows such pseudo-scholarship has not swayed American voters.

The new national Poll Position survey was a December 6 telephone poll of 1,142 registered voters, with a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points for its nationwide results. The survey asked: “Do you think that school teachers in the U.S. are underpaid, overpaid, or make the right amount of money?”

The answer was emphatic. Some 56 percent of all respondents said U.S. teachers are underpaid; fewer than one-fourth as many, only 13 percent, said they are overpaid. Another 23.5 percent said they are paid the right amount, and 8 percent said they were not sure.

Respondents in the age group from 18 to 29 were the most convinced that teachers are underpaid; 69 percent of them said so. Only 8 percent in this group said teachers are overpaid. The only age group where the percentage answering “underpaid” fell below 50 percent was the 65-and-over population, and even in that group the percentage answering “underpaid” was 45 percent versus just 14 percent who said “overpaid.”

Also noteworthy was the partisan breakdown. Among Republicans, 45 percent said teachers are “underpaid,” while 19 percent said “overpaid.” Among Democrats, 67 percent said teachers are “underpaid,” and only 4 percent said “overpaid.” Some 57 percent of independents agreed that teachers are “underpaid,” and 15 percent said the opposite. You can see the full poll results at <http://pollposition.com/2012/01/04/do-teachers-make-enough/>.



Tell Us What You Think.

Aldine ISD is considering the adoption of a new evaluation system called INVEST. We want to know what you think about it so far and what concerns, if any, you may have.

Take our quick survey online to share your thoughts at www.aldineaft.org.

In National “Quality Counts” Study, Texas Earns An F Again for Inadequate School Spending

The results of the 2012 Quality Counts survey are out, and for the second year in a row Texas has earned an F for its school-spending effort—or lack of effort, to be more precise. And once again the overall Texas score is only a C+, in spite of top marks awarded to the state for standard-setting from the researchers at Education Week magazine who conducted the study.



Actually, the Texas funding story is even worse than this study suggests. The low Quality Counts rating for funding of the state’s system of public education doesn’t even take into account the impact of an initial round of cuts implemented in 2010-2011 or the huge cuts that have taken effect in the 2011-2012 school year.

Even before the recently enacted cuts, Texas already ranked 49th in the nation in spending per pupil (after adjusting for regional cost variations).

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Texas also falls far below average in terms of teacher pay. Compared to average pay within the state for 16 comparable occupations, Texas teachers earn nearly 14 percent less. By this measure, average teacher pay in Texas ranks 42d in the nation.

The lack of funding effort is particularly deplorable in light of another set of indicators reported by the Quality Counts researchers. They looked at the “chances for success” of Texas students as affected by the undertow of a number of key factors working against them:

- ❖ Texas ranks 44th among the states in family income;
- ❖ Texas ranks 46th in parental education (percentage with postsecondary degree);
- ❖ Texas ranks 50th in the percentage of parents who are fluent English speakers;
- ❖ Texas ranks 35th in preschool enrollment;
- ❖ Texas ranks 43d in postsecondary enrollment;
- ❖ Texas ranks 40th in percentage of adults with a two-year or four-year degree.

Quality does indeed count, and the lack of adequate funding for education from the state is dragging down educational quality and blighting the future of Texas. Against this backdrop, it’s not hard to see why four lawsuits are now pending against the state for failing in its constitutional duty to fund public education.

The full report may be viewed at <http://www.edweek.org>.

From Cradle to Grade

A new AFT report promotes seamless transitions into early grades by drawing from the insights of educators from across the country.

There have been many studies over the years documenting the need for smoother transitions from prekindergarten to the elementary level. A new AFT study reinforces that conclusion—and does it in a manner that puts frontline voices at the heart of the dialogue.

“Right from the Start: Strategies for Developing Effective Transitions from Pre-K through Grade 3 for our Youngest Students,” was funded through the Pew Charitable Trusts and highlights many field-tested measures to building an effective, collaborative environment between the pre-K and elementary communities. Such an environment is indispensable to the long-term success of students—particularly the most vulnerable young learners, AFT president Randi Weingarten stresses.



“Collaborative, thoughtful and intentional transitions to assist children leaving pre-K and entering kindergarten have been found to be especially beneficial to children from lower socioeconomic circumstances,” Weingarten writes in the introduction to the report, citing measures already adopted in several communities.

Among the promising strategies singled out in “Right from the Start”:

Horizontal alignment, which describes opportunities for educators across a grade level to work together and give children similar, high-quality learning experiences, is a strategy that can be used by teachers at the preschool level—even though they might work in a variety of different settings, the report makes clear.

Vertical alignment, which describes opportunities that ensure each grade provides a strong foundation for the next, also is called for and one way to instill an approach based on “bringing kindergarten and preschool teachers together, as well as bringing child care teachers and other early childhood educators together for joint professional development.”

Wraparound support—embodied in features like low child-to-teacher ratios, parent participation that includes adult education, home visits, health and nutrition services—should be expanded. “The best aspects of these child- and family-focused settings should be pushed up into elementary schools. One way to achieve this is to look to the community school model.”

View the full report at www.aft.org.



Members Attend Leadership Conference:

Pictured above (L to R) are Sandra Villa, Vilma Morera - Aldine AFT Organizer, Henry Ramirez, and Melissa Slezak.

Members and staff completed a three-day workshop featuring information on how to design and implement successful issue advocacy campaigns. The Texas AFT Winter Leadership Conference took place January 20-22 in Austin, TX.

"I am excited about what we have learned," said Ramirez. "I am looking forward to helping our union grow and to secure a strong voice for employees."

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www.aldineaft.org

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



1. YOUR INFORMATION Please **print clearly**

New Member / Update Profile

NAME: _____ DOB: _____ SSN: _____
(Nombre) (Fecha de Nacimiento) (Seguro Social)

PERSONAL EMAIL: _____
(Correo Electronico)

HOME PHONE: _____ CELL PHONE: _____
(Telefono de Casa) (Telefono Celular)

MAILING ADDRESS: _____ APT: _____
(Direccion) (Número de Apartamento)

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____
(Ciudad) (Estado) (Codigo)

JOB TITLE: _____
(Titulo de Trabajo)

WORK SITE / CAMPUS NAME: _____
(Lugar de Trabajo)

CIVIC GROUPS & NAME OF YOUR CHURCH (optional): _____
(Organizaciones Cívicas / Afiliaciones Religiosas) (Opcional)

2. MEMBERSHIP DUES / CONTRIBUTIONS

YES! I would like to join Aldine AFT. Please select the dues category appropriate for you.

Teachers & Certified Employees

\$26.07 (20-checks) \$21.73 (24-checks)

Employees making less than \$25,000

\$17.79 (20-checks) \$14.83 (24-checks)

Employees making less than \$10,000

\$13.66 (20-checks) \$11.39 (24-checks)

Discontinuation of Dues and/or Fees for Another Professional Association:

I hereby authorize the Aldine I.S.D. to cancel my dues/fees with the following association:

ATPE TCTA TSTA Other _____

The **Aldine AFT Committee on Political Education (COPE)** collects voluntary contributions from members and uses these funds to support political candidates (\$1.00 per month). Contributing is not a condition of membership and members have a right to refuse to contribute without suffering any reprisal or loss of membership status, rights, or benefits. You may decline to contribute to Aldine-AFT COPE by checking this box.

3. PAYROLL DEDUCTION AUTHORIZATION

I hereby authorize the Aldine I.S.D. to deduct from my salary my dues obligations to the Aldine American Federation of Teachers (AFT). These deductions should begin following my signing of this authorization form and continue for this school year and future years, including any increase in dues that may occur and until written notification is given by me to the district revoking this authorization.

PRINT NAME: _____ SIGNATURE: _____

DUES AMOUNT: _____ **DATE:** _____ **SSN:** _____

Return this application to the Aldine AFT office. If using payroll deduction, completed applications may be faxed to 281/847-1097. Learn more online at www.aldineaft.org.

OFFICE USE ONLY: Received on _____ / Received by _____ / Entered on _____