

## Events & Activities

### Transportation Workers Luncheon

August 4  
Tony's Country Kitchen  
1911 Aldine Bender Road  
11-1:00 p.m.

### New Teacher Welcome Reception

August 10  
Tony's Country Kitchen  
1911 Aldine Bender Road  
4:30-6:00 p.m.

### Building Representative Meeting

September 7  
Aldine-AFT Headquarters  
5-6:00 p.m.

### Know Your Rights Seminar

September 28  
Aldine-AFT Headquarters  
5-6:30 p.m.

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

## Elections Matter

### AFT'S NEW 2012 ELECTION WEB SITE:

Because elected officials have a direct effect on your job, your rights, and your family's and community's well-being, it is critical that you get involved in the 2012 elections. Next year, you will vote to elect the president of the United States. As we look at what is happening now across the country, that election takes on even greater significance.

Every day, in state after state, public employees and the services our communities depend upon are under assault. And while we continue to push back against those assaults, the surest recourse is the ballot box. Visit [www.aft.org/election2012](http://www.aft.org/election2012).

## Weingarten Calls for Quality-Focused Education Agenda

In her July 11 TEACH keynote speech, AFT president Randi Weingarten called for systemic education reform based on quality teaching with continuous teacher development, rich and meaningful curriculum, and the best ideas from schools here and abroad, drawing a sharp contrast with self-styled reformers who denigrate teachers, defund public education and ignore the lessons of top-performing countries.

Weingarten, citing the theme of using heart, mind and muscle to pursue a quality agenda, spoke to more than 2,000 educators at the AFT's TEACH (Together Educating America's Children) biennial educational issues conference in Washington, D.C.



"By standing for quality and standing with community, we build the foundation of educational opportunity that all our students deserve," Weingarten said.

The AFT's quality agenda is guided by four fundamental principles: evidence, so reforms are based on what works, not ideology; equity, so that all children receive a great education; scalability, so that true successes are replicated and don't exist in isolation; and sustainability, so that reforms are immune to budget cycles and political shifts, and can outlast changes in school, district and union leadership.

Weingarten contrasted the AFT's agenda with that of so-called reformers, who believe public education should consist of "islands of excellence staffed by passers-through instead of dynamic school systems staffed by professionals." She repudiated this approach, calling it "disdainful" of the teaching profession and its dedicated teachers.

"It's time to stop talking about the importance of teacher quality. It's time to start building a high-quality education system by cultivating high-quality educators—whether from excellent teacher colleges or even alternative routes—with ample clinical experience, focused induction, and ongoing professional support throughout a teacher's career, in an environment that fosters respect."

One of the major steps the AFT has taken to strengthen the teaching profession is its comprehensive teacher development and evaluation system, which, Weingarten said, "is about supporting, not just sorting, teachers, and providing a means of continuous improvement that will ensure that all kids are taught by the skilled and knowledgeable teachers they deserve." *Continued on page 2.*

# Agenda Outlines Quality Focused Reforms

*Continued from page 1.*

The system, which is aligned to a fair and expedient due process procedure, is now being implemented in school districts with the American Association of School Administrators as the AFT's partner.

Weingarten also noted the AFT's involvement in writing the Common Core math and English standards—which explain what students should know and be able to do—and the current rollout to use them to develop rich and meaningful curriculum and to ensure that teachers have the resources, materials and tools they need to meet, and exceed, the standards.'

Education reform programs should include lessons learned from the success of systems here and abroad. "The top-performing countries all have a strong emphasis on teacher preparation, continuous development, mentoring and collaboration—and in each of these countries, teaching is a highly respected profession," she said. By contrast, she said, so-called reformers distort international comparisons and support stop-start experiments with curriculum, standards, vouchers, merit pay, tour-of-duty teaching and Race to the Top.

"They use international comparisons to denigrate American schools, but they ignore their lessons. Worse, they pursue policies that are completely antithetical to the successful strategies used in high-achieving countries. It just doesn't make sense," she said. "And many have started denigrating public schools and public educators, putting ideology over effectiveness and experimenting without regard to evidence. And that must stop."

"Make no mistake, a new reality is what we're fighting for. One in which we improve the profession of teaching for teachers and outcomes for students. And by improving outcomes for our students, we're improving the prospects of our nation. A quality agenda unites educators and community," Weingarten said.

Weingarten's speech, and an accompanying document outlining AFT proposals and projects, can be found at [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org).

## AFT's Quality Education Agenda

Go to [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org) to learn more...

...watch the full speech online.

...read the full Quality Education Agenda

...download "A Quality Agenda: How to Build Enduring Education Reform"



# Unheralded Wins for Teachers and Kids in the 2011 Legislature

You already know the big picture coming out of the 2011 regular and special sessions of the Texas legislature: deep and unnecessary budget cuts in public education, with those cuts then used as a phony rationale for attacks on educators' pay and contract rights.

While the battle over these major issues dominated the headlines, other efforts were under way on your behalf throughout the session, and many of these bore fruit. Here are several examples:

### **Health-care pay supplement for support personnel:**

Texas AFT with the help of Senate allies blocked an attempt to eliminate the \$500 state-mandated pay supplement that since 2001 has helped make health insurance more affordable for support personnel.

**Educational-aid scholarships:** We succeeded in blocking efforts to repeal this valuable program. Thanks to a House amendment by Rep. Donna Howard, Democrat of Austin, we also preserved eligibility to continue in the program for those already in it, modifying a legislative plan to restrict access only to employees studying toward certification in shortage subjects. But funding for this program remains in doubt for the coming two years.

**Protecting your political voice:** With a huge helping hand from the Texas AFL-CIO, we soundly defeated an attempt to hinder voluntary political contributions and expenditures by public employees and their unions. HB 2986 by Rep. Tan Parker, Republican of Flower Mound, never even got a hearing in committee, and no equivalent measure made it into any bill in the regular or special session. Although Rep. Myra Crownover, Republican of Lake Dallas, tried to insert a related nuisance provision into SB 8 in the special session, her amendment was removed after Texas AFT came up with a point of order against it. Thanks go to Sen. Wendy Davis, Democrat of Fort Worth, for raising the point of order that helped finish off this bad proposal.

**Defending neighborhood schools:** We defeated a destructive House version of a bill (SB 738) that would have facilitated takeover of neighborhood public schools by private operators, and we also blocked bills to increase the number of charters issued to such operators, without proper oversight or quality control, by the State Board of Education.

**Testing excesses:** We blocked legislation that would have placed even more excessive emphasis on high-stakes state tests, by misusing the results achieved by a teacher's students on state exams as a decisive factor in the teacher's individual evaluation. (Regrettably, progress was stymied on Texas AFT's alternative approach, calling for district-level pilot programs to develop an appropriate evaluation methodology with full teacher involvement.)

**Safe Schools Act:** A new law strengthens requirements to provide full, immediate notice of a student's serious criminal history to teachers and other school personnel with supervisory responsibility over the student...*continued on page 3.*

Law-enforcement officials and superintendents or other administrators who fail to carry out this duty will be subject to professional-licensing sanctions. (We'll publish a lot more on this and other subjects in an upcoming analysis of notable bills of the 2011 legislature. Be on the lookout for a notice of publication in an upcoming *Hotline* with a link to the analysis.)

To receive the daily legislative update produced by Texas AFT, visit [www.texasaft.org](http://www.texasaft.org) and sign-up for *Hotline*. Please be sure to use your personal email address.



## The “Other” Education Cuts

The 2011 Texas legislature did not stop at cutting formula aid for school districts by \$4 billion over the next two years. Lawmakers also approved as part of the 2012-2013 budget some \$1.4 billion in additional cuts, in some cases entirely eliminating the discretionary grants from the Texas Education Agency that until now have sustained key programs.

Here's a recap of some of the significant programs that took the biggest hits as legislators refused to raise new revenue or tap the Rainy Day Fund reserve for 2012-2013:

–**Full-day pre-K: 100 percent cut for 2012-2013 biennium (\$223 million).**

–**Science-lab grants: 100 percent cut (\$35 million).**

–**Instructional facilities allotments: 100 percent cut (\$100 million) .**

–**Student Success Initiative funding for extra help for students at risk of failing state high-stakes tests: 92 percent cut (\$270 million).**

–**Educator bonuses, a/k/a District Awards for Teacher Excellence: 90 percent cut (\$345 million).**

–**Communities in Schools (dropout programs): 37.5 percent cut (\$12 million cut).**

–**Advanced Placement Incentives: 29.9 percent cut (\$6 million cut).**

Please note: At the same time that they zeroed out full-day pre-K and other crucial programs, state legislators found room in the budget for full funding of favored programs.

## 22:1 Class-Size Cap Saved

Parents and educators have teamed up all year long to thwart repeated attempts by some Houston state lawmakers to gut the state's 22-to-1 class-size limit in grades K-4. Thanks to the thousands of emails, phone calls and postcards, lawmakers finally gave up their pursuit of the 22:1 provision which has been called one of the most significant reforms in Texas public schools.

Aldine-AFT members began collecting signatures urging lawmakers to take no efforts to weaken this law and increase class size. Thanks to our local efforts, hundreds of signatures were hand delivered to state lawmakers during the Texas AFT lobby day event in Austin in March.

“Through petitions and a lot of persistence, lawmakers finally came to the same conclusion as parents and teachers,” said Melissa Slezak, Aldine-AFT member. “Small class size is critical to the success of our students.”

State Representative Rob Eissler brought up several proposals to eliminate 22:1; however, in the final days of the legislative session, he substituted his bill to make a minor amendment to current law. That amendment merely confirms the commissioner's existing discretion to grant a class-size waiver when a district's state funding has been reduced from the previous year's level. Otherwise, the class-size provisions of current law, including those requiring individual notice to parents of children affected by a waiver of the 22-to-1 standard, remain intact.

Several school districts across the state will be granted waivers, and the cap of 22 students will be lifted in most schools. However, educators should be proud that we protected a vital state law under attack due to this temporary decline in our state's economy.



### 2011 Lobby Day Attendees

Dozens of concerned Aldine ISD employees attended the 2011 Texas AFT Lobby Day in Austin on March 14. Aldine-AFT chartered a bus which allowed many parents, teachers, and support personnel to speak with their elected state lawmakers. While in Austin, Aldine-AFT members joined over 4,000 other school professionals to rally for state funding for our schools. Many changes were made to teacher contract rights, etc. Read more at [www.aldineaft6345.org](http://www.aldineaft6345.org).

# Gen Y? Join in!



*A Union of Professionals*

## Generation Y Teacher Center

[go.aft.org/GenY](http://go.aft.org/GenY)



a new online community where teachers connect and collaborate

**AFT MEMBERS KNOW TALK IS CHEAP**

**SHOPPING**

**AT&T Wireless Discount**

- Discount of 15 percent on wireless plans with AT&T, the only unionized wireless company.



**MORE VALUE FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP**

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**AFT +**  
Member Benefits

AFT + is your advocate. For information on all AFT + programs, call 800/238-1133, ext. 8643, or e-mail [aftplus@aft.org](mailto:aftplus@aft.org). The AFT has an expense reimbursement and/or endorsement arrangement for marketing this program. For more information, please contact AFT Financial Services at 800/238-1133, ext. 4493; send an e-mail to [disclosureinfo@aft.org](mailto:disclosureinfo@aft.org); or visit [www.aft.org/benefits/disclosure](http://www.aft.org/benefits/disclosure).



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**[www.aldineaft6345.org](http://www.aldineaft6345.org)**



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