Aldine-AFT
Local 6345 / AFL-CIO

localVoice

September 2010 / www.aldineaft6345.org

Events & Activities

Ambassador Sign-Up Event
September 3 & 10
Jimmy G's Cajun Seafood Restaurant
307 N. Sam Houston Pkwy., E.
3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Campus Leader Training
September 7
Aldine-AFT local office
4:30 to 6:00 p.m.

Classroom Management Seminar
September 9
Aldine-AFT local office
4:30 to 6:00 p.m.

New Ambassador Orientation
September 13 & 17
Aldine-AFT local office
5:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Ambassador Action Event
September 25
Aldine-AFT local office
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

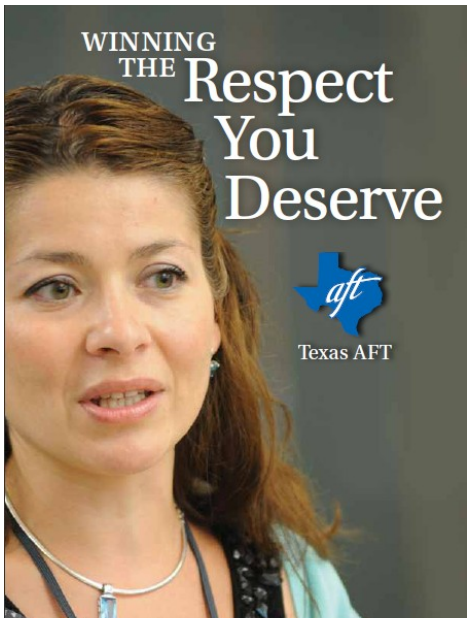
Learn more about AFT events by visiting our "Calendar" section at our local web site.

Sign Our Petition

Help us partner with the district to provide free quality professional development programs to all Aldine ISD employees. Give employees input into what professional development is offered, and allow our federation to train employees on district property. Sign our petition online at **www.aldineaft6345.org**.

AFT Wins Respect Employees Deserve

Recent victories on behalf of Aldine ISD employees



How many times have you heard public officials proclaim their admiration for teachers but demand educators' livelihoods be tied to all-or-nothing standardized tests? How often have you seen pundits reminisce about teachers who changed their lives, but act as if punishing teachers is the best way to motivate them?

School districts cannot cut, fire, and test their way to higher performance. As educators, we are willing to do our part. It takes teachers, parents, administrators, and public officials working together for both kids and schools to succeed. The Aldine-American Federation of Teachers (AFT) was created by local educators and school-related personnel to stand up for our students and our professions. As we continue to inspire students, set standards, and help our schoolchildren reach goals others thought impossible, Aldine-AFT is committed to bringing school employees the respect we have earned.

Aldine ISD was Wrong to Fire Veteran Teacher

Dr. Frances (Elina) Adams has 39-years of experience, and she has taught elementary school in Aldine ISD for the past 30-years. Adams was wrongly terminated for actions she took after two kindergarten students under her supervision were injured on the playground within a two-week span. Adams was not fired as a direct result of the first incident, but was fired for disregarding a principal's directive on how to handle such injuries in the future when the second student was injured on the playground.

The principal had directed Adams to gather her entire class from the playground to escort any injured students to the nurse's office in the future. When a second incident occurred, Adams was the only adult on the playground. She instead sent the injured student to the nurse's office escorted by a student nurse. The district used the second incident to fire Adams for insubordination.

Adams, with the assistance of AFT's attorneys, challenged the district's decision and outlined better campus policies to deal with these situations. The district refused to correct its error in judgment while refusing a recommendation from an official TEA

hearing officer advising them that the district was wrong. AFT represented Adams' case before the Texas Education Agency, Commissioner Robert Scott, who agreed with the union that Adams' actions in the second incident regarding the injured student "was what a person of ordinary prudence would have done under the same or similar instances."

Commissioner Scott granted Adams' appeal, and ordered Aldine ISD to either reinstate her with back pay/benefits, or pay her a year's salary. Aldine ISD has chosen to pay Dr. Adams a year's salary, while refusing to acknowledge its own error in judgment. The lack of respect shown to Dr. Adams throughout this process not only cost taxpayers a full-year's salary for Dr. Adams, but also $12,759.54 in legal and administrative costs. In this case, the cost of "respect" totals more than $100,000.

"It is sad that our board of education is spending money for no good purpose," said Adams. "Perhaps this will be a wake-up call for abusive principals to realize that even administrators must treat their employees fairly and with respect."

Dr. Francis (Elina) Adams is pictured at the local Aldine-AFT office discussing her case for "respect."

Court Backs AFT on Truth-in-Grading Law: Minimum-Grade Policies Ruled Illegal

Texas AFT has won a significant victory for truth in grading—the authority of teachers to give grades that accurately reflects students' actual, demonstrated proficiency in their courses.

A state district judge in Austin has rejected an attempt by 11 Texas school districts—including Aldine ISD—to nullify the 2009 state law outlawing local minimum-grade policies. Under these local policies, teachers were required to give students grades no lower than some district-mandated minimum, even if the students have refused to do any assignments or have failed to attend class.

Aldine ISD, and the other 10 districts, sued the Texas Education Agency over a letter the agency sent out in October stating that the legislature intended to prohibit such policies and that districts should comply. The districts, led by Fort Bend ISD, insisted that the law did not apply to cumulative grades for grading periods, because it did not expressly refer to cumulative grades. (Many other districts meanwhile have gone ahead and complied with the law, amending their local policies to end the practice of mandating minimum grades regardless of effort or mastery of the subject.)

Texas AFT was the only teacher organization to intervene in this legal fight in defense of the new state law, contending that the legislature's intent was clear—all forms of local minimum-grade policies were outlawed.

Judge Gisela Triana-Doyal said it was not her role to decide the wisdom of local policy or state law, but rather to interpret the law passed by the legislature. SB 2033 (now codified as Section 28.0216 of the Texas Education Code) is not ambiguous, the judge ruled, and thus applies to all types of grades, including cumulative grades for grading periods.

The plaintiff districts can appeal her ruling to a higher court, Judge Triana-Doyal noted, or they can try to go back to persuade the legislature to change the law.

Planning and Preparation Periods Reinforced

In April, Aldine-AFT filed an association grievance on behalf of educators stating that numerous violations had occurred throughout the 2009-10 school year regarding an educator's right to a minimum 45-minute daily planning and prep period.

Under Texas law, educators are guaranteed 450-minutes for planning and preparation purposes every two-weeks. Aldine-AFT members reported many inconsistencies with the implementation of this law, and shared with the federation that they were not receiving their guaranteed time. Members commented that their principals were mandating that they attend meetings and perform duties, which violated the law.

Aldine ISD first challenged AFT's right to file an association grievance, but failed as the federation asserted its legal right to represent employees. The district then ruled in favor of the union, and has agreed to notify all administrators and teachers of their legal right regarding planning periods. The district also agreed to do better to not infringe upon an educator's rights under the law.

Contract Terms Enforced Saving Teacher's Job

Linda Johnson has been a teacher in Aldine-ISD for 6-years. As an elementary teacher, she has dedicated herself to helping her students succeed. In May, Johnson was about to complete the first-year of a two-year term contract. She was also attempting to transfer schools as she found a new exciting opportunity at another Aldine ISD elementary school. However, this is where things went sour.

After receiving confirmation that her transfer would be accepted, she then was notified that she would no longer be employed by the district. Johnson contacted the federation and discussed her situation. There were no issues affecting Johnson's job performance, no growth plan, and the district had not notified Johnson of its intent to terminate her in writing prior to the 45-day deadline.

The district instead was taking action to disrespect the terms of Johnson's contract, Texas law, and ignore her pleas to correct this administrative error, which would cost Johnson her career and livelihood.

With the assistance of AFT, the contract issue was resolved, and Johnson is happily settling into her new position at Kujawa Elementary. The district's HR department has halted its lump-sum payout, and her pay and benefits are on schedule.

"Several years ago, a colleague told me that I should join the union," said Johnson. "I thought that I really didn't need to join because I am a good person. Now, more than ever, I believe that every teacher should belong to the union. For me it is the assurance that I will not be alone, and it was Aldine-AFT who rescued me and helped me to reclaim my status."

Learn More About Our Federation

We invite you to learn more about what "respect" means to us. In addition, find out more about your rights as an educator and school employee. Visit us online at **www.aldineaft6345.org**. We are proud to be the largest education organization in the Aldine ISD, and we are the only association with a full-time local office and staff personnel. Call us today at 281/847-3050 to join your colleagues as we continue to win the respect we all deserve.

FREE WORKSHOP

Classroom Management

You are invited to attend a free Classroom Management workshop provided by Texas AFT's Educational Issues Director, Ana Pomar.

Thursday, September 9
4:30 to 6:00 p.m.

Food & Beverages Provided

Receive professional development credit for PDAS, and materials to help improve your classroom.

Call 281/847-3050 to sign-up today.

This class is limited to 25 participants. This workshop is open to all Aldine ISD employees.

President's Update

Gov. Perry may block Aldine ISD from receiving nearly $14 million

By: Carmen Mayorga

Jobs are a top priority for not only our country's economy, but also for Aldine ISD employees. Bad economic times have a big impact on employees when it comes to salaries and benefits. As we talk about "respect," AFT believes that we must raise salaries and improve benefits to attract and keep quality employees.

Carmen Mayorga
Aldine-AFT President

According to Lynn O'Shaughnessy, author of *The College Solution*, she states that education ranks in the top worst-paying college degrees in 2010. According to this book, a degree in elementary education ranks #2, special education ranks #10, and general education ranks #14. Texas is currently ranked 29th in the nation for average teacher pay ($45,392), according to AFT's national salary survey, but ranks 10th for beginning teacher pay starting at $38,522.

A few weeks ago, the U.S. House of Representatives gave final approval to a bill providing more than $10 billion in job-saving education aid to the nation's public schools. There's more than $800 million in the bill for hard-pressed Texas school districts, enough to save roughly 15,000 jobs of teachers and educational support staff statewide. Aldine ISD is estimated to receive $13.8 million, which could help eliminate the district's projected budget deficit. The bill passed by a margin of 247 to 161.

The funds may be used only for compensation and benefits and other expenses necessary to retain existing employees, to recall or rehire former employees, and to hire new employees. Salaries for teachers and other campus level personnel may be funded, and district-level administrators may not be paid from these federal funds.

Gov. Rick Perry said he objects to a part of the bill that requires the state to promise a good-faith effort to maintain state education funding, instead of using the federal money as an excuse to cut state education spending.

There is no excuse for rejecting this help for our schools, as Gov. Perry has threatened to do. Our teachers and educational support employees call on the governor to rethink his stance on this issue and make sure that the aid flows to Texas school districts without delay.

Help the governor see reason on this issue, and help save jobs, salaries, and benefits. Make your voice heard by sending an e-mail letter addressed to him that you'll find on the Texas AFT Web site at **www.texasaft.org**.

Aldine-AFT
Local 6345 ★ AFL-CIO
521 N. Sam Houston Pkwy. E, Suite 110 ★ Houston, TX 77060
T: 281/847-3050 ★ F: 281/847-1097 ★ www.aldineaft6345.org

1. YOUR INFORMATION Please **print clearly**

☐ New Member / ☐ Update Profile

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

PERSONAL EMAIL: (Correo Electronico)

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

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

CITY: (Ciudad) STATE: (Estado) ZIP: (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 amount below, and enter this amount in the line titled, **"DUES AMOUNT."** If you decline to contribute to COPE, please subtract fifty cents ($0.50) from the per check dues amount

Teachers & Certified Employees

☐ $25.50 (20-checks) ☐ $21.25 (24-checks)

Employees making less than $25,000

☐ $17.46 (20-checks) ☐ $14.55 (24-checks)

Employees making less than $10,000

☐ $13.44 (20-checks) ☐ $11.20 (24-checks)

Aldine-AFT COPE Fund

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 initialing below:

"I decline to contribute to Aldine-AFT COPE, and I understand that this will not affect my membership status or rights."

Initial _____

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. 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.aldineaft6345.org.

OFFICE USE ONLY: Received on_____ / Received by_____ / Entered on_____