

FACT SHEET: ‘What Kids and Communities Need’ Campaign

This week, at the American Federation of Teachers’ (AFT) Biennial Convention, AFT President Randi Weingarten addressed over 3,000 delegates and announced the launch of the landmark “What Kids and Communities Need” campaign. Here’s what you need to know:

What is the goal?

The “What Kids and Communities Need” campaign is a new effort to **invest in public schools and communities**, and **encourage Democrats and elected officials** on the federal, state, and local levels to recapture the debate around education by **getting back to the basics** and focusing on what matters most for student success.

Why now?

Following [recent polling](#) that shows **Americans are fed up with politicians trying to politicize public schools** and engage in culture wars, it’s time to show that **our focus is on uniting parents and teachers to deliver what kids and communities need**. As such, Weingarten is encouraging both delegates and elected officials to remain focused on the essentials that help bring people together and build a better life: community and school safety, partnerships between parents and educators, and the important things that happen in the classroom and beyond.

What will this campaign do?

“What Kids Need” is about getting “back to the basics” by directly investing in the kinds of classroom initiatives, educator supports, and school-based enrichment programs that help kids and communities succeed in the long term. AFT is pressing Democrats and elected officials on the federal, state, and local levels to recapture the debate around education by focusing on this “back to basics” message. It also means AFT is encouraging parents and teachers to take action to put the focus back on what matters: our kids and their education, which includes their mental and emotional health and their safety from gun violence. This means voting against politicians who are focused on things like book banning, culture wars, and injecting division into our classrooms, rather than investing in mental health resources, literacy programs, and efforts to reduce class sizes.

What is AFT committing to?

The campaign’s specific commitments include:

- Awarding **\$1.5 million grants to parents and teachers through the AFT Powerful Partnership Institute** to support community engagement by helping parents and teachers find new ways to work together for the benefit of kids.
- Advocating for commonsense policies to address the teacher shortage and teacher burnout through the [AFT Teacher Shortage Task Force](#).
- **Quadrupling the number of community schools** over the next five years. Community schools help children and families get the healthcare, food assistance, and other essentials they need in one place. AFT and its affiliates already support more than 700 such schools nationwide.

- Improving, supporting, and funding critical **career and technical education (CTE) programs. From cyber security, culinary arts, aviation and auto and transit tech, healthcare, green jobs—high quality CTE programs** can equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need for career and life.
- **Encouraging kids to read more and improve their reading skills through a campaign to give away 1 million books so that kids have books to read at home.** AFT has already distributed 612,686 books to date during “[Reading Opens the World](#)” events hosted by more than 100 local affiliates in 20 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Once AFT reaches the 1 million mark, it will **commit to giving away 2 million books.**

How do we win?

While partisan political extremists are hell-bent on dividing Americans against each other – with much of that effort beginning in the classroom – AFT is focused on accelerating learning, fighting for the conditions teachers need to do their jobs, and ensuring students and communities have what they need to thrive and succeed in the long term.

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