



Education | Healthcare | Public Services

# Professional Learning & You





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## OUR MISSION

The AFT 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.



## Why organize with the AFT? Why belong to the AFT?

“ The AFT is the home of the people who make a difference in other people’s lives: 1.75 million educators and support personnel, healthcare workers and public employees fighting to improve the lives of our kids, our patients, our families and our communities. Fighting for real solutions that make everyone’s lives better and showing up when it counts. Taking on the extremists who want to destroy public education, dismantle our democracy, defund public services, decimate healthcare and demonize the vulnerable—and standing up to the privatizers who are more concerned about profits than people.

“ So if you want respect on the job, a voice in our democracy or simply better pay, then join us. If you want the respect and resources to do your chosen work in a safe and welcoming environment, if you want to be part of the fight for a better life for all, join the AFT. That’s who we are—people dedicated to the belief that everyone in America deserves the freedom to thrive, fueled by opportunity, justice and a voice in our democracy.

“ We’ve got your back. We see you. And we know that in this world of fear and division, the road to a better future is our unity and our work. Together, we can accomplish what is impossible alone. ”

—Randi Weingarten, AFT president

 @randiweingarten

## Real Solutions

The AFT is about real solutions that help create a better life. Our Real Solutions for Kids and Communities campaign rejects the toxic attacks against public education and aims to strengthen public schools. We are addressing learning loss, loneliness and literacy with transformative strategies that can be sustained and scaled to help kids thrive. These strategies focus on reading, community schools, experiential learning, mental health and well-being, and investment in our public schools. Learn more at [aft.org/realsolutions](https://aft.org/realsolutions).

When you become a member of the AFT, you help make real solutions for kids and communities a national priority. And we help you by offering educator-designed programs and resources that will enhance your professional growth and ensure children recover and thrive.

This brochure highlights many of these opportunities. You can also visit [aftpd.org](https://aftpd.org), email [edissues@aft.org](mailto:edissues@aft.org) or contact your local union to learn more.

## Helping Educators and Students Thrive

### Reading Opens the World

Reading is a foundational skill necessary for virtually everything we do. It opens possibilities for all children to succeed—to learn and grow, to explore and imagine, to investigate and verify, and to lead fulfilling lives. Reading well instills confidence and helps reduce inequities. The disruptions due to the pandemic have made focusing on literacy even more important, not only to help our students catch up but also to thrive. That's why the AFT launched Reading Opens the World, a multiyear campaign to give millions of books to children and educators in marginalized communities, to offer parents and caregivers fun and research-based tips for boosting literacy, to spread the joy of reading, and to ensure teachers and school staff have tools and professional development that translate the science of reading into usable resources to help students read and read well. Through our 10+ year partnership with First Book, we have given more than 10 million books to students, families, educators and school staff for classroom collections, home libraries and community centers.

Visit [sharemylesson.com/read](https://sharemylesson.com/read) to join Reading Opens the World's online community and access webinars, blog posts and other literacy resources.

In addition, we are proud to have partnered with Reading Universe. Visit [ReadingUniverse.org](https://ReadingUniverse.org), a completely free website with ready-to-use teaching strategies, in-classroom videos, interviews with



teachers and reading experts, and helpful answers to common questions about teaching reading and writing—all rooted in the science of reading.

## Career and Technical Education—Career Pathways

Thanks in large part to investments in infrastructure, manufacturing, energy and the environment by the Biden-Harris administration, the U.S. economy will be remade for the next generation, including well-paying, safe and sustainable jobs. The AFT has opportunities to bring additional resources and attention to career and technical education, to link education to economic development and to expand career pathways, internships and apprenticeships for students.

By being intentional about this—starting in high school (if not earlier), partnering with employers, creating paid internships and offering industry-approved credentials or college credit—we can engage students in deep and fun learning and set young people on a path to a career or higher education, or both, as soon as they graduate.

The AFT is working closely with federal agencies and with industry experts to ensure that CTE is seen as the pipeline for preparing a workforce with the flexible skills that today's economy is clamoring for. More districts are offering high-quality pathways in areas of high demand. For example, our New York affiliates are partnering with microchip maker Micron and 10 districts throughout the state to pilot a curricular framework that will prepare students for careers in and related to advanced manufacturing. The AFT is also working with Bloomberg Philanthropies to seed the creation of high schools that will partner with health systems, so students will be able to enter high-demand healthcare jobs when they graduate. This builds on a successful program in Cleveland, where a high school located inside of a hospital allows students to earn certificates that jump-start their careers in healthcare.



The goal of the AFT is for every student to be offered such engaging opportunities in whatever career pathways spark their interest. The AFT's 2024 Center for School Improvement Leadership Institute focused on opportunities to deepen and grow programs in CTE, giving participants opportunities to craft real-world solutions for the challenges their students and communities face.

For more information, visit [aft.org/position/career-and-technical-education](https://aft.org/position/career-and-technical-education) or email Marie-Louise Caravatti at [mcaravat@aft.org](mailto:mcaravat@aft.org).

## Community Schools Strategy

The community schools strategy transforms public schools into the centers of their communities. It helps public schools weave together community partners to support students and their families; creates an environment where everyone has a voice; and is a collaborative and effective vehicle for increasing educational equity, social cohesion and civic participation. Community schools purposefully partner with food banks, social service agencies, businesses, higher education institutions, health clinics and youth organizations, typically under the guidance of a site coordinator. Community schools create the supportive environments that make it possible for educators to focus on what they do best—teaching—and for students to learn and reach their full potential.



The AFT has consistently advocated for the community schools strategy and, in collaboration with other national partners, has supported our local affiliates in designing and implementing community schools. We have supported dozens of locals in working with their districts and communities to create nearly 900 schools, and our goal is to expand to 2,500 over the next three years.

For more information, visit [aft.org/position/community-schools](https://aft.org/position/community-schools) or email Dena Donaldson at [dDonaldson@aft.org](mailto:d دونالدسون@aft.org).

## AFT Teachers Program and Policy Council

The AFT Teachers Program and Policy Council (PPC) is the advisory body for the AFT Teachers division, encompassing over 700,000 preK-12 educators. It includes more than 70 representatives from local and state affiliates nationwide (who have been recommended to the PPC by the AFT president and appointed by the AFT executive council). The PPC meets periodically to help ensure that the work of the division is aligned with the issues that matter most to our members and with important developments in the preK-12 field. The AFT Teachers PPC reviews policy, programs and research, and recommends resolutions for action by the AFT executive council. The AFT relies upon rank-and-file members and local leaders to keep our work grounded in the challenges our public school students, teachers and support staff face every day.

To learn more about the AFT Teachers PPC, email Marla Ucelli-Kashyap at [mucelli@aft.org](mailto:mucelli@aft.org).

## AFT Innovation Fund

The AFT Innovation Fund—open to affiliates at the state and local levels—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 our 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 grantees through monthly calls, periodic site visits, and connections to experts and resources.

For more information, go to [aft.org/about/innovation-fund](http://aft.org/about/innovation-fund).

## AFT's Project-Based Learning Kits

content, featuring capstone project ideas that are grade-level and developmentally appropriate. These

project-based learning lessons and activities enable students to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways that will adapt to in-person, hybrid or remote learning.

To learn more and download the free kits, visit [go.aft.org/wer](http://go.aft.org/wer).

## AFT Teacher Leaders Program

The ever popular Teacher Leaders Program identifies and brings together a select group of educators and then supports and empowers them to assume active leadership roles in their schools, unions and communities. The program was launched in 2011 because the AFT noticed the lack of teacher voice in education policy discussions in our country. 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, 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 2,400 individuals from over 40 affiliates have participated in the program.

Teacher leadership embodies the idea that classroom teachers can become 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 Lisa Dickinson at [edickinson@aft.org](mailto:edickinson@aft.org).

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## The AFT Professional Learning Program

The AFT professional learning and member engagement program empowers educators to connect theory to practice and improve student outcomes.

AFT professional learning:

- Is rooted in evidence-based educational, cognitive and social science research;
- Is guided by expert practitioners 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; and
- Connects excellent teaching practice with broader educational policy issues and campaigns.

We know that in the changing landscape of education settings, educators need diverse strategies to meet students where they are. With more than 50 offerings, this program provides a variety of professional learning opportunities to meet varying teaching and learning needs.

Courses range from online asynchronous classes available to all AFT members on the AFT eLearning platform to 30-hour-plus graduate-level, train-the-trainer courses that require approval and involvement from your local union.

Any AFT professional learning courses can be customized to meet the unique needs of your local union.

- See our catalog of course offerings: [go.aft.org/d4t](https://go.aft.org/d4t)
- Join the AFT eLearning community: [aftlearning.org/professional-learning](https://aftlearning.org/professional-learning)
- Contact Lisa Dickinson: [edickinson@aft.org](mailto:edickinson@aft.org)

### AFT eLearning

Through this web-based, professional learning 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 student success. The AFT eLearning platform also provides a space where educators and locals can connect with their peers and colleagues from around the country to access support, the latest research and more.

The site hosts a variety of professional learning opportunities, including webinars, self-paced courses, blended learning and communities. 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 [elarning@aft.org](mailto:elarning@aft.org) for more information.

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## AFT-Sponsored Conferences

### AFT TEACH Conference

AFT TEACH (Together Educating America's Children) provides an unforgettable experience filled with inspiration and ideas for educators to take back to their schools. Each professional development workshop is custom designed for TEACH by AFT members and other experts to directly focus on tools and strategies to support educators and their efforts to provide real solutions for kids and communities.

TEACH offers:

- Engaging and energizing sessions to inspire for the year ahead;
- New strategies to improve teaching and learning; and
- Time to connect and collaborate with educators from across the country.

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

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

This train-the-trainer 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-playing, case studies, simulations, Socratic seminars and shared reflection. This comprehensive, intensive and energizing 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.

For more information, email Lisa Dickinson at [edickinson@aft.org](mailto:edickinson@aft.org).

## **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 and 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.

For more information, email Giselle Lundy-Ponce at [glundypo@aft.org](mailto:glundypo@aft.org).

## **AFT Share My Lesson Virtual Conference**

Each spring, the AFT's Share My Lesson runs a free three-day virtual conference featuring more than 35 webinars on a wide variety of topics. Each webinar provides one hour of professional development credit for participation. Topics include teaching current events and controversial issues; instructional strategies across the curriculum; social emotional learning; supporting diversity, equity and inclusion; and trauma-informed practices. All webinars are available on demand, and webinars since 2020 include closed captioning in English and Spanish.

Learn more at [ShareMyLesson.com/webinars](https://ShareMyLesson.com/webinars).

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## **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 enable grow-your-own programs through CTE courses and Educators Rising chapters so high school students can explore education careers. The Educators Rising chapters (which are career and technical student organizations), their curriculum and their associated micro-credentials can help you get a program started in your school/district. PDK International's national conference for Educators Rising draws thousands of high schoolers each summer to compete in teaching skills and service projects. The AFT is collaborating with Educators Rising to recruit leaders to plan and spearhead the implementation of Educators Rising programming.

For more information, email Dyan Smiley at [dsmiley@aft.org](mailto:dsmiley@aft.org) or go to [educatorsrising.org](https://educatorsrising.org).

## Grow-Your-Own Programs

Teacher diversity is crucial to student success. 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 and racial backgrounds. The AFT recognizes that diversity is a key component to equity and opportunity, and strongly believes in diversifying the teaching workforce through grow-your-own (GYO) 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. Programs such as Red Hawks Rising Teacher Academy in New Jersey are introducing high school students to careers in teaching by helping them build their academic and problem-solving skills.

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

## AFT New Teachers

The AFT has developed resources to give beginning teachers the tools they need to do their jobs and the support they need to stay in their jobs. In the New Teacher Community, you can:

- Find valuable tools for the first weeks of school, including the basics of setting up classrooms and working with families, the essentials of classroom management, and resources on content knowledge and pedagogy;
- Discover AFT resources on teacher evaluation, feedback, professional development and teacher leadership;
- Learn about the union and how to become more active and engaged in the work we do and in the local community; and
- Connect with other new teachers through online issue discussions.

For more information, email Robin Vitucci at [rvitucci@aft.org](mailto:rvitucci@aft.org) or visit the New Teacher Community on Share My Lesson: [sharemylesson.com/AFTNewTeachers](https://sharemylesson.com/AFTNewTeachers).

## Online Resources

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

The AFT's free, award-winning, lesson-sharing website provides support for anyone who works with students as well as a place to collaborate on new ideas and best practices to enhance the profession and the larger community. With more than 2.2 million members, Share My Lesson is where teachers, parents and school staff can:

- Find thousands of standards-aligned preK-college lesson plans, activities and professional development webinars that span the curriculum, content areas and key issues schools are facing;
- Access high-quality resources from content partners like Colorín Colorado, Common Sense Education, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Discovery Education, Folger Shakespeare Library, Google's Applied Digital Skills, National Wildlife Federation, PBS NewsHour Extra and Statistics in Schools;
- Participate in discussions via communities and get resources for issues like bullying prevention, social and emotional learning, engaging parents, meeting the needs of diverse English language learners, literacy opportunities via Reading Opens the World and helping students cope with traumatic events;
- Search lessons by grade and subject; and
- Contribute their finest, most effective work to support colleagues across the country.

### Reading Universe | [readinguniverse.org](https://readinguniverse.org)

Reading Universe is a state-of-the-art, research-based, video-rich service supported by the AFT that offers free systematic, comprehensive professional development. The website primarily serves general education teachers in preK-6th grade, along with reading coaches and other educators. On the website, you'll find:

- Guides for teaching all of the essential reading and writing skills—and an interactive taxonomy showing how those skills are connected;



- In-classroom videos showing real teachers working with real students, filmed in diverse classrooms nationwide; and
- Classroom-ready lesson plans, printable activities and decodable texts for every skill.

In addition, Reading Universe has a special focus on serving teachers who work in Title I schools and who teach children who are immigrants, have learning disabilities or speak a dialect of English. Reading Universe complements WETA's established national education websites, which include (among others) Reading Rockets, Colorín Colorado and [AdLit.org](https://www.adlit.org).

### First Book | [firstbook.org](https://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 families 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 10 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 [firstbook.org/AFT](https://www.firstbook.org/AFT).

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

Colorín Colorado, with support from the AFT, offers free resources for educators and families of English language learners in grades preK-12, including classroom videos, toolkits, multilingual tip sheets, newsletters and featured books and authors. The website is bilingual in English and Spanish and offers basic content in 14 other languages.

### 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. Opportunities are 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).

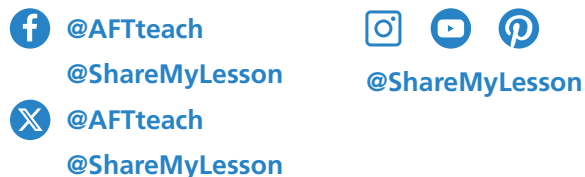
### Start Blogging

The posts on our Share My Lesson blog ([sharemylesson.com/blog](https://www.sharemylesson.com/blog)) are in large part written by educators 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 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 X (formerly Twitter) account, let us

know. We will follow you, and we might even feature you in an upcoming newsletter or article.



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## Become an E-Activist and Stay Informed

The AFT has tools and resources to support your work and engage your community, including e-Activist alerts that give you opportunities to speak up for working families, monthly newsletters highlighting AFT members' issues and initiatives, and print and electronic journals to enhance your professional knowledge.

At [aft.org/subscribe](https://aft.org/subscribe), you can subscribe to the alerts and publications that match your interests, including:

- **AFT Teachers Professional Learning Newsletter**  
Sign up for this e-newsletter to get helpful ideas for engaging preK-12 students, free lesson plans and timely professional development webinars—all based on what's happening in the news; and resources aligned to upcoming holidays or events.
- **AFT Share My Lesson Newsletter**  
Sign up for this e-newsletter to get helpful ideas for engaging preK-12 students, free lesson plans and timely professional development webinars—all based on what's happening in the news and resources aligned to upcoming holidays or events.

- **American Educator**

The AFT's preK-12 and higher education members receive this quarterly magazine focused on educational equity, research and ideas. If you are not receiving this magazine and would like to, please email [ae@aft.org](mailto:ae@aft.org). To read *American Educator* online, go to [aft.org/ae](https://aft.org/ae).

## Other Publications

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