

Vocational Instructor



IT PAYS TO BE TAUGHT BY A
VO-TECH TEACHER!

Local 4200A~AFT, AFTCT, & AFL-CIO

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An Overview on Contract Negotiations

by Paul Angelucci, President

I have already been receiving questions about negotiating language in our contract book and the SEBAC language. SEBAC is the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition and negotiates benefits and wages for all State employees. I want to lay out the coming year in regards to the process and steps it takes to negotiate and get a signed contract. What was new for the first time on our current contract and all contracts moving forward is that after they are negotiated and signed, they must be voted on by the legislature.

To start with, there are two timelines. The first is the wages for the '24-'25 school year. As per Article 35, January 1, 2024 either party can supply a notice in writing asking to reopen the wage package. Historically wages are negotiated at the SEBAC level for all employees. This negotiation, SEBAC is negotiating for one year of wages. I will update members as I receive information.

The second timeline is for the language in our contract book which started September 1, 2021, and expires on August 31, 2025. The written notice to reopen that can be sent no earlier than September 1, 2024. All members will receive information through ACTION NETWORK. In June we will send a Google Form for any member to submit a proposal. The Negotiating Committee will only consider proposals received through the Google Form. We encourage our members to share their voice and if you are passionate about your working conditions, please share a proposal! Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

Understanding Your Pay Stub

Below are examples of SERS Tier IV deductions and TRB deductions. Look in the bottom left corner of your paystub to see your own. The amounts below are an example. Retirement deductions are a percentage of your pay, so they are different for everyone. If you do not see deductions, please reach out to Makenzi immediately.

BEFORE-TAX DEDUCTIONS			BEFORE-TAX DEDUCTIONS		
Description	Current	YTD	Description	Current	YTD
SERS Tier 4 Shortfall	70.77	424.62	TRSRegPay	414.77	6,793.24
SERS Tier 4	176.92	1,061.52	TRSRetHF17	67.42	1,646.37
Ret Health Fund 2017	106.15	636.90	Primary Care Access	144.46	3,336.78
Expanded Access	219.90	1,319.40	Dental Basic	11.28	269.68
Dental Enhanced	9.53	57.18			
Sr4/HyDCEE	35.38	212.28			

The Proposal Process

by Makenzi Hurtado, Vice President

Proposals are the beginning of our contract negotiation process. In June we will send a Google Form to all members. Any member can submit a contract proposal to the Contract Negotiation Committee. The SVFT Officers will not be accepting proposals in any other form to ensure that all proposals are received and reviewed in the same way. The Google Form to submit proposals will require the member to share two comparables. Comparables are examples of contract language from other districts or State contracts that substantiate the proposal.

Every proposal that is submitted will be given consideration by the Contract Negotiation Committee, with the guidance of our attorney. The Contract Negotiation Committee was curated to ensure a diverse representation of our members. This is very important to ensure that the voices and needs of all of our members are heard. Proposals will not be chosen or rejected based on feelings or beliefs. The Committee will take into consideration the results of the survey to the membership, benefits to the Union as a whole, benefits of specific groups, and comparables.

The Contract Negotiation Committee will take all submitted proposals and review and research the comparables and look for more comparables. Comparables strengthen the validity of the proposal.

Comparables are important at several different points of negotiations. In the negotiation room, every proposal is treated like a lawsuit. Examples of districts where comparable language is working are an important part of our argument. Comparables become especially important if the union and management are unable to come to an agreement and must go to arbitration. An arbitrator will make final decisions and base those decisions on comparable language.

Parts of the Contract You Do Not See

by Bob Riccitelli, Executive Union Representative

Our contract can be changed in two ways. The first is past practice. Past practice usually starts as teachers trying to help out by giving up a prep, taking more students in a class, accepting more responsibility than your job description allows, etc. If this is done openly, through multiple schools and with the union's knowledge it becomes a past practice even though the contract may state something different. I have heard members say, "just don't let the union know". I know I have said this many times, and I'm going to say it again. You are the union, Not the Building Reps, Not the Officer, YOU are the union. Please, if you are asked to violate the contract, or you see someone else violating the contract, call me.

The other way we can change the contract is by a stipulated agreement or a Memorandum of Agreement. This is done as a mini contract negotiation. It allows us to do research, add language to ensure our members are protected, protect the contract, discuss pay and impact bargain. Stipulated agreements that affect all of our membership are shared at Executive Council Meetings.

We are currently looking at language changes in four areas. Most of these agreements are to resolve a potential arbitration. This can also be a solution for someone that has a unique circumstance and would like to help out but not violate the contract. You can always call or text me to see if this is possible. But don't violate the contract. You may be unknowingly changing it for everyone in the district.

Article 22 SENIORITY

Section Five. Seniority List.

The Board shall prepare a system-wide seniority list and make a copy available to the Union by January 1 of each contract year.

The updated seniority list is available on our website, under Membership→Key Documents. This list constantly changes and we do find mistakes whenever we receive it. Please check your hire date and information and let Makenzi know if you find an error.



MTC INTEREST SURVEY

A survey for BIPOC members and members interested in learning more about Racial Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion

This survey is optional.
The goal of this survey is to identify BIPOC members who are interested in meeting with other BIPOC members throughout the district. We are also hoping to identify ANY members who would like to learn more about racial equity, diversity, and inclusion.
All information gained during this survey will only be used by SVFT Officers and MTC members to support members and create programming for members.



or go to the website:
<https://qrco.de/beWKtr>

Contract Negotiations Committee Members

Paul Angelucci	Plumbing DH	President, Bullard Havens
Makenzi Hurtado	Related DH	Vice President, Prince
Bob Riccitelli	Architecture DH	Executive Union Rep, Platt
Emily DelPiano	Related DH	Treasurer, Kaynor
Jamie Lamitie	Electrical DH	Secretary, Norwich
Bob Herdlein (Chair)	General Education DH	Cheney
Royal Allard	Skills, Electronics DH	Oliver Wolcott
Michelle Dellavecchia	Counseling DH	Wilcox
Sarah Fennessy	Special Education	Prince
Jen Garzone	Special Education DH	Wilcox
Eric Klotz	English	Goodwin
Vanessa Medina-Valdez	Social Worker	Goodwin
Dennis Mercado	Part-Time	Prince
Jon Nadeau	Athletic Director	Windham
Nick Ogorzalek	Dean	Vinal
Mel Perry	LMS	Platt
Johana Rios-Roldon	School Psychologist	Eli Whitney
Wanakee Young	Electrical DH	Wright

Tentative Plan for Contract Negotiations

Negotiations will be for the language in our book starting in Aug 25, 2025. We do not know the end date for the new book.

June 2024

- ⇒ Officers will send a Google Form for contract proposals to all members.
- ⇒ Negotiations Committee Members will be trained.

June 2024—November 2024

- ⇒ Negotiating Committee will research and substantiate proposals with evidence.

August 24, 2024

- ⇒ SVFT can officially demand to negotiate for the next contract.

November 2024

- ⇒ Officers will send a survey for contract negotiations to all members.

December 2024

- ⇒ Negotiation Committee Members vote on proposals to move forward.

January 1, 2025

- ⇒ Negotiations can officially begin and ground rules are established by both parties.

January 2025

- ⇒ Officers will share final proposals with members.

Once negotiations begin, there is no communication with membership unless impasse is declared.

We need SVFT voices heard!

Meet your area legislators and let them know what is important to you!



AFT CT Regional Legislative Meetings

This is an opportunity for members and area legislators to have informal discussions on AFT CT legislative issues.



Southeastern

Lyme Tavern, Niantic
MAR 9 • 8:30-10:30am



Eastern

Dimitri's, Coventry
Mar 16 • 12-2 pm



Grtr New Haven

Eli's on the Hill, Branford
MAR 9 • 11:30am-1:30pm



Middletown

Red Fox Restaurant, Middletown
Mar 23 • 11:30am-1:30pm



Greater Hartford

Margaritas, East Hartford
MAR 16 • 11:30am-1:30pm



Central

Gobi Mongolian Grill, Southington
Mar 23 • 11:30am-1:30pm



For more information call 860-257-9782 or email at jvigue@aftct.org



SVFT/CTECS TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

The Teacher of the Year Program is a joint recognition from SVFT and CTECS. SVFT Building Representative and school TOY Committees run the building level nominations and vote. CTECS organizes the selection of the District Teacher of the Year.

2024 Teacher of the Year Program Selection Guidelines

Each school will form a Teacher of the Year (TOY) Committee consisting of at least three members: two members must have been a previously selected Teacher of the Year; at least one member must be a current building representative. The Building Representative will serve as Chairperson of the committee.

No TOY committee member can be nominated as the school's Teacher of the Year. It is the responsibility of the Teacher of the Year Committee to coordinate all activities relating to the yearly selection of the school's Teacher of the Year in cooperation with the school principal.

Any person nominated can be will be reviewed by our Executive Union Representative to determine they are a member in good standing. Teachers only need one nomination to be placed on the ballot.

Nomination Form

2024 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Due to school TOY Committee by 2/21/2024

(Some TOY committees send out a google form for the nomination form.)

Nomination Criteria

- Demonstrates excellence in your field.
- Holds a Connecticut teaching certificate.
- Be a full-time, part-time, or durational SVFT member.
- Be an SVFT member in good standing.
- Demonstrates commitment to professional growth.
- Demonstrates commitment to school improvement.

NAME OF NOMINEE _____

ASSIGNMENT _____

State the reason(s) for the nomination: _____

Labor/Management Committee

January 9, 2024

AFT CT- 35 Marshall Road, Rocky Hill CT

1. Introductions

Management – Dr. Justin Lowe, Dr. Nikitoula Menounos, Rafael Palacio

SVFT – Makenzi Hurtado, Bob Riccitelli, Rich Benedict, John Hemenway, Johanna Rios-Roldan

2. SVFT Concerns

Ordering and Financial Issues

Rich Benedict - The length of time it takes for orders to get processed is too long. We do not have the things that we need to instruct our students properly. These are school level orders that keep getting pushed backed. Different building business managers accepted orders done in different ways. It takes a very long time for feedback to get back to DHs when an order is not done “correctly” and then they have to rewrite orders and wait longer. Many times, the orders take so long that the prices go up or the supplies are no longer available.

Bob Riccitelli - In the past there was bonded money available. Is there bonded money at all for shops?

Niki Menounos – The last bonded money was available for safety. Don Poulin oversees the usage of bonded money. The last time it was used for trades was 2012.

Bob – We used to have DH meetings at the beginning of the year where all the DHs would share what they need with the consultants.

Rich – What is the process for us to share what we need? It’s been so long since we have been able to get money and we don’t know how.

Niki – It should go to the consultant. But right now we have not had word that there is bonded money for trades to get new equipment.

John Hemenway – It is very time consuming to fill out orders. There are two different programs for ordering and vendors and they are not searchable. Across the board, orders are kicked back for very minor things. Some business managers are helpful, but many are not. Example: It used to be okay to say “see attached quote”, but now you have to list it if it is less than five items. There is no warning of changes, but we are expected to know.

Justin Lowe – We have been having conversations about having an automated OF95 system. Meeting scheduled for today (1/9/2024) at 2pm.

Johana Rios-Roldan – Central Office is in charge of ordering our testing materials. At the beginning of the year school psychologists were told by Tonya LaPlante we were running low on Behavioral Assessment System for Children, 3rd Edition. There was no money for this assessment. School Psychologists were told to inform parents that they needed to do a different test, even though this was the test on their IEP and we would need a PPT to change this. Again, this was time consuming when school psychologists don’t have time.

Makenzi Hurtado – If something is a district wide issue, it would be helpful for communication to come from Central Office. There are many times when teachers are asked to be the face of an issue when they don’t have all the information and no power to make decisions for parents.

Central Office Communication/Response

John Hemenway shared that there is confusing messaging about the Title I programs and how they operate. It is hard to get a firm answer from the Title I Supervisor. The responses tend to be nonanswers. We must fit inside guidelines and that is appropriate, but we aren’t getting clear information. Things have gotten kicked back, but we don’t have a bank of evidence to work off of. Another example was we were told to use specific indicators for after school programing, but then we were told that it did not apply to the SIP. It feels like we are given freedom to create something new for students and then told we are doing wrong.

Bob Riccitelli – the problem seems to be a lack of procedures. We are not told ahead of time what the procedures are. We are wasting so much time filling out these forms and then told it is wrong.

Makenzi Hurtado - Across disciplines, we are hearing that teachers send multiple emails and do not get responses. When teachers are reaching out with specific questions, they should be able to get a response from a supervisor, in a timely manner.

John also shared that responses for HR related questions take a very long time. For example, people have had questions about their FSA and don’t get responses until after the deadline. Another example is people asking for employment verification for mortgage or citizenship and not getting the answers they need.

Justin Lowe shared that the employee portal will be opening soon, before February 1. It was rolled out to principals last week. It will hopefully be a game changer. There will be opportunities for people to get directed to the correct people. Kerry Markey is overseeing the portal.

Continued on page 5

Labor Management Meeting Minutes continued from page 4

Supporting Teachers So They Can Support Students

Rich Benedict shared that he took only one special education class and is in the classroom. The trade teachers are acknowledging that they don't know how to help the students that they have. The kids we have need a lot more support and we don't have the resources or the training.

We need more than just a special education teacher coming into the room. Many of our students need one-on-one support and are not getting it.

Trade teachers specifically are asking for more training and guidance on how to support students with IEPs and 504s.

Johana Rios-Roldan reiterated that over the past few years we do have such an influx of students that need more time. School Psychologists have bigger caseloads with much higher and time-consuming needs. School psychologists have so much paperwork but don't have the time to do it. They are also now responsible for 504s and not enough time.

Makenzi Hurtado- Right now special education teachers, social workers, and school psychologists are using PD time to try and complete paperwork and there is still not enough time. They are all very grateful for this time, but this also means that they are not receiving any professional development. Even with the PD time, there is just not enough time in the day for the paperwork and providing the services needed to students.

John Hemenway- Academic teachers also need training on how to support students with behavior plans. It is not enough to get the plan. Teachers need strategies and resources that they can use to help and support these students.

Trade Teachers Need Collaborative Time (between shops and between schools)

Rich Benedict shared that in some buildings, there are not very many veteran trade teachers. Newer trade teachers do not have anyone to reach out to for support. Teachers are working and problem solving in silos. There are probably teachers in the district who have solved a problem or have the answers, but there is no time or avenue for trade teachers to collaborate.

This affects the retention of teachers. If we are having a rough day or struggling with the day to day, it helps to have someone to talk to and work with.

We are requesting scheduled time to meet with trade teachers across the district and across disciplines.

CTECS

No agenda items

Follow Up

- **Shop and Department Budgets**

- **Trade Credentials**

Makenzi asked where the money comes from for credentials.

Niki - Money for credentials goes through Central Office.

Request that consultant fills out OF95s for credentials.

- **Consistent Safety Plans Across the District**

Needs to be rolled out to teachers. This continues to be a concern, especially when teachers or administrators transfer and no one knows what the current plans are.

- **Time**

We need to get creative with making time for teachers to collaborate.

SVFT requests again that we have half day Wednesdays (every week or biweekly) or 2 hour delay schedules to allow for collaboration and professional development.

- **State Vendors and OF95s**

When OF95s take too long, the prices change and go up drastically.

- **Consistency Across the District in Procedures for Support Staff**

Johana asked if there is a district wide procedure for when a student is in crisis. It seems that different schools have different procedures and in some schools the school psychologists are not called.

**** Our next Labor Management Meeting is March 5, 2024. ****

If you have any concerns you that you believe are district wide issues, please reach out to:

Makenzi Hurtado

Your Building Representative

Labor Management Committee Members

Trade Advisory (UTAC) Committee Members

All committee members can be found on our website.

Calendar

2/7 Executive Council Meeting

2/7 Eli Whitney H&S

2/12 No School

2/15 Budget Committee

2/20 No School

2/27 UTAC Committee

3/5 Labor Management

3/6 SVFT SERS Retirement Seminar

3/13 Executive Council Meeting

3/14 Oliver Wolcott H&S

3/22 SKILLS



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!!!

Are you considering retiring this year?

Join us for our

SERS Retirement Information Session

March 6, 2024 at 6pm

via Zoom

Link will be sent through Action Network.

This session is for SERS only.

AFTCT will host a TRB session in April.

svft.ct.aft.org

Any information you need is on our website!
Do you have suggestions for additions to our website?

Email our Secretary, Jamie Lamitie:
jlamitie@svft.org

Future Articles

We would like to have a "School Shout Out" article and a "Member Spotlight" article in each newsletter.

Invite us to attend an event or share something from your school that makes you proud.

What else do you want to see in the Vocational Instructor? Please let us know!

Email Jamie at jlamitie@svft.org

Vocational Instructor

*is the monthly newsletter of the
State Vocational Federation of Teachers*

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SVFT Mission Statement

The SVFT is an organization of professional educators that promotes excellence through the mutual adherence to policies, documents, and procedures negotiated with the CTEC. We work to guarantee that the contract is followed and positive working conditions are maintained. This organization shall be to provide a safe and positive teaching environment for all by:

1. Maintaining the integrity of the contract, the Vocational Technical High School System, and the solidarity of the union.
2. Ensuring all members are protected by the contract and equipped with the tools and knowledge necessary to make them successful.
3. Protecting the jobs of our members and strengthening our system.
4. Providing members opportunities to further their education and receive quality professional development.
5. Responding quickly to the emerging changes to the workplace and technological challenges.
6. Handling all interactions with fairness and integrity.
7. Striving for productive, open communication between the SVFT leadership and our membership.
8. Building and improving relationships with our union affiliates and local labor councils.