

Vocational Instructor

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



"It Pays
To Be Taught
By a Vo-Tech
Teacher"

Volume MMXXII Issue 1

January 2022

The Year Ahead

By Paul Angelucci

Let me begin by telling you what we are working on and what we are fighting for. With the use of MOUs and stipulated agreements, we've been pressuring Central Office to produce clear procedures regarding, but not limited to, the posting of vacant positions, a clear definition of job descriptions, and who does the lesson planning and grading when long term subs are in place. We've tackled the placement of assistant principals and the lack of fairness that was shown. I will be publicly speaking at this month's Board Meeting on the need to bring back half days on Wednesdays for teachers.

Makenzi, Bob, and I met with Dr. Solek by ZOOM this snowy Friday afternoon as we do weekly now. One of the topics was the mental health of our staff. Makenzi, who is on the CARES Committee, did an incredible job when she met at Central Office with the committee and today with Dr. Solek. When discussing half day Wednesdays, she conveyed the fact that giving teachers time to collaborate with colleagues is more valuable than PD and all the structure implies that we are not seen as professionals who can manage free time. I also gave Dr. Solek the history of PD in our District and said, "If it's more of the same PD on Wednesdays, just leave us with kids!". She understood our concerns and is working on providing teachers with opportunities, rather than requiring extra PD.

Negotiations has many moving parts to deal with to get us to the finish line, which is a signed Contract. The four main ones are:

1. SEBAC coming to an agreement on a wage package. SEBAC consists of 15 of the largest unions in the state that meet with the Governor's people. I attend a larger meeting that is all 37 presidents. These negotiations focus on our steps and raises. We've had 6 raises in the past 11 years and we are more than due our fair share.
2. The negotiations going on at the table on language between SVFT and CTECS: There is a path to get this done without arbitrating, which would save us time.
3. Then, either the ratification or arbitrating the finished product. A ratification would consist of all members being presented the offer and language changes and voting them. Arbitrating would consist of the lawyers presenting and an arbitrator making a final decision.
4. And lastly, the legislature, by law, must vote on all contracts. In the past if they weren't present it passed by default which would give them cover with their constituents. Now, legislators are required to vote.

As of Thursday, January 6th, Connecticut had 7,612 students tested positive and 2,338 staff members tested positive. Schools are closing left and right but the Governor, and Commissioner of Education along with Connecticut's own Secretary of Education all share the thought that the safest place for kids is in school. Dr. Solek shared with us several of the closings are due to our subs being sick and unable to staff the buildings. It's a problem that is being left to worsen unfortunately.

Lastly, I want to encourage you all to attend our ZOOM Meetings we set up for all schools. The three officers will briefly present and then open the floor to questions. We appreciate your patience and thank you for your continued support.

Member Spotlight: Abayomi Wilson – Windham Tech

By Makenzi Hurtado

Abayomi Wilson, Information Systems Technology DH at Windham Tech, did not want to be in the spotlight. In fact, he tried to track down the person who recommended him for this article. But when Mr. Wilson started talking about his students and their accomplishments, he glowed with pride.

For several years, Mr. Wilson has involved his students in CyberStart America programs and competitions. It started with CyberGirls. As the name implies, this competition was only for girls. Mr. Wilson's girls performed very well, placing third in Connecticut and making the national teams.

CyberSmart America is a four month long online competition that is intended to identify and recruit students to the cybersecurity field. High schoolers around the country must complete a series of challenges related to cybersecurity. Students do not need to have any prior knowledge of cybersecurity to participate. While these challenges are referred to as gamification challenges, Mr. Wilson made it clear that his students were not just playing around. Students had to apply what they were learning in challenges to cybersecurity puzzles, code breaking, networking, and more. And, all of this had to be done as a supplement to their already full IST curriculum. In 2020, Governor Lamont announced that Connecticut would again be participating in CyberSmart America. For the first time, the program would be open to all students. Mr. Wilson shared that this was an amazing opportunity for his IST students for many reasons. As one would imagine, IT and cybersecurity specifically, are high need and ever-changing fields. No matter how robust a curriculum, it is challenging to keep up. Through this competition, students are introduced to problems and solutions that are relevant right now.

At the end of the competition, the students were ranked. Scholars were the 540 highest scoring students and Finalists were the 862 highest scoring students. Scholars and Finalists both were awarded free access to the summer Cyber Foundations Academy (a \$4,000 value). Scholars also earned a \$2,500 scholarship to the college of their choice. Of the 11 Scholars from Connecticut, seven were from Windham Tech. Two of the Finalists were also from Windham Tech.

As if these accomplishments were not enough, Mr. Wilson's students continued to impress. Six students were able to participate in the summer program. The summer program was also sponsored by the SANS Institute. Mr. Wilson explained that this is the premier cybersecurity company in the world. Students learned about careers in cybersecurity, cybersecurity issues facing the world today, and had the opportunity to earn their GIAC Certification. This certification is the highest standard in cybersecurity certification. At the time of this interview, four of Mr. Wilson's six students had earned their certification and one was preparing to try for the certification again. It was amazing to learn of all the accomplishments Mr. Wilson's students were able to achieve. But, perhaps more important than any of the awards was the way that Mr. Wilson's students began to see themselves. Through these challenges, and with Mr. Wilson's support and guidance, his students were able to see what he had always seen in them - potential.



Committee Spotlights

SVFT has 10 standing committees and several special committees. These committees are made up of members throughout our union. Members serve on committees for two-year terms. This term is May 2021 – April 2023. Throughout the year we will be spotlighting different committees to give you an idea of what they do, and the commitment needed to serve. Joining a committee is a great way to have your voice heard and make change.

Labor/Management is a district committee. It consists of three members that represent different teachers throughout our union. This committee meets with management four times a year. Teachers are given a district release day to attend these meetings. Members of this committee are tasked with presenting issues that are facing our members in their day-to-day work.

Health & Safety is also a district committee. This committee is made up of mostly trade teachers and one science teacher. These members take one day a month to tour the shops and science labs in a school, with the building management supervisor. Members document any health and safety concerns and share their report with the BMS and principal. Committee members meet with all shop teachers to provide anonymous outlet for sharing concerns. These members are a district release day to complete this work.

New Year – New Page

SVFT – State Vocational Federation of Teachers – Local 4200A



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

STATE VOCATIONAL
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**SVFT - State Vocational
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Local 4200A**

Labor Union

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Learning the Lingo

By Bob Riccitelli

Makenzi recently brought to my attention that sometimes I use terms that no one understands. Here are some definitions that may help.

The Union – Many members refer to “the Union” as only the officers. This is far from the truth. The Union is all 1,200 members. We are all responsible for upholding OUR Contract. While the officers fight for the members, the members hold the true power of the union. That is why we always say, we can stand up with you but not for you.

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding – this is a stipulated agreement between the SVFT and the Board (Central Office) that changes an existing policy.

Stipulated Agreement – an agreement between the SVFT, the Member, and the Board that only affects one person or group.

CBA – Collective Bargaining Agreement – Our Contract

Grievance – A grievance is a formal process to argue a violation of the contract. A Level 1 grievance is file at the school level. This gives the principal a chance to correct or defend their actions. A Level 2 is filed with Human Resources.

Arbitration – If the SVFT and the Board cannot come to a mutual agreement, we can forward the issue to our Grievance and Arbitration committee. They look at the impact on the member, the impact on the Union, the contract language, and the ability to win the arbitration. If the committee votes to forward, the case is presented to an Arbitrator by our Attorney.

Complaint – A formal letter to Human Resources about a non-contractual issue such as unprofessional conduct from a supervisor.

Just Cause – typically this is when HR issues discipline for some unprofessional action a teacher has done.

Letter of Counseling or Letter of Concern – These are not in any order. They both are a way for an administrator to document a conversation without it being disciplinary. You could get 10 of these letters and never have any discipline.

Letter of Reprimand – This is the first level of discipline. We can grieve the letter if it is unjust, but we cannot forward to Arbitration.

Timelines – Everything in my world has a timeline. We only have 30 days from the date of the violation to file a grievance. The principal has 10 days to reply. We have 10 days to forward to a level 2 and HR has 10 days to reply. If we forward the issue to Arbitration, we only have 20 days to do so.

Past Practice – If the Union or the Board is aware of a violation of the contract and lets it go without any action it becomes standard practice.

Loudermill – A Loudermill is a pre-disciplinary hearing. This is a last chance to reduce or eliminate whatever discipline Administration is contemplating. Fact-finding meetings – Everyone gets nervous when they are called to the principal’s office, Central Office, or EEOC for a fact finding. This is when investigators are looking into a situation. While it may feel accusatory, it really is just a means of collecting the facts to see if there is any wrongdoing on the member’s part or if new policies need to be instituted.

An Important Reminder About April Vacation:

Per our contract (Article 6, Section 1.d), we only have 5 makeup days built into the calendar. After which Central Office can remove days from the April break. These are workdays so PLEASE do not book a vacation during the break. You cannot use sick time and only the first 5 people requesting a PL will be granted. By contract, the only time that Central Office cannot schedule us to work is July 1st - August 25th.

Congratulations to some of the new parents and grandparents in our district!

Jacob Walsh
Katie Kollias
Steve Moore
Sarah Ramos
Amanda Gannon
Nicole Deal
Tabitha Anagnos
Jaime Miller
Michelle Allen
Juliana Juber
Kimmy Melissa
Lilitha Kasturirangan



Labor/Management Minutes:

The December Labor/Management was rescheduled to take place on January 18th, 2022. Minutes will appear in the February Newsletter.

Not Receiving Emails from SVFT?
Check your junk mail and promotions folder!

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
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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. Please email Makenzi at mhurtado@svft.org if you have something great to share.

What else do you want to see in the Vocational Instructor? Please let us know!
Email Makenzi at mhurtado@svft.org.