

Vocational Instructor

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



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

Volume MMXXII Issue 9

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Some Quick Updates

by Paul Angelucci, President



Here we are with more than half the year done and we still have more questions than answers. The Executive Director nor the Superintendent has yet to be selected.

We currently meet every other Tuesday at Central Office with the Super, HR, and sometimes Sue Scott, who is the district's lawyer. We discuss and look for resolutions on various issues. We started this with the last superintendent and will look to continue this with the new superintendent. If you have any questions or something you'd like to discuss, please let us know.



CALENDAR

- 2/09 Health & Safety Visit - Goodwin
- 2/13 No School
- 2/16 Tuition Reimbursement Arbitration
- 2/20 No School
- 2/22 Deadline to submit TOY nominations to school committee
- 2/22 Budget Meeting
- 2/27 AFT-CT Testifying Training
- 3/7 MTC Meeting
- 3/7 Labor Management Committee Meeting
- 3/8 Executive Council
- 3/9 Health & Safety Visit - Grasso

AFT-CT is offering a workshop on giving testimony on February 27th. This legislative session goes until June 6th. There are a number of bills we have an interest in: funding obviously and automatic refill. The teacher shortage coupled with the incredibly long on-boarding process makes filling these positions in a timely manner impossible. If you are interested in testifying for a bill that would benefit our members and our district, please reach out to me.

I want to thank the members who took the time to fill out our survey. The only way we can speak for you effectively is to know your thoughts. This survey was for all SVFT members to share their voice. We'll be sharing the results with the management when they're announced. If you have not filled out the survey, you still can! Look for an email from Makenzi, through SurveyMonkey.

I want to say since July 1st when the district became its own agency, I never would believe seven months later we'd still have payroll, stipend, tuition, step movement, reimbursement, etc. issues but unfortunately, we do. I want to thank Makenzi who continually advocates for resolution. Unfortunately, this continues to be a long road. A quick update on the hiring situation, as of this writing the district has hired 160 teachers since August 25, 2022. This is almost double the average. As always if you know of someone interested or in the process of applying, please share my info - c 203-627-0710.

To end on a more positive note, I met with the Governor's office regarding the urgency needed to fill the Executive Director position and was given assurances that it will be days or weeks, not months to be finalized. And we're a mere 8 weeks away from the April break!

link to register for AFTCT Testifying at the State Capitol: 101 (available on AFT-CT website calendar)

<https://aftct-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIkcuGhrz0tEtGrjFeGaEE11BsL6rq8S9li>

New Year, Same Fights

By Makenzi Hurtado, Vice President

First, I would like to give a shout out to our school counselors during National School Counseling Week. School counselors use this week to increase awareness of their roles in schools. I highly recommend taking a few minutes to visit www.schoolcounselor.org and educate yourself on the work they do and how it has changed over the years. As the affects of Covid continue to ripple through our schools, it is only more obvious how invaluable our school counselors and support staff are to our communities.

Each month, I attend the AFT-CT PreK-12 Council meetings. These meetings are an opportunity for me to hear about the state of education throughout Connecticut and compare issues we are facing with other districts. Many of the issues we are facing are the same in every district. Every district is struggling with finding the staffing to support students. Every district is frustrated with CT-SEDS and the effect it has had on our special education teachers. We do have issues that are uniquely ours and I am finding new resources to help us address those. This month we were able to resolve several TRB issues that we had with the help of members of this committee. I have also been developing a relationship with the union leadership for Hartford Federation of Teachers. They are working on increasing their connections to the Hartford community and have given an open invitations to our members who serve the Hartford community to join them. As they develop events, I will share them with our schools that take Hartford students. I hope to develop more relationships like this with other sending districts.

Since November, I have been the SVFT point person for pay issues. We decided to streamline these issues to one person to simplify communication with HR and to easier keep track of the progress. Pay issues continue to be a frustration. There are many issues that started in July and new issues that arise every pay period. I am working on a daily basis to resolve these issues. If you have any pay issues, please first reach out to your business manager. If they cannot resolve the issue, please email me. I cannot guarantee that your issue will be resolved quickly, but I can promise that once you are on my list, I will not stop until the issue is resolved.

We had a great turn out for our retirement seminar. We have heard that HR is also providing seminars for SERS and we recommend you attend. The invite for these was sent to your work email. AFT-CT will be hosting a seminar for TRB in April. We will share that information when it is shared with us. In our meeting, we did notice many younger members who are interested in better understanding their retirement plan farther in advance. We are developing a new retirement seminar specifically geared at those members and information will be forthcoming. Lastly, our next Labor-Management meeting is March 7th. Please feel free to reach out to me, if there are any issues you would like brought to the table.

Stipend Positions

(Be Helpful But Get Paid!)

by Bob Riccitelli, Executive Union Rep

Last year we signed a stipulated agreement to cover stipends that are not listed in Appendix B or D.

They include: Full Curriculum Creation or revisions (\$2,000); Partial Curriculum updates (\$1,000); DSA creations (\$200 per exam); Proficiency Scales (\$300 per course); Remediation Plans (\$1,000 per Course); ECE, AP or CCP Training (\$400). Any other training or creation of documents or materials must be paid at the teachers per diem rate.

If you are asked to create substitute plans (not your own) outside of the workday, attend training over the summer or after normal working hours, or proctor an exam on a weekend, they MUST pay you your per diem rate. The reason we had to sign an agreement for the above stipends was we set a past practice by allowing Central Office to Direct Deal with you. Please, if any management member asks or tells you to do something outside of Appendix B, D or the stipend agreement call me ASAP. Also remember if it is on your time, you cannot be made to do it. This way we can make sure you get paid and more importantly we protect our contract for everyone.

Advice from AAA

(American Arbitrators Association) Fair & Complete Investigation

by Bob Riccitelli, Executive Union Rep

The employer's duty to conduct a fair and complete investigation is part of the "7 Tests of Just Cause." The author of the "7 Tests" was the late Arbitrator Carroll Daugherty.

The "7 Tests" have fallen into disfavor primarily because they do not take into account the balancing that arbitrators engage in. More importantly, arbitrators never adopted Arb. Daugherty's ultimate test which was that a "no" answer to any of the "7 Tests" meant that the union would win. Stated the same way, but from the employer's perspective, if the employer checked every box with a yes, then it would win its case. Such a check-off mentality is attractive, but it is not how arbitrators decide cases. At a recent conference, an arbitrator, equally as well-known as Carroll Daugherty was in his day, discussed the one test that the employer conduct a fair and complete investigation before it decides to discipline or discharge. Here is an excerpt of his remarks.

It is not an absolute rule or test.

continued on page 3

Advice from AAA continued...

An employee goes up to his boss and smacks him. The boss says, "You're fired." and the employee is escorted out. There is no investigation. There is no suspension pending an investigation.

The union grieves the discharge and, among other things, argues that the lack of an investigation violates the "7 Tests of Just Cause." The union is correct, but now you're at the arbitration hearing and both sides present ALL the relevant evidence.

There are 6 cameras from every angle. There are 42 witnesses. There's no question that the grievant did it. Ask yourself, did the employer need to investigate? Can the boss's reaction ("you're fired") be upheld?

Chances are that, once the rule violation is proven, the discharge will be upheld. The lack of any investigation did not affect management's proof at the hearing or the remedy.

The merits of the case are what matter; not whether the investigation was fair, complete, or anything else. Management can help its case by finding out such things, such as why the grievant smacked him (was there some provocation?). Or, if there had been an investigatory phase, the employer might have learned that the boss was out to "get the grievant".

But here's the point: management will lose the case on the merits, not because it fell below some standards about investigation.

In other words, it may be better for management to conduct a fair and complete investigation in every case, but this is not an absolute rule. In fact, it may not even be a factor in the case.

In conclusion, the union should do its own investigation, and it can win the case if that investigation refutes what is behind management's case. I also hope that the employer will consider the possibility that it has a lousy case, when it has failed to investigate.

Labor/Management Committee January 10, 2023 – 9am AFT – CT

1. Introductions

Paul Angelucci, Makenzi Hurtado, Bob Riccitelli, Krista Miller, Charles Rolle, Kelley Benzing
Dr. Nikitoula Menounos, Javette Giannelli-Allen, Rafael Palacio

2. SVFT

a. Science Lab Size – Article 7 Section 1e

- "The Committee also shall review any case of a science laboratory in which the number of students assigned exceeds the number of stations and shall recommend an appropriate remedy to the Superintendent."

- Need to review buildings in which the number of students assigned exceeds the number of stations

- Most labs have 18 stations. Science class sizes are between 25 and 30.

- Dr. Menounos will reach out to Don Poulin, John Woodmansee, and Brian Barrington to schedule a Health & Safety Committee meeting to address this.

b. Lesson Plan Templates

- Kelly explained that the roll out was different throughout the district. We are requesting teacher input in all schools. It is helpful for a teacher to be able to organize their lesson plan template the way that they would like. We would like to see more flexibility for teachers to use what works for them in their planning.

- Dr. Menounos stated that there are non-negotiables that have to be on every lesson plan. Most of these things fall in a logical order in a lesson plan. She asked what other things are being asked.

Krista Miller shared that the Eli Whitney plan has four pages and did not have teacher input. It would be more helpful if they were more of a cycle plan. The amount of time that it takes to complete these lesson plans does not seem like a good use of time.

c. Shop Budgets

- Costs for materials are increasing drastically and budgets have not gone up at all. Some schools are holding shop profits. Charlie shared that his money from production did come but almost too late to be useful. He has 66 students come through Exploratory Phase II. The students go through a lot of material that they cannot use again. There is a difference between true perishables and

continued on page 4

Labor Management Minutes continued...

reusables. Makenzi shared the example of a plumbing shop that is given \$900 for Phase I of Exploratory. The first activity that he does requires 525 90s that costs him \$840. He does not have enough money for the rest of the supplies. The budgets don't reflect the number of students in Exploratory either.

- Dr. Menounos explained that there is a set amount of money for Phase I and Phase II. She can talk to the principals about the way that they budget their money for the shops, based on class size and the types of materials that are needed.

- Charlie also asked if there can a system be created for selling scrap metal again? Paul shared the history of a teacher being fired for scrapping the metal in the incorrect way, even though this was the common practice at the time. The correction was to have maintenance scrap the metal. The maintenance union at the time refused because they do not handle money.

Charlie also shared that the same thing happened with sawdust at one point. It can also be sold, but we cannot do that because it was not done properly in the past. It is not only a waste of money to throw it away, but maintenance does not want the sawdust in the dumpsters.

Dr. Menounos said that she would talk to the consultants to work on a plan for scrap metal and sawdust.

- Opening shops before they have supplies. Teachers are trying to recruit with nothing. One teacher had nothing for Exploratory Phase I and then spent \$1000 of his own money on Phase 2, knowing he would not be reimbursed. Charlie also shared that this is common practice for all shop teachers. They know they will not be reimbursed and it is easy for people on the outside to tell them not to spend their own money, but if they don't have what they need for exploratory, they will not get the students that they need.

Dr. Menounos stated that all new shops are given startup money. They are supposed to have the money they need to start a new shop. She said that she would look into why the supplies are not getting to the teachers in time for exploratory.

d. School Counselor Support

- Krista Miller explained that there is no way to see the applications on the school side. There are parents and sending schools asking what they need to send and what is missing and no one at the school level can see this to help.

Javette: Shelley Visinski, Interim Director of Admission, is the acting director for admissions. She is getting all applications and screening all applications. Is this the first year you do not have access?

Krista Miller: Yes, this is the first year we do not have information.

Paul Angelucci: How does only one person look at thousands of applications?

Javette: There should be a committee, but we don't know how Shelly is doing it this year.

- Makenzi also shared that there is no go-to person in Central Office for school counselors. The DHs and Directors of School Counseling have weekly meetings and this year they have not had anyone from Central Office attend.

- Krista Miller explained that there is the trauma of the last few years. We are seeing much more need than ever before. We are requesting a needs assessment for the district. So much more support is needed since COVID.

Javette shared that for the last two years we have noticed this need. We have been doing needs assessments. The CREC Contract covered testing for special education, para-educators, speech pathologists. That is our only contract on file with the state right now. We have increased the services coming in from CREC in every building. We now have a \$12 million contract to get more services in the building. We went from one para to almost 40 paras.

- There have been postings for durational School Psychologists... none of them have been for our "priority schools".

Javette: These are regional positions.

Paul Angelucci: This needs to be reflected in their hire letter. This affects their contract and their mileage.

- Makenzi explained that the feeling amongst many of the school counselors is that Central Office staff and administrators do not understand the role of a school counselor. We have school

continued on page 5

Labor Management Minutes continued...

counselors that are qualified and willing to provide PD for Central Office Staff on the role of a School Counselor.

- Paul Angelucci: I would like to attend a principals' meeting and an assistant principals' meeting.

Dr. Menounos: The principals' meeting will be the first Thursday of February. The next AP meetings is tomorrow (1/11).

Paul Angelucci: We have many teachers that are new and struggling. I will be in the building more to support these new teachers.

3. CTECS

- Restraint and seclusion: By law, there needs to be a policy and training at the building level. For the most part, in our district, we are not doing restraints. However, there are times when restraints happen. We do need training. Our administrators and consultants are being trained and to be trainers. This is taking place until March. There are also a lot of de-escalation strategies involved in restraint.

Until teachers are trained: Follow the current directive at your building.

- Dr. Menounos shared that at the principals' meeting, they began looking at trends for exploratory numbers for shops. This is something that they do every year.

- Goodwin is now a priority school, along with Prince and Eli Whitney. All three schools have a performance intervention team. This is determined by students' scores on different assessments.

4. Follow Up

a. New Special Education Platform – has there been any movement to give special education teachers more time in their schedule to accommodate the amount of time needed for IEPs?

Javette: We have not put this in the mandate, but we have recommended it to building level administration. For PD days, principals have been asked to open up time for special education teachers to work on CT SEDS.

b. Role of Managers/Consultants/Supervisors/Directors and Chain of Command

Rafael Palacio will share this with the officers.



Vocational Instructor

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

Email our Secretary, Jamie Lamitie
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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.