

# Vocational Instructor

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



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

Volume MMXXIII Issue 2

November 2023

**ALL MEMBERS WELCOME! ALL MEMBERS WELCOME! ALL MEMBERS WELCOME!**

## General Membership Meeting

5PM - NOVEMBER 8, 2023

A. I. PRINCE TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

Attend in person to participate or livestream from home!

Links will be sent to your email.

### **Protecting Union Work**

*by Paul Angelucci, President*

On October 13, 2023, we had a Labor Charge heard at the Board of Labor. Eric Chester, our counsel, was present and Susan Scott and Rafael Palacio attended for CTECS. This charge started in April 2023 when I was informed by a member that there were CREC social workers working in our schools. Article I, Section One of our contract states the SVFT is the sole bargaining agent for all employees in positions covered by a teaching certification. I immediately brought this to management's attention and was told it was temporary and would be stopping. In August I was informed that the CREC social workers were rehired, along with school psychologists and speech pathologists. Upon receiving the contract we learned that they were contracted to hire special education teachers and substitutes, as well. Part of the ruling on 10/13 was that CTECS had to identify the CREC employees doing our work and have those positions posted by January 1, 2024. We received a list of 19 employees from CREC: six full time, six part time, six as needed, and one after school tutoring. I'm sharing this for several reasons. First, I only learned of this because a teacher told me. Second, that teacher found out by introducing themselves to a new staff member. I always encourage our teachers to reach out to know the other staff in the building. We need to know who we are working with. And third, this is how a union works best. The member who brought that information to me is the union! You're all the union. We're strongest when we stand together and keep each other informed!

**A Note on PMT Training:** We do have to attend, but we do not have to be certified. It is our understanding that there is a physical component to the training and you can opt out of it. Our contract clearly states we never have to act as security. We have always said and will continue to say, "**NEVER PUT YOUR HANDS ON A STUDENT**". If you want to get certified that is your choice, but you can still refuse to restrain a student after being certified. We have seen far too many good teachers placed on admin leave their reputations dragged through the mud for putting a hand on a shoulder, so be careful.

**Hopefully we will see you at the General Membership at Prince or on Zoom!**

## Avoiding Past Practice

*by Bob Riccitelli, Executive Union Representative*

When you get a directive from a building administrator, supervisor, manager, director, assistant superintendent, or the superintendent, you must follow that directive. However, that doesn't mean it is contractually legal. If you are being asked to do something new, reach out to me immediately. Do not be insubordinate, but let us know so that we can prevent past practice.

Article 2 of our contract states that if the contract does not address a specific issue it becomes managements' prerogative. That doesn't mean they can do anything they want to us. If we hear about a practice that is not in our contract, we will file a Grievance and possibly a ULP (Unfair Labor Practice).

Here is a quote from the Labor Arbitrators Institute on Past Practice.

*“1. The Practice must be clear.*

*This is a key element. The parties cannot be bound to a practice that is not clear.*

*I can't tell you how many cases I have heard where the witnesses testify that there is a Past Practice of doing something. And this is how they start their sentences:*

*I have heard that . . .*

*My sense is . . .*

*I believe the practice has been. . .*

*What this tells me is that they don't have first-hand knowledge. If there are records, then this testimony may not matter. But I have heard too many cases where the party who has the burden of proof has witnesses who waver.*

*Usually, the union has the upper hand in these cases. The union witnesses have been around for a long time, and it's the management witnesses who are relatively new.*

*2. The Practice has to be repeated over a long period of time.*

*A number of cases arose out of the pandemic.*

*I know 2 or 3 years is a long time, but the practices which arose under the pandemic may not meet this requirement. There are two reasons why. First, when the alleged practice started, was there a mutual agreement that it would continue for the length of the bargaining agreement? And second, if the pandemic has receded, is that a change in the underlying circumstances? A practice only survives for as long as the circumstances which gave rise to the employee benefit continue.”*

We are currently looking at Past Practice issues with LMS-DHs and Athletic Directors. Both were assigned additional responsibilities. Is this a management right? I don't believe so. Our members are pushed to the limit every day. And I want it to stop!

## “Pay Me What You Owe Me”

*by Makenzi Hurtado, Vice-President*

As a school district, we are a very unique state agency. In my time as vice-president, I have received a crash course in how finances work for state employees and it is complicated. Last year I learned that in terms of employee size, we are a relatively small state agency, but it in terms of transactions we have thousands. Most agencies have base pay, overtime, and maybe a few other pay items for employees. In our contract, we have over 60 stipend positions and special pay. We also have unlisted positions and ancillary positions that are not in our contract. I have also learned that there are many groups responsible for different aspects of our pay. We have fiscal, payroll, HR, central office, and labor relations, to name a few. It is very complicated. And mistakes do happen. Some mistakes that are as simple of missing a toggle in CoreCT can drastically affect your pay. CTECS is responsible and required to pay you what you are owed. When mistakes happen, they are resolved the fastest when they are found quickly. This year we have seen many issues, but we have also seen quick

resolutions for issues that are new. Unfortunately issues that are years old take longer to resolve.

It is important to look at your pay stub every pay period, especially when you are expecting an additional payment. It is also important that you are reviewing your deductions and accruals. The bottom line: know what you owe and know what you are owed.

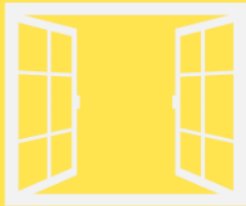
HOURS AND EARNINGS					TAXES		
Description	Rate	Current Hours	Current Earnings	YTD Earnings	Description	Current	YTD
Regular Earnings		70.00			Fed Withholding		
Mis. Bonus, Fees, Reimburse	<i>The "rate" on your pay stub is not your actual hourly rate - just ignore it.</i>				Fed MED/EE		
Longevity	<i>Your "earnings" should match your step in the contract book.</i>				Fed OASDI/EE		
SDE Team Mentor Stipend	<i>Payments in this box vary based on the extra work that you do.</i>				CT Withholding		
SDE Personal Leave Buy Back	<i>Many items fall under Miscellaneous.</i>						
Total:					Total:		
BEFORE-TAX DEDUCTIONS				AFTER-TAX DEDUCTIONS		LEAVE BALANCES AS OF:	
Description	Current	YTD	Description	Current	YTD	Description	Balance
<i>In this box you should see:</i>			StVocFTD			Sick	
Retirement (SERS or TRS)			Group Life Ins - Basic			Personal	<i>Accruals are listed in hours, not days.</i>
Retirement Health			GrpLiFSup				<i>If you elected to roll over a PL day, you should see the time here.</i>
Health Insurance							
Dental							
<i>You are responsible for these deductions, so make sure they are correct!</i>			<i>If you are unsure about your pay, your business manager or FAA can help you. You can also reach out to Makenzi. Send her a screen shot and a question any time!</i>				

# TRANSFER WINDOW IS OPEN

August 15 - March 15

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

TRANSFER RIGHTS information is in Article 11, Section One of our contract.



## New Language

Based on a stipulated agreement:

Instructors can now complete the Transfer/Promotion Form during the transfer window for the Dean of Students position. If no current Deans put in for the transfer, instructors will be interviewed for the promotion.

## Giving Thanks to Unions Past

By Eric Klotz

*Eric Klotz is an English Teacher from Goodwin Tech. He is a building representative and is now also a member of the Grievance & Arbitration and Contract Negotiation Committees and a Delegate.*

With a reopener in our contract in January 2024 for potential wage increases for next September, negotiations are on the horizon and on the minds of most us. Hopefully these negotiations will be reasonable and our value as teachers will be recognized, but if the last few negotiations indicate how the next will be, we will face numerous challenges. As a union, it is vitally important that we both hold the line and demand what is rightfully ours.

At a recent family gathering, we were reminiscing about growing up in New York City where the majority of my family members were members of the Transport Workers Union of America. My mother and my aunt were, at first, joking about how my grandmother had decorated the apartment where they had been raised. There was a small table in their apartment with pictures displayed of the Pope, the Virgin Mary, and Mike Quill, the TWU President. John F. Kennedy eventually joined the pantheon of prominent Irish or Catholic icons as well.

While I know that most of us do not have a photo of Paul displayed in our homes, Mike Quill's photo encapsulated a few things that were important to my family and what we as union members also revere. The union organizing of Mike Quill and the TWU provided Irish immigrants with an opportunity to earn a living, but also, and equally as important, a means to earn respect while living with integrity.

The fight that solidified Mike Quill's legacy was the 1966 New York Transit Strike. The TWU contract with the city expired at the end of 1965, and rather than concede to what was considered an inadequate, if not insulting, proposal for a wage increase, the TWU organized a strike in conjunction with the Amalgamated Transit Union, effectively shutting down the city.

It wasn't just the courage to reject an insulting offer, but also the manner in which Mike Quill conducted himself when faced with possibility of imprisonment for organizing a strike that inspired. Yes, a wage increase and an improvement in benefits was important, as it is now, but respect was equally as important, as it is now.

There was a lot of uncertainty at the time of the strike. Would stewards and vocal union members lose their jobs? Would union members on the picket line be arrested? The city had issued an injunction against the strike and a judge's order cleared the way for the arrest of Mike Quill and other prominent union leaders. Despite significant health problems, Mike Quill retained a fiercely resilient spirit that would not yield. When asked about the judge's order prior to his arrest, Mike Quill said, "The judge can drop dead in his black robes. I don't care if I rot in jail. I will not call off the strike."

After twelve days, both parties agreed to reasonable terms and the strike ended. While we will not repeat Mike Quill's tactics, we can certainly emulate his courage as we enter our own negotiations. There is a reason why there is a teacher shortage, and an SEL breathing exercise will not alleviate the fact that teachers are being asked to do more now with less support. While we are legally not allowed to strike, there are other ways to show our strength and power. We need to come together and remind management that we are not subordinates to be dictated terms, but equal partners in maintaining the integrity of the school system.

**\*\*\*We welcome member articles in our newsletter.**

**We reserve the right to edit articles. We reserve the right not to publish articles for any reason.\*\*\***

## **Labor/Management Committee Meeting Minutes**

*Labor/Management Committee meets four times per year. The minutes from these meetings are always shared in our following newsletter.*

### **October 3, 2023**

SVFT: Paul Angelucci (President), Makenzi Hurtado (Vice President), Bob Riccitelli (EUR), Rich Benedict (Platt), John Hemenway (Wright), Johana Rios Roldan (Eli Whitney)

CTECS: Justin Lowe (Superintendent), Nikitoula Menounos (Asst. Superintendent), Rafael Palacio (Labor Relations Manager)

#### **SVFT Agenda Items:**

1. Lack of Busses: Rich Benedict explained how the lack of buses is affecting production opportunities. There is not enough space for 36 students to work safely in the building for the construction trades. Usually the 18 upperclassmen students are not in the building. Dr. Lowe asked Mr. Camacho for an update. Some schools have 5 busses, four schools have 3 busses, Bristol has no bus. They are working on this issue.
2. Vacancies: John Hemenway shared the affect that vacancies are having on students. There are layers of problems. We need short term and long term solutions. Wright Tech specifically has the highest number of vacancies. Posting Issues: CTREAP only comes up under Hartford. Wright is on the border of New York and we are not allowed to use OLAS (an IT issue). Dr. Lowe will look into OLAS and CTReap to work on a solution. Dr. Menounos is working with the science supervisor and Mr Viens on Edmentum (new Plato). Allows substitute to facilitate the learning and there is someone correcting work on the other end. Rich Benedict asked if there is any focus on retention.
3. Time: Rich Benedict shared the need for time to complete professional responsibilities (including shop set up at start of year). All teachers are given 2 hours to set up their shops and also do all of their training. John Hemenway explained the challenge with finding time to plan for co-teaching. There is a big push for co-teaching, but there is only one collaboration period. This isn't happening when you are covering classes. But there is only one period a week. And there is no time for PLCs. There are 20 schools with 20 schedules and every school has scheduling issues. Dr. Menounos explained that there are many requirements that are coming from the state mandates as well. Time in trade is becoming less and less. Makenzi suggested the solution of ½ day Wednesdays or 2-hour delays. Dr. Menounos explained that we cannot do this with a the time requirement for credits. There are many new requirements for teachers and schools. Makenzi reiterated that something has to give. We cannot keep adding to the requirements when time is limited.
4. State Vendors and OF-95s: Paul explained that the money issues are a big issue for our members. There are constant money issues that affect the day to day for teachers and students. Rich Benedict explained that they were freezing, not only budget money, but also production money. Rich Benedict explained that orders are constantly getting kicked back. We cannot wait three months to get an order. State Vendors have limited options, prices are more than we can afford, usually the State Vendor is a middle man for the company we want to use any way – can we be trained on how to get more vendors approved as State Vendors Dr. Lowe said that he will work with the FAAs and create training for DHs. John Hemenway explained that the old Biznet and new site do not match up. Rich Benedict also shared that vendors.
5. Consistency Across the District in Procedures for Support Staff: Johana shared the concern that there are no clear guidelines on how to handle many different situations. Crisis teams, PPTs, SATs, re-entry process, how often, members of teams, etc. No standardized procedure for suicide risk assessment. People are only trained if they find it for themselves. This can be a big liability for the district. We have had school psychologists get in trouble for not handling it properly, but they were doing what they were trained to do. Dr. Menounos asked if School Psychologists requested training. Johana explained that they have asked, but there has not been time. Paul made a friendly request that one of our SVFT officers be on the district Crisis Team. Dr. Menounos does want to have more manuals for each of our procedures. Johana also shared that it makes it difficult to collaborate across buildings, especially when an employee is the only person in their building. Different employees get different directives and cannot collaborate.

#### **CTECS Agenda Items.**

1. PDEC: We are working with an outside organization. Dr. Menounos is the chair, Makenzi Hurtado is on the committee as well. PDEC members will be trained in December.

#### **Follow Up from 2022-2023 School Year**

1. Shop and Department Budgets: same for 10 years
2. Trade Credentials: Not all shops need the credentials that they are getting – takes time away from what they really need. Dr. Menounos explained that credentials are not a competition. The only credentials that should be listed are the ones that are actually needed.
3. Consistent Safety Plans Across the District: John Woodmansee presented at the June retreat and he will present with the principals this month. There is a new Safety Plan Team for the District.
4. Lack of School Nurses: We are still seeing vacancies for these positions and no substitute nurses. We are very concerned, if there is an emergency. We are also concerned for our students that have daily medications.

CONNECTICUT FOR ALL

PROTECT + TRANSFORM

# PUBLIC EDUCATION IN CT

STATEWIDE  
SUMMIT

**WHY IS OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM IN CONNECTICUT NOT SERVING ALL OF OUR STUDENTS IN AN EQUITABLE WAY, AND WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?**

Join us to understand the forces that threaten public education, and let's create a school system where our school communities can thrive!

**LIGHT BREAKFAST + LUNCH + CHILDCARE PROVIDED**

NOVEMBER

**18**

10:00am -  
3:00pm

**Career High School**

140 Legion Avenue,  
New Haven CT 06519



**Please register!**

[tinyurl.com/publicschoolsCT](https://tinyurl.com/publicschoolsCT)

Questions/Concerns?

Call Constanza: (860)307-3359

**PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS:**

AFSCME Council 4, AFT Connecticut, CT Students 4 a Dream, CT Technical High Schools, Hartford Deportation Defense, Hartford Federation of Teachers, New Britain Racial Justice Coalition, and New Haven Federation of Teachers, Anti-Racist Teaching and Learning Collective

## Calendar

11/2 MTC Meeting  
11/8 General Membership  
11/9 H&S Visit  
    - Wright Tech  
11/10 No School  
11/22 Early Dismissal  
11/23 No School  
11/24 No School



# Vocational Instructor

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

**President ..... Paul Angelucci**  
**Vice President ..... Makenzi Hurtado**  
**Executive Union Rep ..... Bob Riccitelli**  
**Treasurer ..... Emily DelPiano**  
**Secretary ..... Jamie Lamitie**  
**Office Manager ..... Lindsay Hochadel**

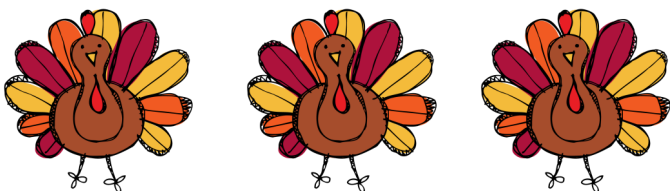
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Wallingford CT 06492  
(203) 793-7996



**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 welcome member articles in our  
newsletter.

We reserve the right to edit articles. We  
reserve the right not to publish articles  
for any reason.\*\*\*

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

Email Jamie at jlamitie@svft.org

## 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.