

Vocational Instructor



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

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

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SPECIAL EDITION 2023

Why Do We Need A Special Edition Newsletter?

Over the last two weeks, we have received many questions and concerns about a complaint we made to State Board of Labor Relations (SBLR) against the district pertaining to the prohibited practice of support service work being subcontracted to CREC.

There is misinformation being spread throughout the district. A member suggested we send a Special Edition Newsletter explaining the history and agreement made. We agreed that was the best way to clarify information and address rumors and conjecture.

As always, please feel free to reach out to any of the officers, if you have any questions or concerns.

TIMELINE

Past Practice—For many years, our district has contracted CREC speech pathologists and school psychologists for specific testing and targeted therapy. SVFT was aware of work being subcontracted that was outside the scope of what our members do.

April 2023—The full-time officers learned that there were full-time and part-time CREC social workers working in our schools. SVFT brought this to management’s attention and were told that it was temporary and would end July 2023. We were very clear that this was a prohibited practice and we would file a complaint if it continued.

August 2023—The full-time officers learned that CREC contracts were renewed and more support staff were hired. SVFT’s legal counsel filed a complaint against CTECS for a prohibited practice.

October 13, 2023—SVFT and CTECS attended an informal hearing at the SBLR to resolve the issue.

SVFT brought President Paul Angelucci, VP Makenzi Hurtado, and Legal Counsel Eric Chester. CTECS brought Labor Relations Manager Rafael Palacio, State Program Manager Damaris Hernandez, and Legal Director Susan Scott. Both sides were able to bring any witnesses they deemed important and CTECS did not bring any supervisors of special education. An agreement was made between both parties (**can be found on page 2**).

October 23, 2023— CTECS provided a list of CREC employees. It included 7 “as needed” school psychologists, 4 full-time social workers, 1 full-time school psychologist, 2 full-time speech language pathologists, 5 part-time speech language pathologist, 1 “eval only” speech pathologist, and 1 special education teacher providing after school tutoring.

Our mission statement is usually on the back page of every newsletter, but for this SPECIAL EDITION, we felt it was important spotlight it on the front page.

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.

Below you will find the complete agreement made on October 13, 2023 after an informal hearing at the State Board of Labor Relations.

10/13 State Board of Education—Connecticut Technical Education and Career Systems & State Vocational Federation of Teachers Local 4200A AFT (SPP—35101)

In order to resolve the claim referred above, the parties agree as follows:

1. The State agrees to no further utilization of outside contractors absent bargaining with the union.
2. The State acknowledges that work being performed by CREC employees at the schools is bargaining unit work.
3. The State will identify with seven (7) days of this agreement all CREC employees performing the job of school social worker, school psychologist, speech pathologist, special education teacher, and substitute within the schools. The State further agrees that any of these identified positions will be posted as bargaining unit position by January 1, 2024.
4. The Union agrees not to seek fees or costs associated with the filing of SPP-35101. The Union further agrees that this agreement will not be used in any future legal proceeding other than for the enforcement of the agreement.
5. The Union agrees to withdraw SPP-35101 without prejudice.

The SBLR hereby closes SPP-35101.
Signed by Rafael Palacio for State of CT
and Paul Angelucci for Union

Important Questions and Their Answers

Why did SVFT file a complaint? Our first priority is to protect the integrity of our contract and ensure that our members and their jobs are protected by the language of our contract. Article I, Section One of our contract states SVFT is the exclusive bargaining agent for all employees in positions covered by the certification. The State cannot negotiate outside of our bargaining unit without a stipulated agreement with SVFT.

What would happen if SVFT did not file a complaint? If SVFT did not file a complaint after fully knowing that the State was subcontracting our work, we would be setting a precedent that any positions in our bargaining unit could be subcontracted.

Why didn't SVFT officers work with the district to ensure students receive services? We were never asked to come to the table to negotiate. The district should have asked us to negotiate **before** subcontracting the work. In fact, during the informal hearing, the Legal Director stated that Paul Angelucci did have a meeting with Javette Giannelli-Allen and Dr. Nikitola Menounos on this issue, knew it was happening and allowed it to happen. This was not the case.

Subcontracting was done by the State knowing that it was against our contract. We have never refused to come to the table to keep our schools open and our students provided for. In the past we have signed stipulated agreements to keep our schools open and services provided. During COVID we signed a stipulated agreement for substitutes to be subcontracted when there was a shortage.

In the last year, we have written a stipulated agreement for special education teachers to receive grant money to complete IEPs due to CTSEDS issues, so that their school time could be used to provide services. We have written a stipulated agreement to pay our substitutes

more and get long term substitutes paid appropriately. At the table, the district said they agreed with both of these agreements. However, both of these agreements have sat on their desks ignored and unsigned.

Why did SVFT require CREC employees be fired when there is no one to take their place? We did not. We do not tell the State how to manage. We came to an agreement with CTECS that all CREC positions would be posted by 1/1/2024. We demand that our contract is upheld, but we do not give directives to management.

We are in a teacher shortage. Don't we need CREC employees? Right now the district is using its CREC contract as a band-aid. It is easier than following our contract. They are saying it is a temporary situation, but that is not true. We have more and more students in our buildings that need support services and no one anticipates that those needs are temporary. The district has said they didn't anticipate the needs and needed to fill positions quickly. However, anyone who has been working in our district in the last 5 years anticipated these needs. We need permanent staff in our buildings and permanent PCNs for those staff.

The district says they need CREC employees because they can't fill positions the right way, but that simply isn't true. They have never tried to fill these positions properly. First, they have never posted the positions filled by CREC. Second, they have posted some speech pathologist positions and durational special education teacher positions and filled them.

If the district cannot fill the positions we need and provide the support our students need, perhaps they should consider improving working conditions for our teachers or creating more enticing salaries and benefits. It seems the district is able to create and fill Central Office positions and administration positions whenever needed.

The district needs to fix its recruiting and hiring practices and get positions created and filled. When they post properly, they do fill positions. We don't need any more band-aids or excuses. We need transparency and accountability in getting positions filled.

What do we do when students do not receive the services they need? Email your supervisors when students are not receiving the services they need. They were put on notice in **April 2023** and should have anticipated the problem when they subcontracted the work in **September 2022**. At Central Office there is an Executive Director, a Superintendent, a Chief of Staff, a Director of Talent Management, two Assistant Superintendents, a Director of Special Education, four Supervisors of Special Education, a Grant Supervisor, a Grant Specialist, and many others whose responsibility it is to solve these problems.