

Vocational Instructor

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



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

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Year End Update

by Paul Angelucci, President

As this year comes to an end, for the first time in the nine years I've been an officer, I'm truly optimistic about the direction of our district. Dr. Pritchard has put together a team that will fast track many of the processes that we're in dire need of and hold people accountable for results. In the five months she has been here we're pleased with the steps she's taken. That being said, some things will take a little more time.

In regards to negotiations of our language, they will begin at the beginning of the school year, but the information I'm getting from SEBAC is that timing will work out.

A few highlights from the May board meeting today: Labor and Legal departments are now combined under Micheal Barrera, which will help a great deal. He has put in place procedures that will help all of us. Dr. Pritchard shared we are no longer locked into the school grid for bonded money, which is great news. There is bonded money for a new Windham Tech in '26 and a new Vinal Tech in '27. The legislative session ends on June 4th at midnight. Until then we know if the previous funding cuts are removed. As I've stated in the past our budget isn't flat lined. We're in the red, unfortunately, due to the poor management of the previous administration.

This year we had 23 administrative transfers and 6 layoffs. The transfers are four times more than any of the last nine years I've been an officer. The AFSA union, our administrators, sees about 15% to 20% transferred yearly and even at 23 we are at less than 2% of our membership being transferred, but that is not a consolation. I have shared with Dr. Pritchard you can't look at teachers and administrators with the same lens. Administrators chose to leave the classroom. Teachers take years to build relationships, community, and trust, and to be rewarded for your hard work by pulling you away from your community is wrong. Dr. Pritchard told me her goal next year was to have no administrative transfers. As someone who has personally been administratively transferred twice, I told her I'm going to share her goal and hold her to it. The layoffs come from programs being eliminated such as Portfolio and a shop closure, Hospitality. We did work with management on stipulated agreement to help our portfolio teachers get into other positions that open up in the district. These members also have SEBAC rights to other state positions that they qualify for before being posted.

This is my last month as president. In the fall I'll be taking the vice president's role. As I stated I'll be retiring within the next term and want Makenzi to handle negotiations without the burden of a special election.

You're in good (better) hands with her at the helm and I wish her well.

I also wish all our members a healthy, happy, safe summer, I hope as always you get everything out of your break and more!



Technically, officers work the same calendar as teachers.

While our office is closed, we will have away messages up on our emails and we will not be checking the office voicemails regularly.

If you have an emergency or time sensitive issue, please reach out to our cell phones. We will respond as soon as possible.

Our Work in SVFT and Beyond

by Makenzi Hurtado, Vice President

Throughout my time as Vice President, I have seen great growth in our member participation. We already boast an impressive membership with over 99% membership. Our goal over the past few years was to see our members more involved in union activities that improve our union, our district, and our state.

This year we had even more members reach out to join committees. There will be 33 members joining committees for the first time! We have also created two Ad-Hoc committees that are much needed at this time.

We have created PROM, Procedures Regarding Our Members, to look at member against member issues. We will work with members and our union attorney to create procedures that ensure our members are supported and represented and protected in their workplace.

We also created a Support Services Review committee. This committee is made up of special education teachers and DHs, counselor and DHs, SLPs, social workers, and school psychologists. We are still looking to have a member from every building, so if you are interested, please let me know! We will work to review what is happening across the district and to make recommendations to management on fair and manageable caseloads and practices. Eventually, we would like to include academic and trade teachers in this committee to ensure that we see a full perspective.

In our State and nation we continue to see a lack of support for the work that we do. We need our members to share their voices at a local and national level. Our Political Action Committee will lead this work next year, but we hope to see more members giving testimony and participating in actions.

I wish you all the break you need and deserve. Please take it! We will need your energy in the Fall!

Changing Times are Coming

by Bob Riccitelli, Executive Union Representative

Makenzi always asks me to write something upbeat for the newsletter—but I'll admit, that's not always easy. My work often involves addressing tough issues, and the good news doesn't always make it to my desk. But that's starting to change.

There's real progress happening—and fast.

Dr. Pritchard recently welcomed a new Legal Director, Attorney Michael Barrera, who has hit the ground running. His leadership is already making a noticeable impact. My schedule is busier than ever—but in the best possible way. Things are moving so quickly that Makenzi and Paul have been stepping in to help me keep pace. Loudermill hearings, investigations, complaints, and resolutions are all progressing with impressive speed.

Previously, I shared how challenging it was to get resolution from Legal. So I want to take a moment to recognize Attorney LaCluyzé for the outstanding work she did—on her own—during the transition. I'm not the easiest person to work with, and she managed to hold everything together during a tough time. Her dedication made a real difference, and I'm truly grateful.

We're also seeing strong leadership from our new HR Director, Dr. Heidi Gray. She has stepped up in a big way, providing timely responses that allow us to act faster and more effectively on the issues that come our way.

For the first time in a while, I'm hopeful that we'll head into the new year without being buried under a backlog of unresolved matters.

Wishing everyone a restful and well-deserved summer break!

After Retirement

By Bill Selski, ret 2009

Congratulations! You are approaching your retirement from the CTECS system. You have been preparing for this moment throughout your career. The summer break is easing you into the next school year, but this time, you won't be counting the days until that first day back. Instead, it will be a continuation of your summer break.

Your retirement coincides with your fellow teachers heading back to the classroom. This is when your days will transition into retirement. No more waking up to an alarm to get to the classroom. Now, you can look at the clock and decide what your schedule will be for the day.

Yes, you will be busier than you thought. Make that to-do list and prioritize it. Then, reverse sort it to tackle the easiest tasks first. When the list shortens, you will feel a great sense of accomplishment.

Keep in touch with your fellow retired teachers by continuing your affiliation with the SVFT through the SVFT-R. The "R" stands for retiree. The dues are less expensive, and you can gain valuable knowledge from your fellow retirees at the twice-a-year meetings central to the state. Participate in the social get-togethers offered by the chapter.

If you are retiring this year, be on the lookout for an email from Cheryl Christie Collett, President of SVFT-R. You can also reach out to her at cccsvft@gmail.com

Labor/Management Committee Meeting Minutes

May 1, 2025

In Attendance:

SVFT: Paul Angelucci (President), Rich Benedict (Platt), John Hemenway (Wright), Makenzi Hurtado (Vice President), Bob Riccitelli (Executive Union Representative), Johanna Rios-Roldan (Eli Whitney)
Management: Freeman Burr (Interim Superintendent), Dr. Nikitoula Menounos (Assistant Superintendent), Rafael Palacio (Labor Relations Manager)

Grade Change Discussion

Under what set of circumstances should administration be allowed to override a teacher's grade?

NM: We believe administration can override a teacher's grade if the grading weights are not done correctly, if there is a disagreement, or if there are not enough assignments in a category and it drastically affects the student's grade. We can also override grades if a PPT requires a student's grades reopen or grading changes.

MH: We believe that attempts should be made to work with the teacher before overriding grades. Is it possible that if a grade is changed unilaterally by an administrator, that there is a notation in the gradebook on who made the change?

NM & FB: Yes, we can look into how to do this and there should be a meeting beforehand.

FB: Grading will be looked at for next year because there are places across the district where grading is capricious. Departments should have guidelines on categories.

PA: We need transparency on who gave the grades that a student has in their gradebook.

SVFT Agenda Items

Procedure for Repair Money

RB: We are looking for a process from CO. We don't know where the money is coming from. We are hearing it comes from CO, some say the building budget, and some say shop budgets.

FB: Now that the CFO is on board, he is working on this. Poulin and McFarlan are also working on how to centralize repairs and take it out of the building level.

MH: Is there a timeline on when there will be process and procedure?

FB: Right now the CFO is working on getting the budget in order and then he will focus on the processes and procedures.

JH: When these processes are coming through, we hope that there will be an understanding of not only the repairs that need to be made, but also the annual maintenance that need to be done. What do you recommend we do right now?

FB: Big picture, we were told that there will be no budget increase. We were given enough to cover our \$12million deficit. If you need things now, write a proposal for your principal, cc Mr. Burr and Mr. Cavallaro. We are looking at tightening our belt with CO positions and with retirements. Right now we are looking at a \$3million deficit for next year's budget.

Professional Development and Meetings

RB: We attend faculty meetings for PSATs, SATs, and NGSS amongst other things. We are also always looking for time to collaborate as shop teachers. This time could be more productively used.

PA: Trades can also collaborate virtually.

NM: We are rolling out a new way of having professional learning. Looking at the data to see what actually needed in the building.

MH: Can you ask the principals to be mindful of who needs to be at specific faculty meetings and use the time to be more productive?

FB: That does seem logical and something that we can ask of the principals. We do expect the schools when developing their accountability plans that there be differentiation.

JRR: Many times the half day PDs are specifically focused on the classroom teachers. As Paul stated, support service teachers can meet virtually if we are the only person in the building. It is important to use our time effectively so that we can be the best that we can be.

FB: What I have heard from several principals is that they feel that they get directions from Support Services that they must program for specific student needs, but the building level staff is not getting guidance on how to program and there are no existing programming.

JRR: That is completely true. Each DH or staff member creates to the best of their ability, but there is not consistency across the board. What I have noticed is that the DHs that do not have as much leadership experience get more support from CO and the DHs with more experience do not get as much support.

PA: What do you think is the biggest difference between working at CTECS and the LEA you came from

JRR: The LEA I came from had a protocol for everything. For any issue, there was a protocol.

JH: Is it possible to look at what is happening at district level professional learning and differentiate based on what teachers need and what their experiences. Also this year with Marzano, there has been a lot of professional learning that is just being talked at. There is almost an analysis paralysis. There is an oversaturation.

NM: We are rolling out a plan for next year on what the schools need and the embedded coaching. There will be a clear understanding of what embedded coaching will look like.

Steering Committee Meetings

JH: There are pockets of meetings, but not necessarily steering committee meetings. We also do not know who attends which meetings. There are DH meetings that are on PLCs.

NM: There are meetings based on topics.

NM: I will bring it up at the trade and academic meetings. I don't want to have meetings just to have meetings and in the past principals asked us to have less meetings because of the issues with getting substitutes.

MH: We also need communication and transparency on who is attending meetings, what is being done at the meetings, and how they affect curriculum and teaching.

CTECS Agenda Items

Curriculum

- Student focus groups held for technology trades.
- Plans to expand cybersecurity in IT and purchase new graphics equipment through grant funding.
- Robotics training planned. Anticipate hiring new teachers post-retirement.

Grading

- Cohort 1 has completed its first cycle and will continue next year.
- Cohort 2 is forming—teachers interested in grading reform should email Dr. Menounos.
- Target size: 60 teachers (Cohort 1 has approx. 40).

Curriculum Modification Round Table

- Around six schools are involved.
- Aims: CO gains insight into school-level curriculum efforts and schools learn from each other's initiatives.
- Next steps to be shared by CO.

School Leadership

- Awaiting approval for Prince to become a Commissioner's School.
- Administrator transfers anticipated.
- Principal interviews for Platt and Prince expected by mid-May.

Portfolio Placement

- Dr. Menounos, Bob Sartoris, and Bob Riccitelli reviewing list of teachers needing portfolio placement.
- Notifications to follow.

Administrative Transfers

Expected by **May 15th**

Follow Up

Counselling – 504 caseloads

MH: We have brought up this issue all year. The caseloads were moved to the counselors without looking at their workload or if they were the appropriate person to be the case manager. They also received no training. We also shared that there was a directive to have annual meetings instead of triannual meetings. This is time consuming and unnecessary. In past meetings we were told that this would be addressed.

FB: I had a preliminary conversation with Javette. 504 students need to be looked at and should just be arbitrarily placed under counseling. The student should be placed based on the needs of their 504. It is reasonable to have triannual meetings, as is the law, rather than yearly meetings as expected by CTECS. This can be done for the 25-26SY, but will need to be discussed with the Director of Support Services.



Calendar

6/19 Juneteenth - No School

6/24 - 8/18 Union Office Closed

7/24 Delegates Attend AFT TEACH

8/19 - 8/21 New Teacher Orientation

8/25 First Day of Professional Learning

8/28 Students' First Day

9/1 Labor Day

9/2 Negotiation Committee Meeting

9/10 Executive Council Meeting



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.