



Federation Forum

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The President's Report

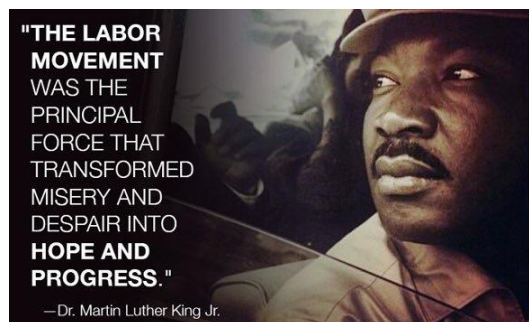


"This Thing of OURS"

On January 7th, 2016 OUR organization did something we don't always do. We showed solidarity. We showed up and we stood up, and we made each other proud. Tired of being disrespected and put on a back burner by the Board of Education, Federation Members gathered at the January Board Meeting to have OUR voice heard. OUR collective voice called for FAIRNESS. OUR voice told Board Members that we can't keep taking home less money each paycheck because of the rising cost of our healthcare contributions. OUR voice told Board Members that WE deserve to be treated as well as the employees outside of our unit who have secured THEIR new contracts *with* a really nice deal on healthcare. Two of OUR members shared their personal stories of financial hardship.

I cannot heap enough praise on the people who came out that night. Everyone complains, but not everyone is willing to give up the time to do something about it. Special kudos to our building reps who have been keeping our members informed, passing out our literature and buttons, and rallying our troops. There was a special energy in the auditorium that night and it was *that energy* that sent a message. WE are the union, and this union is OURS. Together we can put an end to the district's two-tiered system of healthcare contributions. Together we can send the message that we are not going to stand pat while some people get a seat at the banquet table and the rest of us get served potluck.

As we celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. we should stop and think about how important unions have been throughout history in the battle against economic injustice. Dr. King was a great advocate of unions.



King recognized that unions offered ALL people a path to financial stability and upward mobility. Said King on the labor movement, "out of its bold struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, government relief for the destitute and, above all, new wage levels that meant not mere survival but a tolerable life." Let us continue to stay united on the issues that will make OUR lives more tolerable.

As this issue goes to print we are still waiting for an answer from Board President Lebreault to our letter requesting meeting dates. We will be keeping our building reps informed about any new developments.

I hope to see all of you soon. Please follow us on Facebook – Perth Amboy Federation, and Twitter – PAF_AFT. It is a great way to share information. We invite you to like us and follow us.

In solidarity,

Pat Paradiso – President, Local 857



A Union of Professionals

An affiliate of the AFT, AFL-CIO



Our Union, Our Voices

The Perth Amboy Federation

For those who could not attend the Board Meeting on January 7, 2016, here is OUR message to the Board:

Some people mentioned that they couldn't hear my comments at last night's board meeting over the sound of the gavel and the protests from the resident "pot who calls the kettle black". The statements were clearly related to two agenda items. Here is a written copy of the comments.

First I would like to offer my support for the approval of the 2015 Uniform State Memorandum of Agreement between Education and Law Enforcement Officials for the 2015-2016 school year. I come from a family of law enforcement officers and I know how important it is to have a cooperative, professional relationship with the people who protect us. Staff members have voiced concerns about their safety and the safety of our students. We hope this represents a new commitment to the safety of our students and staff.

Second I would like to comment on the hiring of our new staff. We have heard that this Board is striving to be the kind of district that attracts only the best and the brightest. Yet at the Federation we have been receiving phone calls from both new hires and current staff members concerned about the state of the district. As you know we have never had the most generous salary guide, and recently the rising cost of healthcare has caused most staff members to take home less money each paycheck. We would like to be able to tell people some good news, but as you know we can't. We all know about The Doctrine of Necessity, but we feel that this board has not made negotiating our contract a priority. We also know that other employees outside of our unit have received their contracts, and they have also gotten really good deals on health insurance contributions.

We would hate to see a two-tiered system in this district where some people get a good deal and the rest of us must face the reality of taking home less money each paycheck. When you give people at the top of the pay scale the best deal on healthcare and do not offer the same deal to the rest of us - you deny us, you deflate us, and you disrespect us. No worker should pay more for healthcare than central administration. That sends a message that policy makers are valued more than those of us who directly touch the lives of children. We are asking that you do whatever it takes to get the job done. Thank you.



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The District Rep's Report

FRUSTRATION



In psychology the topic of frustration is one that is continually discussed. Defined as the blocking of goal-directed behavior, frustration impacts many aspects of our well-being. Similarly, frustration is the major cause of anger. And anger, we know, can lead to many different issues from low morale in the workplace to physical problems to erratic behavior.

One of my biggest frustrations occur when questions go unanswered. In a environment that touts transparency-you know, one of those buzzwords that I just love-and refuses to share information, frustration is created! I continually hear complaints from staff regarding emails being unanswered and requests ignored. When I approach the guilty party I am often met with excuses as to why nothing is being done, excuses that often cast blame on the person making the request. Personal experiences, however, tend support the complaining party as all too often when I send emails or make phone calls on behalf of staff, I too am ignored. I have to ask when will enough be enough? Granted we are all overwhelmed with the many added duties heaped upon us regularly, but this district will NEVER improve until the concerns of those of us in the trenches are addressed. It's wonderful to have all the new "window dressings" throughout the district but that's simply "putting lipstick on a pig" as more serious issues are being ignored. Staff certainly has enough to do without worrying that doors are decorated and bulletin boards look pretty. Similarly, papers hanging loose from hall bulletin boards are not a threat to the safety and security of our buildings, so our Law Enforcement Officers carrying staplers is an unnecessary addition to their uniform equipment. Such actions do nothing to improve reading or math skills of our students but may serve to enhance the perceived performance of those in authority.

Another huge area of frustration is the new hiring practices put into effect in the district. It seems that every applicant, regardless of position desired, is subject to rigorous hiring processes. While I understand the need for rigor in hiring, I cannot comprehend the extensive amount of time the process entails. It is my understanding that rounds of interviews take place in front of an interview committee and then the committee must submit two candidates' names to the Personnel Committee of the Board for their consideration. The Personnel Committee then makes the final decision, forwarding that name to the superintendent for his recommendation to the Board of Education for approval. The sad part is this process is adhered to, recommendations made and ultimately disregarded. So I have to ask...why bother? But more importantly....why are positions left unfilled for such long periods of time? Why do we continue to employee substitutes for positions which have been vacated due to staff leaving-sometimes for years??? Why do retiring staff submit ample notification of their impending departure only to have the position left unfilled? And most importantly, why are our **students suffering** due to this bureaucratic red tape??? Leaving any position unfilled in this district, whether teacher, paraprofessional, secretary, bus driver, food service worker, SLEO or custodian, has a direct impact not only on the lives of us-the staff- but on the lives of our students as well and that's just wrong! Our students deserve the best we can give them and working understaffed does not allow anyone to perform at their best! We have tried to encourage the streamlining of the hiring process, but like our phone calls and emails, this too has fallen on disinterested ears.

As Martin Luther King said: "There comes a time when silence is betrayal." Let's hope those who can fix these issues will do so and the safety and welfare of our students and staff take precedence over decorating contests. As always, the Federation remains open to those "C&Cs" I mentioned in my last column: communication and collaboration with management. In the "good old days" when true collaboration and meaningful communications existed, Perth Amboy was a better place to work. Real student achievement will remain elusive until ALL PARTIES engaged as respected partners.

Pam Campbell – Full Time District Representative – Local 857





Our Union, Our Voices

The Perth Amboy Federation

Dear Staff Members,

It has come to my attention that some of you recently severed your membership with the PAFAFT and became a member of the NJEA. The purpose of this letter is to be sure that you made an informed decision.

- YOU CANNOT BE A MEMBER OF BOTH ORGANIZATIONS!
- PAFAFT Membership dues are \$660.00 / year.
- NJEA Members pay \$561.00 to the PAFAFT + \$252.00 to the NJEA.
(\$153.00 MORE /YEAR THAN PAFAFT MEMBERSHIP)
- Districts represented by the NJEA pay a MINIMUM of \$840.00 in dues / year.
- Retired AFT member's dues are \$25.00 / year.
- Retired NJEA Members pay one lifetime payment of \$985.00 (the equivalent of 39 years of AFT dues)
- 60% of dues paid to PAFAFT stay in our local.
- 5% of NJEA dues stay in the local.
- PAFAFT has a full time District Rep who is available to be at any school site in a matter of minutes.
- NJEA has Field Reps working in a number of districts so they may not get to your case for a few days.
- PAFAFT has a fully operational office open 9-5 allowing you to have private conversations away from your building without worrying who's watching or listening.
- YOUR ARE NOT DOUBLY PROTECTED. Only PAFT representatives can accompany you to meetings and/ or hearings. NJEA lawyers are not allowed in the district.
- PAFAFT has an attorney acting as a consultant and will represent you in district matters at our expense.
- Both organizations offer DISABILITY INSURANCE for MATERNITY LEAVE as well as discounted personal legal services, entertainment, shopping and travel.
- Joining an organization outside of the district does not help any of US.

Sincerely,

Donna Tartza



Paying more
and more for
healthcare
means less
take-home pay.

We have the
right to be
treated
FAIRLY!





NEW JERSEY STATE

The Voice of Working Families in the Garden State

One Way We Fight for Our Pensions!

On October 10th Karen Perez, Stacy Lemongelli and I participated in a Labor Walk in an attempt to “flip a district”. Our short term goal was to change New Jersey’s 15th Legislative District from Republican to Democratic. Our long term goal is to get an Assembly in New Jersey that can stand up to Chris Christie and make the promised payments to our pension.



The three of us showed up at the IBEW Hall in Wall Township wearing our AFT blue. We knew we were in the right place when NJ AFL-CIO president Charlie Wowkanech shouted from across the room, “AFT is in the house”. Being true to our teacher selves, we made sure to get a photograph with the candidates – Eric Houghtaling and Joann Downey, and with Charlie Wowkanech and Laurel Brennan from NJ AFL-CIO for ‘documentation’ purposes.

We were assigned a neighborhood in Neptune to knock on doors and convince fellow union members to vote for OUR candidates – people who will protect OUR interests. We memorized our talking points and got to work. Karen was in charge of the app that told us which doors to knock on and what unions the people behind those doors belonged to. Almost everyone who answered their door was pleasant and I think we were able to convince some people to vote for the candidates we were supporting. The highlight of our adventure was when Stacy convinced a homeowner to put a Houghtaling/Downey sign on his front lawn. The low point of our day was when a fellow AFT member told us she wasn’t interested in what we had to say and shut the door in our faces.

On election night the three of us were keeping track of the election results from the 15th district as if we were in a high-stakes Super Bowl pool. Houghtaling, a long-time union electrician; and Downey, a practicing attorney and former Deputy Attorney General from the State of New Jersey were victorious that night. The legislative district had been flipped. Do we think that the three of us made a difference in the outcome of the election? Yes. Will we do it again? YES. Next time, think about joining us.



*The AFT is an affiliate of AFL-CIO, and AFTNJ is an affiliate of the NJ AFL-CIO. For more information contact: www.njaflcio.org.



Our Union, Our Voices

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In Praise of the Danielson Framework

The Danielson Framework rubric is precise. It is black and white, leaving nothing to the imagination, to prejudice, or to common sense.

Here is my most recent experience. I got a “2” for Domain 2e, Organizing Physical Space. I outright deserved it. I freely admit that “the physical environment is not an impediment to learning but does not enhance it.”

So let’s set the scene. My students are sitting at their desks, arranged in two long “tables”. Since I have 29 desks, there is a grouping of 16 and a grouping of 13. In the back of the room is a reading table on risers that I use as a demonstration table and for small group remediation lessons.

Within the large groups are small heterogeneous subgroups. Students are engaged in using both textbooks and laptops to answer questions on animal population changes. I am monitoring their progress. As I see issues arise, I call students to the back for clarification. As we near the end of the period, the class engages in a whole group discussion of the answers.

This is where I went wrong. Instead of taking time to have the students in the interior of the room get up with their notebooks, textbooks, and chairs to position themselves in the front of the room, or move around the table to squeeze into the corner to form somewhat of a discussion circle, I just let them stay at their desks and discuss their answers. In this formation, I might have been able to conduct the discussion without disruption or loss of time, but some students, through no fault of their own, were facing away from some of the students who were speaking. It’s the same issue we have if we work in groups at cafeteria tables and then speak together as a group. Deplorable, I know.

I haven’t quite figured out the answer to the problem. My room was arranged for group work, not discussion. If I’d arranged it for discussion, it would not be arranged for group work. If I moved them, I’d run the risk of violating 2c if the transition took too long or the students not needing to move were not occupied with a meaningful task. I might have earned a “1” if a student accidentally bumped another with a chair, so I guess I’ll have to be content with my 2. Things could have been much worse.

As I’ve been writing, I’ve been studying the Danielson rubric more closely than ever. The ways for a teacher to mess up are endless. What if one of my adolescents engages in eye rolling at another student and I don’t address it (2a)? What if I do address it and the culprit slumps in her seat (also 2a)? A student might turn in sloppy or incomplete work (2b), and that would be a poor reflection on my work ethic. What if an administrator comes in when the student with the behavior disorder is ignoring posted rules and procedures (2d) and my directive to sit down and stop cursing don’t cure his behavioral issues?

Well thank goodness I wasn’t trying to “use a computer to illustrate a concept” (2e). If it required several attempts to work, I’d be in hot water. When that state representative came in September to facilitate our standards workshop, the sound on the video didn’t work. Until now, I didn’t think to blame the facilitator. Lucky for him, none of us were writing his words verbatim and circling away on a Danielson rubric.

Most of all, I’m thankful that I had the good sense not to build a pole in the middle of my classroom. If a pole in the middle of my room obstructed anyone’s vision, I’d fail 2e every single observation.

Yup, Danielson has pointed out the error of my ways. Once we stop populating the classroom with mere human teachers and students, we’ll be on our way to rubric perfection.

By Donna Marinelli

Federation Photographs



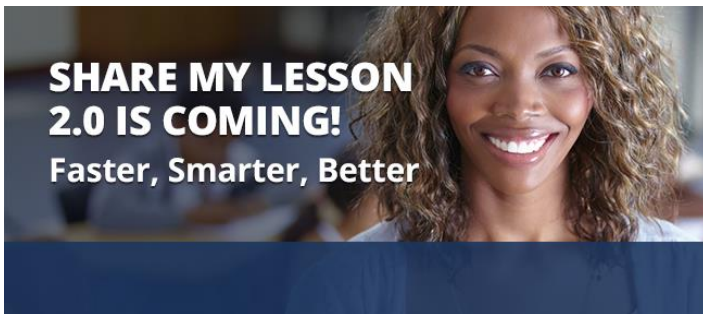
Congratulations!



Stacy Lemongelli, on the right, with Lynn Audet and Randy Weingarten

Stacy Lemongelli has been selected to be AFT's representative on NJ Teacher Leader Advisory Panel. OUR Stacy is always working to promote teaching and learning.

Resources



It's the Share My Lesson you asked for, coming soon.

You'll be able to do a lot of new great things, like personalize your profile and avatar, use Share My Lesson on all your mobile devices, share your lessons with your peers and much more. Your Share My Lesson will be faster, better, and yes, *still free*.

<http://www.sharemylesson.com>



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- For qualifying members, exclusive benefits include a \$500 My Mortgage Gift award from Wells Fargo Home Mortgage and, from Union Plus, special hardship assistance and the opportunity to earn a \$500 First-Time Home Award.
- **New!** \$1,000 Mortgage Veterans Grant program for union members who've served in the U.S. armed forces.

Upcoming Events



- 1/18/16 Dr. Martin Luther King Day (No School)
- 1/19/16 General Membership Meeting (Vote on the Constitutional Revision.)
- 2/5/16 Federation's Super Bowl Social (Eat, Drink and be Social!)



Know Your Contract Bereavement Leave

In the case of the death of a member of the immediate family (parents, step-parents, brothers, stepbrothers, sisters, stepsisters, own children, husband or wife, registered domestic or civil union partner, grandparents and grandchildren of any employee, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, stepchildren or the death of any person living in the home of the employee for some time preceding death as a member of the household) such employee shall be excused, without loss of pay, for a period of 5 working days. This allowance shall not extend beyond the 14th calendar day following the date of death.

In the case of aunts, uncles, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, nieces or nephews of any employee, such employee shall be excused without loss of pay for a period not to exceed 2 school days, provided the two come within 7 days following the date of death.