



*A Union of Professionals*

# Professional Learning & You





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## OUR MISSION

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.



**As a member of the American Federation of Teachers**, you have access to a variety of programs and resources designed to enhance your professional growth. This brochure highlights many of these opportunities. You can also visit **[aftp.org](http://aftp.org)**, email **[edissues@aft.org](mailto:edissues@aft.org)** or contact your local union.

By addressing the professional needs of our educator members, we are able to help them become even more successful in their careers; in their union; in the institutions in which they work; and in serving the students, families and communities they serve.



# Helping Educators and Students Thrive

## Reading Opens the World

Reading is a foundational skill necessary for virtually everything we do. It opens possibilities for all children to succeed—to learn and grow, to explore and imagine, to investigate and verify, and to lead fulfilling lives. Reading well instills confidence and helps reduce inequities. The disruptions due to the pandemic make focusing on literacy even more important, to assist our students not just to catch up but also to thrive. That’s why the AFT launched Reading Opens the World, a campaign to give 1 million books to children and educators in marginalized communities, to offer parents and caregivers fun and research-based tips for boosting literacy, and to ensure teachers and school staff have tools and professional development that translate the science of reading into usable resources to help students read and read well.

Visit [sharemylesson.com/read](https://sharemylesson.com/read) to join the campaign’s online community and access webinars, blog posts and other literacy resources.

## Community Schools Strategy

The community schools strategy transforms public schools into the centers of their communities. It is a collaborative and effective vehicle for increasing educational equity, social cohesion and civic participation because it helps public schools weave together community partners to provide the services and supports that students and their families need. Community schools purposefully partner with food banks, social service agencies, businesses, higher education institutions, health clinics and youth organizations, typically under the guidance of a site coordinator. By meeting those needs, community schools make it possible for educators to do what they do best, which is to teach, and for students to learn and reach their full potential.

The AFT has consistently advocated for the community schools strategy and, in collaboration with other national partners, has supported our local affiliates in designing and implementing community schools. We have supported dozens of locals in working with their districts and communities in creating nearly 900 schools.

For more information, visit [aft.org/position/community-schools](https://aft.org/position/community-schools) or email Dena Donaldson at [ddonaldson@aft.org](mailto:ddonaldson@aft.org).



## **AFT Innovation Fund**

The AFT Innovation Fund, open to affiliates at the state and local levels, works to identify, nurture and bring to scale union- and educator-led innovations in public education. Through this funding, the AFT provides a platform for our local affiliates and members to lead and engage partners in improving outcomes for our members and the people and communities they serve. The majority of the fund's resources are distributed as grants to affiliates to be used to plan and carry out their work. In addition, the fund's staff and other AFT departments provide technical assistance to help grantees carry out their work through monthly calls, periodic site visits, and connections to experts and resources.

For more information, go to [aft.org/about/innovation-fund](https://aft.org/about/innovation-fund).

## **AFT's Project-Based Learning Kits**

A cadre of K-12 AFT members from across the nation has jointly designed standards-based, integrated content, featuring capstone project ideas that are grade-level and developmentally appropriate. These project-based learning lessons and activities will enable students to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways that will adapt to in-person, hybrid or remote learning.

To learn more and download the kits for free, visit [go.aft.org/wer](https://go.aft.org/wer).

## **Career and Technical Education—Career Pathways**

Career and technical education initiatives focus on preparing students for the working world. Nearly every public school—98 percent of schools, in fact—has some kind of CTE program, and these programs represent a significant opportunity for innovation within public schools. Through our partnership with the AFL-CIO's North America's Building Trades Unions, we have increased our members' awareness of apprenticeship opportunities, and pre-apprenticeship curricula, that prepare students for careers as electrical workers, plumbers, carpenters and HVAC installers. The AFT continues to support CTE development in our locals, from partnering with New York's Metropolitan Transit

Authority and the AFL-CIO to working with the U.S. Department of Defense to extend CTE pathways in ways that open avenues to careers in the defense workforce. We're also supporting locals as they work with nearby colleges and universities to strengthen connections between CTE training and higher education.

Further, in 2015 the AFT partnered with four local affiliates in Miami, Peoria, Pittsburgh and San Francisco to create a CTE initiative called the AFT Innovation Fund's Promising Pathways. The fund invested over \$1 million in this multiyear initiative to expand CTE opportunities for students, including creating an internship program connected to CTE pathways, developing a first-responder academy, connecting high school cohorts to community college-based design technology, and implementing a middle school computer science-for-all curriculum. CTE programs like these can motivate students while they are in school and give them both knowledge and flexible skills that will assist them in adapting to the jobs of the future. For more information, email Marie-Louise Caravatti at [mcaravat@aft.org](mailto:mcaravat@aft.org).

## AFT Teacher Leaders Program

The ever popular Teacher Leaders Program identifies and brings together a select group of educators and then supports and empowers them to assume active leadership roles in their schools, unions and communities. The AFT noticed the lack of teacher voice in education policy discussions in our country and decided to do something about it. Why weren't experts in the classroom being asked for their input on how to ensure that our children have the best opportunities to learn? To help address this question, the AFT designed the Teacher Leaders Program in 2011, based on Ellen Meyers' Teachers Network, to help prepare educators to facilitate discussion of the issues that affect our profession—both locally and nationally. To date, more than 1,200 individuals from 35 locals have participated in the program.

Teacher leadership embodies the idea that classroom teachers can become formal, recognized leaders within their schools and communities while still maintaining their in-the-classroom status.



Teachers who feel passionate about education—and want to continue working with children—can become coaches, peer evaluators, mentors, specialists in curriculum and instruction, advocates, activists, union leaders, teachers on special assignment, fellows in state or national programs, “teacherpreneurs,” National Board Certified Teachers, teachers of the year, and more. This program helps educators find their niche and follow their passion.

For more information, email Lisa Dickinson at [edickinson@aft.org](mailto:edickinson@aft.org).

## The AFT Professional Learning Program

The AFT has long recognized that the union’s responsibilities go beyond the traditional “bread and butter” issues of salary and benefits. This program represents one of the union’s major efforts to improve student achievement by making a difference in practitioners’ performance and professional growth. Our program of 30 professional development courses:

- Is rooted in evidence-based educational, cognitive and social science research.
- Is guided by cutting-edge experts in the field and designed by frontline educators who know firsthand what goes on in classrooms and schools every day.
- Provides educators with the necessary tools and resources to make complex decisions and select the most effective strategies for meeting individual students’ academic, social and behavioral needs.
- Connects excellent teaching practice with broader education policy issues and campaigns.
- Allows for internal capacity building and enables affiliates to meet the unique needs of their school community by training local members to develop coursework and deliver locally based trainings.

**Union-sponsored professional learning strengthens our relationships with our members and is an indispensable tool for building broader, deeper support for the union. When professional learning is led by peers, participants are more likely to feel invested in the process and incorporate new knowledge into their practice.**

To see our catalog of course offerings, go to [aft.org/sites/default/files/plcatalog2021.pdf](https://aft.org/sites/default/files/plcatalog2021.pdf), or to join the AFT eLearning Community, go to [aftelearning.org/professional-learning](https://aftelearning.org/professional-learning).

## Customized Professional Learning

Do you need just-in-time strategies or different delivery methods for professional development? We know that in the changing landscape of education settings, educators need a diverse set of strategies to meet students where they are. In addition to our 30 professional development courses, we offer customized professional learning opportunities for AFT members to meet varying teaching and learning needs. These can be done in person and on site or via distance learning and through webinars. Our customized professional development workshops include:

### ■ **Promoting Students' Social Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health**

This workshop focuses on identifying and understanding common childhood mental illnesses; understanding research on adverse childhood experiences and trauma, as well as their implications for practice; and creating and implementing strategies for supporting students in the challenging work to help them thrive.

### ■ **Supporting Grieving Students**

In this workshop, participants learn the important role of school personnel in supporting grieving students, what to say and what not to say to a grieving child, how to advocate for peer support, and how to provide support over time.

### ■ **Strategies for Student Success**

This workshop is a high-quality, research-based program that consists of three hourlong modules that create a manageable way to connect with educators. These modules address teaching and learning in a way that benefits new and veteran teachers alike. The content in the modules can be tailored to benefit individuals, groups and the whole school.

### ■ **Informing Instruction: Linking the Assessment Process to Teaching and Learning**

This course ensures new employees or veteran educators understand the process of using student learning objectives or growth measures. Participants will gain the confidence to take control of the process and use it as a tool for success in the classroom.

### ■ **Instructional Supports Workshops**

These workshops are designed to meet the needs of educators who are looking for strategies and instructional practices on implementing academic standards that they can learn and apply right away in their classrooms. Workshops include:

- English Language Learners
- Considerations for Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings
- Differentiating Instruction



## ■ Online Reading Course *(Coming Soon!)*

This 10-hour asynchronous e-learning course, which is being adapted from AFT's in-person reading courses, will help any AFT member learn about the science of reading and high-leverage instructional practices for supporting literacy in young learners.

## AFT eLearning

Through this web-based, professional learning platform, members are able to access content to help them learn new techniques and skills and to get tips that will help them create classroom environments that foster student success. The AFT eLearning platform also provides a space where educators and locals can connect with their peers and colleagues from around the country and access support, the latest research and more.

The site hosts a variety of professional learning opportunities, including webinars, self-paced courses, blended learning, and communities. Affiliates can contribute to the site by adding their online offerings to the platform or announcing face-to-face offerings that will be available to members in their district. This site is free to AFT members and locals.

Go to [AFTeLearning.org](https://AFTeLearning.org) to create your account, or contact [elearning@aft.org](mailto:elearning@aft.org) for more information.

## AFT-Sponsored Conferences

### AFT TEACH Conference

TEACH (Together Educating America's Children), the AFT's biennial educational issues conference, brings together educators from across the country for workshops, discussions and speakers. The conference attracts more than 2,000 participants, including AFT members, state and district administrators, school board members, and representatives of the higher education, business and social services communities nationwide.



TEACH offers:

- Turnkey tools and resources to use back home;
- Ways to engage on issues facing your students, school or community;
- Hands-on sessions;
- Networking opportunities; and
- Thought-provoking speakers.

Learn more at [aft.org/teach](https://aft.org/teach).

## **AFT Professional Learning Summer Educator Academy**

This nine-day train-the-trainer academy provides union-sponsored, research-based professional learning that addresses the complexities of teaching. The program is designed to help local unions build the capacity to deliver high-quality professional learning services to all educators—teachers, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel. The AFT collaborates with leading education researchers to synthesize and apply research-validated best practices. Classroom-based activities help participants connect the research findings to their daily work, including small group interaction, role-playing, case studies, simulations, Socratic seminars and shared reflection. This comprehensive, intensive and energizing training prepares these educators to return to their locals as facilitators in specific course areas. These individuals, in turn, train others to facilitate sessions at the local level in a pyramiding effect designed to reach larger numbers of participants.

## **AFT Center for School Improvement Leadership Institute**

The CSI Leadership Institute, created in collaboration with the United Federation of Teachers Teacher Center and AFT national partners, focuses on helping teams discover how to collaboratively create sustainable systems change—around the issues impacting their own schools’ students, educators and families. Through intensive work sessions, teams strengthen their collective leadership capacity, as well as learn how to lead and facilitate school transformation that results in improved student performance and improved teaching and learning environments; the teams dig deeper into their local data and integrate strategies to improve school culture and climate, always with an eye toward sustainability.

## **AFT Share My Lesson Virtual Conference**

Each spring, the AFT runs a free three-day virtual conference featuring more than 40 webinars on a wide variety of topics. Each webinar provides one hour of professional development credit for participation. Topics include strategies for distance learning, teaching current events and controversial issues, instructional strategies across the curriculum, social emotional learning and trauma-informed practices.

All webinars are available on demand, and webinars since 2020 include closed captioning in English and Spanish.

Learn more at [ShareMyLesson.com/webinars](https://ShareMyLesson.com/webinars).

## Shaping the Future

### Educators Rising

To broaden and diversify the teaching talent pool, we need to start early and grow our own. The AFT is proud to partner with Educators Rising (formerly Future Teachers of America) to support elective courses and career academies for high school students to explore teaching. The EdRising Academy curriculum and “Beginning to Teach” microcredentials can help you get a program started in your school/district.

The AFT is collaborating with Educators Rising to recruit union leaders to plan and spearhead implementation of Educators Rising programming.

For more information, email Dawn Krusemark at [dkrusema@aft.org](mailto:dkrusema@aft.org) or go to [educatorsrising.org](https://educatorsrising.org).

### Grow Your Own Programs

Teacher diversity is crucial to student success. Numerous studies indicate the benefits for students of color who attend schools with a significant concentration of teachers of color who share their cultural, linguistic and racial backgrounds. The AFT recognizes that diversity is a key component to equity and opportunity, and strongly believes in diversifying the teaching workforce through Grow Your Own (GYO) programs—a promising practice for recruiting people of color to the profession. GYO is a recruitment strategy designed to address teacher shortages and teacher diversity gaps that are especially prevalent in underserved communities across the country.

For more information, email Dyan Smiley at [dsmiley@aft.org](mailto:dsmiley@aft.org).



## AFT New Teachers

The AFT has developed resources targeted toward teachers in the early years of their careers; all are designed to help beginning teachers:

- Find valuable tools for the first weeks in school, including the basics of setting up classrooms and working with parents, the essentials of classroom management, and resources on content knowledge and pedagogy.
- Discover AFT resources on teacher evaluation, feedback, professional development and teacher leadership.
- Learn about the union and how to become more active and engaged in the work we do and in the local community.
- Connect with other new teachers through online issue discussions.

For more information, email Robin Vitucci at [rvitucci@aft.org](mailto:rvitucci@aft.org) or visit the New Teacher Community on Share My Lesson: [sharemylesson.com/AFTNewTeachers](https://sharemylesson.com/AFTNewTeachers).

## Online Resources

### Share My Lesson | [sharemylesson.com](https://sharemylesson.com)

The AFT's free award-winning lesson-sharing website provides support for anyone who works with students as well as a place to collaborate on new ideas and best practices to enhance the profession and the larger community. With more than 1.9 million members, Share My Lesson is where teachers, parents and school staff can:

- Find thousands of standards-aligned, preK-12 lesson plans, activities and professional development webinars that span the curriculum and content areas;
- Access high-quality resources from content partners like Colorín Colorado, Common Sense Education, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Discovery Education, Folger Shakespeare Library, Google's Applied Digital Skills, National Wildlife Federation, PBS NewsHour Extra and Statistics in Schools;
- Participate in discussions via communities, and get resources for issues like bullying prevention, social emotional learning, engaging parents, meeting the needs of diverse English language learners and helping students cope with traumatic events;
- Search lessons by grade and subject; and
- Contribute their finest, most effective work to support colleagues across the country.

## Colorín Colorado | [colorincolorado.org](https://colorincolorado.org)

ColorinColorado.org is the premier national website serving educators and families of English language learners in grades preK-12. Colorín Colorado has been providing free research-based information, activities, and advice to schools and communities nationwide for more than a decade.

To support these educators and parents, Colorín Colorado offers free multimedia materials such as classroom videos, toolkits, research-based articles, multilingual tip sheets, newsletters, featured books and authors, and social media. The site also provides information about topics such as reading together at home and creating a welcoming classroom environment.

Colorín Colorado is a bilingual website in English and Spanish, and offers basic content in 11 other languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Korean, Diné (Navajo), Russian, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

## First Book | [firstbook.org](https://firstbook.org)

The AFT and First Book are working together to put our shared values into practice by supporting inviting, inspiring, and stimulating learning environments for our students, members and communities in need.

Through our partnership, we support:

- Children's well-being with access to new high-quality books as well as school supplies and basic-needs items at 50 to 90 percent off retail costs and in some cases for free;
- Powerful learning with First Book Marketplace books and resources to support hands-on learning opportunities and community-engagement activities;
- Building teacher and school staff capacity by highlighting new and diverse authors and books, along with tip sheets and suggested activities; and
- Fostering cultures of collaboration among students, educators, community partners, and parents to help all students succeed in school and life and reach their full potential.

Together, the AFT and First Book have partnered to distribute more than 7.5 million books to classrooms and programs serving students and families in need and connected thousands of educators and staff to ongoing resources. We'd like to help you as well.

Register today at [firstbook.org/AFT](https://firstbook.org/AFT).

## Share Your Voice

AFT members have great expertise and passion, and we want to help you share that energy, experience and wisdom with a wider audience. Opportunities are available for you to share your voice to help improve our schools and communities, including:

### Become a Professional Learning Trainer

Are you interested in delivering AFT professional learning courses? Opportunities are available to join our trainer cadre to deliver courses face to face, virtually, locally or nationally. To learn more about the program and the application process, check with your local leader and email [edissues@aft.org](mailto:edissues@aft.org).

### Start Blogging

The posts on our Share My Lesson blog ([sharemylesson.com/blog](https://sharemylesson.com/blog)) are in large part written by educators from around the country, with some additional commentary by AFT leaders and staff. Our teacher bloggers are sharing their experiences in the classroom—from their thoughts on how distance learning is working, to their reflections on professional learning, to their successes and struggles working with students of all backgrounds and abilities. If you are interested in adding your voice to the blog, email [edissues@aft.org](mailto:edissues@aft.org).

### Connect with Us on Social Media

Tell us what you do on social media, and we can follow you! If you have your own blog, website, Facebook page or Twitter account, let us know. We will follow you, and might even feature you in an upcoming newsletter or article.



**@AFTteach**

**@ShareMyLesson**



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## Newsletters & Publications

### American Educator

AFT's preK-12 members receive this quarterly magazine focused on educational equity, research and ideas. If you are not receiving this magazine and would like to, please email [ae@aft.org](mailto:ae@aft.org).

### AFT Teachers Professional Learning Newsletter

Sign up to receive this e-newsletter, which highlights the work our members and leaders are doing regarding professional issues. Each issue includes tips you can use with your students or share with your colleagues. Upcoming training sessions and events are also listed as well as links to new resources.

Subscribe online at [actionnetwork.org/forms/plnewsletter](https://actionnetwork.org/forms/plnewsletter).

### AFT Share My Lesson Newsletter

Sign up for this e-newsletter to get helpful ideas for engaging preK-12 students, free lesson plans, and timely professional development webinars—all based on what's happening in the news and resources aligned to upcoming holidays or events.

Subscribe online at [sharemylesson.com/newsletter](https://sharemylesson.com/newsletter).

### Other Publications

AFT members may request complimentary copies of AFT reports and brochures. To see the latest offerings, visit [aft.org/education/publications](https://aft.org/education/publications).

Most publications are available for download, but hard copies can be requested at [edissues@aft.org](mailto:edissues@aft.org).



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