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*The Inside Stories...*

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# *Chicago* UNION TEACHER

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Teachers, parents, students and community members speak out against Gunsaulus principal at last March's Local School Council meeting.

## Teachers and staff members suffer at the hand of abusive principals

By Jenny Celandor, Associate Editor

Unfortunately, contentious relationships between principals and staff are not a new to the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). But, for a number of schools in the system, the principal-staff dynamic is more than just contentious – it's become abusive.

Teachers and staff members at Field, Gunsaulus and Prescott elementary schools and Washington High School have indicated that working conditions at these sites have

become unbearable because of the principals' abuse of power.

"CEO Ron Huberman has been advocating a 'culture of calm' for public schools in Chicago," said President Stewart. "But, what CPS needs to understand is that such calm begins with the staff at these schools. These principals are attacking teachers. How can we provide a calm, safe place for students when teachers are suffering this way?"

The four field representatives assigned to these schools have been working directly with the staff members and investigating their concerns. Michael Kane is

the field representative for Field; Tanya Saunders-Wolffe is the representative for Washington; Maria Rodriguez for Gunsaulus; and Gregg Cox for Prescott; and each says the situations with the principals at these schools are some of the worst they have seen.

Beginning last year, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) held meetings with staff mem-

bers, principals, CPS officials, and the leadership of the Principals Association to investigate the allegations at these schools and to seek remedies.

But, when the new school year began at these schools, the staff reported nothing had improved. They are still dealing with the same abuse of power.

As the issues persist, the  
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# KNOWING WHEN TO LOOK

by Melani Davis, Editor

There are times in life when you *should* look away – the scene of a car accident (if help is already on-site), a public display of grief, a family's personal possessions strewn across the lawn after being evicted from their home. These are instances when the aftermath of tragedy is excruciatingly personal, and looking away is the only decent thing to do.

And then, there are times when violence must be *full-out* seen, as difficult as it might be to watch. Images of wounded or dead soldiers, heartbreaking photos of stranded Katrina victims, and just this past month, the horrendous videotaped account of a Chicago teenager beaten to death by a group of his peers.

At such times, we must not turn away from the reality of *what happens* to the men and women we send to war, and the *horror* that can result when a government fails its citizens.

And, though it is shocking and painful to watch the videotaped *murder* of a child, looking may shed some light on learning how to make it stop.

Derrion Albert, a 16-year-old student from Fenger High School in Roseland, was on his way home from school last month when he became the victim of a gang fight in progress.

An innocent bystander, Derrion was hit on the head twice with a two-by-four and viciously beaten and kicked to his death by a group of teens.

Teachers in Chicago Public Schools know all too well that this kind of violence is nothing new, at Fenger, or at dozens of other high schools across the city. The only thing that makes this incident unique is that the resulting videotape flew across the internet appearing on every news outlet, and in just a matter of hours, the rest of the world became privy to our disgrace.

So now people everywhere are attempting to make sense of how this could happen. As educators in Chicago, there is one thing we know for certain contributes to the problem.

Renaissance 2010 is, and continues to be, a dangerous plan. School closings cause Chicago schoolchildren to cross into rival gang territories and this results in bodily harm and sometimes, death. It's a fact. Derrion Albert is sad evidence of this.

"Turnaround," schools like Fenger *don't work* and serve only to pull the rug out from under kids already struggling with an unstable environment – suffering from poverty, physically or emotionally absent parents and violence as a course of their daily lives. Removing the

little stability these children have by firing teachers and staff they have come to know and trust, is terribly cruel, and seems obviously counterproductive.

And when it comes to solutions, there are plenty of things that could begin to help communities and schools get back on the right track.

- Increasing security, hiring more mental health professionals, financing longer school days and additional after school programs are some.
- More mentoring programs where adults could engage in activities with kids, listen to their struggles, and offer encouragement.
- Assisting parents in finding employment and social services.
- And, a recent suggestion by CTU President Marilyn Stewart, to create an alternative school for chronically disruptive children in order to remove them from the classroom and provide them with the kind of intervention and support they need (see *President's message on opposite page*).

The list of suggestions is endless, and every idea is a valid one.

In the end, there will be no *one* remedy to end the violence, but rather, a combination of *many*. Each time that we choose to shine a harsh light on the issues that plague our children rather than look away we can come a little bit closer to helping them *live* a better future.

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by Marilyn Stewart, President

On October 1, I addressed the City Club of Chicago at its monthly meeting. Members of the City Club include civic leaders in business, government, and community affairs throughout Chicago and the state.

As I prepared for the speech, I kept in mind that as educators our job is to teach. Whether it be to a classroom of students, or to the city's most powerful stakeholders. As a teacher and as Chicago Teachers Union president, it is my task to explain what our educational community needs.

I spoke to the group about the late Albert Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers. Mr. Shanker was respected as much as an educational reformer as he was a union leader. He once told his union members, "It is as much your duty to preserve public education as it is to negotiate a good contract."

We respond to that directive through the CTU Quest Center, which is dedicated to the professional development of our members. We know that improving your educational practice is Union work. We're successful when we know we are the best teachers we can be.

I want groups such as the City Club to understand that as members of the CTU we know our goals are not just about salaries, benefits, and working conditions. It is also our responsibility to improve public education for all students. And, we are out there working towards that goal every day. But, it's something we cannot do alone.

As CTU president I have

learned the importance of partnerships. Some of the most successful programs we have right now are because we are working together, united, for a common goal.

I also know that my job is to give teachers the help, support, assistance, tools and resources they need so that they can do their jobs educating students in the Chicago Public Schools. The more people we can include in that cause, the more successful we will be.

Although we don't always agree with the decisions the school district makes, we can agree on a number of collaborative programs we have started with CPS. I spoke to members of the City Club about Fresh Start, Nurturing Teacher Leadership, and Chicago TAP. These are all programs that provide teachers with the support they need to do their jobs.

But, in some schools in this city, teachers are faced with a bigger challenge. All the professional development, support, and resources won't make a difference if classrooms are being chronically disrupted by overwhelming discipline problems.

We hear from Union members constantly dealing with students who are physically and verbally abusive to teachers and staff members; who fight with other students; who disrupt classes by misbehaving; or who throw objects or furniture. This behavior makes it nearly impossible for even the best teacher to teach and makes it impossible

"Chicago Public Schools need an effective alternative school for chronically disruptive students."

for other students to learn.

Chicago Public Schools need an effective alternative school for chronically disruptive students. I believe that these kids need separate placement so they can learn to manage their behavior while getting the education that they need and deserve.

I don't want classrooms to be disrupted and I don't want teachers to spend the majority of their time filling out paperwork to remove a problematic student. The process should be simpler; opening an alternative school would provide immediate placement in a separate environment so these students could receive the kind of intervention and support they need.

A proposal like this encourages the highest level of collaboration. We need everyone – from the mayor to the business community – to work together to make this happen.

Enough is enough. The violence, the shootings, the disruption in the classrooms day-to-day are crippling our educational system. And, what's at stake – our students' futures – is too important to ignore.



# PRESIDENT'S DIARY

- On September 7, President Stewart participated in a Labor Day rally where she spoke about the importance of labor.
- On September 10, President Stewart met with Janet Knupp from the Chicago Education Fund about funding for National Board Certification and the teacher incentive fund.
- From September 14 to September 17, President Stewart was in Pittsburgh for the AFL-CIO Convention where the organization's new leadership took office.
- On September 18, President Stewart spoke to Chicago Board of Education President Michael Scott about the abusive principals at Field, Washington, Gunsaulus, and Prescott. She also discussed the removal of 403(b) from the Board agenda.
- On September 23, President Stewart addressed the Board of Education at its September meeting. She spoke about the continuing payroll issues as well as issues involving abusive principals.
- On October 1, President Stewart spoke to the City Club of Chicago and proposed an alternative school for chronically disruptive students.

# Teachers and staff members suffer at the hand of abusive principals

(Continued from page 1)

Union has pinpointed a number of disturbing similarities among all of the cases of problematic principals.

## TEACHER INPUT UNDERVALUED

Michael Kane explained that the principal at Field treats his employees with a level of extreme disrespect. Michael said the principal's behavior is both "boarish and abusive," and staff members say morale is very low. The principal referred to one staff member as "a little girl." That teacher has since found a new position.

Teachers have reported the behavior to CPS and are anxiously awaiting for some sort of action.

"If teachers do not have the

by the teachers at the school, Tanya said. Unfortunately, she explained, teacher input does not hold a lot of weight when evaluating a principal.

"Teachers are even under represented on the LSCs," Michael said. The Local School Councils have two teacher positions, but Mr. Kane said that's not enough. For the amount of time these teachers spend in the schools they should have more say.

Exactly how much does a teacher's opinion of the principal matter?

"Not much," Michael said. "It depends on the LSC, but in my experience, whatever the teachers wanted the committee went the other way."

Maria Rodriguez said the situation at Gunsaulus is appalling.

teachers who were integral to the environment at Gunsaulus have since found new positions elsewhere.

Ms. Rodriguez explained that most of all, teachers have had health-related problems that she can only imagine have come from the stress of working at the school. One staff member suffered a stroke, another had a miscarriage, and others have complained of stress-related illnesses.

"At some point, CPS has to take these teachers seriously," said President Stewart. "They are in these schools. They know what it's like."

## PRINCIPALS PLAYING POLITICS

The field representatives described a game of politics being played at each school. One teacher is pitted against another. Anyone who voted against the principal is a target.

In at least three of the schools teachers who don't have a positive record with the principal have been moved out of positions they are qualified for into other subjects that are not their specialty just to make things difficult on them.

At Washington, Tanya said, the principal has a list of people she's targeting.

"A principal has a right to move teachers based on their need, but to move teachers in retaliation is another story," Tanya explained. One teacher at Washington was moved into a specialty she was certified for more than 20 years ago.

"She's moved people into positions they are qualified for, but it's not their preference and not what they are certified for. She's also moving them without considering seniority."

Another example was a teacher at Gunsaulus who was moved from the area she had National Board Certification for in the upper grades, to a kin-

dergarten position. Maria said that there was no explanation that made sense except that this teacher was a target of abuse. That teacher has since left the school.

"It's unfortunate," said President Stewart. "That school has lost a really great teacher because the principal had some sort of political agenda."

The field representatives explained that in many cases it was politics that got these principals hired in the first place. At Gunsaulus, the boundaries of the LSC area were changed to include more people that would vote for the principal. If the teachers voiced their opposition to the principal they became targets.

"Teachers don't have enough pull on the LSC's," Tanya explained. "In some cases the teachers and community members hand-pick the principal and vice versa. They are then beholden to that principal. It just gives them more power."

## VETERAN TEACHERS ARE TARGETED

Michael Kane indicated that the majority of the staff being mistreated at Field Elementary are veteran teachers. In most cases Probationary Assigned Teachers (PATs) are either too scared to speak up about the issues at the school or feel indebted to the current principal because they were hired by him.

According to Mr. Kane, "there's a horrible culture of fear at the school. The principal plays a good game of divide and conquer."

Because the veteran teachers have a little more protection than PATs, Michael explained, they have been speaking out and have therefore been punished.

The latest incident against a veteran teacher came after one of the teachers spoke out against her principal at a Chicago Board of Education meeting. The

"At some point, CPS has to take these teachers seriously," said President Stewart. "They are in these schools. They know what it's like."

where-with-all and the desire to come to school in the morning, it affects the success of that school," Mr. Kane said. "The teachers' opinions have to hold more weight."

At Washington High School teachers are working to file a lawsuit over the principal's abuse. Ms. Saunders-Wolfe said principals are evaluated based on a number of items, including

- human resource management,
- interpersonal effectiveness,
- school leadership, and
- instructional leadership.

On all of these, Tanya explained, the Washington principal would be scored very low

Since the principal was hired, teachers at the school have had DCFS called on them numerous times — something that had never happened before. In a span of two days, the principal had filed ten disciplinary referrals against staff members. When Maria followed up with a ranking official at CPS Labor Relations, all the hearings were cancelled.

"False allegations can destroy someone's career and they were all unfounded," Maria said.

And yet, the teachers there still struggle with the same principal. The entire atmosphere at the school has changed because teachers have been forced out. A number of PATs were let go last year after speaking up against the principal. Veteran

principal obtained a copy of the Board meeting tape and played it at a school meeting to let the staff know that he did not like the behavior.

He even accused the Union, its leadership and the school's Union delegate of lying.

Maria, Michael and Tanya all reported that they have trouble getting people to serve as delegates in schools with bad principals.

"No one wants the job because they become targets," Tanya said.

Last year, the *CHICAGO UNION TEACHER* featured an amazing culinary arts program at Washington High School. Gloria Hafer, a teacher who initiated and ran a similar a program at Taylor School for more than three decades, received a \$400,000 grant this summer to improve the kitchen at Washington, but then was fired by the principal before the year began. The principal still has not provided Gloria with any reason for her dismissal.

CTU field representatives have also found that the administrators are violating the teachers' contract by asking them to give up prep periods, stay after school or come in on Saturdays. Some of the newer teachers do not realize this is a violation or are too scared to question it. Even veteran teachers are afraid to file a grievance.

"This is an abuse of power," Michael said. "And, the Board, for whatever reason, does not investigate principals that take advantage of their authority. Until they do, the teachers at the schools are going to have a very difficult time. There's no accountability."

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Field Representative Gregg Cox said the situation at Prescott has been going on for far too long. "If teachers were doing some of the things these principals are allegedly doing, they'd

be gone — no problem."

So why is it any different for principals?

"They need to look at the background of these principals," Maria said. "They do that to teachers. They need to look at principals the same way."

President Stewart has suggested that CPS should examine grievance records before hiring principals. In at least two of these schools, principals moved from one site where they were having issues with staff, only to be placed in a new school to repeat the same problems.

Michael Kane also said a school with a high turnover rate should be investigated.

"I have one school that had 15 new employees...that's crazy. That should be looked into," he said. "Why is there so much turnover...why are people leaving?"

The field representatives agree that the best way to fight an abusive principal is to file grievances — lots of grievances.

"Get together," said Ms. Rodriguez. "If you get eight, nine, ten, or even 15 people there are not enough days in the year or hours in the day to retaliate against those who filed the grievances. Hopefully the Board will get tired of all the grievances — it's a lot of time and money — and say, 'what is going on here?'"

"There's a division of power," Michael explained. "And, these principals are crossing the line of what their job actually is. There should be investigations so that teachers get a fair shake."

"We're not asking for a lot," said Tanya. "Just a principal who respects the teacher as a professional. So many of them don't."

President Stewart and CTU staff continue to follow up with the staff members at these schools. If you are having issues with the administration at your school call the Union office at 312-329-9100 and ask to speak to your field representative.

## ABUSIVE PRINCIPALS – DÉJÀ VU

For Chicago Teachers Union Member Services Coordinator Peter Ardito the recent stories about abusive principals and forced grade-changing has been a little too familiar.

Before working for the Union, Peter served as delegate for Prosser High School, where he was faced with his own abusive principal, grade-changing scandal, and a long fought battle to uproot the administration.

Much the same as the stories of Field and Gunsaulus, the troublesome Prosser principal was transferred from Irving Park School. And, just as in those schools, she was able to stack the Local School Council (LSC) with her supporters. She also brought with her two people from Irving Park and made them assistant principals.



Soon after her arrival, Peter explained, teachers at the school were bringing forward complaints about the LSC president's daughter receiving special treatment. She was often late to class, or sometimes would not come at all, without being marked late or absent. Some teachers even

made claims that the administration was changing grades for the student.

Teachers at the school also complained of abuse and intimidation from the principal and assistant principal. The assistant principal had been writing e-mails to teachers falsely accusing them of not doing their job. He yelled at teachers and threatened them.

Peter encouraged the staff to keep documentation of every incident. He told them to carry tape recorders for their protection and show the assistant principal that he was being recorded. After a meeting held with CPS officials, teachers, staff and parents Peter and two colleagues had started gathering evidence of the administration's mistreatment of staff. They brought it to the Chicago Public School's law department.

"We didn't realize how long it would take," Peter said. "We actually ended up providing three different sets of documentation over a period of about 14 months."

After enough documentation, CPS decided to come in and investigate allegations of grade-changing. Officials first approached a school counselor who backed off right away and pointed to the principal and assistant principal.

"At the end of that summer, they concluded that grades had been changed. The assistant principal had run a ghost class for the president of the LSC's daughter because she never went to class."

On September 14, 1995, Chicago Sun-Times reporter Rosalind Rossi wrote a front page story about the issues at Prosser and the investigation of grade-changing at the school. Ms. Rossi also authored the most recent grade-changing article published in the Sun-Times this fall.

Paul Vallas, then CEO of CPS, was quoted in the story as

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# Charter school law includes wins and losses

By Katie Anselment,  
CTU Contract Lobbyist

**A**fter nine months of tedious, protracted and often heated negotiations, the Charter School bill – Senate Bill 612 – was signed into law on July 30.

Many wish that the cap on charter schools had remained untouched. I have to report that in all honesty, between the legislators and the leaders this past Spring, the train had already left the station. The momentum was with the charter school movement even beforehand, but with the push from President Barack Obama after his inauguration – and with the change in leadership in the Illinois Senate – the cap was going to be raised. The question was by how much?

CTU saw these negotiations as an opportunity. Sure, it would have been easier to just say we are not negotiating on more charters and to boycott the meetings entirely. But realistically we knew the number of charters would be increased and we could either be a part of the problem or a part of the solution in the eyes of the legislators at the table.

And so, the cap on the number of charter schools for Chicago went from 30 to 60 with an allowance for an additional five charters targeted specifically at drop-out students. It is important to point out a few things here.

First, the initial request of the Network of Charter Schools and of CPS was much higher than the number finally agreed upon.

Second, we got clarity in the law on these newly authorized charters that they could only be single-campus schools (except the drop-outs charters which can operate multiple campuses up to a certain limit). This is a major distinction as some existing multi-campus charter schools have grown larger than suburban school districts nearby.

And third, we were able to negotiate a four-year moratorium on any further bills amending the charter school law. The cap will not be revisited again for at least four years.

There was much more than just the cap in this bill though.

CTU/IFT was able to negotiate a requirement of 75 percent certified teachers for all charter schools throughout the state. You might be thinking “that’s still too low!” I agree, but under the old law, some charters in Chicago, depending on when they were authorized, only had to have 50 percent of their teachers certified. And can you believe the requirement for downstate charter schools in terms of percent of certified teachers was ZERO before this bill? This was one of the final chips to fall for the Network of Charter Schools because they were insistent that permitting the use of uncertified teachers was one of the fundamental characteristics of charters.

Charter schools will now be held to stricter standards with

regard to oversight and review. Charters will now be required to submit independent audits of their finances to the State Board of Education. The bill also sets forth a much more rigid process for closing failing charter schools. They will have two school years to turn things around or they will lose their charter authorization. Charter school data will now be collected by the State Board on a campus-by-campus basis. This is key because some multi-campus charter schools were aggregating their student data which made it very difficult to tell which campuses were doing well (and why) and which were not.

Probably the most overlooked but important item in SB612 for CTU members is the limit placed on contract schools. The contracting out of an ENTIRE public school to a private entity without even having to at least go through an authorization process like a charter school is troubling to say the least. However, CPS has been operating schools under this model for some years now so it seemed most appropriate to place a permanent cap on the number of these schools. SB 612 permits the Chicago Board of Education to operate no more than 30 general contract schools and no more than five additional “contract turnaround schools.” This was one of the last chips to fall for CPS representatives. They fought tooth and nail to maintain the “powers of the Board” to operate these schools when and as they saw fit. In the end, they were forced to accept our cap on these contract schools if they wanted the number of charter

schools increased.

One other huge win for the teachers unions was Senate Bill 1984. This bill was run separately but was considered part of the negotiated “charter school package.” SB 1984 clarified in law that both charter schools and contract schools fall under the Illinois Education Labor Relations Act and may be organized under such. This assertion had been questioned under previous law, but is now made crystal clear.

Senator Kimberly Lightford (D-4th Dist.) and Representative Jerry Mitchell (R-90th Dist.) went to great lengths and spent unimaginable hours mediating these negotiations. They were there because they had sincere interest in seeing a resolution reached that did the least harm and the most good. They were tough, they were understanding, and they were fair. Senator Heather Steans (D-7th Dist.) and Majority Leader Representative Barbara Flynn Currie (D-25th Dist.) also assisted in reaching resolution, particularly toward the end when many times it appeared the negotiations would fall apart. Representative Monique Davis (D-27th Dist.) carried the education labor relations bill, SB1984.

Senator Lightford said repeatedly that in the end she hoped everyone would get something but no one would get everything. That is a fair description of the final outcome and demonstrates her success.

Our next challenge on the charter school front will be to use the new data collected by the State Board of Education to find best practices that are working in charter schools and to replicate those best practices in our traditional public schools, seeking changes in the law as necessary. The whole point of charter schools was to find better methods through innovation. It does our students no good to continue these experiments if we are not going to utilize the lessons learned when we identify what works.



Revere School



Revere School



Kinzie School



Earl School



Las Casas School



Pulaski School



Nightingale School



## Executive Board sets referendum for membership approval

**A**t the September Chicago Teachers Union Executive Board meeting, three items were approved to go before the membership for a referendum vote. Members of the CTU will be provided with the exact language and will vote on the items at the end of November.

The first item is to reduce the number of officers from five to four by eliminating the position of Treasurer and assigning the fiscal oversight responsibilities listed in the Constitution as Treasurer's duties to the Financial Secretary instead.

The rationale for this change is that there are a number of unions that operate with fewer officers, including the CTU's parent organizations, the American Federation of Teachers and the Illinois Federation of Teachers. Many of the duties of the Treasurer are currently being carried out by the Director of Financial Operations as required by the AFT. The elimination of this position would provide substantial savings in salary, benefits and clerical assistance.

The second item before the membership is to create

a constitutional provision is to codify that an officer who loses his or her membership also must relinquish office.

Without such a provision, action by the Executive Board in dealing with misconduct by an officer, as dictated by the Union's By Laws, can cause lengthy legal action as was the case last year when the former vice president was removed from office.

The third item involves removing the constitutional provision requiring election returns to be published in the *CHICAGO UNION TEACHER*. Instead the results would be posted on the CTU website.

In 2004, the published election results from four slates of candidates cost about \$90,000. There would be no cost for publishing results on the website.

The CTU constitution states that items can be moved to a referendum vote if approved by the Executive Board. Details about the referendum vote will be posted on the CTU website and in the November issue of the *CHICAGO UNION TEACHER*.

## CTU files et al payroll grievance against CPS

**C**hicago Teachers Union President Marilyn Stewart addressed the Board of Education at its September meeting about the continued problems with payroll.

During her remarks, she let the Board members know that the Union has filed an "et al" grievance on behalf of all the members who have encountered problems with payroll. President Stewart also told the group that the Union would be counseling members on how to file a wage claim with the Illinois Department of Labor under the Wage Payment and Collection Act.

"It's a simple form that our members can fill out," explained President Stewart. "And, it is something, that by law, the Board must respond to."

The form and directions on how to fill it out are posted

on the Union website. President Stewart encouraged all members who have encountered issues with payroll to download the form.

Board President Michael Scott responded to President Stewart's comments with frustration.

"You keep saying your fixing it," he told CPS staff. "Get it done."

## Union files age discrimination charge

**T**he Chicago Teachers Union is filing an age discrimination charge with the Illinois Department of Human Rights and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The action is based on the number of teachers 55 years and older who are going into the re-assigned teacher pool.

Members of the CTU staff have reported a large amount of veteran teachers being forced out of their schools. At recent job fairs the Union has heard that new teachers were given a stamp on their resumé and a different time slot than veteran teachers at the fair.

President Stewart said the CTU has had a few years now to observe what's going on and she does not like the pattern.

In one instance reported by a field representative, a veteran teacher was moved from her position to another position. A newer teacher filled her space. Then the principal eliminated the veteran teacher's position in order to get rid of her without worrying about seniority.

"Veteran teachers are being targeted," President Stewart explained. "We are building a case, and we need people to come forward and share their experiences."

The Union is now collecting data about who has been placed in the reassignment pool and who has filled the positions.

"We are currently working to collect data to see how the staff dynamics are changing," President Stewart explained. "If you have information, please contact your field rep."

## CTU IN THE NEWS FOLLOW THESE LINKS...

- <http://www.chicagounionnews.com/2009/09/new-women-of-chicago-labor-movement.html>

Follow this link to read an article about women in the Chicago labor movement, including CTU President Marilyn Stewart.

- <http://www.chicago-publicradio.org/Content.aspx?audioID=37181>

Visit this link to hear President Stewart's address to the City Club of Chicago.

- [www.suntimes.com/news/education/1802060,marilyn-stewart-disruptive-students-school-100109.article](http://www.suntimes.com/news/education/1802060,marilyn-stewart-disruptive-students-school-100109.article)

The Chicago Sun-Times covers President Stewart's address to the City Club.

- <http://www.suntimes.com/news/cepeda/1806304,CST-EDT-esther05.article>

A Chicago Sun-Times columnist shares her thoughts on President Stewart's proposal at the City Club of Chicago October meeting.





# AFL-CIO elects new leadership at fall conference

**O**n September 16, delegates at the AFL-CIO 2009 convention in Pittsburgh elected a new slate of officials. Richard Trumka was chosen as AFL-CIO president. He will be joined by Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler, who at 39 is the youngest person to become an AFL-CIO officer, and Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker.

President Trumka previously served as secretary-treasurer. Secretary-Treasurer Shuler is a former executive assistant to the Electrical Workers (IBEW) President Edwin Hill. Executive Vice President Holt Baker was re-elected to her position during the September convention.

President Trumka shared thoughts about his upbringing in a union family in western Pennsylvania. He told the crowd, "Even though the face of the American labor movement has changed,

one thing hasn't: it's that the surest, the fastest, most effective way to lift workers and our families into the middle-class is with the strength, that can only, only come with a union contract."

Mr. Trumka was nominated by retiring AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. Ms. Shuler was placed into nomination by IBEW President Hill who praised her for her energy and organizing skills.

"Liz Shuler is going to do for you what she has done for us: be part of a team that will confront all obstacles, win new victories and promote the solidarity and spirit that represent the best of our movement."

Ms. Holt Baker told the crowd that her mission for her term is to help pass the Employee Free Choice Act. She also explained that she wants to reach out to new generations of workers.

"I believe with every fiber in my body that our movement must keep on ensuring that millions of workers in this country have the dignity and respect they deserve. That means good wages, decent pensions, affordable health care and continuous job training," she said. "If we don't fight for these securities, who will?"

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten praised the new AFL-CIO leadership and said the group will provide "inspiring new leadership that is tailor-made for our challenging times.

"Rich Trumka is a known fighter for worthy causes," she continued. "And just as passionate a bridge-builder in his quest to achieve a more just society. With Liz Shuler and Arlene Holt Baker as part of his team, the AFL-CIO is poised to lead America's labor movement to a position of greater strength."

Convention delegates also elected 51 vice presidents who make up the AFL-CIO Executive Council.

## ABUSIVE PRINCIPALS – DÉJÀ VU

(Continued from page 5)

saying the issues extended far beyond just grade-changing.

"You have a dysfunctional LSC. You have some questions about the actions and conduct from the LSC chair, there are accusations about the principal and the assistant principal, there are accusations of grade changes, of harassment of teachers, of intimidation of teachers," he said.

One gym teacher at the school provided crucial evidence that grades had been changed. He had kept his records from the school year – every grade, every absence – and when the principal told him to change the student's grade he refused. The principal went ahead and changed it anyway.

The Sun-Times article reported that the daughter of the head the LSC received at least two Fs, which were changed to passing marks, but that in her three years at the school she had flunked more than a dozen classes and had been absent more than 100 days.

The principal and assistant principals were ultimately removed from the school. A hearing was held to terminate the abusive assistant principal. The teachers and staff were able to present all the evidence they had gathered – in total, 3,200 pages of documentation. The court took action to fire him and the decision was later upheld in the circuit court.

The principal, who had a four-year contract with the Board, was asked to finish out her term at CPS headquarters. She refused, requesting that she be put back at Prosser.

She filed lawsuits against Paul Vallas, the Board and everyone all the way down to the teachers who had gathered the evidence. Peter had multiple lawsuits against him.

The trials dragged on for five years. Finally, the judge of the case ruled that CPS

could pursue her termination. What finally ended the trial was a ruling that she had endangered students at the school.

She had dropped science courses from the school curriculum in order to push Peter out of the school.

"They were trying to say there was nobody for me to teach," he explained.

What she did not realize was that Peter had the credentials to teach business, accounting and keyboarding. He was placed as a keyboarding instructor at the school and the only science course at the school was given to a bilingual teacher even though Board policy stated that bilingual teachers were to teach bilingual courses only.

The hearing determined that she had endangered students at the school by giving classes to teachers without the credentials to teach that course. She challenged the decision and continued to fight the Board by bringing it before the appellate court.

Peter said a new principal was hired at Prosser after the former principal had been removed and he was exactly what the school needed. He came in and worked directly with the staff and encouraged open communications. In the seven years he was there he never fired or suspended a single member of the staff.

"So that really is a success story for what a remediated school can be like if you have a principal who has the well-being of his staff in mind," Peter said. "Reading scores increased...I mean he just made it an outstanding school."

Peter said the whole ordeal was hard. Many of the staff members did not want to get involved.

"Some people were so afraid of this whole process," he said. "But, this is the kind of documentation it takes to get rid of a principal. The surprise was how long it took. It was a challenge every day."

Peter still has the copy of the original Sun-Times article exposing the issues at Prosser.



## UNITE HERE rejoins AFL-CIO

"Solidarity will always overcome division... our union will continue to be a strong and growing member in the house of labor."

**A**sserting that "our 265,000 members belong in the House of Labor," UNITE HERE rejoined the AFL-CIO on the final day of the labor federation's convention—one day after Richard Trumka was elected president of the 11.5-million member AFL-CIO.

Underscoring the importance of unity within the labor movement at a moment when working families have an opportunity to win landmark improvements in jobs, health care and labor law, Mr. Trumka presented a charter to UNITE HERE President John W. Wilhelm.

Mr. Trumka said, "I can't think of a more uplifting way to begin this day than by welcoming UNITE HERE back to our union family as an affiliate of the AFL-CIO. A united labor movement will serve the interests of working people during this time of incredible opportunity."

"In UNITE HERE, we know what a fighter for workers Rich Trumka is, and we pledge to stand with him and fight with him to get workers what they deserve: a piece of the American dream," said President Wilhelm. "Solidarity will always overcome division... our union will continue to be a strong and growing member in the house of labor."

Mr. Trumka will continue to lead conversations with other unions about affiliation and reaffiliation.

Nearly 1,000 delegates and 2,000 guests participated in the convention, where they heard an address from President Obama, wished outgoing President John Sweeney goodbye and elected new officers to the AFL-CIO. Two women were elected to hold

the top offices along with Mr. Trumka: Liz Shuler was elected secretary treasurer and Arlene Holt Baker was re-elected executive vice president.



## World Teachers' Day celebrated

World Teachers' Day, celebrated in October, has been promoted since 1967 by Education International, UNESCO and other leading organizations as an opportunity to recognize the important work teachers do and to draw attention to crucial issues facing educators worldwide. The theme of this year's World Teachers' Day "Build the Future: Invest in Teachers Now," is a fitting one according to Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers.

"In all countries, teachers play an integral role in providing a solid foundation to their students as well as to their countries' economies. As leaders from Argentina to Zimbabwe grapple with the world economic crisis, it is more important than ever that they reject cuts to education, which offer only short-term relief yet have lasting effects from which children may never fully recover," President Weingarten said.

The AFT urges Congress and the

Obama administration to make sound investments in education, including teacher recruitment and retention both here and abroad, to improve children's futures and to restore economic strength.

On this World Teachers' Day, AFT leaders met with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Posner and conveyed the AFT's support for Secretary Clinton's international efforts to fund essential programs that prevent AIDS, eradicate child labor, educate girls, and combat chronic illness and hunger. The AFT believes that "education is one of the most effective tools available to break the cycle of poverty, deter extremism, and promote a safer and more prosperous world."

Additionally, Ms. Weingarten said, "The AFT will continue to fight for the right of all students to a free, accessible high-quality education; for the rights of teachers and education professionals to practice their craft free from abuse and to be adequately compensated; as well as for international labor rights, the promotion of democracy and the rule of law. At a time when global economic footing is so tenuous, one of the best investments we can make for our children and their future is ensuring that they have well-prepared and well-supported teachers."



## Scholarship applications available online

Parents of high school seniors preparing for college, it is time for you and your children to think about applying for the 2010 IFT scholarships. All IFT scholarship forms and application instructions can be printed directly from the IFT website at [www.ift-aft.org](http://www.ift-aft.org).

### IFT ROBERT G. PORTER SCHOLARSHIP

The IFT Robert G. Porter scholarship, named after the late AFT secretary-treasurer who began his teaching and union career in Illinois, will select two winners in 2010. Each recipient will receive \$6,000 (\$1,500 per year for four years) towards the cost of college education at a public university in Illinois. Applicants must be children of currently employed, active IFT members in good standing or of deceased members who were in good standing with the IFT at the time of their death. Applicants must also be high school seniors with a cumulative "B" average. Scholarship applications must be received in the IFT Westmont office by December 4, 2009. *(Please note - the American Federation of Teachers also has a Robert Porter scholarship with a different deadline.)*

### CARL J. MEGEL SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP

The Carl J. Megel Special Education Award is given to the son or daughter of an IFT member (current or deceased), or a student recommended by a teacher who is an IFT member. The winner receives a one-time award of \$1,000. Applicants must be high school seniors who will graduate in 2010 and are currently enrolled in a special education school, class or program. (Students who plan to teach Special Education are not eligible.) The application deadline for the Megel Award is also December 4, 2009.

# Three Chicago teachers selected to receive wardrobe makeovers

**Imelda Souchet, a teacher from Marquette Elementary School in Chicago,** was selected the grand prize winner of The Classroom's 2009 Back To School, Back To Style! national contest, sponsored by Jones New York in the Classroom and Macy's. Ms. Souchet, a bilingual, K-5 teacher, was whisked to New York City for a wardrobe makeover and fashion photo shoot. Ms. Souchet was personally styled at the photo shoot by TV fashion guru, author and JNY Style Guy Lloyd Boston, and received a new Jones New York wardrobe along with a hair and make-up transformation.

The two Chicago second prize winners, Emily Callan-Rowley of Albert R. Sabin Magnet School and Brooke Poole of Pilsen Community Academy, received a new Jones New York wardrobe at Macy's.

The winning teachers also received donations for classroom supplies and improvements from national education non-profit Adopt-A-Classroom.

Ms. Souchet, a 20-year veteran teacher, was chosen for the award because "she has proven to be extremely dedicated to her students, her family and her community," according to her supporters. Ms. Souchet teaches her students everything from the importance of performing arts – including a spectacular production of "The Wizard of Oz," – to leadership and discipline by helping them create a student council with by-laws and a government body. She also served as chair of the education committee for the Logan Square Neighborhood Association from 1998 to 2003, assisting with the Ambassador for Reading Program and the School Parent Mentor Program.

According to Ms. Souchet, teaching "was my childhood dream. I never thought of any-

thing else. I wanted to make a difference in my community. I absolutely love my kids – they have so much energy and enthusiasm." About the award, "I'm honored, humbled and speechless," she said.

**Emily Callan-Rowley, a reading and literacy teacher at Albert R. Sabin Magnet School,** has "a glowing personality," according to friends and advocates, and is "a beautiful human being who cares about and places others before herself." She has a passion for helping students learn to read and even organizes a literacy resource center for parents who need books and materials for their children. Ms. Callan-Rowley is also deeply involved in a variety of community literacy programs that involve parents, teachers and local businesses.

**Brooke Poole, a dedicated 5th and 6th grade teacher at Pilsen Community Academy,** is the school's science specialist and runs the Science Fair and Science Family Night. She also finds time to head the school recycling program and gardening club. Her supporters call her a "wonderful wife, mother and teacher" who "makes sure everyone around her is taken care of."

These Chicago teachers are part of a select group of 21 winning teachers from across the nation who were chosen to demonstrate the importance of educators to communities and children.

"Teachers play an enormous role in the lives of their students and often make personal sacrifices to provide the best possible learning environment. On average, teachers spend \$1,200 of their own money each year to outfit their classrooms for basic



Photo by Jones New York in the Classroom

**"Teaching 'was my childhood dream. I never thought of anything else. I wanted to make a difference in my community. I absolutely love my kids – they have so much energy and enthusiasm.'"**

learning," said Amy Rapawy, Jones New York Senior Vice President of Marketing. "Our mission is to support teachers,

and Back to School, Back to Style! rewards teachers with something for themselves and for their classrooms."

# PASS IT ON Poetry Anthology helps ESL students learn important lessons

By Jenny Celandor,  
Associate Editor

In Gloria Henllan-Jones' classroom for more advanced English as a Second Language (ESL) students, each year begins with poetry. And for the past ten years, Ms. Henllan-Jones has been doing one poetry project that gives her students a memo-

to of all that they learn. Many of the kids in this particular class are transitional ESL students, Gloria explained. "They are in or through their third year as ESL, but really aren't ready for a sophomore level or junior level English class. They would be expected to understand things like alliteration or metaphors or similes and they've never gotten it. Or, maybe they've gotten it in their own language but they've never gotten it in English."

Ms. Henllan-Jones said over the years she has discovered the most useful way to teach some of these terms is through poetry.

Gloria has done her Poetry Anthology project for the last ten years. It's an ongoing project and takes six weeks to complete. While the students learn about poetry from Ms. Henllan-Jones, they will also choose poetry they like to complete their project.

They are to select eight poems — one from their home country. They can choose classic and contemporary published poems, but are restricted from certain poems they find on the internet — the poems must be published.

Gloria kicked off her poetry unit and then her students took an early trip to the library to start choosing poems for their

anthologies. Overall, this project will last six weeks.

Students must write an introductory essay that begins the anthology and explains their personal experience with poetry, how they organized their anthology, and their overall reaction to poetry and their chosen pieces.

The students also must include smaller essays that describe why they chose a specific poem, how the poem reflects a certain culture or country, and they must analyze the language and themes of at least four pieces they chose.

The students are also required to include two poems they wrote during the poetry course and a bibliography. After the students' anthologies are complete, they are laminated and bound as a keepsake.

Gloria said all of the sections of the project are important, but each component can be molded to make the students more comfortable. For instance, she explained, if the students are comfortable writing then they

have a wide range of options for what to include as samples. If a student is not a writer, then she has them include poems they write that imitate a published piece. That way they can have a shell to work with.

Students are also encouraged to type the project and include illustrations, but if they cannot type, or are uncomfortable drawing, only a few points are deducted.

Over the years, there have been slight changes to the project — the number of poems they must choose — but the basic concept has stayed the same. And the lessons they learn have stayed consistent — literary terms, poem structure, how a poet chooses his or her words, the kinds of things that are expressed through poetry.

One thing that has become more important over the years is the lesson about bibliographies. Gloria said it is something she spends more and more time on each year because it is so important. Originally, she had

"...they are able to attack it, break it down. See that you don't have to understand every single word to really understand what's going on in a poem."





assumed the students knew how to do one because of other classes they were in. Now, they get a lesson on how to create a bibliography in the library, and a web site where they can plug in the information.

The project also provides the students with an important lesson on how to do research in the library and on the internet. They have to learn what sources are legitimate — which web sites can be trusted or how to find a book.

The Poetry Anthology not only teaches the students how to break down poems and analyze them, but also how to research and cite the work.

"They have to learn to decide what is a valid web site. What is not a valid web site. They are learning how to search the internet," she said. She also admits that as the internet has become more prevalent, the project has evolved.

Ms. Henllan-Jones said that each year in the beginning she always has students who say they "hate poetry." But, often by the end of the section they end up enjoying it.

"The idea is that, first, the simple appreciation of poetry," Gloria explained. "'This is something I don't like. It's too hard. I don't know how to do it.' And then they are able to attack it, break it down. See that you don't have to understand every single word to really understand what's going on in a poem."

So, how do these lessons fit into the rest of the year?

Ms. Henllan-Jones' students

start with poetry because she wants them to grasp literary terms — metaphors, similes, imagery. Then they move into Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

"They build up to that," she explained. "Some of the kids have even read it in their own languages."

Then it's on to short stories using everything they have learned from poetry. And, finally, they tackle the *Odyssey*.

"This project is just for the section on poetry. But, what they learn from doing it, they use the rest of the year."

Each year, Ms. Henllan-Jones has kids who speak different languages, or come from different educational levels, or have different levels of English comprehension.

She does not speak any languages for a number reasons. In any one of her classes she can have anywhere from four to 12 different languages being spoken at home and it would not be fair if she could speak only certain languages and not others. But, Gloria also wants her students to be able to explain themselves in English. When she can't understand them in their language it forces her students to find a way to make her understand.

"They help each other," she said.

The students in Gloria's class keep the anthology at the end of the poetry term.

"Sometimes they come back years later and that project is what they remember. They get to hold on to it."



"This project is just for the section on poetry. But, what they learn from doing it, they use the rest of the year."

photos by Jenny Celander

## Educators' guide promote safe learning

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) offers a resource guide to educators who believe in providing a safe learning environment for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

The organization feels that one way to create a safer space for everyone is to include Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) themes in the classroom.

Results of a 2007 National School Climate Survey suggest that only 10 percent of LGBT students are taught positive representations of LGBT people, history and events. But when students are taught about these topics, they feel more a part of their school, report feeling safer in school and are less likely to skip school. So education on the subject can make a difference.

"The Educator's Guide to LGBT Pride" is a resource that illustrates five easy ways to accomplish this goal. It is available for download at <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/2441.html?state=tools&type=educator>.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS FOR PSRPs

### OCTOBER 22

Curie High School  
4959 S. Archer Avenue

### OCTOBER 27

Simeon High School  
8147 S. Vincennes Avenue

### NOVEMBER 17

Clissold Elementary School  
2350 W. 110th Place

### TBA\*

King High School  
4445 S. Drexel Boulevard

### TBA\*

Prosser High School  
2148 N. Long Avenue

### TBA\*

Roosevelt High School  
3436 W. Wilson Ave.

All meetings will be held from 4:30 – 6:00 pm.

\*Confirmed dates for these meetings can be found on the CTU website.

## Illinois receives federal funding to help improve the health of school children

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has been selected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to receive a nearly \$350,000 nutrition grant to combat childhood obesity and promote an active lifestyle. Funds from the Team Nutrition Training grant will be used to help children develop good nutrition and physical activity habits for healthier lifestyles.

According to State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch, "Good nutrition and physical activity go hand-in-hand with learning and will benefit students well beyond their school years."

The ISBE will administer funds during a two-year grant period through the Illinois Team Nutrition Training (TNT) project with plans to focus on three initiatives.

1. Provide training and resources to school food service staff to help them increase the amount and variety of whole grain products offered to students in the school breakfast programs. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) recommend that half of the grains consumed be whole grains but studies show that children consume only one third of the recommended level.

2. Provide the opportunity for 20 Illinois elementary schools to apply for a mini-grant of \$3,500 for training and technical assistance in the HealthierUS School Challenge, a national recognition program for schools that excel at supporting student wellness. The initiative aims to help reverse the childhood obesity epidemic. Overweight children are at greater risk for developing heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and other chronic diseases.

3. Improve after-school wellness activities, nutrition and snacks through 10 mini-grants of \$2,000 to eligible after-school programs. Funds will also go toward developing training to successfully integrate nutrition education and physical activity into after-school programs. Across the country, 20 percent of K-8 students are en-

rolled in after-school programs.

The \$348,404 Team Nutrition Training Grant is a key component in the efforts of the USDA's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) to enhance children's lifelong eating and physical activity behaviors by incorporating the principles of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid. Illinois is one of 18 states to receive the grant that expires September 30, 2011.

"Good nutrition and physical activity go hand in hand with learning and will benefit students well beyond their school years."



## Grants offered to math teachers

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) is giving grants up to \$4,000 to NCTM members currently teaching mathematics in grades 9-12.

The purpose of these grants is to purchase classroom materials (books, visual displays, computer programs or displays, slide shows, videotapes, or other appropriate medium) to create lessons that connect mathematics to other fields.

Proposals must address the following: the plan for developing and evaluating materials, the connectivity to other disciplines, and anticipated impact on student learning.

The applicant must be a current (as of October 15, 2009) Full Individual or E-Member of NCTM and currently teach mathematics at least 50 percent of the school day. Activities are to be completed between June 1, 2010, and May 31, 2011.

Past recipients of this grant are not eligible to reapply. Deadline for application is November 13, 2009.

For further information and application specifics, visit <http://www.nctm.org/resources/content.aspx?id=1328>.



## THE CTU WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE INVITES CTU MEMBERS TO

### From Bonnets to Briefcases: A Journey of Chicago Women in Law

IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, 565 W. Adams  
**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2009**  
Registration and refreshments • 6:00 to 6:30pm  
Program • 6:30 to 8:30pm

This program is presented by the Working Women's History Project of which the CTU Women's Rights Committee is a founder. Brigid Duffy Gerace and former field representative Paul Odell will perform in a staged reading based on the stories of the first women lawyers in Illinois.

To register for this event, visit [www.wwhpcchicago.com](http://www.wwhpcchicago.com) or call Sue Straus at 773-761-6013.

**THIS PROGRAM IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

## 2009 ALLAN WARDELL AWARD WINNER



John Boggs, the 2009 winner of the Allan Wardell Award stands with members of the Gay, Lesbian, Transgendered and Bisexual Committee members. The award is given every year to a CTU member who works to foster a safe and healthy learning environment for all students through the positive teaching of tolerance. Mr. Boggs, an English teacher at Crane High School, founded the Gay Straight Alliance at the school in 2007.

## THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OVARIAN CANCER

Because ovarian cancer is difficult to detect, especially in the early stages, it has the highest mortality rate of all gynecological cancers. Clearly, early detection of ovarian cancer is the best way to improve survival.

Some of the symptoms or potential signs of ovarian cancer are:

- unexplained change in bowel and/or bladder habits
- gastrointestinal upset such as gas, indigestion, nausea
- unexplained weight loss or gain
- pelvic and/or abdominal pain or discomfort
- pelvic and/or abdominal bloating or swelling
- a constant feeling of fullness

If you or your doctor suspect a problem, consult with a gynecologic oncologist. A pap smear will not detect ovarian cancer. At a minimum, get an annual pelvic examination by a qualified physician, which must include a recto-vaginal exam.

The National Ovarian Cancer Early Detection Program is supported by the National Cancer

Institute, and is part of the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center at Northwestern University. For further information, or to see if you qualify for this program, call 312-926-6606.

### OTHER OVARIAN CANCER RESOURCES:

**National Cancer Institute**  
800-4-CANCER • Chicago  
**Ovarian Cancer Alliance**  
312-409-2622

**Gilda's Club**  
312-464-9900

**National Ovarian Cancer Coalition**  
888-OVARIAN

**Gynecologic Cancer Foundation**  
800-444-4441

**Ovarian Cancer National Alliance**  
202-333-1332

[www.ovariancancer.org](http://www.ovariancancer.org)

**American Cancer Society**  
800-227-2345

To become an advocate for ovarian cancer awareness, support and cure, call COCA (Chicago Ovarian Cancer Alliance) at 312-409-2622 or email [info@ovariancanceralliance.com](mailto:info@ovariancanceralliance.com).

## If you're having this kind of success in the classroom you need to

# Pass It On



This year, **Chicago Union Teacher** would like to introduce a new feature — **Pass It On!** If you have an innovative classroom project that inspires student learning, we want you to share it.

If you know of a colleague who has come up with something that just works, we'd love to hear about it. We believe that success breeds success, so pass it on and help other teachers excel.

Please contact Jenny Celander, Associate Editor, **Chicago Union Teacher**, 312.329.6252 or email [jencyclander@ctulocal1.com](mailto:jencyclander@ctulocal1.com)

# Summer in Spain urges teacher to give back to community

by Melani Davis, Editor

Michael Gallagher came to teaching circuitously. He graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in art history and studio art, moved to Chicago to attend Columbia College where he received a master's degree in interdisciplinary arts education, and then worked in arts administration for several years where he says he became frustrated to be "30-whatever-years-old and still counting quarters to go to the laundromat."

At that point he decided to take any job to make some money, and began working as an office manager for a large restaurant downtown. The restaurant employed about 100 people – half of whom were Spanish – and Michael says that half of that half didn't speak a word of English.

Eventually he grew tired of having to get a translator just to say, "Why didn't you punch out last night," or, "Your check was short this week because you missed last Wednesday, don't you remember?" and he spent a year attending school to learn conversational Spanish. Michael says he simply took the eight-week course the school offered over and over, until he eventually learned it. He was also able to practice Spanish at work, and by the time he left

the restaurant job eight years later, he was speaking half in English and half in Spanish.

"So it worked out really well," Michael claims. "That job really served its purpose. I paid off student loans, bought a car, bought a house, learned Spanish and decided it was time to do something more important in my life than help make somebody else wealthy. So that's when I decided to do the teaching thing. My goal was to work with bilingual, Spanish-speaking, low-income students."

The Humboldt Park neighborhood fit the bill, and in 2004, Mr. Gallagher landed a bilingual teaching position at Harriet Beecher Stowe Elementary School where he taught 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades in his time there.

"I had four grades, five classes and three rooms, in four years," he laughs. "Then I came here."

This school year, he began teaching third graders at McPherson Elementary School in Ravenswood.

"It's really interesting here because a lot of the students don't live in the neighborhood. They commute to McPherson. We have a really strong special ed program here. We even have a classroom completely devoted to kids with autism – some of them are severe and profound.

"I think it's word of mouth. A

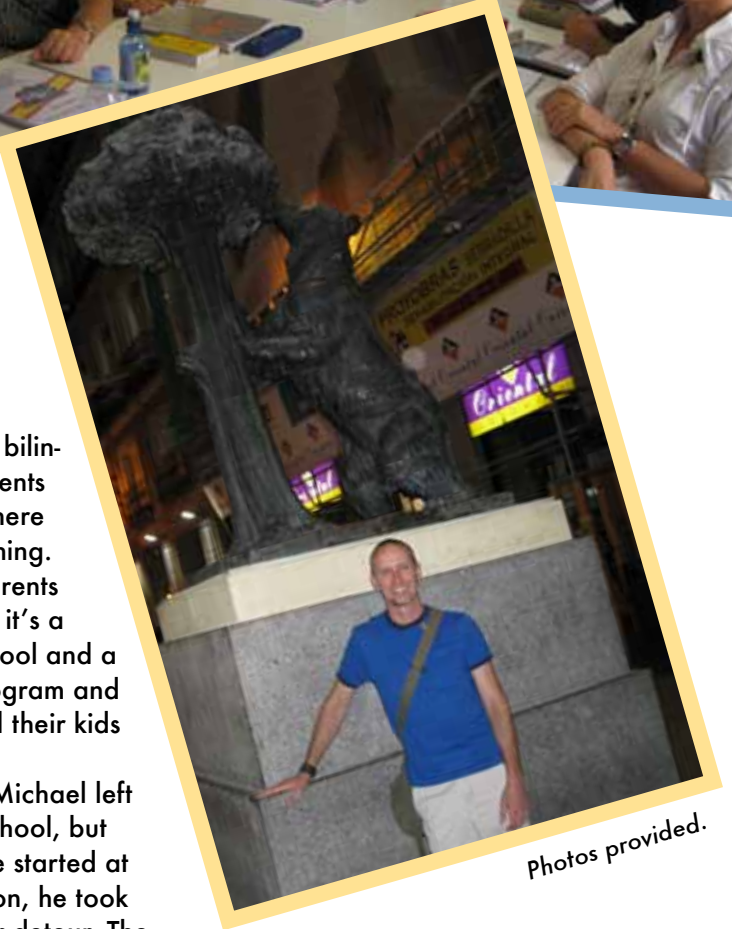
lot of the bilingual students that are here – same thing. I think parents hear that it's a good school and a good program and they send their kids here."

After Michael left Stowe School, but before he started at McPherson, he took a summer detour. The recipient of a Fund for Teachers Grant, he was able to complete a fellowship to Spain, where he immersed himself in Spanish language and culture to improve his communication and understanding with his students. As a result of this trip, Mr. Gallagher is now finalizing plans for an English class he will offer to his students' parents this fall.

Michael says the first and foremost goal of his fellowship study was to improve his Span-

ish fluency for the bilingual classroom and he feels confident that has happened. With four weeks at the Eureka School of Spanish Language in Madrid, a week in Portugal when the program ended, and another week in Madrid before flying home, he was actually there a total of six weeks and spoke Spanish 98 percent of the time.

His second goal, was to find



Photos provided.



## How can this teacher afford to bring innovative projects to his classroom? He owes it all to his sister...

Each year, Michael Gallagher enjoys a year-end project with his class that he has designed, to get them to locate themselves within their community. Those connections, he feels, are very important. Kids are given a camera and asked to take pictures of themselves, their homes, and a favorite place on the way to school and in their community. They add their own words to the visuals and everything is bound into a book that is displayed and kept, at the end of the school year. At that time, friends and relatives come to a celebration where they share the books and see the children perform a poetry slam. The project is a successful one, and “extremely powerful,” according to Mr. Gallagher.

All of this would not be possible without the help of his younger sister. Four years ago she came up with the idea to ask friends to bring Target gift certificates in lieu of a hostess gift at her annual holiday party.

“Everybody wants to bring something,” Michael explains, “and she says, ‘I don’t need another expensive bottle of wine.’ I provide her a group picture of my kids and a note introducing the class, and she includes it with her invitation. Last year the economy was bad so I only got \$1,700, the year before it was \$2,200 and the year before that it was \$2,000. I take the gift certificates and share it with the other third grade teachers. Even if they are just using it for pencils and paper towels, it’s not out of pocket. The people she invites love the project because they want to help and it gives them a place where they can focus their generosity.”

a way to give back. He felt that since he had been provided this great opportunity, he really wanted to do something to give back to the community.

In that regard, his English class for parents will be offered free, and held in school on a day when after-school programs are in session for their convenience. That way parents who want to participate won’t need to worry about child care.

“So those were my two main goals, but what I really brought home from the trip was a great sense of renewal,” Michael says.

“It’s very easy to get burned out as a teacher. I’m only in my fifth year, but it can be really challenging. So, to be able to get away like that and do something that I know is really going to help me in my own practice, and help my kids, is just amazing. So I kind of think there is a responsibility to try and pass that on.”

Michael says he also tries to impart some lessons learned from the trip to his kids.

“This month’s character education theme is responsibility, which is perfect because I’ve kind of been focusing on two things with the kids. ‘Carpe diem’ and what a great thing that is. Whether it means getting their homework done right away so they can get out and play later, or not getting in trouble — it ties right in with responsibility.

“So those are the kind of things I tried to bring back to the kids. Not just that I speak Spanish and they’re surprised that a white guy speaks Spanish, but that I can teach them how important it is to have a responsibility to their community. And that if they ‘Carpe diem,’ they can do a car wash, like the one going on outside today, and that’s a great opportunity. Take the opportunity to get involved and do something.”

Though he was planning to start the English program for parents in Humboldt Park where he lives and sees a great need, he says he is excited to be working with the people at McPherson on the project now. The administration has been extremely supportive of him and Michael says an aide has even volunteered to recruit parents for the class. The class will begin as soon as the after school programs are in place and he is hoping there will be a good response.

“We’ll go from there,” he says. “It should be really fun and I’m excited about it. And, I’ve never taught adults. I spend a lot of time passing out band-aides and Kleenex so this should be a little different.”

Michael says the best thing about teaching is, “when you see them get it. I know its crazy to make it into a kind of parental thing but I really have this thing about creating a family in my room. *Mi Familia!* And what happens is I get great attendance because the kids want to come to school. They know that

we’re going to have fun and that their teacher cares, and then they really do learn.

“We just had a spelling test and I have a kid in here who I don’t think had a vowel on the whole page. So I’ve got some work to do with him, but when I see him get a 50 on a spelling test, that’s going to be great!”

And, he says he really likes working with other teachers. “They have no sort of sense of selfishness about their plans. They are more than willing to say, ‘Try this...oh, that didn’t work...then try this! Because it is never the same twice, the lesson changes with each teacher and with each group of kids.”

If he has advice for other teachers, it is to “Develop a lot of patience. When you are a teacher your job is never done. You need to organize your life around making sure you are well-rested and well-prepared. So I would say, ‘Be prepared and be patient.’ Because if you don’t have patience or you’re not prepared your kids are going to misbehave and that’s no fun.”





## MARK OCHOA: CTU's Hispanic renaissance man

to the removal from office of the former vice president for inappropriate activities – Mr. Ochoa has had to take on increased responsibilities as a Union officer

and has done so with his usual grace and good humor.

“Much of the day-to-day responsibility of officers involves dealing with members’ issues,” he said. “Because we have fewer officers in place right now, that burden is falling on the shoulders of just a few of us.”

He explained that he finds himself making frequent visits to schools to speak with members and learn their concerns. “Nothing takes the place of face-to-face communication,” he said. “Our field representatives go out to the schools on a regular basis to address member concerns, but those members also want the opportunity to speak with an officer directly about their issues.”

Mr. Ochoa said that CTU President Marilyn Stewart often requests that he represent her at various meetings or events. “The president’s schedule gets full very quickly,” he said. “Even though she goes to lots of places each week, she’s always looking for assistance to make sure members’ issues are heard at the highest levels of the Union’s leadership.”

Mr. Ochoa has a good grasp of what members face because he’s had so much experience in the schools himself. After receiving his elementary school edu-

cation at St. Adalbert’s School, his high school education at Holy Trinity High School, and a bachelor of science degree in physical education from DePaul University, he suddenly found himself in a Chicago Public Schools’ setting for which he was totally unprepared.

“Back then, certification wasn’t a requirement for an assignment,” he explained. “I was hired as a bilingual special education teacher at Jungman Elementary School even though I wasn’t certified in special ed. I was bilingual and that’s all that mattered at that time. I did the best I could, and I think my students benefited from having a bilingual teacher, but the district just wanted to plug holes rather than give the kids what they really needed.”

Later he was a substitute teacher in the Little Village neighborhood, eventually finding a full-time position at Lazaro Cardenas Elementary School. It was there that he met three individuals who eventually became his colleagues on the CTU staff. Teaching at Cardenas at the time were Molly Carroll, now the CTU coordinator of member services; Sandy Schultz, who currently serves as the Union’s coordinator of educational issues; and Maria Rodriguez, one of the CTU’s current field representatives.

After a two-year stint at St. Joseph High School in Westchester, where he was assistant coach for the soccer team that placed fourth in statewide competition, he eventually came back to CPS to work at Logandale Elementary School where he served most of that time as

By John A. Ostenburg  
Editor Emeritus

Only a handful of labor leaders across the country can claim the broad range of experience that Chicago Teachers Union Financial Secretary Mark Ochoa owns.

Not only does he have years of experience as a teacher in both public and parochial schools, or experience as a coach of soccer students who have played in settings around the world, or experience as an employee of the U.S. Treasury Department, including undercover work, or experience as a construction worker, but he also once was an instructor in ballroom dancing.

Now that’s a truly varied background.

Mr. Ochoa has the distinction of being the CTU’s first major officer of Hispanic origin, which makes this profile of him in the middle of Hispanic Heritage Month especially appropriate. He was elected to his current position in 2004 and re-elected by a massive margin in 2007. Since that second election – due

## OCTOBER IS NATIONAL FAMILY SEXUAL EDUCATION MONTH



October is National Family Sexual Education Month. Chicago Public Schools has adopted a policy of comprehensive sex education that is age appropriate, scientifically based, and medically accurate. The Women’s Rights Committee is an advocate of comprehensive sex education and strongly opposed former President George W. Bush’s federal funding for abstinence-only education.

The committee encourages teachers to participate in free FLAE (Family Life and AIDS Education) training offered by CPS. Five-day, 15-hour trainings provide three CEUs, 15 CPDUs or one semester-hour of lane promotion credit. Classes for K-4 and 5-HS are held at the Medill Professional Development Center from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. Classes are offered in October, December, March, May and June.

Contact <https://cpsatworkprod.cps.k12.il.us/> <<https://cpsatworkprod.cps.k12.il.us/>> or call Ken Papineau at 773-553-1830 for more information.

the school's representative to the CTU House of Delegates.

"Our delegate was moving on so I decided I wanted the job," he said. "I felt our school needed good representation in the House and I was ready to give it. I think my members at Logandale felt I did a good job on their behalf."

Mr. Ochoa's belief in the importance of Union solidarity and of individuals helping one another best is characterized in a story he tells about his father. "My father always said no one should go without," he explained. "He said, if someone's hungry, he can eat at our table. We can always add another cup of water to the soup so everyone gets his fill."

He believes the Union has the responsibility to carry out that same mission on behalf of its members. "We pull together so no one goes without," he said.

Mr. Ochoa stayed at Logandale right up to the time he was elected as the CTU financial secretary, also serving six years as a teacher representative on the Local School Council (LSC) there.

Previously, however, he mixed lots of other things into his repertoire of experience. He worked for a short time as the P.E. and aquatics director for the Valentine Chicago Boys Club, and also worked with the People to People and the Youth at Risk programs. While with People to People, he chaperoned both male and female soccer teams of kids ages 12-14 on trips to England, Ireland, and Scotland to participate in competition, including the famous Ian Rush Soccer Tournament in Wales. Later, also as a chaperone for People to People, he provided guidance for high school students on visits to both Australia and New Zealand. With Youth at Risk, he worked in residency programs in Chicago, Hawaii, Colorado, and California.

The experience as a ballroom dancing instructor came during the one-year hiatus he took from the Chicago area to work con-

struction with his brother Jose in Houston. During that time, in addition to teaching dance, he also served as a coach for third and fourth grade soccer players who included his nephew.

In the late 1980s, Mr. Ochoa began a six-year period working for the U.S. Treasury Department. He was a revenue officer working with both the bankruptcy and the criminal investigations divisions. It was while working with the latter that he often found himself engaged in undercover work.

"Working undercover for the government can be a little nerve-racking," he said. "There were a few times when I was very uncomfortable in settings where I found myself."

About 1993, Mr. Ochoa was sent to Steinmetz High School to represent the Treasury Department at a career-day event. "Afterwards, one of the teachers asked me why I didn't consider a career in education," he said. "I told him I had been a teacher and his response was 'You should do it again. You're a natural.' That's when I decided to go back to the classroom."

In his personal life, Mr. Ochoa long has been an avid soccer player himself. He's played with various teams and clubs over the years and has traveled both nationally and internationally to engage in competition. In addition to games in Los Angeles, San Diego, and Denver, he also has competed

in play in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires.

"Soccer's one of my true joys in life," he said. "It's not just a game for me. It's a way of life."

But the true joy of Mr. Ochoa's life is his daughter Brianna, a 16-year-old junior at Oak Park-River Forest High School. He puffs with pride when he points out that she is an honor roll student and a member of the color guard for the school's marching band. And when Brianna's involved in a color guard competition, no matter where it is, that's where you'll find Mark Ochoa - proudly cheering his daughter on.

As a Mexican-American, Mr. Ochoa loves to celebrate his heritage, especially on such culturally rich holidays as Mexican Independence Day on September 16 and Dia de los Muertos on November 2. He also enjoys cooking Mexican food, fondly using recipes passed on to him by either his mother or his father. And, he points out, "When enjoying good Mexican food, nothing's better than hearing the sounds of a Mariachi band playing in the background."

Family and ethnicity are key elements in making the individual into the man or woman he or she eventually becomes. It's not surprising, then, that Mark Ochoa's Hispanic heritage obviously has contributed greatly to making him the renaissance man that he is today.



"My father always said no one should go without... if someone's hungry, he can eat at our table. We can always add another cup of water to the soup so everyone gets his fill. The Union has the responsibility to carry out that same mission on behalf of its members. We pull together so no one goes without."

# In Memoriam

## July 2009

14 Hill, George L	Lovett
16 Bond, Elsie A	District 4
19 Cuna, Antonio R	Farragut
21 Mahoney, Jay N	Jamieson
24 Cage, Lottie	Morton Career Acad.
25 Bondurant, Charles R	Frazier
27 Durdik, Albert A	Burroughs
29 Brown, Gable	Yale
29 Siegel, Lincoln R	Sub
31 Becker, Barbara J	Goeth
31 Parker, Melita B	Avondale
31 Woods, Mary L	Dumas



## August 2009

3 Pens, August H	Wright	16 Ryan, Suzanne T	Sub
5 Harrop, Marian S	Clay	16 Thompson, Donald M	Montefiore
5 Maskoff, Richard J	Marshall Metro HS	17 Dudich, Eleanor E	DuBois
5 Wilson, Martha E	Gale Comm Acad	19 May, Glecena D	District 8
6 Lakin, Henrietta B	Schurz HS	21 Hambric, Robert M	Simeon
7 Gorman, Helen F	Peck	21 Healy, Patricia	Funston
7 Pearson, Bobby	Mann	21 Lawrence, Frances	Terrell
9 Alfred, Virgie M	Ross	22 Gary, Almeta	Smyth
9 Levin, Conrad M	Bowen HS	23 Harris, Mary L	Jones HS
10 Jackson, Sharonjoy A	Graham Training C	25 Watts, Irene H	Yale
13 Kelley, Mary E	Erickson	28 Fox, Margaret R	Sullivan HS
13 Peacock, Emily Marie	Casals Pablo	29 Buckman, Maxine F	Budlong

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## Is Your Class Size Too Large to Teach Effectively?



If your class size is above the limit as defined in article 28-1 of the Chicago Teachers Union — Chicago Board of Education contract, please file a class size referral. Article 28 and the Class Size Referral Form can be found on [www.ctunet.com](http://www.ctunet.com). A class size monitoring panel (which will be comprised of two retired teachers and one retired principal) will visit your school to assess the situation and develop a resolution.

If you have any questions, please contact Erin Doubleday at 312.329.6231 or [erindoubleday@ctulocal1.com](mailto:erindoubleday@ctulocal1.com).



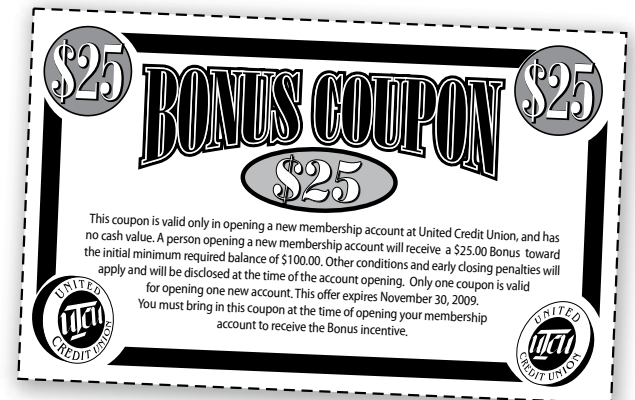
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## THINGS TO DO IN CHICAGO

# Don't miss 26th Chicago International Children's Film Festival

The Chicago International Film Festival organizers encourage educators to help their students experience the world in a new way this fall by taking a trip to the movies, October 22 through November 1, 2009.

CICFF is the largest festival of films for children in North America featuring more than 200 films from 40 countries and screening a wide range of projects from live action and animated fea-

tures, to shorts, TV series, documentaries, and child-produced works. CICFF is one of the most unique festivals in the country, showcasing the best in culturally diverse, non-violent, value affirming new cinema for children, and the only children's film festival to be an Academy Award Qualifying festival.

The festival reaches children of all ages with inspiring messages, diverse stories, and intellectually

stimulating activities.

Multi-cultural films encourage children to explore world cultures, language studies, creative arts, social studies, history, literature and more.

After one trip to the festival, teachers will have weeks of exciting and thought-provoking material for discussion, writing assignments, and follow-up exercises.

For groups of 25 or more, tickets are only \$6 per child.

All teachers who attend the festival receive a 120-page curriculum for classroom study, with worksheets, questions for discussion, and activities. The CICFF curriculum meets state learning goals. Free Professional Development Workshops are also offered to teachers attending the festival. CPDU's will be available.

For more information on the festival and to download a movie schedule visit [www.cicff.org](http://www.cicff.org).

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



### MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2

4:30 p.m.  
Executive Board  
CTU Executive Board Room

### TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3

4:30 p.m.  
District Supervisors Meeting  
CTU Executive Board Room

### WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

4:30 p.m.  
House of Delegates  
International Union of Operating Engineers, 2260 S. Grove Street

## OTHER DATES TO REMEMBER

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23**  
Staff Development Day  
Central Office/Area Directed

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1**  
Daylight Savings Time Ends

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6**  
Professional Development Day  
End of Quarter

**SATURDAY-SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7 & 8**  
IFT Union Leadership Institute

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11**  
Veterans Day

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18**  
Elem. Parent-Teacher Conferences

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19**  
HS Parent-Teacher Conferences

## CTU EVENTS

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20**  
4 p.m.  
Clinicians Steering  
CTU Offices, Merchandise Mart

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21**  
4 p.m.  
PAVE  
4:30 p.m.  
Pension-Insurance  
CTU Offices, Merchandise Mart

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27**  
4:30 p.m.  
Trustees  
Women's Rights

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28**  
10:30 a.m.  
Retired Teachers Group  
4:15 p.m.  
Early Childhood

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