



A Union of Professionals

**A New Path Forward:
Four Approaches to Quality Teaching and Better Schools
AFT President Weingarten's Jan. 12 Speech**

OVERVIEW

- The AFT is committed to improving teaching and learning in our public schools.
- The agenda the AFT is laying out is intended to address what we see as four issues that are central to moving our public education system from an industrial model to one that can prepare our students for the 21st-century knowledge economy.
- The AFT is proposing a serious and comprehensive reform plan to ensure great teaching.

Teacher development and evaluation system:

- An AFT ad hoc committee on teacher development and evaluations, made up of union leaders from around the country, with input from some of America's top teacher evaluation experts, has proposed a system designed to improve how we support and nurture teachers, and how we evaluate them.
- Current evaluation systems don't work. There is widespread agreement on this point. A principal or administrator sitting in the back of a room, a few times a year, can provide only a snapshot—at best—of how a teacher is doing.
- We're suggesting a comprehensive teacher development and evaluation system. This system would put the time and effort into making and supporting great teachers, and would provide regular, rigorous evaluations during the entire course of a teacher's career.

Multiple means of evaluation, including student test scores:

- Teaching requires multiple skills and involves several kinds of work. Therefore, multiple means of evaluation should be used.
- Evaluations should include classroom observations, self-evaluations, portfolio reviews, appraisal of lesson plans and, yes, student achievement, including student test scores. Valid and reliable assessments should be considered. And they should show whether a teacher's students have demonstrated real growth while in her classroom—not compare the scores of last year's students with the scores of this year's students.
- All of this then can be used to tell us what is working and should be replicated, and what isn't working and should be abandoned.

Due process:

- Once we have a good evaluation system in place, it will lay the groundwork for a new approach to due process. We're prepared to work with any district willing to work with us on both. But a good evaluation system must be put in place first.
- Ineffective teaching hurts not just students but the teachers down the hall. That is why no teacher wants ineffective teachers in the classroom. What they want is a fair, transparent and expedient process to identify and deal with ineffective teachers.
- The comprehensive system we propose will allow us to identify and support struggling teachers to help them improve, and to counsel out of the profession teachers who do not improve.
- We also address the issue of due process as it relates to teachers accused of misconduct or malfeasance.
- Teachers have zero tolerance for people who, through their conduct, demonstrate they are unfit for their profession.
- Just as in the case of ineffective teachers, there is a need for due process in cases of alleged teacher misconduct.
- But due process must not be allowed to become glacial process.
- Ken Feinberg has agreed to spearhead the AFT effort to develop a fair, efficient protocol for adjudicating questions of teacher discipline and, when called for, teacher removal.
- Mr. Feinberg served as Special Master of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund and currently serves as the Special Master for TARP Executive Compensation.

Labor-management relationships:

- We want to change and improve labor-management relationships because nothing we're suggesting here can succeed unless the people responsible for educating our children work together.
- Too often, when things get difficult, the labor-management relationship becomes adversarial—with finger-pointing, laying blame. Instead of working together to solve problems and create solutions, we defend the lines that keep us apart. Instead of respecting the value of having a strong partner, we try to weaken each other—as if that's the goal.

All supporting documents for A New Path Forward can be found at www.futurestogether.org.