

# Education Matters

April 2011

A publication of the Association of American Educators Foundation

## Doing the Right Thing

By Jill Newell

### Educator Ethics in an Age of Uncertainty



**R**ecently, I received an email that concerned me. The author was inquiring about the availability of teacher training dealing with appropriate behavior and relationships between teachers and students. I'm glad the person asked because I want to help people find the professional resources they need. My concern was with the need for this inquiry to be made in the first place.

The conduct and ethics of a professional educator are arguably the most important factors in educating our students. I would argue that all high-quality teaching stems from professional conduct and ethical behavior that are above reproach. Millions of parents trust their children to us. How do we, as educators, handle that trust?

Quite honestly, I am puzzled and saddened when an inappropriate situation between a student and teacher comes to light. Isn't it common sense to recognize that teachers are adults and students are children? Don't the lines of professionalism seem pretty obvious? Even if not discussed in a pre-service meeting or back-to-school training, I boldly say, "Yes." Am I completely wrong to assume this answer? Apparently so, if people are requesting that classes be taught to teachers on the subject of proper relations between students and teachers.

Regarding educator ethics, my research showed that while

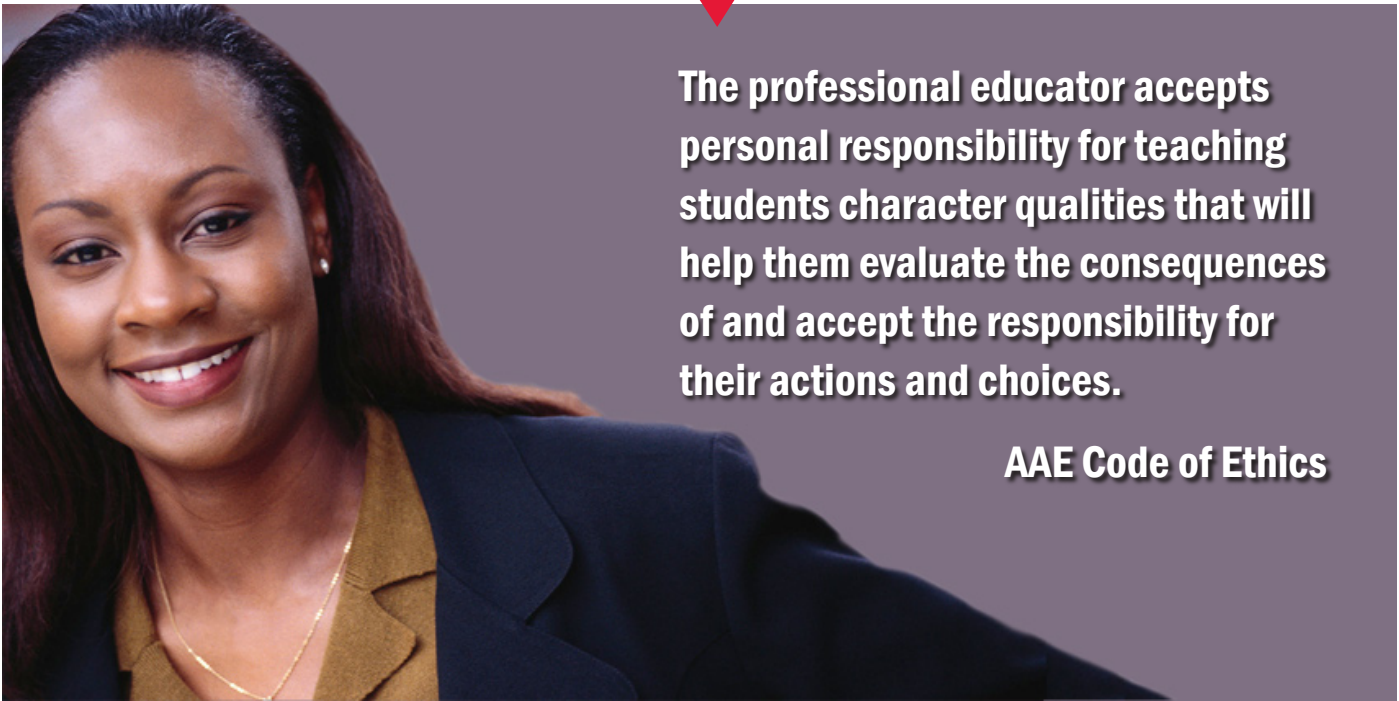
schools, districts, and even some states mention proper teacher-student interactions in a handbook or a code of ethics, there is a lack of specific courses on the subject. And maybe it is best to keep this training on a local level so that trainings can be developed to address specific needs for the school/district.

For example, a *Christian Science Monitor* article from 2001 mentions a training that instructs teachers and students not to exchange emails with one another. Yet, ten years later, some schools in the U.S. actually require

email communication between their teachers and students. And for virtual students, an email is one of their primary forms of communication with a teacher. During my classes, I voluntarily offer my work email address to my students, letting them know

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## **AAE Code of Ethics**

that it was to be used only for school-related issues such as homework. Beyond email communication, the highly successful KIPP schools provide students with their teachers' cell phone numbers for questions about homework.

In my opinion, it's not necessarily the mode of the communication but the content found within that can cause problems.

In response to the inquiry I received, I sent over the AAE Code of Ethics. This document is invaluable. It offers a solid framework for how a truly professional educator should conduct himself or herself. It is common sense for educators. If a teacher will understand and follow guidelines such as these, there will rarely be a need for "appropriate behavior and conduct" training.

Let's take a minute to review the AAE Code of Ethics and self assess. Are you continuously increasing your professionalism as an educator? Do you need to take time to recommit to holding yourself to a higher standard?

### **AAE Code of Ethics**

1. The professional educator strives to create a learning environment that nurtures to fulfillment the potential of all students.
2. The professional educator acts with conscientious effort to exemplify the highest ethical standards.
3. The professional educator responsibly accepts that every child has a right to an uninterrupted education free from strikes or any other work stoppage tactics.

#### **PRINCIPLE I:**

##### **Ethical Conduct toward Students**

1. The professional educator accepts personal responsibility for teaching students character qualities that will help them evaluate the consequences of and accept the responsibility for their actions and choices. We strongly affirm parents as the primary moral educators of their children. Nevertheless, we believe all educators are obligated to help foster civic

virtues such as integrity, diligence, responsibility, cooperation, loyalty, fidelity, and respect—for the law, for human life, for others, and for self.

2. The professional educator, in accepting his or her position of public trust, measures success not only by the progress of each student toward realization of his or her personal potential but also as a citizen of the greater community of the republic.
3. The professional educator deals considerately and justly with each student, and seeks to resolve problems, including discipline, according to law and school policy.
4. The professional educator does not intentionally expose the student to disparagement.
5. The professional educator does not reveal confidential information concerning students, unless required by law.
6. The professional educator makes a constructive effort to protect the student from conditions detrimental to learning, health, or safety.
7. The professional educator endeavors to present facts without distortion, bias, or personal prejudice.

#### **PRINCIPLE II:**

##### **Ethical Conduct toward Practices and Performance**

1. The professional educator assumes responsibility and accountability for his or her performance and continually strives to demonstrate competence.
2. The professional educator endeavors to maintain the dignity of the profession by respecting and obeying the law, and by demonstrating personal integrity.
3. The professional educator applies for, accepts, or assigns a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications, and adheres to the terms of a contract or appointment.
4. The professional educator maintains sound mental health, physical stamina, and social prudence necessary to perform

- the duties of any professional assignment.
5. The professional educator continues professional growth.
  6. The professional educator complies with written local school policies and applicable laws and regulations that are not in conflict with this code of ethics.
  7. The professional educator does not intentionally misrepresent official policies of the school or educational organizations, and clearly distinguishes those views from his or her own personal opinions.
  8. The professional educator honestly accounts for all funds committed to his or her charge.
  9. The professional educator does not use institutional or professional privileges for personal or partisan advantage.

### **PRINCIPLE III:**

#### **Ethical Conduct toward Professional Colleagues**

1. The professional educator, in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, accords just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession.
2. The professional educator does not reveal confidential information concerning colleagues unless required by law.
3. The professional educator does not willfully make false statements about a colleague or the school system.
4. The professional educator does not interfere with a colleague's freedom of choice, and works to eliminate coercion that forces educators to support actions and ideologies that violate individual professional integrity.

### **PRINCIPLE IV:**

#### **Ethical Conduct toward Parents and Community**

1. The professional educator pledges to protect public sovereignty over public education and private control of private education.
2. The professional educator recognizes that quality education is the common goal of the public, boards of education, and educators, and that a cooperative effort is essential among these groups to attain that goal.
3. The professional educator makes concerted efforts to communicate to parents all information that should be revealed in the interest of the student.
4. The professional educator endeavors to understand and respect the values and traditions of the diverse cultures represented in the community and in his or her classroom.
5. The professional educator manifests a positive and active role in school/community relations.

A mentor in my life, who was also an effective leader and teacher, once said, "I teach people correct principles and they govern themselves." As professional educators, can we expect the same of ourselves? Do we need to have minute details spelled out to us regarding correct behavior in the profession? Or can we take our common sense, combine it with professional principles of conduct, and then find ourselves miles away from any concerns of propriety in and out of the classroom? I think we can. I think we must. If we're going to be teachers, then we must recognize that we are influential. We are role models at all times. We are too professional to allow impropriety in our relationships

**The professional educator acts with conscientious effort to exemplify the highest ethical standards.**



with students; we've been entrusted with their safety. That is a professional obligation that must be respected and valued. ■



*Jill Newell is the director of professional development at the Association of American Educators. She taught English at the secondary level in suburban Utah and inner-city Southern California. Currently, she teaches Spanish at Northern Virginia Community College to fulfill her desire to be in the classroom with students.*

# Debunking Myths about Online-Learning Teachers

By Katherine Mackey



At the Virtual School Symposium 2010, Michael B. Horn, the co-founder and Executive Director of Education, Innosight Institute, asked a panel of six online-learning leaders what policy they thought posed the greatest barrier to the growth of online-learning programs and schools. Surprisingly, two of the panelists identified the greatest barrier to be the misconception that online-learning teachers aren't "real" teachers.

Indeed, a great deal of misconception surrounds the role of online-learning teachers. In a recent article published in *The New York Times*, Laura Herrera insinuates that online-learning teachers aren't "real" teachers in her description of one student's experience in an e-learning lab in Miami-Dade County Public Schools:

"Naomi is one of over 7,000 students in Miami-Dade County Public Schools enrolled in a program in which core subjects are taken using computers in a classroom with *no teacher*. A 'facilitator' is in the room to make sure students progress. That person also deals with any technical problems" (emphasis mine).

Although Herrera claims that the students have "no teacher," she later explains that the students are using Florida Virtual School (FLVS) courses, where "[s]tudents log on to a website to gain access to lessons, which consist mostly of text with some graphics, and they can call, email or text *online instructors* for help" (emphasis mine). Unfortunately, descriptions such as these help perpetuate misconceptions about the role of online-learning teachers.

Over the past two years, my research for Innosight Institute has taken me to different parts of the United States to visit various online-learning programs. During these visits, I typically interview teachers and students about their experiences with online learning. When I ask teachers—the majority of whom had previously taught in a traditional classroom before transitioning to online learning—to identify the pros and cons of teaching in an online-learning environment, nearly every teacher says that online learning enables him or her to truly teach and form relationships with students. Rather than standing in front of a classroom and lecturing to 25-30 students, online-learning teachers work one-on-one with students and provide students with individualized help. This, teachers claim, is where the "real" teaching takes place.

Additionally, when I ask at-risk students or dropouts why they are succeeding in an online-learning program, nearly all of them give the same response: the teacher. It is evident that no matter what medium students are using to learn, they need a great teacher, moderator, and cheerleader to help them learn and succeed.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stressed the importance of having great online-learning teachers in his keynote address at the State Education Technology Directors Association Education Forum 2010:

"Technology will never replace great teachers. We all know that the most important factor in student success is a teacher leading the classroom. That will never, never change. The best instruction happens when a caring, skilled instructor uses every resource at her disposal to help students learn, including the power of technology. In today's world, technology is an essential tool. It offers teachers new ways to enrich their students' learning experiences, and it offers students the ability to connect to learning opportunities anytime, anywhere. Technology empowers teachers like never before to support their personal mission of providing the best possible education to every single one of their students. But it's also important to remember that technology alone is not going to improve student achievement. The best combination is great teachers, working with technology, to personalize the learning experience and engage students in the pursuit of learning that they need." ■



Katherine Mackey is a research fellow in Innosight Institute's Education Practice. Prior to joining Innosight Institute in September 2008, she was an eleventh-grade English teacher at Highland High School, a public high school in Utah.



## News from Washington, D.C.

### Reports from AAE's Office in the Nation's Capital



Union protesters gather outside the Wisconsin state capitol building. (Photo by Justin Ormont)

### Forced Union Teachers “Held Hostage”

Since the labor battle broke in Wisconsin, we have been hearing from teachers across the country in forced union states who take issue with paying forced dues. Teachers who don't see value in a one-size-fits-all system to teachers who do not want to support certain union-funded political causes have all been speaking out. Recently a teacher in the compulsory union state of California penned an op-ed that has resonated with the thousands of other teachers who do not want to support the union in their state.

Mark Prather is an elementary school teacher in the Corona-Norco Unified School District, and is forced to support the California Teachers Association and the local Corona-Norco Teachers Association as a condition of employment. He, like many others, does not see value in union membership, and takes offense at their stances on certain political issues that conflict with his personal beliefs.

He writes, “The teachers union spends millions of dollars of its members’ dues each year on issues like these that have nothing to do with teaching children. They employ an army of full-time political operatives, and the top union leaders make huge salaries.”

Mr. Prather correctly illustrates where the unions spend money and as a result, in forced union states, teachers are forced to pay upwards of \$1,000 a year for union membership to support partisan politics and hundreds of employees.

Mr. Prather takes issue with not only where the union spends their money but also the unprofessional tactics encouraged by the NEA and their Wisconsin affiliate. “I don't feel solidarity with the mobs that occupied the beautiful, historic capitol building in Madison, Wisconsin, and did more than \$6 million in damage to it. I don't admire those teachers who abandoned their students, calling in ‘sick’ using bogus doctor's excuses,” stated Prather.

### Secretary Duncan Vows to ‘Move Away’ from the 2 Percent Rule in Assessing Students with Disabilities

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan vowed recently to abolish the so-called “2 percent rule” that obscures an accurate portrait of the academic needs of America's students with disabilities.

In prepared remarks to the American Association of People with Disabilities gala in Washington, Duncan declared that students with disabilities should be judged with the same accountability system as everyone else.

“I just want to say—here and now—for the record—we are moving away from the 2 percent rule,” Duncan said. “We will not issue another policy that allows districts to disguise the educational performance of 2 percent of students.”

Since 2005, the Education Department has used its regulatory authority to permit states and local school districts to effectively shield certain test scores of students with disabilities when determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Specifically, proficient scores for up to 2 percent of all students in the grades assessed can be reported using alternate assessments based on modified academic achievement standards, and states without appropriate alternate assessments have been allowed for purposes of AYP to use a proxy—counting as proficient the scores of that 2 percent of students, regardless of how they actually performed.

That proxy has masked the kind of information that educators need in order to identify areas that can be targeted with resources to help students with disabilities achieve their academic potential.

### President and First Lady Call for a United Effort to Address Bullying

Recently, the President and First Lady called for a united effort to address bullying at a White House Conference on Bullying Prevention. Approximately 150 students, parents, teachers, nonprofit leaders, advocates, and policymakers came together to discuss how they can work together to make our schools and communities safe for all students.

“If there's one goal of this conference, it's to dispel the myth that bullying is just a harmless rite of passage or an inevitable part of growing up. It's not,” said President Obama. “Bullying can have destructive consequences for our young people. And it's not something we have to accept. As parents and students, teachers and communities, we can take steps that will help prevent bullying and create a climate in our schools in which all of our children can feel safe.”

“As parents, this issue really hits home for us. It breaks our hearts to think that any child feels afraid every day in the classroom, on the playground, or even online,” First Lady Michelle Obama said. “I hope that all of you – and everyone watching online – will walk away from this conference with new ideas and solutions that you can take back to your own schools and communities.”

The conference speakers stated that every day, thousands of children, teens, and young adults around the country are bullied. They estimated that nearly one-third of all school-aged children are bullied each year—upwards of 13 million students. Students involved in bullying are more likely to have challenges in school, to abuse drugs and alcohol, and to have health and mental health issues.



## Congressional Hearings Uncover Regulatory Hurdles Faced by Schools

The U.S. House Education and the Workforce Committee held a hearing last month to examine the scope of federal education mandates and to analyze how compliance with these mandates can create unnecessary work for K-12 schools.

Offering examples of the redundant regulations overwhelming schools, Loudoun County, Virginia, Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Edgar Hatrick stated, "Specific regulations, data collection, and reporting vary greatly and are dependent on program, grant, and agency requests. However, there is overlap, resulting in redundancy of reporting and resources being diverted from the mission of teaching and learning."

Following up on the full committee hearing, the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education, chaired by Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), held a hearing to examine the negative impact intrusive federal paperwork requirements have on teachers, administrators, and students in elementary and secondary schools specifically.

During the hearing, both Committee members and witnesses stressed the need to strike a balance between requiring accountability from schools and imposing overly complicated, duplicative regulations that divert time and money advancing student outcomes. ■

## MEMBER MENTION

# New Jersey Teacher to Earn Special Education Certification with AAEF Scholarship



AAE Director of Professional Development Jill Newell giving Danielle Blakely her award.

Ms. Danielle Blakely, a teacher at the Ethical Community Charter School in Jersey City, was awarded a scholarship by the Association of American Educators Foundation to continue her education and pursue a special education certification. The funding will offset the costs of books and classes for the Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Certification Program at Caldwell College. AAE Director of Professional Development Jill Newell was on hand to deliver her certificate personally.

According to Ms. Blakely, the scholarship will be beneficial to her continued education. "My primary focus has always been improving the quality of the education of the students that I interact with daily," said Ms. Blakely, currently a kindergarten teacher. "Learning more about special education and working with students that have disabilities, I will be able to better teach a variety of students."

In these changing times in education, capitalizing on the opportunity to advance her education through a specialty certification will certainly improve her students' outcomes.

AAE would like to congratulate Danielle on her commitment to her students. Going back to school to help an underserved group of students will serve her school well. Great job!

Don't forget to apply for the next round of scholarship and grant opportunities. Teacher scholarships and classroom grants are competitive awards available to all educators. Apply online or by mail to receive up to \$500 for professional development or classroom materials. The spring deadline has passed. Don't forget to mark your calendar for the fall deadline, October 31, 2011. ■



**iPad for the Classroom**  
by Kathy Schrock  
kathy@kathyschrock.net  
Twitter: kathyschrock

Bring the iPad to your students with fun and engaging apps. This site links to other iPad information pages.  
<https://sites.google.com/site/schrockipad/>



### History

This Day in History for iPad is an interactive multimedia calendar that displays historical events for the current day or any selected day, along with related media such as photos, illustrations, music, and speeches.



### Geography

With Google Earth for iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch, students can fly to far corners of the planet with just the swipe of a finger. Explore the same aerial imagery and high-resolution imagery for over half of the world's population and a third of the world's land mass.



### Math

IFormulae is a simple library consisting of various formulae, equations with their example. Students won't need to flip through pages of the mathematics book for finding and learning any new formula. They can open the app and look for one they need.

## Quotable

The Education Intelligence Agency (EIA) compiled comments from 2010 that will make you chuckle, or shake your head, or both.

### You Must Spend the Money

“You will literally be fired, whoever you are. You must spend this money.” —*Maura Policelli, U.S. Department of Education’s senior advisor for external affairs, describing what will happen to school officials who don’t spend their stimulus money by the end of next year*

### Fair Share?

“Now is not the time to be handing out tax breaks to a small number of large corporations—everybody must be paying their fair share.” —*David Sanchez, president of the California Teachers Association, a tax-exempt organization*

### Gender Bias?

“Unions think differently. It is part of the ideology of unionism that everyone in the group is paid under the same rules. No favoritism. And so, when the Editorial Board had a visit from Washington Education Association leaders Jan. 19, I expected a statement about fairness when I asked: Why shouldn’t math and science teachers be paid more, if there is a shortage? And I did get something like that answer from WEA President Mary Lindquist: ‘We have traditionally not been supportive of singling out one group.’ Then she had another answer. She said, ‘It’s also a gender issue. It means you’re paying men, by and large, more than you’re paying women’—because a higher proportion of math and science teachers are men.” —*Bruce Ramsey of the Seattle Times*

Source: [www.eiaonline.com](http://www.eiaonline.com)

## Why Great Teachers Quit

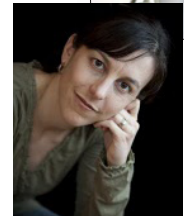
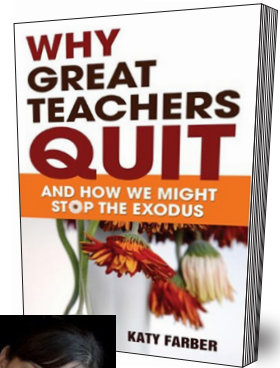
### And how we might stop the exodus

“If every critical parent, politician, and educational leader could substitute for at least one day, preferably a few, then they would gain a real sense of what it takes to be a teacher today,” writes Katy Farber in *Why Great Teachers Quit*. Farber, a fifth and sixth grade teacher at Rumney Memorial School in Middlesex, Vermont, paints a sometimes shocking picture of life in today’s schools, taking a frank look at factors such as:

- Poor working conditions that include violence and an unsafe climate
- Ever-higher expectations and a “do-more-with-less” mandate
- Bureaucracy and the smothering of creativity by committee

Low pay, increased responsibilities, and high-stakes standardized testing—these are just some of the reasons why more talented teachers are leaving the profession than ever before. Drawing on in-depth interviews with teachers all over the country, Katy Farber presents an in-the-trenches view of the classroom exodus and uncovers ways that schools can turn the tide.

Featuring clear analysis and concrete suggestions for administrators and policymakers, *Why Great Teachers Quit* takes you to the front lines of the fight to keep great teachers where they belong: in the classroom.



## A Weighty Issue

### Obesity warning as quarter of children lead isolated lives

Almost a quarter of children never play outside because of bad weather, hectic lifestyles, and irrational fears over accidents and abduction, according to research.

Children under 16 years of age now spend twice as much leisure time in the home as they do in green spaces, it was claimed. Researchers said the “indoor generation” was becoming increasingly ignorant of nature as parents allow them to waste hours in front of the television, video games, and the internet.

Experts said failure to play outside was fueling obesity levels and leaving children less prepared to deal with the stresses of modern life.

Dr. William Bird, GP and advisor to *Natural England*, said: “If you want to deal with obesity and physical activity, it has got to include the natural environment.”

First Lady Michelle Obama is a leading voice addressing childhood obesity. The White House has set up [www.Letsmove.org](http://www.Letsmove.org) to encourage proper nutrition and active lifestyles among children.

“I’m proud of what we’re doing to support these efforts through our Let’s Move! initiative,” remarked the First Lady. “I am confident that, together, we can turn the tide on childhood obesity and give all our children the happy, healthy lives they deserve.”

Source: [www.educationnews.org](http://www.educationnews.org)





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# Union Legislation Spreads across the U.S.

By Alexandra Schroeck

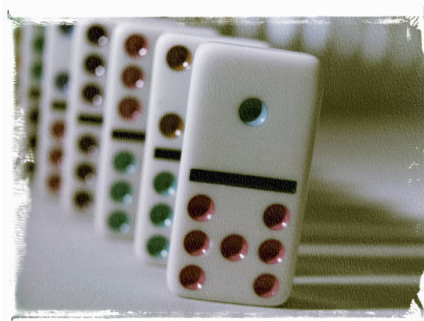
The fight in Wisconsin is far from over. Dane County Judge Maryann Sumi issued a temporary restraining order barring the new law until she can rule whether Republicans violated Wisconsin's open meetings law. While this was a setback for the Wisconsin legislation, other states are following Governor Walker's lead and are in various stages of pushing labor reform legislation.

## Alabama

Alabama recently passed legislation prohibiting the use of the state payroll system to transfer money to political organizations—specifically government unions. The Alabama Education Association (AEA) contends this will cost them millions in lost dues and is challenging the law in court, as they will not be able to set up bank drafts until May. Since the Supreme Court already upheld a similar law in Idaho, the AEA's suit will most likely fail.

## Idaho

The state legislature passed a comprehensive bill that affects Idaho teachers. It limits collective bargaining to just salary and benefits. The legislation focuses on the effectiveness of teachers—phasing out tenure and seniority-based layoffs and allowing elected school officials to have the power to reward good teachers and remove ineffective ones. It requires unions to prove that they represent a majority of teachers in each district for collective bargaining and that all bargaining must be done in a public fashion so that union



members and the public are privy to negotiations. In addition to these reforms, Professional Education Liability Insurance (PELI) was enacted, requiring all school districts to inform teachers about providers of liability insurance, AAE's state chapter, Northwest Professional Educators, being one such provider.

## Florida

Committees in both the state house and the state senate have taken important steps toward restoring a nonpartisan civil service. They have passed legislation prohibiting the state and local governments from collecting union dues through their payroll systems. If passed by the full legislature, this would end a major taxpayer subsidy for union political fundraising.

## Kansas

The Kansas House of Representatives passed a paycheck protection bill. The legislation prohibits government unions from collecting money used for political purposes through the state payroll system. Instead, the union would have to persuade workers to write a separate check to cover political expenses. The legislation recently passed a state senate committee. In addition, there is an equal access bill that just passed the House State and Federal Affairs Committee (HB 2229) that would level the playing field for nonunion organizations like AAE and our Kansas chapter, the Kansas Association of American

Educators, so that we would receive the same access to teachers that the KNEA currently receives. A similar law exists in Utah and has made for ideal conditions for our organization to expand in that state.

## Oklahoma

A state house committee passed a bill allowing large cities to choose whether to give unions a monopoly over municipal work forces. The Oklahoma senate also passed a bill reforming binding arbitration. Like many other states, Oklahoma prohibits government employees from striking against the public. Instead, binding arbitration resolves contract disputes. With arbitration, an outside official listens to both sides and hands down a binding contract, taking spending decisions out of the hands of elected officials. The reforms change the standards arbitrators use to make them more fair to taxpayers.

## Ohio

By a one-vote margin, the Ohio senate passed a bill preventing government employees from striking against the public, requiring government employees to pay more of the cost of their benefits, and taking the "binding" out of binding arbitration. Contract disputes would go to arbitrators, but local elected officials would have the final say on whether to accept the proposed contract. The state house is currently conducting hearings on Senate Bill 5.

Many thanks to James Sherk of the Heritage Foundation for compiling a comprehensive assessment of these state legislative actions. AAE is monitoring legislation that affects our members. Visit the AAE blog for the latest. ■

*Alexandra Schroeck is AAE communications coordinator. To read her blog posts, visit [aateachers.org](http://aateachers.org).*