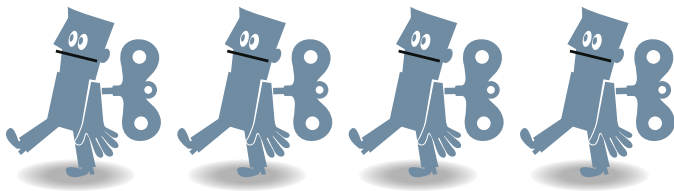
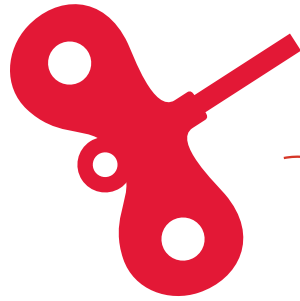


Education Matters

June/July 2012

A publication of the Association of American Educators Foundation



California Teachers Declare Independence from State and National Teachers Unions

In a bold move for teacher independence in Fresno, California, a group of local teachers, led by veteran educator Mike Cerrillo, recently voted to disaffiliate from the California Teacher Association (CTA) and the National Education Association (NEA) in favor of local representation.

The newly formed Washington Unified Faculty Association (WUFA) will now bargain independently and rely on the non-union Association of American Educators for nonbargaining member benefits and services such as liability insurance and legal counsel.

The process to sever ties with the CTA/NEA was lengthy and often dramatic for this tight-knit group of hardworking teachers. In the diverse town of Fresno, several different one-school districts existed under their own separate contracts, many of which were functioning smoothly

and without 100 percent union membership. For local teacher Mike Cerrillo, the transition to a local-only association was eye-opening.

Growing up and attending school in his district, Mr. Cerrillo became aware of the teachers unions in college and often disagreed with their hardlined confrontational and adversarial methods, much less their agenda. "I didn't agree with where the union was spending money," he said of the CTA. For over ten years, Mike taught high school chemistry and human

anatomy without joining the union.

After years of independent collaboration and local control, the push to unify with the other small school districts in the area became a rallying cry. One school was having financial issues, and local leaders and administrators thought that unification would bring together the community under one smoothly run school district. At the time, Mr. Cerrillo thought unification would benefit all stakeholders. What followed was a power struggle between local teachers and the California Teachers Association seeking to organize teachers into a new CTA bargaining unit.

Following an affirmative vote for unification, the Washington Unified School District was created to welcome Mr. Cerrillo's high school and the surrounding K-8



Interestingly, not a single local association has converted back to union control after declaring independence.

feeder schools. The process then began to determine how the schools would bargain under unification. Coming from a school with total teacher freedom, Mr. Cerrillo and his colleagues were unaware of the potential for a “monopoly-bargained” environment where all teachers would be required to join the CTA as a condition of employment. While one of the feeder schools was run in this way, the independent teachers assumed their colleagues would prefer keeping a more open dialogue.

Among the diverse group of teachers debating their options, a small vocal group was pushing the adoption of the CTA for what it called critical “bargaining experience.” Mr. Cerrillo and his high school colleagues disagreed, citing their district’s long track record of favorable outcomes, including a 20 percent pay raise within the last ten years, and their ability to stay independent. Test scores were high, teachers were content, and the relationship between teachers and administrators was collegial and professional.

Sensing a loss for the union, CTA representatives descended upon Fresno, peddling their services to teachers across the

district. Claiming “ultimate power” and that “teachers would be moved around without CTA protections,” Mr. Cerrillo and his colleagues recognized the CTA’s need to instill fear in the work force to compel teachers to vote for total CTA membership.

Meanwhile, after researching association alternatives, Mr. Cerrillo contacted the Association of American Educators about the mounting frustrations in Fresno. AAE Executive Director Gary Beckner visited with teachers personally to let them know that they did, in fact, have options. “No teacher should be compelled to join the CTA as a condition of employment,” stated Beckner. “Teachers can work together to bargain locally and obtain nonbargaining services through AAE, at a mere fraction of the cost of CTA dues.”

Mr. Cerrillo saw AAE as a nonpartisan alternative that he knew would resonate in his diverse community. In researching union activity, teachers uncovered the union’s partisan political advocacy spending with teacher membership dues. They often asked, “If you’re paying \$96 a month, where is that money going?” Mr. Cerrillo asked his colleagues, “Whether

you’re a Republican or Democrat, why are they funding these things when they should be worrying about education?” When teachers compared the insurance products, they realized AAE was a better value for twice the coverage. “It was a no-brainer for us,” said Mr. Cerrillo.

While the teachers of the district had made their decision to form a local-only association with nonbargaining support from AAE, the CTA continued its attempt to persuade the teachers of the district to join the union. After a bogus “card-check” organizing scheme over the summer of 2011, and constant propaganda and misinformation, the teachers of Fresno finally voted once and for all against CTA membership in March. The newly formed and independent Washington Unified Faculty Association allows all teachers to vote on matters that concern their employment, and teachers rely on AAE for liability coverage.

This decision is the latest in an emerging nationwide movement of teachers seeking a more self-governed approach when it comes to collective bargaining. Teachers in Washington, Illinois, Kansas, and Iowa, among others, have all chosen either self-representation or local organization representation over membership in the state and national unions. Interestingly, not a single local association has converted back to union control after declaring independence. ■



Mr. Mike Cerrillo



There Are No Miracles, But There Are Teachers:

An Educator's View on the Common Core

By Darren Burris

Ask ten fifth-grade teachers how they teach fractions, and you'll probably get ten different answers. That's the beauty of teaching: part art, part science, all creativity.

Will the Common Core State Standards change that? Will we suddenly have a nation of automatons at the front of our classrooms, delivering identical lessons?

As a teacher, I think not. To me, the Common Core represents an empowering opportunity for teachers to collaborate, exchange best practices, and share differing curricula—because a common set of standards is not the same thing as a common curriculum.

A report recently released by the Brookings Institution, “The 2012 Brown Center Report on American Education,” would have us believe otherwise. The report begins with this oversimplification (unfortunately perpetuated in a blog post by Peter Wood on *The Chronicle of Higher Education*) and repeats it throughout: “The push for common education standards argues that all American students should study a common curriculum...”

Curriculum is informed by standards, not determined by them. By equating a set of standards with the curricular experiences created by teachers for their students, you immediately undercut the craft of teaching. This flawed approach to understanding the Common Core amounts to an elimination of the power of the classroom.

Consider this Common Core State Standard from fifth-grade mathematics:

5.NF.1 Add and subtract fractions with unlike denominators (including mixed numbers) by replacing given

fractions with equivalent fractions in such a way as to produce an equivalent sum or difference of fractions with like denominators. For example, $\frac{2}{3} + \frac{5}{4} = \frac{8}{12} + \frac{15}{12} = \frac{23}{12}$. (In general, $\frac{a}{b} + \frac{c}{d} = \frac{ad + bc}{bd}$.)

Fifth-grade teachers across the country will determine what set of classroom experiences will allow students to fully master this standard. How many ways could 5.NF.1 be experienced?

Well... a teacher could organize students in rows and directly instruct them on how to add and subtract fractions by filling the board with examples and having students complete worksheets at their desks.

Or a teacher could provide a pair of students with fraction manipulatives, and ask them to create equivalent fractions for a half, a third, a fourth, and a fifth. After this, students could be asked to add fractions with different denominators using the manipulatives.

A teacher could ask students to reflect on how they spent their time over the weekend, and then to determine what fraction they spent sleeping, eating, playing, gaming, or texting. What fraction of the time was spent eating and sleeping? How did you figure that out? How did you get your common denominator? How could you add $\frac{2}{3} + \frac{5}{4}$?

Or a teacher could have students rotate through stations where they look up different words from the standard and make flashcards, listen to a short lesson online, and interact with a virtual applet that explores the topic. This set of independent experiences could fuel a classroom discussion that formalizes the process of adding and subtracting fractions with unlike denominators.

Not one of these lessons looks alike, and the student experiences would be quite distinct. But because as teachers, we are designing lesson plans to teach the same standard, we have an unprecedented opportunity to share our experiences about what's working, how it's working, with whom it's working, and which areas of growth still need support.

The Brookings Institution report misses the significant difference between the old standards and the new: the Common Core State Standards are shared in common. True collaboration among teachers could be the single most important result of common standards—if we seize the opportunity.

As we craft our curricula from these common standards, we can connect with the best ideas from around the country to inform how we bring the standards to life in our classrooms. We should feel empowered to use evolving technologies to go beyond our classrooms, schools, districts, and even states, and to start crafting and sharing curricula and experiences to serve all students and families well.

The Brookings report's headline-grabbing finding—that standards will not, on their own, improve student achievement—is nothing new. It only confirms what teachers have known since the standards movement gained steam in the 1990s: standards will not in and of themselves improve achievement. Well-led collections of committed and effective teachers, not standards, transform schools.

As Kathleen Porter-Magee states in her critique of the Brookings report, “[S]etting standards alone does very little, but... thoughtfully and faithfully implemented rigorous curricula can move the achievement needle, sometimes dramatically.”

So the report should not be taken as evidence that standards are useless, or that the Common Core State Standards are a step in the wrong direction. In fact, I find its message ultimately empowering for teachers if we write ourselves into it—empowering if we:

1. Marshal the experiences and lessons learned from the classroom and bring them to bear on the national conversation about education reform.
2. See this as an unprecedented opportunity for collaboration and the sharing of best practices.
3. Turn the conversation toward enabling and supporting quality teaching in our schools.
4. Connect the K-12 conversation to the demands of college and the work force.

The Brookings report reminded me that there are no miracles in the hard task of closing the achievement gap, graduating college- and career-ready students, and preparing the next generation to be engaged citizens in a fast-changing information-saturated world. I hope the national conversation now moves toward recognizing the power of holding basic standards in common; that curricula and classrooms will remain as varied as the people teaching and learning in them; and that attracting, supporting, developing and retaining quality teachers would be the closest thing to a miracle that our schools can and should hope for. ■



Darren Burris is a middle-school instructional coach and a high-school math teacher at a charter school in Boston. He is a former Teach Plus Teaching Policy Fellow.



The Flipped

Today’s students will be tomorrow’s citizens, workers, employees, learners, and leaders. It is obvious from the rapidly growing technology that almost all of our students will own handheld computers that are connected to the Internet by the time they are adults. This technology demands that our education system modifies the priorities and methods used to prepare students for adulthood.

What will be the needs of tomorrow’s adults? It seems obvious what they WON’T need: a head full of facts. Which skills and what knowledge will be necessary?

1. **Critical thinking skills:** With the plethora of information and opinions thrust upon our citizenry, our students must learn to think for themselves, to critique, to filter, to prioritize, to apply, and to draw conclusions.
2. **Reading and skimming skills:** Main mode of learning is and will be reading, particularly of nonfiction text. Students need to be taught, and have the opportunity to practice, skimming skills since they will have to wade through volumes of text to find what they are looking for.
3. **Independence:** With a computer in one’s hand, the world of learning is only a click away. Students need teachers who will expect them to take care of themselves and take charge of their own learning. The leaders of tomorrow will achieve this status primarily through teaching themselves.
4. **Writing skills:** As Web presence becomes more and more crucial to success in all vocations, tomorrow’s employees and entrepreneurs must possess the ability to communicate clearly in writing. Our students need to be taught expository writing skills and given ample opportunity to practice those skills, particularly in real-life situations.
5. **Multimedia communication skills:** With the explosion of video and other visual media on the Internet, tomorrow’s leaders will need to be able to produce pro-



Classroom

By Tim Bedley

professional-looking presentations to effectively share with peers. Teachers need to explicitly teach video production, photography, and presentation software as well as give students ample opportunity to practice and get feedback.

6. **Netiquette:** From a very early age, our schools need to help students know how to behave properly online.
7. **Organizational skills:** With the explosion of information and opportunities comes the responsibility to organize data and activities. Students need to be taught to organize or else they will be rendered useless to their employers, and they will experience personal demise.

So what are the implications for our schools? Flipping the classroom is just one important change that needs to occur. In the traditional classroom, the teacher delivers instruction via lecture to a classroom full of students who sit by passively taking notes, often copying from a PowerPoint presentation. Then, the students are expected to take this new “knowledge” and apply it for homework, usually in the form of an essay, reading assignment, worksheet, or comprehension questions. The assignments are collected, corrected, and the student receives a grade.

In the Flipped Classroom, the homework and the lecture are flipped. The instruction is delivered to the student by means of a video. This video is watched as homework through the Internet, a video file on the computer, or a DVD projected on a TV. The ensuing assignment related to that lecture is then completed in the classroom.

What are the benefits of flipping the classroom?

1. Students are able to pause, rewind, and rewatch the lecture. This is handy when the student has to go to the bathroom, is a slower learner, and/or needs repetition or review.
2. Students are expected to be independent learners. There is no teacher giving a misbehaving student the stink-eye during the lecture. It’s up to the student to pay attention to the video lecture and be prepared for quizzes and activities. Students must initiate the watching of the video.
3. The classroom becomes more human. Since input is dealt with when students are alone, class time can be used for more social learning activities like one-on-one help from the teacher, group activities, and project-based learning.
4. Stuck students no longer need to deal with the frustration of having no one around to help. When students get stuck in the traditional classroom model, they ask parents to help on homework. Many parents don’t know how to help. Some students ask for help from peers. This often results in, at best, a lack of independence and learning because the helping student merely gives the answers.
5. Absent students are able to get missed instruction. No one ever misses a lesson in the Flipped Classroom. In the traditional class, absent students have gaps in their learning.
6. Students are more engaged because they like videos. There’s something a little more fun and interesting about using a video to learn rather than sitting in a hard chair listening to the teacher talk.
7. Students can get involved in the production process. Teachers can assign video production as part of the project-based in-class instruction.
8. The teacher is afforded the opportunity to take on more of a coaching/mentoring role. Teachers are freed up to work one-on-one and in small groups with students who are lacking in organizational, critical thinking, writing, and reading skills.
9. Learning becomes more individualized as students are all learning at their own pace. One model of the Flipped Classroom uses mastery-based learning. Students watch videos until they are able to pass assessments on each concept. Advanced students get less bored and learn even more. Challenged students learn more content because they are not moved on in spite of their huge gaps in learning.
10. Review becomes simple. Just rewatch the video. ■



Mr. Tim Bedley teaches fourth and fifth grades in Southern California. He is the creator and drummer of Rockin’ the Standards, a rock band that helps kids remember California’s State Academic Standards.

Non-Union Educator Groups Challenged by Seeking Equal Treatment

Since AAE's founding in 1994, our association and state partners have been met with harsh opposition from both the NEA and its state affiliates. False claims about AAE's motives and benefits, coupled with districts shutting out non-union groups in favor of the union have been commonplace. AAE members have even been harassed and blackballed for supporting the non-union option. In states such as Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, and Utah, non-union groups have been on the front lines of seeking equal treatment as their union counterparts.

Despite the fact that the non-union educator movement is exploding across the country, the playing field in certain states is anything but fair. Time and time again, local non-union leaders are met with opposition from the union. Whether it's having an exhibit table at a new teacher orientation, presenting at a faculty meeting, serving on a committee, or distributing literature, districts often bow to pressure from union leaders and block access to AAE even though the union enjoys open access in districts. This union pressure borders on absurd, including threats of lawsuits against districts.

In the current climate, individual states have either pursued or passed various bills known collectively as "equal access" laws. These statewide policies mandate equal treatment of teacher associations, in the form of equal time to speak with teachers in meetings, equal access to mailboxes, or email addresses, or any other contact, to all competing education organizations. If followed correctly, the state would simply be facilitating an open playing field for all associations, and teachers themselves would make the ultimate decisions of which organization to join—if any. Equal access laws also have the benefit of getting school districts out of the business of playing favorites with different organizations.

In Utah, equal access became the law of the land in 2007, allowing AAE greater access than ever before to offer teachers a new option. Despite this law, it appeared that districts and local UEA reps continued to collaborate on ways to keep AAE on the sidelines. Because the equal access law had no penalties for noncompliance, a bill was introduced in the 2012 legislative session that would strengthen the law and sanction school districts and leaders for noncompliance. Despite testimony about unfair practices associated with schools, districts, and administrators shutting out competing organizations in favor of the teacher labor union monopoly, the bill failed to pass the legislature. While equal access is still the law, AAE Utah leaders are expecting continued challenges in

“From the very beginning, the non-union educator movement has been about creating an option for teachers...”

access to teachers.

AAE's state chapter in Colorado, the Professional Association of Colorado Educators (PACE), also experiences hurdles due to the unfair playing field in the state. For example, PACE members in Jefferson



County were recently denied access to payroll deduction of PACE dues. The payroll clerk cited budget issues; however, the union enjoys this privilege. When PACE offered to reimburse the district for the cost of processing payroll deduction, the district declined. Sadly, at this point, this preferential treatment is legal. There is hope for Colorado's teachers as potential legislation may soon be considered to right these wrongs and empower teachers to make informed choices.

In Idaho, Northwest Professional Educators, an AAE chapter, recently testified in support of HB 694, a bill that revises current law and clarifies that districts must inform teachers about their options for non-union, professional associations that provide liability insurance and legal services for employment rights issues. While the bill passed the House, due to time constraints, the legislation will be effectively shelved until next year.

Last year, AAE's Kansas chapter, the Kansas Association of American Edu-

cators (KANAAE), testified in support of equal access legislation with similar results. HB 2229 ended up stalling in the Senate, continuing to allow the KNEA unfettered access to every district in the state. While KANAAE membership is on

the rise, KANAEE is often barred from promoting the non-union option.

The fact is getting equal access—much less equal treatment—is an uphill battle. While it's no surprise that the teachers unions fight against the expansion of the non-union option, it's disturbing to see district and state leaders complicit with this practice.

Interestingly, while AAE and other non-union groups seek to welcome teacher members across the country, AAE has never sought to be the monopoly voice for teachers as the union so often states and fears. From the very beginning, the non-union educator movement has been about creating an option for teachers searching for professional benefits, like liability insurance and legal protections, at a fraction of the cost and without a partisan agenda. AAE is not a labor union and has no interest in bargaining contracts or telling members how to vote, but an entirely different entity, solely focused on professionalism and balancing the interests of educators and students to help create a world-class education system.

As the leader of the non-union educator movement, our hope is for teachers nationwide to be presented with the critical information needed in selecting an association that best aligns with their beliefs and budget. Teachers deserve a choice no matter where they teach.

* Following AAE's outreach during the 2011-2012 legislative session, the nonpartisan Chicago-based Heartland Institute released a comprehensive report about non-union associations and teachers and their quest for equal treatment in a union-dominated landscape. *The exposé*, authored by Education Policy Research Fellow Joy Pullman, highlights the Association of American Educators and AAE state chapter teachers and staff who have experienced harassment, discrimination, and bullying from union representatives keen on maintaining their monopoly in local schools. Visit <http://is.gd/71AW1G> to view the full report. ■

The Professional Educator Resume

If you are a classroom teacher searching for a new job, or if you are thinking about a career in education, perfecting your resume should be at the top of your to-do list. Just like in any other skilled profession, an educator's resume should incorporate elements specifically designed to appeal to administrators or other hiring managers. Incorporating both traditional elements and some added pizzazz can be just the ticket to landing your dream teaching position!

Remember, your resume is a professional reflection of you. What is included and how it is presented truly depend on your education, experiences, achievements, and the position itself. Administrators are looking for passionate teachers who are professional and collaborative, exhibit teacher leadership potential, know their content, and understand serving a diverse demographic.

First, start with the correct order of resume elements:

- Personal Contact Information
- Career Objective (optional)
- Education Information
- Certifications/Professional Licenses
- Special Skills (optional but may show other ways you can contribute to the organization)
- Education Experience (paid and nonpaid)
- Other Work Experience
- Thesis Title and short summary
- Honors
- Professional Affiliations
- Presentations
- Publications
- References

For an experienced educator, it is not uncommon to see a resume resemble a curriculum vita. The teaching profession has become much more sophisticated over the past 15 to 20 years, and a resume

that reflects this sophistication will stand out. It's not uncommon for teachers who have truly grown with the profession to have resumes that reflect extensive technology and data-driven decision making education, action research, presentations at professional conferences, and significant professional organization, committee and leadership experience.

Just as the teaching profession has become more complex, so have teacher education programs. Increased field experience, internship requirements and high expectations for data use, action research, and serving diverse students using a variety of instructional strategies and technology have required colleges of education to raise program expectations. A new teacher's resume should reflect all field experiences, internships, organization leadership roles and affiliations, action research project titles and any other significant experience that might show a good fit for the position. In addition, titles of major presentations completed for course requirements should be listed.

Regardless of level of experience, all teachers should consider certain elements. Job seekers should do their research and incorporate the organization's language into their resumes. Nothing stands out more to a hiring manager than using the same language as the school's mission statement, for example. Never use a "one-size-fits-all" resume. Also, don't forget to keep professionalism in mind. Cute fonts, colors, and clip art do not belong in a professional educator's resume.

For additional resources and tips, check out your college's career services office. Education professors and school administrators are also great resources for resume feedback. ■



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 Mission Viejo, CA 92691-6388

Presorted Standard
 US Postage Paid
 #400
 Laguna Niguel, CA

Education Matters is a publication of the Association of American Educators Foundation (AAEF)

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AAE Launches New Website for Charter School Community



This May, AAE launched a new website for public charter school stakeholders: www.AAECharters.org. The new website is geared toward charter school administrators, leaders, teachers, supporters, and associations searching for timely updates and research on issues affecting the public charter school community.

“We are thrilled to launch the interactive website—www.AAECharters.org,” said AAE Executive Director Gary Beckner. “This new tool allows our association to connect with the charter school community on a whole new level.”

The website includes information about AAE membership and benefits for individual teachers, charter-specific scholarships and grants, as well as original research and information on creating a culture of best practices and professionalism in the charter school environment. The site also encourages educators and charter leaders to comment and collabo-

rate via a timely blog covering charter school issues and topics.

As part of AAE’s continued outreach to the charter school community, the website will include information for schools and associations seeking to partner with AAE for charter school employee services. Charter school associations already partnered with AAE, including organizations in Florida, Georgia, Indiana, New Jersey, and Utah, will have their own pages designed to inform members about important charter news in their respective states.

“As a vocal supporter of charter schools, AAE is committed to working hand-in-hand with the nation’s charter stakeholders to ensure all educators have the tools they need to provide students with the best possible education,” stated Beckner. “This new website will be an invaluable tool for reference and collaboration within the growing charter school community.”

The AAECharters website is a great forum for current AAE charter members to connect and share their thoughts on recent headlines. The website will be regularly updated with new postings and resources. For more information, visit www.AAECharters.org.



Write for AAE on Your Summer Vacation

Do you have opinions or insight about classroom policy or education reform? Are you implementing a new program in your classroom, school, or district that you would like to share with your fellow members? We want to hear from you! Write an article for the Association of American Educators over your summer vacation! AAE is constantly looking for new material to share in *Education Matters* or on the AAE blog. We would love to hear from real classroom teachers and members interested in sharing their experiences. Whether you are interested in class size, teacher choice, education reform, cutting edge curriculum, or anything in between, don’t hesitate to contact AAE’s editorial staff. Email AAE today at Editor@aaeteachers.org with your articles or ideas. Have a great summer!