



RIGHTS, RAISES, RESPECT

News and Issues for the Early Care and Education Workforce

A monthly electronic newsletter

From the Center for the Child Care Workforce,

A Project of the AFT Educational Foundation (CCW/AFTEF)

April 2007

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MAKING THE CONNECTION – ADVOCACY & RESEARCH

Worthy Wage Day – May 1, 2007 - We're Hanging by a Thread

Worthy Wage Day is less than a month away! On May 1, early childhood educators nationwide will raise their voices to let the public know that, in this changing economy, "we're hanging by a thread" and we deserve more—better pay, benefits and respect. All too often, our most committed professionals leave the field because they cannot afford to stay. Worthy Wage Day is our time to remind the country—policymakers, legislators, other educators and parents—that early childhood educators are important and deserve more rights, raises and respect. There are many ways to get involved. Here are just a few ideas for Worthy Wage Day celebrations:

- 1) **Send a letter** to Congress. We need to ensure early childhood educators are not left "hanging by a thread." For every letter sent, *AFT First Class Teachers* will deliver a letter to each member of Congress with a piece of thread and the message, "We're Hanging By a Thread! Worthy Wages for Early Childhood Educators!"
- 2) Visit the [Worthy Wage Day Section](#) of the *AFT First Class Teachers* Web site. It is full of resources to help you plan activities and educate others about Worthy Wage Day. [Check out the site](#) for suggested activities, logos and information. [Use these resources to make your Worthy Wage Day a success!](#)
- 3) Keep track of the *AFT First Class Teachers*, which was signed by over 2,000 early childhood educators and supporters. The quilt is a special tribute to early childhood educators recognizing the important work performed everyday in the lives of America's youngest children.

Keep an eye on your in-box for more Worthy Wage Day actions, activities and messages on the development of the quilt. Please get involved, take action and help advocate for the wages and benefits our early childhood educators greatly deserve!

AFT Member Is Children's Author Extraordinaire

As if being a teacher, a United Federation of Teachers (UFT) officer and an AFT vice president weren't enough, Michelle Bodden also is the author of two children's books and plans to start on a third this summer. Her most recent book, *Obara the Gatekeeper*, was published at the end of last year. Like her 2004 debut, *Obara and the Merchants*, the second work is based on Yoruban stories from Nigeria that Bodden has told to her own children. Her books clearly are a labor of love, but Bodden also sees a connection to her duties as the UFT's elementary school vice president. "My work at UFT is very focused on creating better school environments and working conditions for educators," she says. "Writing is a great way for me to stay connected with children, so I think my two passions complement each other." Bodden published the books through her own company, Water Daughter Publishing. *Obara and the Merchants* won honorable mention at the 13th Annual Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Awards. Both books are available at www.amazon.com, and more information about them is available at www.waterdaughter.com.

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Donate Your Children's Books to Keep Soldiers Connected to Their Children

Cleveland Teachers Union school nurse Diane Adloff might be 9,000 miles away from home serving as an Army nurse at a field base in Iraq, but she stays connected to her grandchildren by taking advantage of the United Through Reading program. Through the program, soldiers send home videos of themselves reading books to their children or other young relatives.

But Adloff says the program desperately needs more books for kids ages 1-8. AFT president Edward J. McElroy is asking AFT and First Class Teachers members to help sustain and expand this program, since it practices what we preach—reading to or with your children makes a big difference, no matter how difficult the circumstances.

Here's what to do: Organize book drives with parents from your center, if possible. Ask for new or used children's books for ages 1-8. Feel free to publicize this activity in your newsletters, the local media and elsewhere. It's a great way to mobilize and help out a worthy program.

Very important: Once you've collected books, please write on the inside cover page the appropriate age for each book and the following: "Donation from AFT/First Class Teachers." You can add the name of your city and state if you'd like.

Send the books directly to:
Major Steve Hopper
25th ID Task Force Lightning
Unit #72111
APO AE 09393

Please let the AFT public affairs department know what you're doing, and if you have any questions or comments. Contact public affairs director Chuck Porcari, cporcari@aft.org.

IN THE STATES

New Mexico Expands Successful K-Plus Program to K-3 Students

New Mexico's unique program to lengthen the kindergarten year for high-poverty children saw such measurable progress in literacy and social skills that the state has expanded the program to include disadvantaged students through the third grade. The program builds on an initiative first promoted by the AFT.

New Mexico implemented Kindergarten-Plus, conceived in 2002 by the late AFT president Sandra Feldman, to accelerate the progress of poor children through an extended kindergarten year. Earlier this month, Gov. Bill Richardson signed legislation to extend the state's three-year pilot for another six years, expand it to eligible students through the third grade and provide \$8 million for the program.

"We can say definitively this program has the potential to narrow the unacceptable achievement gap. By extending the program through the third grade, we are doing what we know works to raise academic achievement for those who need extra help,"



says AFT New Mexico president Christine Trujillo. AFT president Edward J. McElroy says early intervention is key to preparing children for academic success. "Early intervention for disadvantaged students can stave off a lifetime of playing catch-up," he says. "We hope that other states follow New Mexico's example and put in place programs like Kindergarten-Plus to give our most disadvantaged children a head start."

New Mexico's pilot program started in the 2003-04 school year in four districts, with a focus on literacy, numeracy, cognitive and social skills. The districts' programs varied, with some adding 40 instructional days to the school year, others implementing a half-day prekindergarten program, and others adding time at the beginning of first grade rather than at the end of kindergarten.

A 2005 state evaluation of the pilot program found that it "seems to be an effective way to nurture student success, particularly among high-poverty students." The evaluation also said the at-risk students "displayed gains in literacy skills - developed important social skills and benefited from increased parental involvement."

To learn more about Kindergarten-Plus visit
<http://www.aft.org/topics/ece/downloads/KPlusQ&A.pdf>.

RESEARCH & RESOURCES

Mixed Results in Early Child Care Study

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development has been tracking more than 1300 children over 15 years in various child care arrangements. Once the subjects reached school, the study used teacher ratings of each child to assess behaviors like interrupting class, teasing and bullying. The most recent installment of the study, published, found that 6th grade children who spent a year or more in a preschool program had an increased vocabulary but were also more likely to be disruptive in class. The positive effects far outweighed the negative effects, as there were more children with strong vocabularies than with behavioral problems. In a recent New York Times article, Marci Young, Deputy director of the Center for the Child Care Workforce/AFTEF, noted the lack of some key components that are related to quality such as turnover. Most employees are "egregiously underpaid and have no benefits," said Young, and when they leave for other work, "children experience this as a loss, and that does have an effect on them." Unfortunately, the headlines in the media highlighted the negative links to behavior, even though there was no real control group in the study and important factors in program quality, as pointed out by Young, were excluded.

Annual State Preschool Yearbook

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has released its annual State of Preschool: 2006 State Preschool Yearbook, which rates state-funded pre-kindergarten programs serving 3- and 4-year-olds. The report measures the quality of programs in the 2005-06 school year by evaluating several indicators such as curriculum, parental involvement, enrollment and teachers' education level. Trends show that state-funded preschool education reached new highs and at least one low



during this period. Enrollment rose and 16 states raised their quality standards enough to meet the benchmarks created by NIEER. Unfortunately, however, in many states funding did not keep up with increased enrollments and inflation. After adjusting for inflation, funding per child fell to the lowest level since NIEER started collecting such data in 2001-2002.

The yearbook is available at <http://nieer.org/yearbook/>.

SOURCE & CONTRIBUTORS

Janet Bass, AFT Press Release, AFT PSRP E-News, Inside AFT, Dori Mornan, Marci Young, NIEER

The Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) was founded in 1978 as the Child Care Employee Project, and in 2002 merged with the American Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation (AFTEF). CCW/AFTEF is a nonprofit research, education and advocacy organization committed to improving early care and education quality by upgrading the compensation, working conditions and training of early childhood professionals.