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ABSTRACT

This report sets forth the position of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) on reform measures in the public schools. The first section deals with securing and retaining an adequate number of talented teachers through the professionalization of teaching. Recommendations are made on professional salaries; teacher shortage areas and the shortage of minority teachers; teacher education, testing, certification, and induction; professional advancement and teacher mobility. The second section is devoted to considerations of school structure and governance. In the third section, the question is raised of choices within the public schools--magnet schools, alternative schools, schools within a school, open enrollment, and elective courses. The position of the AFT is one of remaining open to the discussion of choice options if such options fulfill the educational conditions, goals, and outcomes established by states and local communities. In the final section, the role of the AFT in the improvement of education is discussed, and considerations are offered for the guidance of state and local federations engaged in the development of education reform proposals. (JD)

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The AFT Task Force on the Future of Education was appointed by President Shanker at the Jan. 25-26, 1985, meeting of the AFT Executive Council. The Task Force worked for almost a year and a half. Its report was submitted to the Executive Council on May 12, 1986, where, after discussion and amendment, it was adopted.

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SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

the Revolution that is Overdue

LOOKING TOWARD
THE FUTURE OF
TEACHING AND LEARNING

A REPORT OF THE AFT TASK FORCE ON THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

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The Context

1 For the past two years, the
2 nation has been in the midst of an
3 education reform movement
4 aimed at ensuring that the public
5 school system prepare students
6 for the future and thereby secure
7 the vitality of America. More rigor
8 has been introduced into
9 curricula, and standards have
10 been tightened. Teachers' salaries
11 have been modestly increased,
12 and some other additional
13 resources have been pumped into
14 education. Traditional friends of
15 public schools have been
16 reactivated, and new allies in the
17 business and political
18 communities have been found. In
19 general and after a period of
20 torpor, the interest and concern of
21 the public have been redirected to
22 public education. Throughout this
23 period, the AFT and its affiliates
24 led many of these changes,
25 supported others, and, equally
26 important, beat back most of the
27 dangerous and simple-minded
28 proposals masquerading as
29 education reform. It was a time of

30 both opportunity and danger, and
31 the AFT's ability to seize and
32 shape the opportunities on behalf
33 of its members and public
34 education earned us
35 unprecedented and invaluable
36 recognition.

37 But there is little reason to be
38 sanguine about the future of
39 public education. Despite recent
40 polls indicating somewhat greater
41 satisfaction with public schools as
42 a result of the reform movement,
43 public education is still in peril.
44 The grades the public gives public
45 education are still low. Fanned by
46 the current administration,
47 support for vouchers and tuition
48 tax credits is still at an
49 unprecedented high. The
50 traditional political base of public
51 education is eroding, along with
52 the proportion of the population
53 with school-age children. As for
54 students, performance is still
55 unacceptably mediocre, in terms
56 of their own future needs and
57 those of the democratic society
58 they will inherit.

59 The "first stage" of education
60 reform therefore has provided
61 only partial relief to the problems
62 threatening public education. One
63 reason is that the public expects
64 education reform to produce
65 higher student achievement, but
66 such gains are neither easily nor
67 quickly obtained. While it is
68 unrealistic to expect immediate,
69 tangible improvements from
70 recent reforms, it seems equally
71 true that if positive results are not
72 forthcoming, there will be a
73 backlash against public education,
74 and one from which we may not
75 readily recover.

76 A second, and more significant,
77 reason for the problems persisting
78 in public education is that much
79 more reform is required, and of a
80 far more basic nature than the first
81 round of reform afforded. Indeed,
82 even if all the better reform
83 measures of the past two years
84 were enacted, they would not be
85 sufficient to ensure a well-
86 educated, democratic, productive
87 citizenry—an education of value
88 for all the nation's children, not

89 just some. They would not be
90 sufficient to attract and retain a
91 talented teaching force, without
92 whom a fine education system, let
93 alone an education reform
94 movement, is impossible. And
95 they would not be sufficient to
96 ensure the future of our union. For
97 as long as the educational
98 function of our public schools is
99 impaired, as long as teaching is
100 not a full profession and teachers
101 are disabled from assuming both
102 the responsibilities and
103 prerogatives of professionals,
104 public education will remain in
105 jeopardy and, with it, the future of
106 our union.

Introduction

107 The AFT Task Force on the
108 Future of Education therefore
109 believes that there is a need for a
110 second stage of education reform
111 to sustain and extend the more
112 promising features of the first
113 stage and to correct its oversights
114 and deficiencies. One of the chief,
115 and most dangerous, omissions of
116 the current reform movement is
117 the failure to take seriously
118 enough the fact that over half the
119 nation's teaching force will have
120 to be replaced over less than the
121 next decade. However, the
122 requisite supply, let alone
123 education's fair share of talent, is
124 not forthcoming. The
125 demographics are against us, as
126 are the prevailing salaries and
127 professional conditions of
128 teaching.
129 To date, virtually nothing
130 positive has been done to attract
131 and retain talented teachers into
132 the nation's public schools.
133 Instead, the historic tendency in
134 education to meet shortages by

135 lowering standards is once again
136 being pursued as a matter of
137 public policy. This policy must be
138 vigorously resisted. It is a threat to
139 all students, but particularly to
140 disadvantaged youngsters for
141 whom public education
142 represents the best chance of full
143 and equal participation in
144 American society. It is a threat to
145 our current members and to the
146 vitality of our union. And, above
147 all, it is a threat to the future of
148 public education. The second
149 stage of reform therefore should
150 be responsive to the demographic
151 and structural changes now
152 affecting our society, to the needs
153 and aspirations of our members,
154 and to the nation's need for a well-
155 educated, democratic, and
156 productive citizenry.

157 To fulfill these requirements,
158 the second stage of education
159 reform should seek the full
160 professionalization of teaching
161 and the restructuring of public
162 schools to promote student
163 learning. In asserting these goals,
164 the AFT Task Force on the Future
165 of Education recognizes that they
166 are not novel ideas for this union.
167 While some of the concepts in the
168 following report may be new,
169 then, the basic philosophy
170 underlying it reaffirms the core of
171 our beliefs as a union. Throughout
172 its history, the AFT has
173 recognized that unionism and
174 professionalism are inextricably
175 linked and that public schools
176 must be, first and foremost,
177 institutions of teaching and
178 learning. We have made
179 significant achievements on
180 behalf of our members, and we
181 have made significant
182 contributions to public education
183 and to the protection and
184 promotion of American
185 democracy.

186 But our vision as a union is
187 only partially realized. Much
188 more is required, now and for the
189 future—for our members, for
190 unionism as we practice it, for
191 public education, and for the
192 nation.

193 **The following**
194 **recommendations therefore**
195 **represent a set of steps toward the**
196 **further realization of this vision.**
197 **They are not “specifications” for**
198 **what to do tomorrow at 9 A.M.**
199 **but, rather, the direction the Task**
200 **Force firmly believes the AFT**
201 **should be pursuing. Nor do these**
202 **recommendations represent a**
203 **comprehensive map of our vision**
204 **or even of a second stage of**
205 **education reform. Some territory**
206 **is missing, other terrain needs to**
207 **be more fully charted. In part,**
208 **this is a result of the Task Force’s**
209 **brief tenure, relative to the time**
210 **required to explore new ideas**
211 **fully and responsibly and to**
212 **suggest their implementation.**
213 **And in part, it is also because the**
214 **Task Force views the following**
215 **ideas and recommendations as a**
216 **beginning, a bold one to be sure,**
217 **but only a beginning.**

218 **The Task Force anticipates and**
219 **urges AFT members and affiliates**
220 **to engage in a process of**
221 **education and discussion of these**
222 **ideas, as the Task Force itself did.**
223 **For it is through the collective**
224 **wisdom of our members, fortified**
225 **by open and vigorous discourse,**
226 **that we will continue to be both**
227 **innovative and responsible, on**
228 **behalf of our members and for**
229 **public education. There is much**
230 **more to be done.**

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TEACHING

231 The AFT recognizes that individual teachers act professionally and there is
232 currently in place the best teaching force the nation is ever likely to see, if
233 present conditions are not altered. Nonetheless, teaching is by no means a
234 **profession**, by any accepted definition of the concept, nor are teachers treated as
235 **full professionals**.

236 The ill effects of the status and conditions of teaching as an occupation on
237 teachers and students have long been known to the AFT. Indeed, at the heart of
238 the revolution the AFT wrought in pioneering collective bargaining for teach-
239 ers, and central to the AFT vision of teacher unionism, was and is the belief that
240 unionism and professionalism are inextricably linked—that collective bargain-
241 ing for teachers was and is an important means of attaining the professionaliza-
242 tion of teaching and the betterment of public education.

243 The AFT therefore has a long and proud history of seeking professional-level
244 salaries and benefits for its members, improvements in teacher education and in
245 the knowledge base of teaching, rigorous entry standards, limitations on class
246 size, decision-making authority for teachers, restraints on the power of super-
247 visors, working conditions that enhance teachers' ability to teach, professional
248 development opportunities, and a host of other particulars related to profes-
249 sional matters. We have made great gains for our members—and shudder to
250 think about how much worse the circumstances of teachers and public educa-
251 tion might have been in the absence of the revolution we wrought.

252 But there is currently a crisis of standards in this nation, and it threatens to
253 wipe out all the gains made on behalf of the teaching force over the past decades
254 and, with these gains, public education as a viable, vital democratic institution.
255 Precipitating this crisis is a massive teacher shortage. During less than a decade,
256 over one half of the current teaching force—over one million people—will be
257 retiring. But neither the number nor the quality of individuals needed to
258 replace the current, able teaching force is forthcoming. Aside from a few saints,
259 talented individuals will not be attracted to an occupation with low salaries,

260 limited autonomy and authority, and tough working conditions—a nonprofes-
261 sional career with few extrinsic rewards and rapidly diminishing intrinsic
262 rewards.

263 At the same time, the nation is experiencing a baby “boomlet,” the propor-
264 tion of at-risk students is growing, and the quality of education required by all
265 students must be increased if the American standard of living and the demo-
266 cratic institutions that sustain our freedom are to be preserved and strength-
267 ened.

268 Given the scenario facing our nation—a smaller absolute number of college-
269 age individuals, and consequently, an even smaller pool of prospective teach-
270 ers, few incentives to enter teaching, the ability of other sectors to outbid
271 education for talent, monetarily and otherwise, greater student numbers and
272 needs—the professionalization of teaching is not only desirable, it is a neces-
273 sity.

274 The AFT recognizes that although the professionalization of teaching was
275 not previously achieved, the nation nonetheless benefited from a variety of
276 demographic and social conditions that assured a steady supply of talented
277 teachers, comprised largely of women and minorities. There have been teacher
278 shortages before, although none of this magnitude. More important, during
279 prior teacher shortages, there was little problem in securing for education its
280 requisite share of talented individuals. The prevailing demographic and social
281 conditions, pernicious though some of these were in terms of equal opportunity
282 for women and minorities, were favorable to the education sector.

283 It is now a different world.

284 If the current salary and professional conditions of teaching persist, and if
285 states and localities continue to meet the teacher shortage crisis by issuing
286 credentials to any warm body, not only will teaching be entirely degraded as a
287 career but public education and the students that represent the future of this
288 nation will suffer irreparable harm.

289 The following recommendations are therefore designed to ensure the future
290 of public education and the democratic society it helps support by securing and
291 retaining an adequate number of talented teachers through professionalizing
292 teaching.

293 PROFESSIONAL SALARIES

294 ■ Because of the existing shortage of new teachers and the expansion of that
295 shortage between 1986 and 1995, the AFT advises state federations to seek
296 state-mandated minimum starting salaries for application during this pro-
297 jected ten-year period of teacher shortages, where states fall below competi-
298 tive standards. Such state-mandated minimum teacher salaries must be
299 designed on a state-by-state basis to make entering salaries for new teachers
300 reasonably competitive with entering salaries in that state for other profes-
301 sions requiring comparable education and training. State-level minimums
302 also can be improved upon through bargaining at the local level.

303 ■ Because of the existing and impending shortage of teachers, which is in part
304 due to the expected retirement of a substantial share of the experienced
305 teaching force, additional monies are urgently needed to retain experienced
306 teachers. Such funds should be generated at the state level, in addition to
307 higher minimum salaries, and can be improved upon through bargaining at
308 the local level.

309 SHORTAGE AREAS

310 ■ As an incentive to attracting and hiring teachers in all areas of shortages, as
311 they develop, the AFT recommends that locals and school districts consider
312 placing entering teachers in areas of shortage on higher steps of the salary
313 schedule. The salaries of certified teachers currently teaching in these short-
314 age areas should be raised in those instances where placing an entering

315 teacher in a shortage area on a higher step results in the experienced teacher
316 earning less money.

317 ■ To meet the current shortage and enable talented liberal arts majors, subject
318 area majors, and college graduates with substantive knowledge in areas of
319 critical shortage who have been in other careers, the AFT supports supple-
320 mentary licensure programs, coupled with rigorous internships under the
321 guidance of experienced teachers for at least the initial year of teaching.
322 Supplementary licensure and internship programs should in no way be
323 designed or used to reduce or undermine standards for entering teaching.
324 They should, instead, be an alternative route to attaining professional stan-
325 dards.

326 ■ To attract former teachers back into the profession, the AFT recommends that
327 such teachers be placed at least on the salary schedule step they had attained
328 in the year in which they left teaching.

329 ■ In defining areas of shortage, it is important to account for all areas of
330 shortage, as they develop, and not single out one subject area or grade level. It
331 is critical that policy makers refrain from responding to teacher shortages by
332 hiring unqualified individuals. Therefore, in addition to the recommenda-
333 tions above, the AFT urges states and localities to explore credit for academ-
334 ically equivalent work experience outside of teaching, flex-time
335 arrangements, incentives to retain retiring teachers and utilize the expertise
336 of retired teachers, and other means of attracting and retaining qualified
337 teachers.

338 **SHORTAGE OF MINORITY TEACHERS**

339 Of vital concern to the AFT is the recruitment and retention of minority
340 teachers. In view of our significant role in the civil rights movement, our
341 historic achievements in securing minority teachers equal rights and equal
342 opportunity in the union movement and in the educational enterprise, and
343 because of our belief in the desirability of having schools staffed by teachers
344 who reflect the diversity of the nation's heritage, the AFT views with alarm the
345 shrinking number of minority teachers.

346 To address this concern, the AFT urges and endorses efforts to eliminate
347 substandard educational opportunities, which contribute to inadequate school
348 and test performance by a disproportionate percentage of minorities.

349 The AFT also proposes the following course of action at the national, state,
350 and local levels:

351 ■ Emphasis on a national level to address issues of recruitment and retention of
352 minority teachers as an area of critical shortage.

353 ■ Programs at the high school and college levels to identify talented minority
354 students who are potential teachers, to diagnose their academic strengths and
355 weaknesses, to strengthen their general school performance, to prepare them
356 adequately for and in college, and to improve their performance on college-
357 entry and teaching-entry tests.

358 ■ Scholarships and loans at the state, local, and federal levels, with targeted
359 funds designated for minorities.

360 ■ Target teacher recruitment and intern programs at institutions that attract
361 significant numbers of minorities.

362 **TEACHER EDUCATION AND INDUCTION**

363 ■ All teacher education candidates should have a broadly based, liberal arts
364 undergraduate education, with at least one subject major.

365 ■ All prospective teachers should have a well-structured induction program
366 that includes a one-year internship (for which they could be paid as intern
367 teachers) under the supervision of an experienced, knowledgeable teacher.

- 368 All beginning teachers should be reviewed and assessed by experienced
369 teachers who are prepared for this responsibility. The induction program
370 should also involve a residency as a beginning teacher beyond the internship.
371 Peer assistance and review would be applied throughout the residency.
- 372 ■ Experienced teachers should be involved in the planning and development of
373 internship, residency, and peer programs, through the agreement of their
374 union.

375 **TEACHER TESTING AND CERTIFICATION**

- 376 ■ A new national, nongovernmental board of the teaching profession, com-
377 posed of a majority of experienced teachers, should be created. The board
378 would develop professional standards for teaching on the basis of the knowl-
379 edge and clinical practice base in teaching and oversee the development of a
380 new national assessment procedure for the professional certification of pro-
381 spective teachers. The assessment should include high-quality procedures to
382 examine subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, as well as
383 providing for a well-structured clinical induction experience. Each compo-
384 nent of the development and implementation of the assessment should be
385 vigilant about safeguarding objectivity and avoiding racial bias, avoid
386 explicitly or implicitly endorsing any "one best method" of teaching prac-
387 tice, and take account of the diversity of students and settings that prospec-
388 tive teachers will face.
- 389 ■ Board certification for new teachers should be awarded only upon successful
390 completion of a rigorous teacher education program, passage of a national
391 teacher entrance examination developed by the profession, and demon-
392 strated teaching competence in intern and residency programs.
- 393 ■ Although board certification initially would be voluntary, states should give
394 serious consideration to adopting the professional certification standards
395 promulgated by the national board as a basis for state teacher licensure.

396 **PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT**

- 397 ■ In the future, experienced teachers should be eligible for professional career
398 advancement through advanced certification by the new national profes-
399 sional board. This board would set the professional standards for such
400 advanced certification and determine whether a candidate had met these
401 standards. Such advanced certification should be voluntary and open to all
402 teachers who sought it.
- 403 ■ Teachers should have a variety of opportunities for performing professional
404 roles and advancing within the teaching profession, while continuing to be
405 practicing teachers. Teachers should also have the option of working on ten-,
406 eleven-, or twelve-month contracts in order to perform professional respon-
407 sibilities while retaining their status as teachers.
- 408 ■ Teaching must be structured as a lifetime career. Teaching and traditional
409 administration/management must be considered as two separate careers, and
410 teachers' salaries should not be limited by the salaries paid to administrators/
411 managers.

412 **TEACHER MOBILITY**

- 413 Although we live in a mobile society, teachers face many roadblocks to
414 practicing their profession if they choose to or are forced to change geographic
415 locations. Teachers moving from state to state must be recertified and often are
416 required to obtain as many as fifteen or more additional college credits. Most
417 states also require teachers who are new residents to teach at least three years,
418 regardless of previous experience, before qualifying for tenure. Teachers who
419 move to a new district or state are placed on lower steps of the salary scale than

420 their many years of experience warrant and often also lose much or all of their
421 pension entitlements because teacher retirement plans are not transferable.

422 Because these practices discourage individuals from entering or re-entering
423 teaching, encourage experienced teachers to leave the profession, exacerbate
424 the teacher shortage crisis, and frequently result in unqualified people being
425 hired to teach in place of qualified teachers, the AFT recommends that:

426 ■ Vigorous steps be taken toward the attainment of reciprocity of teacher
427 license recognition from one state to another. A means for achieving such
428 reciprocity that warrants serious consideration would be for states to adopt
429 the professional certification standards promulgated by the national board as
430 a basis for state licensure.

431 ■ The requirement of earning additional college credits be based upon need
432 and not be an automatic consequence of having changed districts or states.

433 ■ School systems preserve full tenure rights and credit on the salary schedule
434 for lifetime teaching experience, regardless of where those were earned.

435 ■ Pension programs should allow teachers who move from state to state to be
436 employed or re-employed without losing benefits.

SCHOOL STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

437 The American Federation of Teachers believes that all decisions regarding
438 the establishment, maintenance, or reform of school structure and
439 governance must be based on their effect upon student learning. The litmus
440 test of all such decisions is whether they positively affect student learning
441 and facilitate teachers' efforts to provide that learning. Therefore, all AFT
442 recommendations are based on the assumption that schools must be learning
443 centered with teachers empowered to carry out their responsibilities.

444 A great deal has been written and discussed about effective schools. Such
445 schools are learning centered. Descriptions of academically effective,
446 learning-centered schools share common factors across the studies and
447 reports: (1) clear goals related to academic learning, (2) high expectations for
448 students and staff, (3) a stable faculty with a clear sense of school ownership
449 and community of shared interests, (4) strong leadership in support of the
450 learning goals of the school—exemplified by a respected principal who
451 involves teachers or a group of teacher leaders, (5) collegial relationships/
452 collaborative planning among teachers and administrators, (6) school-wide
453 staff development, (7) school site management, (8) learning time given
454 priority, (9) frequent student assessments and feedback, (10) community and
455 district support, and (11) a safe and orderly climate with clear and fairly
456 enforced discipline codes.

457 These school characteristics are consistent with AFT's goals and policies
458 related to the professionalization of teaching. They are also in line with
459 AFT's long-standing positions in support of high quality standards for
460 students, teachers, and other personnel. However, these "effective school"
461 factors are **descriptive** rather than **prescriptive**. That is, they tell how an
462 academically effective school appears; they imply but do not necessarily
463 guide how to create such a school.

464 As public schools are currently organized, the only way for teachers to
465 advance professionally and monetarily is by leaving the classroom. This

466 structure diminishes the importance and value of the role of the teacher and
467 thereby impairs student learning. In contrast, it is the fundamental premise
468 of learning-centered schools that teachers are at the core of school success. To
469 recruit bright teachers, equip them with highly sophisticated skills through
470 rigorous training, and then offer them little opportunity to apply their
471 knowledge and skills in school decision making inevitably will drive capable
472 people away from teaching. Teaching must instead be structured as a lifetime
473 career.

474 The AFT therefore strongly recommends that schools and school systems
475 abolish the factory model of education-management, which treats teachers as
476 workers who must adhere to predetermined practices and follow endless
477 rules and regulations, even against their professional judgment, and assumes
478 that students are passive, uniform cogs in a production process.
479 Professionalizing teaching begins with a clear recognition that teachers must
480 become much more self-regulating, that traditional management
481 responsibilities in public schools must be altered, and that the organization
482 of learning must put student needs above bureaucratic convenience.

483 The following recommendations therefore support the creation of
484 learning-centered schools and advance the professionalization of teaching:

485 **GOALS AND DECISIONS**

486 ■ In a democratic society, the general goals and learning outcomes for
487 schools are established by states and local communities. However, the
488 means to achieve these state and local goals are best determined by those
489 responsible for the implementation of the educational program at the local
490 school site. Teacher unions, as the collective voice of the teaching
491 profession, must be involved in the development and implementation of
492 education policy matters at all levels.

493 ■ School faculty and staff must share in the establishment and maintenance
494 of school goals and values consistent with required state and local
495 education outcomes.

496 ■ School site autonomy must be increased, with greater decision-making
497 power invested in classroom teachers.

498 ■ Schools should operate in a collegial and participatory fashion under the
499 leadership of the teaching faculty. All building employees should be
500 recognized as contributing to the efficient operation of the school.

501 **LEADERSHIP**

502 ■ As progress is made in restructuring schools, the AFT supports an even
503 greater distinction than currently exists between the roles of teachers and
504 those who do not teach. Teachers should assume the appropriate
505 instructional and curricular functions currently exercised by those who do
506 not teach.

507 ■ Teachers should be the instructional leaders of the schools and should be
508 responsible for making decisions about instructional strategies, staff
509 development, curricular materials, pupil assignments and scheduling,
510 structure of learning time during the school day, instructional goals
511 beyond those set by the state or local school board, school-level budgetary
512 matters, and elements of professional evaluation.

513 ■ The role and function of managers in a learning-centered school must
514 continue to be explored. Different roles and models have been suggested:
515 1. teacher-run schools with a group of teachers taking on school site
516 management responsibilities, employing an administrator to handle
517 the day-to-day administrative tasks, which could include the
518 employment of managers from outside the field of education (see 3
519 below);

- 520 2. principal as institutional advocate who also serves as a liaison with
521 central governance bodies and the community, with teachers
522 empowered to make decisions about and implement the instructional
523 and curricular functions of the school;
- 524 3. principal as building manager who implements the educational
525 program and school discipline policies designed by teachers and
526 carries out district and state reporting requirements. The principal is
527 generally responsible for working with personnel not directly involved
528 in the school instructional program and with the coordination of
529 student services provided by outside agencies.
- 530 ■ Teachers' salary levels should not be limited by the salaries paid
531 administrators.

532 STRUCTURE

533 If a group of experienced teachers were brought together and given the
534 opportunity to design a school structure from scratch, the chances of their
535 reaffirming the present structure would be remote. Beginning with the
536 isolated, cellular organization of classrooms on to the whole top-down, "egg-
537 crate" structure of the typical public school, there is a series of obstacles to
538 effective teaching and learning. Present classroom arrangements, for
539 example, force teachers into spending most of their time lecturing and
540 maintaining order, and sometimes even require them to be entertainers rather
541 than teachers in order to hold the attention of their usually excessive number
542 of students. The professional ideals that drew teachers into teaching in the
543 first place—working intensively with students, preferably on a more
544 individual basis, intellectual challenge, cooperation, and control over one's
545 work, to name but a few—are everywhere thwarted.

546 It is little wonder, then, that such an alarming proportion of teachers
547 "burn out," leave, or become cynical. For even under more enlightened
548 school administrations, the present school structure makes it difficult for
549 teachers to function as full professionals on behalf of their students. In all too
550 many schools, it has become increasingly difficult for teachers to deploy
551 human, curricular, and technological resources within the school, as
552 necessary, to work with students individually or in groups, and to interact
553 with and learn from their colleagues.

554 The costs this factory-model school system imposes on students are also
555 considerable. Students learn in a variety of ways and through a variety of
556 means, and these patterns frequently vary even subject to subject. The
557 present structure takes little or no account of this. Students are individuals,
558 some of whom need intensive help from a variety of sources in order to attain
559 mastery, others of whom can function more independently, and most of
560 whom embody diverse needs, depending on the situation. The present
561 structure takes little or no account of this. Some students who could forge
562 ahead may be held back by the needs of the majority of their class or grade,
563 while others who encounter difficulties that might be easily detected and
564 rectified under a more flexible class, grade, and curriculum structure may be
565 left back unproductively and become tomorrow's dropouts. The present
566 structure takes little or no account of this. All students require problem-
567 solving and critical-thinking skills, as well as basic skills, and prompt and
568 constructive feedback on school and homework assignments. The present
569 structure, with its fixed and excessive class sizes, takes little or no account of
570 this.

571 The dysfunctional nature of the present structure has become increasingly
572 apparent to the AFT. This is evident from the massive defections of teachers
573 from the teaching ranks and in the criticisms of those who remain. It is
574 evident in the staggering dropout and failure rates, particularly among
575 disadvantaged students. And it is evident in the low performance of average
576 and even gifted American students relative to their counterparts in other

577 developed nations.

578 Rethinking the present structure of schools is therefore an essential pre-
579 condition to the creation of learning-centered schools. The AFT recommends
580 the following preliminary steps toward the realization of this goal:

- 581 ■ Time is a key element in restructuring teaching and schools. Time for
582 teachers to teach, to plan, to continue learning, and to make educational
583 decisions requires alterations in current teacher loads and creative uses of
584 technology, paraprofessionals, and other instructional personnel under the
585 direction of teachers. Current teaching loads therefore must be reduced
586 and restructured to achieve these goals. The prevailing principle should be
587 to improve, rather than diminish, students' access to professional teachers.
- 588 ■ In contrast to the current system in which students are assigned a new
589 teacher(s) every year, and in order to enhance teachers' ability to make
590 appropriate instructional decisions for students and students' prospects for
591 receiving individualized attention, the possibilities of new arrangements
592 should be explored, such as having staff teams take responsibility, perhaps
593 over periods of more than one year, for determining the instructional needs
594 of groups of students, providing appropriate follow-up, and monitoring
595 their progress.
- 596 ■ Paraprofessionals involved in instruction must be well trained and
597 certified and given greater responsibility for working with students while
598 under the direction of teachers.
- 599 ■ Learning-centered schools should employ a variety of informational
600 technologies, including video, audio, and computing resources; however,
601 the use, assessment, and refinement of these resources should be part of
602 the professional task of teachers.

603 **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 604 ■ Staff development should exist on a continuum beginning with an
605 internship and continuing throughout one's professional life. Continued
606 professional development should be a normal job expectation and occur
607 within the regular school day. This could include regular reviews and
608 observations by colleagues, demonstration teaching, coaching, and
609 opportunities for conducting independent research.

610 **EVALUATION**

- 611 ■ Beginning teachers should be assisted and assessed by experienced
612 teachers prior to certification.
- 613 ■ Following implementation of high-quality teacher internship and
614 residency programs and when teacher-directed professional growth
615 opportunities are a regular part of the school program, peer assistance and
616 intervention should be used to safeguard standards within the profession.
- 617 ■ Intensive evaluations of certified teachers should occur only when serious
618 problems are evident.

619 **ACCOUNTABILITY/REGULATION**

- 620 ■ In order to help ensure the establishment and maintenance of at least the
621 minimum conditions necessary for teaching and learning to occur, an
622 index of essential learning-input conditions (such as teachers teaching in
623 field, adequate teaching resources and supplies, up-to-date and adequate
624 numbers of textbooks, etc., etc.) should be developed and schools should
625 be publicly rated every year or two under the criteria established by the
626 index. The AFT should consider encouraging states to pass such Fair
627 Learning Conditions Acts, with rigorous state and local enforcement
628 provisions, so that schools that consistently fall below the minimum

- 629 learning-input standards can be brought up to par.
- 630 ■ Although learning-centered schools and professional teachers must have
631 flexibility to meet the needs of students, the public necessarily requires
632 accountability. Central school system administration and state
633 governments therefore should monitor the progress of schools. However,
634 regulation and intervention should be applied to the school site only if the
635 school fails to meet minimum learning-input standards outlined in an
636 index of essential conditions for a learning-centered school or other
637 appropriate problem indicators, such as high teacher turnover, dropouts,
638 violence, and poor student performance.
- 639 ■ The autonomy of teachers in school sites is predicated upon norms and
640 standards of practice established by the teaching profession.

641 THE ROLE OF THE UNION

- 642 ■ The details of the various mechanisms described herein should be
643 developed and implemented through the participation of teachers and
644 through the collective bargaining process or memorandum of
645 understanding at the local level or through a collaborative agreement.
- 646 ■ Collective bargaining contracts should continue to allow for flexibility in
647 mutually agreeable experimental programs at the school site.

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

648 Choice within the public schools exists in many forms: magnet schools,
649 alternative schools, schools within a school, open enrollment, and elective
650 courses, among others. The AFT recognizes, however, that for both parents and
651 teachers, current choices of educational programs may be unnecessarily lim-
652 ited, largely by the wealth of a district or the inflexibility of central or school
653 administration. The AFT therefore remains open to the discussion of choice
654 options within the public school system if such options fulfill the educational
655 conditions, goals, and outcomes duly established by states and local commu-
656 nities.

657 Our openness is a cautious one, for we recognize the pitfalls of the choice
658 issue, even within the public school system. These pitfalls involve the need to
659 balance the public or social interest against individual interests and to avoid the
660 kind of racial, class, and ability segregation that is antithetical to the mission of
661 public schools in a democratic society. Any consideration of a public school
662 choice proposal must also be sensitive to the protection of the rights of teachers.

THE ROLE OF THE UNION

663 Throughout its history, the AFT has recognized that unionism and profes-
664 sionalism are inextricably linked. That basic precept has shaped our activities
665 and clarified the role that a union of professionals must play. The AFT
666 pioneered collective bargaining for teachers and other education employees. A
667 strong union structure has been established, an effective political action capac-
668 ity developed, and considerable power and authority have been moved to our
669 members.

670 Through these means—collective bargaining, political action, and profes-
671 sional development assistance—we have made significant achievements on
672 behalf of our members and have overcome tough obstacles in the face of difficult
673 conditions and changing requirements for public education. We will continue
674 to use and develop these means to bring about change and improvements in the
675 status and conditions of teaching and to enhance the quality of education. And
676 we now have a special opportunity to build on our achievements and to advance
677 the teaching profession.

678 The American Federation of Teachers has a responsibility to play a signifi-
679 cant role in the education reform movement. It is crucial that the quality and
680 level of education received by Americans be improved. As a union, we can make
681 an important contribution to assure that there will be sufficient numbers of
682 qualified teachers to teach America's children and that those teachers will have
683 professional authority over teaching practices. In fact, the unprecedented atten-
684 tion given to education at this time by governors, legislators, the business
685 community, and the public at large presents an opportunity to achieve gains for
686 our members and for public education that may not come our way again soon.

687 The AFT realizes that certain conditions must be met if we are to be
688 successful in our obligation to represent members in their relationship with
689 management, protect the institution of public education in the environment in
690 which it exists, and protect the institution of democracy in America where we
691 are privileged to live and practice our profession. Consequently, the union's role
692 in education reform is an important part of the union's primary responsibility of
693 effectively representing its members. Past achievements were made possible
694 because hundreds of thousands of individuals who joined our union because of
695 a belief and a vision remained to build an organization capable of meeting the
696 challenge we now face.

697 We are about to experience the largest shortage of teachers in the history of
698 American education. Some of the first efforts at education reform have resulted
699 in overly prescriptive changes affecting professional conditions and discourag-
700 ing the choice of teaching as a career. Pay and status in teaching, while showing
701 recent gains, remain below levels in other professions. To overcome the short-
702 age while resisting the erosion of professional standards, we must attempt
703 radical, rather than incremental, changes in the basic structure of American
704 education.

705 Our organizational goal is to preserve public education while empowering
706 teachers to exercise independent professional judgment in educational matters.
707 This means we seek to restructure the present public education system and
708 obtain for teachers the legitimate authority to make decisions affecting their
709 work. We will not exchange one set of prescriptive controls for inflexible
710 working conditions established in any other manner. The union is a force in the
711 education system for the practicing professional because it represents and
712 asserts its members' interests in improving the profession and the quality of
713 education.

714 ■ The AFT seeks to empower teachers to gain legitimate responsibility and
715 authority for teaching and the learning environment in the schools, to retain
716 independent decision making in matters relating to the profession, and to

717 assist in obtaining the resources needed to provide a high-quality education
718 program. The union welcomes proposals that can help achieve these goals.

719 ■ The AFT should provide a forum for the exploration of developments in the
720 advancement of the profession and other aspects of education reform, con-
721 sider national policies and responses related to these developments, and
722 provide research and staff support for affiliates.

723 ■ The AFT should, at the same time, be involved in providing assistance for
724 activities that will strengthen the capacity of state federations and local
725 unions in efforts to organize and represent members. The AFT should assist
726 in the establishment of union structures, provide for leadership training and
727 assistance, and help our locals develop the skills and programs that they
728 require to represent members and participate in the development and imple-
729 mentation of education reform issues.

730 Opportunities to advance the interests of members can take many forms, and
731 we should be open to these opportunities while we seek to develop our capacity
732 to represent our members' interests. The union consists of locals in various
733 stages of development and maturity. Because of the different conditions and the
734 variations of experience, some state federations and locals will necessarily
735 choose different ways to advance the profession. At each level of governance, we
736 should use the tools available to us—collective bargaining at the local level
737 where possible, heightened political and legislative activity at the state level,
738 and union-sponsored programs to enhance the profession.

739 There are significant opportunities in the education reform movement for
740 emerging locals and state federations. By being open to new ideas and involved
741 in their development, drawing on the resources and experience of other seg-
742 ments of the union, locals can provide a stronger voice for their members. This
743 involvement can result in important improvements in education and gains for
744 teachers and other school employees and can also help the union grow. The
745 growth of the union is important to the education reform movement because of
746 the special relationship of the union to its members. Teachers and their unions
747 will evaluate proposals, develop new concepts, and serve as the vehicles
748 through which the new reform measures will be implemented. The most valu-
749 able reform proposals are those that support these opportunities.

750 The consideration of new ideas and involvement in education reform
751 activities should enhance the efforts to strengthen our ability to represent
752 members. In fact, such involvement may suggest the importance of organizing
753 and prove useful in broadening our sense of purpose for the organization. As
754 that strength is established, the union can effectively insist on the involvement
755 of teachers in any activity relating to the profession and obtain, through bargain-
756 ing or collateral activity, the conditions of employment sought by its members.
757 At the same time, we must continue to target resources and efforts toward
758 building strong local unions in new areas.

759 The following considerations should guide state federations and locals
760 engaged in the development of education reform proposals:

761 ■ Teacher unions, as the collective voice of the teaching profession, must be
762 involved in the development and implementation of education policy mat-
763 ters at all governance levels. The union's role is to provide leadership through
764 informing and educating the membership about the latest developments in
765 education reform and by taking the initiative in suggesting new education
766 reform policies.

767 ■ Participation of the membership in developing, deciding, planning, and
768 implementing reform proposals is critical to the acceptance of reform by
769 members. The local, state, and national structures should encourage oppor-
770 tunities for broad participation by members in the process.

771 ■ The collective bargaining process or collaborative agreements at the local
772 level and the legislative process at the state level are important means to rely
773 on in the exploration and development of various reform proposals.

- 774 ■ The discussion of reform proposals and the experience of other state federa-
775 tions and locals can provide valuable insights to state and local federations
776 about new approaches that can help us achieve our goals. AFT locals and
777 state federations have gained experience in successfully bargaining new
778 measures to enhance teachers' professional lives, as well as lobbying for
779 educational improvements at the state legislatures. We should make every
780 effort to find ways to come together to share these experiences for the benefit
781 of all.
- 782 ■ Members can benefit from efforts by state federations to bring together locals
783 to achieve state education reforms. The coordinating role of the state federa-
784 tion is crucial in the political debate surrounding education reform issues. A
785 strong state federation program is imperative to ensure the ability of the union
786 to provide effective leadership in education reform.
- 787 ■ State federations and local unions need to expand their political action
788 capacity so that reform activities requiring legislative activity or political
789 responses can be achieved. State federations and local unions are urged to
790 commit specific resources to achieve this goal.
- 791 ■ In developing programs to explore and implement education reform, we need
792 not draw resources away from our present activities but, rather, develop new
793 resources to meet the needs of our membership as a consequence of reform
794 proposals.