

NEWSLETTER

Local 1075

February 2025

Meet Our Executive Board:

Kelly Erinakes – President
Debra Lathrop – VP
Elementary
Joe Fargnoli – VP Secondary
Tiffany Risch – Secretary
Greg Wightman – Treasurer
Sue Toohey-Kaye –
Professional Development
Ted Mitchell – Public Relations

Donna Beaudoin – CHS Rep.
John Kelly – CHS Rep.
Matt Paiva – CHS Rep.
Christine Conklin – ASFMS Rep.
Derek Larginho – ASFMS Rep.
Jennifer Limoges – Western Rep.
Colleen Riessen – Western Rep.
Tara D’Aleno – Tiogue Rep.
Julie Marran – Hopkins Hill Rep.
Kristin Hill – Washington Oak Rep.
Michelle Gallagher – Washington Oak Rep.
Helen Tiernan – Blackrock Rep.

Membership Meeting Dates:

March 13th
May 8th

ASFMS @ 4PM



AFT’s AI & Education Series

From Share My Lesson comes this series and discussion board featuring many webinars and materials useful to navigating how to use AI in your teaching.

Join the team from the AI Educator Brain, which includes AFT’s Share My Lesson director Kelly Booz; New York City Public Schools teacher Sari Beth Rosenberg and EdBrAln, our AI teammate (yes, it named and designed itself!). In this community, we will dissect the pros and cons of AI tools in education. Our mission: to determine how AI can support teaching and learning, and when it might be best to stick with tried-and-true methods.

Some webinars include:

[Commonsense Guardrails for Using Advanced Technology in Schools](#)

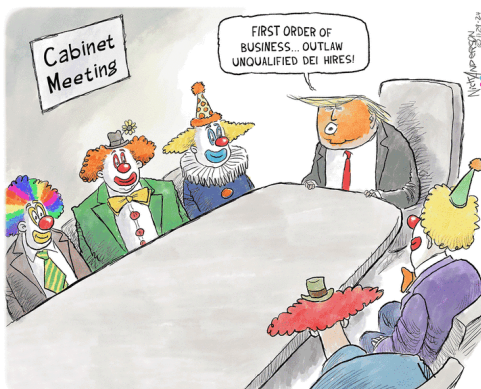
[The AI Educator Brain on AI Literacy: Navigating the Election Frenzy—Truth or Trickery?](#)

[The AI Educator Brain on To Grade or Not to Grade: AI’s Role in Assessing Student Work](#)

[The AI Educator Brain on Differentiation and AI: Empowering Educators and Engaging Parents](#)

[The AI Educator Brain on AI-Powered Visuals for Engaging Students](#)

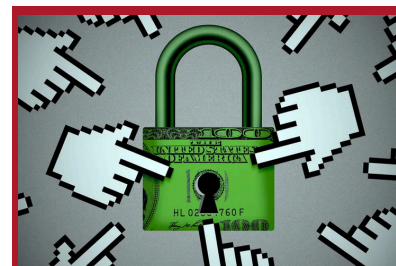
[The AI Educator Brain on Lesson Planning with AI: Teaching Sidekick or Sci-Fi Overlord?](#)



AFT Sues Department of Education Over DEI Directive

The AFT and the American Sociological Association filed a federal lawsuit challenging a recent U.S. Department of Education “Dear Colleague” letter. The letter, issued on Feb. 14, threatens to withhold federal funding from educational institutions that do not comply with its policy. The AFT argues that it undermines civil rights laws and restricts the teaching of accurate history, including topics on slavery, diversity, and inclusion.

The lawsuit asserts that the directive is unconstitutional, harms students by limiting critical thinking and historical understanding. Randi Weingarten criticized the policy as an attack on knowledge and equal opportunity. It will have a harmful impact on students, educators, and academic freedom. The lawsuit aims to prevent what the plaintiffs see as an overreach of federal authority and a violation of American educational values.



Stop Elon Musk from invading upon Americans' tax and other private data

The Privacy Act of 1974, created in response to post-Watergate concerns, limits government overreach by granting individuals control over their personal data, restricting agency disclosures, and enforcing strict accountability measures.

It appears Musk has hacked into millions of Americans’ personal information and now has access to their taxes, Social Security, student debt and financial aid filings. Musk’s so-called Department of Government Efficiency was not created by Congress—it is operating with zero transparency and in clear violation of federal law.

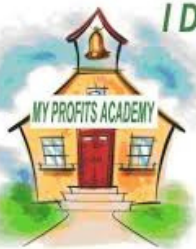
This is outrageous, and it must be stopped. Click "start writing" below to Congress and the Trump administration to stop Musk from invading upon our personal information.

[Contact Your Senators Here](#)

CTA Newsletter

I DO IT FOR THE KIDS

(Continued)



The Federal Role in Education: Past, Present, & Future?

In 1867 President Andrew Johnson signed the Department of Education Act. There were only three clerks with Henry Barnard (the same person who founded what became Rhode Island College) that worked there. The original department was limited to collecting statistics on the condition of education in our country. Only one year later, Barnard asked for more funds and Congress demoted the department instead to the Office of Education within the Department of Interior (this part of our government today oversees management of federal lands and natural resources). The southern states were distrustful of any federal intervention (sound familiar today?) and wanted to control their segregated schools.

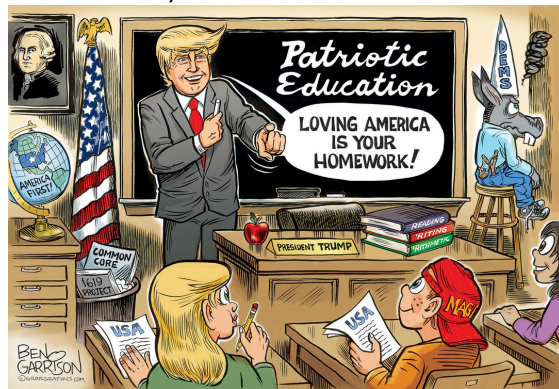
It wasn't until decades later that Congress passed the 1917 Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act in the interest of addressing widespread illiteracy among the large influx of immigrants coming into our country. The motivation was to provide government welfare to entice illiterate immigrants from joining the communist and anarchist movements. The communists in the Soviet Union later motivated Congress again to pass the 1958 National Defense Education Act to compete in the Space Race, endorsing science and foreign language.

It wasn't until the 1960s where the federal role in education grew dramatically with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as part of Johnson's Great Society policies. This law provided technology, training, resources, and parental involvement programs. It also emphasized the equal access to education for all children.

Congress reauthorized it for years as it involved from the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, to the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 and, eventually, Every Child Succeeds Act with which we are working under today. These major pieces of legislation were overseen by the Federal Security Agency which the Office of Education was moved to in 1939, eventually moving again the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare from 1953 to 1979. Finally, the Department of Education was signed into law under President Jimmy Carter in 1979. President Trump claims that his plan is to eliminate or shut down the Department of Education. Our Constitution doesn't allow for this as it would take an act of Congress to do so. Moreover, the legislation mentioned above, passed by Congress, would remain law. If Congress does vote to terminate the Department, other agencies of our government would likely take over the different tasks created in past legislation. Know that already our school meal programs are overseen by the Agriculture Department and the Department of Health and Human Services runs Head Start.

One of the largest concerns among many is what happens to Title I funding. Given that almost all school districts across the country get a share of that money, it would likely continue and be implemented by another agency. Most importantly, what happens to special education? The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1975) was originally run by the Health and Human Services (HHS) predecessor. This law affects almost 8 million children and would likely be moved back to HHS.

What is the motivation behind eliminating the Department of Education? Between federal, state, and local governments, our country spends \$857.2 billion dollars on K-12 schools. The campaign dollars behind Trump's proposed voucher platform want access to these funds. Deregulation and a lack of accountability, make this easier.



DEPARTMENT OF PEOPLE WHO WORK FOR A LIVING
AFL-CIO

Department of People Who Work for a Living

We'll be ensuring the federal government works for working people and isn't destroyed by billionaires like Elon Musk. We'll report on the facts of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) cuts and what you can do to fight back.

Message from Liz Schuler - President of the AFL-CIO
(Click on the image for video)



Join Us on Bluesky!

Since Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter, now rebranded as X, he has faced criticism for banning journalists who are critical of him, allegedly censoring Democratic perspectives, and promoting far-right extremist content, despite his claims of being a "free speech absolutist."

Let us not support him as he dismantles the Department of Education. Please click the image below and switch to Bluesky!

Coventry Teachers Alliance RI
LOCAL 1075

CTA
Dedication to Educator

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