

TURN Mission Statement

Teacher unions must provide leadership for the collective voice of their members. Teacher unions have a responsibility to students, their families, and to the broader society. Teacher unions are committed to public education as a vital element of our democracy. What unites these responsibilities is our commitment to help all children learn. We affirm the union's responsibility to collaborate with other stakeholders in public education and to seek consistently higher levels of student achievement by:

- Improving continuously the quality of teaching.
- Promoting in public education and in the union democratic dynamics, fairness, and due process for all.
- Seeking to expand the scope of collective bargaining to include instructional and professional issues.
- Improving on an ongoing basis the terms and conditions under which both adults and children work and learn.



Fairfax County Launches B.U.S. Beginners United for Success

Poor teacher retention has been characterized as a national crisis in recent years, as the attrition rate among teachers during their first three years in the classroom has risen to over 30% nationwide. Fairfax County Public Schools hires over 1,000 new teachers every year. The cost of living in the area is particularly high and new teachers often face additional budgetary problems and very often must live far outside the community in which they teach.

At the October, 2008 TURN meeting in Portland, Princess Crabtree, an FEA Director, was energized and excited by a group of young teachers from Decatur, IL. Their program for new teachers, which they dubbed Club 315 inspired Princess to jump-start something similar through the Fairfax Education Association. BUS, or *Beginners United for Success*, will soon be implemented as a program for teachers with 3 years or less experience in Fairfax County. Based on the Club 315 model, they plan to schedule monthly gatherings to provide new teachers with opportunities to network, socialize, and benefit from community support.



Princess worked with others to develop a video and a business plan that she will soon share with the school system and Chamber of Commerce, seeking their cooperation and partnership. Goals for BUS include publicizing the program at new teacher orientation, and securing discounts and special services for new teachers from businesses throughout the county in preparation for a successful kickoff in September 2009.

In addition, the Fairfax Education Association has surveyed new teachers and plans to hold focus groups to gather data on specific needs of the teachers in Fairfax County, which will also influence plans for BUS. The groundwork has been laid, and now the legwork must begin!

Precious Crabtree
Fairfax Education Association, VA



Upcoming TURN Events

TURN meeting
• June 4-6 2009 The Tamaya Resort in Bernalillo, NM

Great Lakes TURN Meeting:
• March 30 - 31, 2009 National Louis University Campus in Chicago, Illinois

For more information, contact:
Dal Lawrence at: Dallawrence@aol.com
or
Mary McDonald at: mary.mcdonald@cecillinois.org

TURN Reflections Cont.

As teachers, we formed the union to effectively address issues on behalf of educators. Somewhere along the line we forgot the element of staying actively engaged even in calm and easy times. As a result, we have created a static organization that struggles to escape status quo. Our unions struggle to pave the future of education by virtue of letting our union "ness" atrophy in pursuit of focusing almost exclusively on education issues themselves and not nurturing the strength of our organization to be a real force regarding those issues. Yet, we have survived and even grown. Imagine where we'd be if we had been deftly and efficient in growing and evolving!



While in Memphis, I visited the Civil Rights Museum. I was reminded how progressive, as educators and as a movement, we have been. The NEA educated African American slaves when it was illegal. We had a woman as president ten years before women could hold elected office. The immensity of the feelings that people felt to change segregation cost lives, pride, beatings, and pain. Yet every victim of segregation took part in the bus boycotts, the freedom rides and ultimately in the insistence on a new condition. We fight a similar fight where all of these things are at stake because the deprivation of education results in their very circumstances, yet the measure of devotion our members feel in preventing these things seems labored at best.

We must reinvigorate people to get re-involved so that they can help innovate the union and make it relevant so that we can innovate education. Once we do this we will truly have captured the best of what President Obama did to rejuvenate interest in the civic duty of political Participation.

Tim Cross,
Colorado Springs Ed. Assoc., CO

TURN *Teacher Union Reform Network of AFT and NEA Locals*
News

A PERIODICAL DEDICATED TO TEACHER UNION REFORM

Memphis, Tennessee

January 22 - 24 2009

Bridging the Theory and Practice Gap

Tom Alves, TURN Co-Director

The Memphis TURN Conference marked another step towards bridging the gap between theory and practice with regard to sustainable, innovative school models. Presentations by critical friend Joe Graba, University of Pennsylvania Professor Richard Ingersoll, Jim Russell of Smart Schools (see related article on p. 2), and our very own scholar, Adam Urbanski, provided a range of practical ideas, theories, and provocations that could serve us well in our locals back home.



About three years ago, Joe Graba presented a powerful theoretical construct to TURNsters — Harvard professor Clayton Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation. Joe presented Education Evolving's attempt to apply the disruption theory to public schools in a historic proposal to the Minnesota State Legislature that would establish a network of innovative, self-governed schools.

Richard Ingersoll, author of *Who Controls Teachers Work*, presented his thesis that schools need

"Ingersoll argued that accountability without commensurate power is unfair and harmful."

to go beyond the current hierarchical model and simply give teachers more power and control.

In a work setting marked by uncertainty, ambiguity, and students with vast ranges of academic and social skills, Ingersoll argued that accountability without commensurate power is unfair and harmful.

Adam Urbanski proved that his common sense thinking was ahead of its time once again as he presented his 10 year-old article, *Make Public Schools Like Private Ones*. Advocating for creating safer schools, teacher and parent empowerment through increased autonomies over budget, organization, curriculum, Adam provided us with a timely counter-narrative to the charter school movement.

At the end of the day, the practitioners had the final say, as it should be. Teachers from New York City, Denver, and Boston presented updates of their innovative school models. At least in three districts, unions and districts stopped obsessing about the seemingly inevitable privatization of public schools long enough to do something about it.

Memphis Ed. Assoc. Plays Host to TURN!

Memphis Education Association President, Stephanie Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Ken Foster and other members of the MEA welcome TURN to Memphis – The Home of the Blues and the Birthplace of Rock & Roll!



TURN in New Mexico

Ellen Bernstein, TURN Co-Director

At our next TURN meeting in New Mexico on June 5-6, 2009, we will continue to delve into the topic of "leading innovation" both in our schools and in our unions. "How can unions create innovation within our own organizations?" "Can unions lead the way toward innovative schools without first rethinking how our own unions operate?" We will deepen our conversations about instructional practices within innovative schools. "If a school has an innovative structure but very traditional pedagogical practices---is it really innovative?" "How do we work to improve teaching and learning and push the envelope of innovation within NCLB?" These provocative questions persist among our TURN members with a growing sense of urgency and importance.



Decatur "Turns" to Club 315 to Engage New Members



What do teachers new to the profession think about their union? How do you engage and support young teachers during their first years in the profession? How can union leaders connect with the new teachers in their locals? Just ask the members of Club 315, an exciting new venture for the Decatur Education Association -IEA in Decatur, Illinois!

Roxie Dotson and other members of DEA's Club 315 were featured at the Memphis TURN meeting to share their efforts and expand upon the idea of InTURNships. Dotson explains, "The ideas that led to the development of Club 315 were fostered from the experiences that many of us had at TURN meetings. We were inspired to develop this organization inside of our association by listening and learning about TURN's continuous focus on improving teacher quality through union leadership."

Club 315 continues to gain the interest of DEA's new membership, as well as others in the community who are concerned about the future of education. Club 315 sponsors ongoing activities that encourage the networking of educator and builds a positive relationship among the association, the school administration and the Decatur community.



TURN Reflections

We know that in schools where teachers have input and voice, students are more successful and teachers are happier. It is incredibly exciting to have data to support this change in instructional leadership.

Kelly Sholtis
Springfield Education Assoc., IL



TURN conferences always start with introductions so people have an idea of who is in the room, where they are from and hearing about what others are going through in their locals, schools and communities. Sometimes it makes me feel better about my own local situation. Then we get started with the rest of the TURN program! I greatly appreciate the balance between presentation and conversation. Usually I leave a TURN conference with new ideas or ways to modify and use ideas that are currently being done elsewhere.

Leslie Littman, President
Hart District Teachers Assoc., CA



Reflections Cont. on page 4

InTURNships Implemented

At the Fall 2008 TURN meeting in Portland, ME, principal TURN members agreed to offer InTURNships to encourage locals to bring newer members of their unions to TURN meetings. As an incentive to each local, the TURN registration fee is waived for new, emerging leaders in a union local who attend these national TURN meetings. Approximately 15 members were participants in the InTURNship program at the January 2009 meeting in Memphis. It was great to have their voices in the room and hear their thoughts about the future of public education and progressive unionism! These InTURNships include the following:

- Corey Bobbitt — Decatur Education Association
- Megan Glover — Decatur Education Association
- Sarah Pritts — Decatur Education Association
- Nicole Johnson — Decatur Education Association
- Faith Vaught — Decatur Education Association
- Barb Bettis — Elgin Teachers Association
- Maryellyn Friel — Elgin Teachers Association
- Hans Stiehl — Elgin Teachers Association
- Lisa Whitme — Elgin Teachers Association
- Kiesha Williams — Elgin Teachers Association
- Jim Barnhill — Minneapolis Federation of Teachers
- Eric Luedtke — Montgomery County Education Assoc.
- Brittani Hopper — Springfield Education Association
- Crysta Weitekamp — Springfield Education Association



The Florida Virtual School Project

Continuing the theme of innovative practices - Jim Russell of Smart Solutions spoke to TURN members about the Florida Virtual School (FLVS). Founded in 1997 by the Florida State Board of Education, it is the country's first statewide on-line public high school. In 2007-08 alone FLVS provided over 63,000 students with 137,000 supplemental half-credit courses.

Most of these students are either advanced students taking AP courses or struggling teens trying to recover credit and graduate from their high schools. The FLVS has an 85% success rate because of the one-on-one support, monthly phone calls and assessments of the on-line teachers, as well as strong parental support.

Questions from TURN members ranged from certification of on-line teachers, student class loads and teacher salaries to how these types of courses meet student IEPs and the accessibility of these courses for students who don't have the necessary technology at home.

Virtual programs like FLVS challenge TURN members to re-imagine what high schools will look like and to consider the implications for unions as teachers work in these types of virtual classrooms. "

Maureen Logan
Westerly Teachers Association, RI



TURN Expands to Regional Networks

One of the outcomes of the Memphis TURN meeting was the initial planning for satellite TURN meetings throughout the United States. The goal of these regional TURN meetings is to increase opportunities for our colleagues to participate in these controversial and provocative discussions in locations that are closer to "home" - within driving distances of our local communities.



Mid-Atlantic TURN

TURN members from Virginia and Maryland established a Mid Atlantic TURN meeting to take place at the new headquarters of the Montgomery County Education Association in Montgomery County, Maryland. Tentative dates for this initial meeting are May 9 or 16, 2009. Topics may include:

- So we elected Obama. What can we expect?
- More than meets the eye: Right to Work and Collective Bargaining Locals...
- Teachers' working conditions are students' learning condition. How can we help our kids, our profession and ourselves?

This one-day session will include one or two presentations featuring a guest speaker as well as opportunities for locals to converse with one another around several topics.

For further information contact Doug Prouty, Vice President of MCEA, at dproutyl@mcea.nea.org or 301-294-6232



Northeast TURN

The Northeast Regional TURN Satellite also re-organized in Memphis. Teacher union leaders from Portland, Maine, Boston, Cambridge and Fall River, Massachusetts, Westerly, RI, Syracuse and Rochester, New York and Pittsburg, PA. agreed to meet on Thursday, March 19, 2009 in Boston. The Boston Teachers Union graciously agreed to host this session.

Agenda items will include sustaining and expanding the reach of the satellite, learning about challenges and successes of regional union leaders, exploring the implications of on-line learning for students and teachers and discussing how to encourage emerging leaders and bring young teachers into union leadership positions.

For more information contact Maureen Logan at mlogan@westerly.k12.ri.us or Gary Vines at gvines@maine.rr.com.



Great Lakes TURN

The Great Lakes TURN Satellite, which includes Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin, will meet on March 30-31, 2009 at National Louis University downtown Chicago campus.

Monday's morning agenda on March 30 includes a school tour option with afternoon conversations and presentations that focus on establishing and strengthening professional learning communities within and among union locals. GL TURN participants hope to learn from existing PLC's in both private and education sectors to assist us in utilizing our own TURN community more effectively in our progressive union work.

The sessions on March 31 will encourage union locals to assess their work using the 3 Frames of Unionism. Experienced GL TURN locals will partner with new locals to analyze and discuss the following questions pertaining to their work:

- Where do we want to be?
- Where are we now?
- How do we get from where we are to where we want to be?
- What are we learning?
- Where do we focus next?

Each union local will also have an opportunity to share action plans or next steps that focus on one area within the 3 Frames of Unionism that is important to the work in their community.

For more information, contact Dal Lawrence at dallawrence@aol.com or Mary McDonald at mary.mcdonald@cecillinois.org.



TURN Goes 24/7/365 Via FaceBook

"One topic of conversation that participants undertook at the Memphis TURN meeting was that of the rapid change of technology and its effects on the future of education. In that context, it seemed a natural progression to use the social networking technology of Face-

book to help TURN participants continue their dialogue with one another between TURN conferences. If you are interested in doing so, join Facebook and search for the group TURN: (Teacher Union Reform Network). Feel free to start conversations, post helpful links, or keep us informed of what is happening in your local."



Jim Barnhill
Minneapolis Federation of Teachers, MN