



TEACHER

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THE WASHINGTON TEACHER
Progress Report
S u m m e r 2 0 1 1 E d i t i o n



**Saunders Administration:
Our First Six Months in Review**

www.wtulocal6.net



July 15, 2011

WTU Member:

The school year has come to a close and I thank you for your dedication, commitment and perseverance. We have encountered obstacles and opportunities, but most importantly, we have begun to improve WTU's image as an aggressive and responsive teacher representative. WTU's internal information technology system was upgraded. The internal organizational structure was revamped, a Legislative and Budget Analyst position was created, and staff received training at the National Labor College and elsewhere.



WTU organized several labor actions including the "We Will Not Be Quiet!" Campaign. It successfully secured public testimony when some tried to quiet the voices of parents, teachers, and students in the Chancellor's selection process. I delivered public and written testimony to the DC City Council and participated in countless media interviews. Several events were held to mobilize our membership and let our collective voices be heard. WTU re-engaged our dedicated retiree chapter members and formed an alliance with police and firefighter unions to defeat pension cuts.



I remain confident that WTU will persevere, ensuring that your working conditions are improved, your due process rights are protected and your concerns are addressed so that you and your students can meet your full potential. Rest assured that I remain steadfast throughout the summer. We will actively engage in several initiatives, including: the "Save Our Schools" Rally on July 30th, WTU Executive Board Member and Building Representative Trainings and our first-ever Summer Film Series.



Going into next school year, we will be armed and ready to: take a stand when our concerns are discounted, continue to challenge the unfair aspects of IMPACT, provide relevant and engaging professional development and collaborate with DC Public Schools and other educational stakeholders to improve academic achievement.

Please look out for periodic updates from the WTU and have a safe, enjoyable and relaxing summer!



Be Safe,

Nathan A. Saunders, President

EDUCATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS PROGRESS

WTU Reached out to Key Educational Stakeholders

WTU President Saunders formed a collaboration with award winning author, historian, and education reformer Diane Ravitch. The union will be working with her to explore ways to effectively achieve successful public education reform.



He also implored American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten to immediately allocate resources to handle the serious concerns about the IMPACT teacher evaluation tool.

General Vice President Peterson along with WTU Field Representatives met with specific group of WTU members including: social workers, school counselors, special education teachers, RIF teachers, retirees, athletic trainers and excessed teachers to listen to their concerns and provide any necessary support.

LABOR MOVEMENT PROGRESS

WTU Spearheaded Several Labor Actions

WTU joined with other unions to protest former DC Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee, governors Scott Walker and Tom Corbett for their support of the voucher system which dilutes traditional resources for public education and is contrary to the public education interests of parents and their children in this country.

WTU leadership attended the 33rd Annual Evening with Labor Dinner sponsored by the Washington Metropolitan Labor Council (AFL-CIO) during which nearly 1,000 labor leaders, activists and politicians gathered at this event to show unity and solidarity around the DC labor movement.

WTU General Vice President Candi Peterson served as a panelist during the Stand Up & Fight Back! Conference sponsored by the ANSWER Coalition during which she highlighted WTU's aggressive plan to support our members as well as how the community can support us in our efforts.

During his first month in office, President Saunders met with then Acting Chancellor Kaya Henderson to highlight and address key issues for teachers and the WTU's priorities moving forward.

WTU joined with other unions in DC to rally in support of workers under attack in Wisconsin and across the country.



LABOR MOVEMENT PROGRESS

WTU held a successful protest at the Washington Post Headquarters. WTU protested that the Washington Post has buried the truth about education reform in DC, endorses IMPACT at any cost and owns Kaplan Higher Education, the premiere education profiteers in the United States. During the rally, WTU President Saunders called upon the nearly 300 participants to stop buying the Washington Post until they stop lying!



WTU staff attended the National Labor College; the nation's only accredited higher education institution devoted exclusively to educating union members, leaders and staff. During the week-long training session, staff learned additional skills in strategic grievance handling, leadership development, campaign development, strategic planning, and bargaining.



WTU members and staff attended the National Day of Action March and Rally at Freedom Plaza which coincided with the "We Are One" movement across the country, commemorating the struggle for workers' rights on April 4th, the anniversary of the day Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Members were also encouraged to sign the "We Are One" pledge in a show of solidarity.



WTU released a final report from the WTU Education Transition Summit that contained critical and candid feedback from members on the IMPACT teacher evaluation system.

WTU President Saunders called upon the nearly 300 participants to stop buying the Washington Post until they stop lying!



LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

WTU Contributed to Legislation, Law & Policy

WTU President Saunders met with the Mayor and DC City Council Chairman to discuss three key items: 1.) maintaining the Education Committee with the Committee of the Whole, 2.) highlighting the controversial and improper tenets of IMPACT, and 3.) ensuring that the WTU is at the table for all key educational discussions.

WTU organized a WTU Education Transition Summit to provide first-hand input on key educational issues with Mayor Vincent Gray's Education Transition Team. During the summit, Education Transition Team members listened while more than 500 WTU members engaged in critical discussions and polling regarding the IMPACT evaluation tool.

WTU President Saunders testified on a variety of important educational topics, including: the Healthy Schools Act, the role of teacher evaluation systems in public and public charter schools, DC Public Schools' Budget, the Pension Protection and Sustainability Amendment Act of 2011, the Bullying and Intimidation Prevention Act of 2011 and the confirmation of Acting Chancellor Kaya K. Henderson

President Saunders also represented the WTU on Mayor Gray's Chancellor Selection Team and made recommendations to Mayor Gray on the next DCPS Chancellor.

WTU publicly endorsed Vincent Orange and Trayon White in the Special Elections citing their energy, civic involvement and dedication to empowering students in the District. Orange won the At-Large DC City Council seat, while White was selected to represent Ward 8 on the State Board of Education.

WTU won the case of the 75 former DCPS teachers who were terminated while on probationary status in 2008 as well as the cases of Denise Hamilton and Fred Kamara, two accomplished and well-loved blind teachers who were unfairly terminated by DCPS.

WTU engaged members in several successful public advocacy campaigns to inform the public that "we will not be quiet!" when it came to issues such as mandatory furlough days, changes to the retirement and pension legislation, and the confirmation hearing of permanent DCPS Chancellor—all of which affect members' day-to-day work.



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MEDIA PROGRESS

WTU Fostered an Open and Honest Relationship with the Media

WTU President Saunders was interviewed by several media outlets, including: the Washington Post, DC Examiner, Washington Times, Voice of America, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, USA Today, Washington Informer, Associated Press, Afro-American, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, FOX 5, ABC News 7, NBC 4 News, WAMU (88.5), and WPGC (95.5). During these interviews, he provided keen insight on topics ranging from: IMPACT, Former DCPS Chancellor Rhee, school vouchers, education reform, teacher excessing, high erasures at several DC Public Schools and the state of education in the District.



WTU began distributing a weekly email entitled, News Stories You Should Know, to provide members with an accurate account of education news, keep members abreast of articles that include the WTU's position on various issues, and highlight similar national and international educational struggles.

WTU held press conferences to announce the results of major issues which affect WTU members. The leadership of WTU contends that members and the general public have a right to know, first-hand, of the union's efforts to right the wrongdoing of management. Taxpayer dollars went to waste in pursuing nonsense litigation against our members. In Denise Hamilton's case, for example, Arbitrator Greenberg said that instead of correcting an obviously unfair termination of a blind teacher, DCPS invested several years and substantial taxpayer funds defending its improper decision to terminate Ms. Hamilton.

President Saunders provided keen insight during interviews on several topics including: IMPACT, Former DCPS Chancellor Rhee, school vouchers, and education reform.



MEMBERSHIP PROGRESS

WTU Provided Transparent Information to Members

WTU held more than the constitutionally required WTU Representative Assembly, General Membership and Building Representative meetings.

WTU General Vice President Peterson and WTU Field Representatives visited all but one of the reconstituted schools to inform members of their rights as they related to mutual consent and excessing and to answer any relevant questions.

WTU prioritized the active involvement of dedicated retiree chapter members. The WTU Retirees Chapter boasts a membership of over 800 former DCPS teachers and related service providers. WTU recognizes the significant contribution these individuals have made to WTU throughout their careers as being stalwarts for fair representation, due process and student achievement. The union will continue to call upon them to help advocate for the interests of active teachers, students and their families.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS

WTU Provided Quality Professional Development to Members

WTU sponsored two successful retirement workshops for all WTU members. DCPS, the DC Retirement Board, the Social Security Administration, and the US Treasury Department provided members with vital information about retirement options and answered any questions.

WTU created a separate section on the website to keep WTU members informed of exciting and useful professional development information.

WTU held an exciting and informative Spring Break Conference for DCPS Teachers and Related Service Providers entitled “Working Through IMPACT: Tips and Strategies” during which members were provided with the strategies and guidance they need to survive IMPACT and improve their scores.

WTU hosted a successful WTU Building Representative Training Conference to inform WTU Building Representatives on how to more effectively advocate for members in their school buildings.



BENEFITS PROGRESS

WTU Improved Membership Services

WTU hired another law firm, Joseph, Greenwald and Laake, PA, that will work diligently to ensure that members’ rights are protected and reexamine those teachers who were terminated as a result of IMPACT.

New staff positions were created including: Legislative and Budget Analyst, WTU Field Services Specialist and Membership Manager.

WTU partnered with Liberty Mutual to offer auto and home insurance benefit programs so that members can be protected from on the job losses.

The WTU upgraded to a new information technology company, OutsourcIT, to ensure that its’ technology best meets the needs of its’ members.

WTU kicked off its Summer Movie Series by providing some comic relief for members with the free screening of the movies “Bad Teacher” and “Horrible Bosses” at Regal Cinemas located in Gallery Place Mall. The film series will continue with the showing and panel discussion of “The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting for Superman” in the coming weeks.



RECOGNITION AND GIVING PROGRESS

WTU Contributed to Teachers and the Community

WTU staff delivered supplies and other materials to Takoma EC teachers to aide them in setting up their new classroom. They were forced to relocate to the Meyers ES facility during the holiday break after there was a fire at their school.



WTU contributed to the 11th Annual Children's Christmas Toy Store sponsored by the Native Washingtonian Club, Inc.

WTU established the "WTU - William Lockridge Scholarship Award" to continue Mr. Lockridge's legacy of passion, dedication and commitment. WTU awarded scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 each to five students who graduated from three DCPS high schools that Lockridge served during his 20-year career as a DC School Board member.

WTU awarded WTU Scholarship Fund (WTUSF) scholarships in the amount of \$20,000 each to two deserving DCPS seniors who plan to pursue careers in education.

WTU provided event sponsorship to several local community organizations, including: the Ward 5 Education Council, George Goodman Basketball League, DC Jobs with Justice, PG County Branch of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People, Metropolitan Washington Labor Council, Peggy Browning Fund, and DC Boys Choir.

In celebration of Teacher Appreciation Week, WTU randomly awarded prizes to 100 WTU members, including coffee gift cards and movie tickets.

WTU held a "Salute to DC Public School Educators" on the Potomac during which members enjoyed a complimentary awards luncheon, entertainment, and prizes on the Spirit of Washington Cruise Ship.

WTU Leadership Received Recognition for Educational Achievements

WTU President Saunders received the People's Champion Award from the United Black Fund for his tireless advocacy on behalf of DCPS teachers.

WTU General Vice President Peterson received the Honorary Membership Award from the DCPS Counselors Association in recognition of her outstanding contributions and support of DCPS counselors.



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