

Blind to Reality, By: Jared Ceaser, CFT Building Representative



In February, we had our learning teams' meeting. Before the meeting, we had an emergency staff meeting. At the staff meeting, the principal and psychologist discussed looking for signs of distress in our students. They discussed how to monitor students' behaviors in case they were upset or had something disturbing going on in their lives.

Later, at the learning teams meeting, one of my colleagues discussed how difficult it is to assess and teach the students because of outside factors. She talked about how students faced difficult hardships including coming from homes that sometimes have no working electricity, running water, or food in the refrigerator. The truth is that when some of our students come to school each and every morning, their only meals are at school. It has become too apparent that some of our lawmakers only care about statistics then about our students. Some of the laws and mandates that our lawmakers have passed down are unreasonable and highly impossible. Students who are experiencing hardships outside of school surely cannot come into school on some days and perform at a high rate. If those students do perform at a high rate, what are they hiding on the inside? It is my belief that in some of the schools, CPS needs additional resources such as a crisis intervention counselor or more psychologists to help students dealing with emotional and physical distress.

This article is about getting our lawmakers and local politicians to understand that teachers, principals, and parents need to have additional resources in order to help our students. This is not a matter of dollars and cents. It's about our leaders learning that our students are more than numbers on a piece of paper. It is about our leaders showing compassion towards our students and helping them in a positive way.

It is unfortunate that some young people have lost their lives to suicide. Several other young people have attempted suicide. It is very difficult for a teacher to watch students and their families go through this tragic ordeal. Sometimes, when I come home from work, I complain to my wife about how the students misbehaved, were disrespectful, and did not want to do their work. Then, at the end of the day, they did not want to go home. My wife replied "Maybe they don't want to go home because they don't have anything to go home to. Some of the students you teach may be getting abused physically and mentally, and you would never know it because they don't say anything. Some of your students could be going home with no food in the fridge, no lights on, and taking care of their siblings at all hours of the night while their parents are out doing who knows what." I try now to give my students a little lead way because of the things that may be going on at home. But, the sad thing is that our lawmakers do not see that. It is perhaps because of these things that some students believe that life is too difficult for them to bear. School is just an afterthought.

There is no easy solution by any means. My colleague and I had a conversation after the learning teams meeting. She made some excellent points about what students go through outside of school. She came to the conclusion that maybe our lawmakers need to live in the homes of our students for one week or a month. Experience the drama and violence that happens in some of our students' neighborhoods. Then, try and give those same lawmakers a test after that week or a month and see how well they perform on it. Schools in high poverty neighborhoods need more counselors and social workers. Principals, teachers, and parents can't do it alone. We need more resources to help students who are depressed, being neglected, and who are thinking about ending their lives. I realized now that in the past I was selfish. I was selfish because I expected my students to perform well on my tests without knowing what some of them deal with on a daily basis. I was selfish because when I would leave my building at 5:00 or 5:30 p.m. in the afternoon some three and a half hours after school would end, I would see some of the students on the streets or outside of the school. I would drive pass them instead of asking them if they were okay or if they needed anything. These students are the leaders of tomorrow. But, in order for them to be leaders, first our leaders must take a look at what our students go through on a daily basis. Our leaders (some of them) need to stop being blind to reality.

Congratulations Melissa Estell, CFT/AFT Teacher Leader receives the 2016 Hawkins' Award

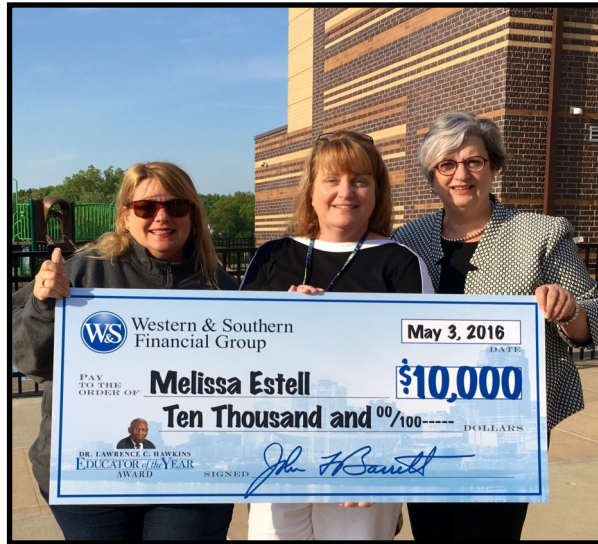
CFT is thrilled to congratulate and announce that Melissa Estell, a 25-year veteran teacher, who teaches at Woodford Paideia Academy, has been named the 2016 Dr. Lawrence C. Hawkins Educator of the Year. Melissa started off her career in CPS as a middle school math teacher and has served as an intervention specialist at Woodford Paideia Academy for the past 8 years.

Estell was chosen by Western & Southern and CPS from finalists who were nominated by their CPS peers for the award. She was recognized on May 3, 2016, with a plaque and a personal check for \$10,000 during a ceremony at Western & Southern's Guilford Institute. The ceremony marked the 10th anniversary of this award.

Melissa has helped lead the AFT Innovation Fund Grant Project the Woodford teaching staff participated in this year by serving as the Intermediate Math Leadership Teacher. Through this Teacher Leader role, Melissa helped assist with the work of the project by being part of the Advisory Committee overseeing the work of the project, assisting the instructional coaches with trainings designed around the SAP Instructional Practice Guide tool, scheduling teacher peer classroom visits, and engaging her colleagues with discussions around shared strategies to transition to the shifts required in Common Core Math instruction.

2016 Hawkins' Award continued

"We are so pleased that Melissa has been acknowledged for her hard work and dedication," said President Julie Sellers. "We thank her for her leadership which helped make the AFT grant project a successful experience at Woodford." Amy Guzi Parkinson, who has led the project adds, "Melissa's positive attitude and expertise has been such a huge asset to our project. I so appreciate her leadership and friendship! Way to go Melissa!"



AFT Members Occupational Liability Insurance Plan

CFT wants to make sure you know of a valuable benefit of your CFT membership! As a CFT member, you are covered by AFT's Occupational Liability Insurance Plan. The plan can only be purchased by local affiliates on behalf of their members, and CFT has purchased this protection for its members.

The plan provides AFT members broad protection for legal costs arising out of their employment activities. It covers participating members for a wide range of employment-related issues, including defense of alleged criminal acts. Coverage is determined based on the limitations and exclusions contained in the plan. To be covered, you must be a member in good standing at the time of the incident.

Here are a few highlights of the coverage:

- Up to \$1 million protection per member per occurrence for damages and attorney fees for accidental bodily injury (e.g., member opens a door and breaks a student's tooth), accidental property damage, and personal injury claims arising out of a member's employment activities.
- Reimbursement for certain expenses to defend any claim made against a member resulting from the following acts, where the charge arises solely out of the member's employment activities:
 - a. *Commission of a criminal act* – Up to \$5,000 per member per year regardless of the outcome
 - b. *Denial of constitutional rights* - Up to \$250,000 per member per year and up to \$1 million for any one incident
 - c. *Sexual abuse* – Up to \$35,000 per member per calendar year

Under no circumstance will the plan pay if there is a settlement of any claim of sexual abuse or any payment is made on behalf of a member due to a claim or allegation of sexual abuse.

Other Key Provisions:

Up to \$5,000 per year for reasonable attorney fees for any appearance before an administrative agency (such as ODE), where the proceeding arises out of the member's employment activities and involves the issuance, maintenance, or revocation of a member's license required for his or her job.

50,000 death benefit should the member be assaulted during his or her employment activities and death occurs within 90 days of the assault.

Duties in the Event of Occurrence, Offense, Claims or Suit

The member must notify AFT Program Administrator Thomas T. North Inc., *in writing*, as soon as practicable, of an occurrence or offense that may result in a claim under the plan. (Email AFT@northcoinc.com). For a claim form, go to <http://go.aft.org/OLIclaimform>. If you have questions or wish to make a claim, please contact CFT. We're here to help!!

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STRS Election

A delegation of the Retirement Committee and retirees from the Northeast Ohio Retirees chapter interviewed STRS Board member, Tim Myers, a candidate for the STRS Board. After the interview process, the committee recommends Tim Myers for selection. Tim is running for re-election and has been very willing to help address concerns of active teachers. These are complex days full of hard decision, so having someone with experience is helpful. Tim is a part of OEA's leadership team.

Are you a CFT/CFOP Member?

What does it mean to be a FULL CFT/CFOP Member? Being a full dues member puts each person in a position to serve in leadership roles with CFT/CFOP and at our State and National Levels.

- It provides \$1,000,000 in liability insurance and other member benefits such as discounts on travel & entertainment, shopping, and legal and financial services. Visit www.aft.org for more information
- Allows access to scholarship programs at our local, state, and national levels for members and members' children
- Loan Forgiveness programs
- Most importantly, it shows your commitment to be a full member of a union who works to ensure teachers & office personnel are treated as professionals and have fair working conditions