



On Target

AFT Local #2569

January 2023



Clarence Teachers Make the Difference

01/15/23

Putting fundamentals above fear and factionalism

by Randi Weingarten
President, American Federation of Teachers

As educators and families have grappled with the challenges of teaching, learning and reconnecting during the COVID-19 pandemic, you would hope that elected officials would have done all they could to help educators and families cope, recover and thrive. Instead, over the past three years, legislators in 45 states proposed hundreds of laws making it harder—[laws](#) seeking to ban books from school libraries; restrict what teachers can say about race, racism, LGBTQIA+ issues and American history; and limit the school activities in which transgender students can participate. After making untold concessions to far-right members of Congress to eke out a victory, one of Kevin McCarthy's first pledges as House speaker was to pass bills to address "woke indoctrination in our schools." These culture wars may be good fodder for right-wing politicians. But when parents and voters of all ideologies prioritize their goals for schools today, they want something very different. They want what educators want—safe and welcoming environments and a focus on essential knowledge and skills.



Weingarten reads to students at Buckeye Primary School in Medina, Ohio, on Sept. 13, 2022. Credit: Pamela Wolfe

The American Federation of Teachers commissioned a survey of voters and public school parents in December to examine public education as a 2022

voting issue and the public's education priorities for 2023 and beyond. Their top priorities include developing students' fundamental skills in reading, math and science; ensuring all children, regardless of background, have an opportunity to succeed; developing critical-thinking and reasoning skills; teaching practical life skills; and preparing students to succeed in college or careers.

We asked respondents to prioritize policies for improving public education. Expanding access to career and technical education, addressing staff shortages, reducing class size, and improving literacy skills top the list.

And we asked which approach should be a higher priority for improving education: making sure schools and teachers have the support and resources to meet the needs of all students, or giving parents more say in what children are taught and stopping schools from teaching a "woke, liberal" agenda, as governors like Ron DeSantis and Glenn Youngkin have advocated. Parents and voters strongly supported the first priority. We also asked about another concept advocated by anti-public school crusaders like billionaire Betsy DeVos: giving parents more choice over which schools their children attend, including taxpayer funding for private schools. By an 80 percent to 20 percent margin, voters and parents want policymakers to focus on improving education in the public schools rather than expanding school choice.

Parents and the public are concerned about shortages of teachers, counselors and nurses. They worry about inadequate funding for schools, students falling behind academically during the pandemic, lack of support and respect for teachers, and school safety. And this survey was conducted before a teacher in Newport News, Va., was shot and critically wounded in her classroom, reportedly by a 6-year-old child.

No one has emerged unscathed from the hardships of the past three years. At least 220,000 [children](#) in the United States have lost a parent to COVID-19. Young people have lost valuable in-person education, school-based support, and connections with their peers and caring adults. Educators have experienced the hardest years of their professional lives, only to be blamed for school closures caused by a pandemic, labeled as "groomers" and accused of teaching "filth."

These accusations can scare teachers away from having important classroom conversations that are necessary to prepare students for their roles in a healthy democracy. And politicizing education and denigrating teachers exacerbates the educator shortages that already are at crisis levels. Countless people have asked me how, in this climate, we can recruit and retain teachers. We must respect, appreciate and pay them more, of course. But we should also give them the tools, time and support they need to do their jobs.

We must trust teachers to teach. And, frankly, parents and voters do. Three-quarters of parents say that teachers in their schools generally stick to teaching appropriate academic content and skills. Voters see the culture wars as a distraction from schools' core mission of educating students, and they believe that politicians who are pushing these issues are doing so for their own political benefit. Not surprisingly, public school teachers top the list of who parents and voters trust to have the right ideas for public education, while politicians rank dead last.

Educators' North Star is helping children recover and thrive academically, socially and emotionally. This survey shows a deep well of support for educators, for the promise and potential of public education, and for the investments parents want to help their kids.

Editor's Note

Each month the On Target will come out near the end of the month.

If you have something that you would like included, please send as a Word document by the 20th of the month to:
lpunek@clarenceschools.org

Items that could be included are: Articles dealing with education/unions, Good ideas for teaching, something humorous/light dealing with education, Information for sharing, Opinion pieces on education, Advertisement for a service you provide.

Thank you,
Lisa Panek

01/19/23

Educators fight to keep their Social Security benefits

Nearly 40 years ago, two provisions in the Social Security Act were created with the intent of equally treating workers who pay Social Security taxes throughout their careers and those who do not pay Social Security taxes on all of their earnings. However, the provisions—the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO)—have caused nearly 2 million American workers to be denied benefits because they chose to enter public service. We need our police, firefighters and educators, but they are being penalized for the very service they provide. To date, public employees in 15 states are affected by [WEP](#) and [GPO](#). Marianne Maloney and Jane Roth are two examples.



iStock/Kemal Yildirim

Maloney is a 74-year-old veteran teacher, with 24 years of service in public education. She teaches high school math in New Haven, Conn. Under the Windfall Elimination Provision, Maloney will lose up to half of the Social Security she paid into the system for more than 20 years before entering public service, as well as any benefits her spouse accumulated. Maloney will not complete the 37.5 years for full retirement in Connecticut until she is 87.

Jane Roth, a special education teacher in New Haven, Conn., has been teaching for 29 years. Like many women, she paused her career to care for her children and later went back to teaching. When her husband died eight years ago at age 65, Roth was eligible to collect his Social Security. If Roth stays a full-time teacher, she can continue collecting her husband's Social Security

survivor benefit. If she retires, the Government Pension Offset will reduce, or as in Roth's case, eliminate the Social Security spousal benefits because she is eligible for a pension with the state.

"I'm OK right now, but there will come a day when I'm ready to step away from teaching. I have two choices. I can retire and receive a partial pension and no Social Security, or I can work until I'm 87 and collect a full pension."

Roth, Maloney and thousands of other public employees say the provisions are unfair and need to be repealed.

For years, the AFT and our retirees have been involved in the effort to repeal WEP and GPO. At the 2022 AFT convention in Boston, members passed a [resolution](#) that reiterated the AFT's support for fully repealing WEP and GPO. Now active teachers like Roth and Maloney have stepped up their involvement to end the [provision](#) as well.

"I should be able to retire with the benefits my spouse and I earned," says Roth.

Last year, advocates for repeal came close to achieving their goal when the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82), a bipartisan measure that would eliminate WEP and GPO, garnered 305 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives, enough to bring the measure to the House floor for a vote.



iStock/Kameleon007

Roth connected with the Connecticut Alliance for Retired Americans and joined the National WEP/GPO Repeal Task Force. She rallied with the group in Washington, D.C., last May and lobbied lawmakers as well.

The bill was not recommended in the House Ways and Means Committee; as a result, the bill was not taken up on the House floor. House Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal (D-Mass.) acknowledged the bill's popularity but expressed concerns about the measure's impact on the solvency of Social Security.

But Maloney believes the cost to repeal is exaggerated. “Do the math. It’s just not that big a hit. It’s not threatening enough to deny people their earned benefits,” she says.

“We’ve already paid into Social Security. I’m not looking to get anything that isn’t mine,” Roth says. “The expectation is that it’s there for you upon retirement, but it isn’t.”

Advocates of repeal say that WEP and GPO are unfair penalties that discourage second-career candidates from applying to teach when they learn that the WEP or GPO penalty will jeopardize their earned Social Security benefits if they enter the classroom.

“The best shot we have at filling the vacancies for the ongoing teaching shortage is recruiting second-career people who can bring their education and real-life experience to the classroom, but the second they hear that they are impacting their earned Social Security, they lose interest,” says Maloney.

“No one ever mentioned to me that I was reducing my Social Security,” says Maloney who believes she shouldn’t be penalized. “Active teachers don’t understand that it can happen to them.”

Roth agrees. “We need active teachers involved in this effort.”

Teachers and other public employees want to build on the momentum created in the last Congress, which saw the first committee action ever taken on a measure to repeal WEP and GPO. The bill has been reintroduced in the 118th Congress by Rep. Garret Graves (R-La.) and already has 10 bipartisan co-sponsors.

“I think we're getting stronger and stronger. With more education and awareness of how unjust this law is, we expect a groundswell of support from everyone—active and retired. To get our message out, we must talk about our rights as citizens who have paid into the system,” says Maloney. “We are asking for equal treatment with every other working American.”

- Chicago

01/20/23

Faculty strike in Chicago draws wide support

UPDATE: The strike has been suspended as of Jan. 23: UIC-UF reached a tentative agreement. [Read more here.](#)

Hundreds of University of Illinois Chicago faculty on strike for a fair contract, and their supporters, rallied Jan. 17, chanting, singing and marching to the sound of a brass band. Among their demands: salaries that keep up with inflation (and allow them to live in the city where they work), mental health care for their students, job security so that nontenure-track faculty have more than a few days' notice of whether they have a job each semester, and more transparency and due process for tenure-track faculty.



Lisa Philip/WBEZ

The faculty members of UIC United Faculty, an affiliate of both the AFT and the American Association of University Professors, number nearly 900, or one-third of the UIC's faculty, and include tenured, tenure-track and full-time nontenure-track positions. Their strike is being heralded by a host of local and national figures, including AFT President Randi Weingarten, AAUP President Irene Mulvey, Illinois Federation of Teachers President Daniel Montgomery, Chicago Teachers Union President Stacy Davis Gates, mayoral candidate Brandon Johnson, state Rep. Lakesia Collins and many others who have attended rallies and joined their voices in the struggle.

“We are here fighting for a fair contract. We are here fighting for our students. And it is no exaggeration to say that we are here fighting for the future of higher education,” said UIC United Faculty President Aaron Krall, putting the monumental effort into perspective. The union has been without a contract for five months and went on strike after nine months of bargaining and a final 12-hour session that failed to produce an agreement. More than 200 members showed up at that meeting to support the bargaining team, and another 100 attended via Zoom.



One issue driving the campaign is salaries. “Right now, the lowest-paid faculty members on our campus are paid \$50,000 a year. That is not enough in the city of Chicago,” said Krall. “We’re not going to settle this contract until we move that number, and we’re going to have to move that number a lot.”

The union is also fighting for its student community. Weingarten praised faculty for demanding mental health support for their students, describing the anxiety, trauma and disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. “If we care about kids’ academic success, if we care about their future, it is vitally important on this campus to have the mental health supports they need to thrive,” she said. The administration told the bargaining team that students’ mental health is “not your business,” said Weingarten. “Of course it’s your business. It’s everybody’s business, and that is what bargaining for the common good means.”



The CTU's Davis Gates also highlighted the fight for the common good—the notion that union contracts can demand better conditions for the communities where union members live and work. “Common good bargaining is the only type of bargaining that is going to transform the very type of places where we work and where we live,” she said. “How we union’ will determine if people get healthcare,” she said, adding that “how we union” will also determine school funding, help for unhoused people, employment rates, and “if you can say Black lives matter and then prove it.”

In this contract, the fight for student mental health services is key: Students at the UI Urbana-Champaign campus get assessments to determine the need for mental health and learning services, but those are not in place at the Chicago campus; UIC United Faculty wants commensurate services. While administrators say they are rolling out improved student services, they have balked at including them in a faculty contract; but when students come to faculty for help they are not necessarily trained to give, student mental health becomes a very real part of faculty life. And at the Chicago campus, where the student population is majority Black, Hispanic and Asian, many have been especially traumatized by the COVID-19 pandemic.



“Dr. King said if the labor movement and the civil rights movement were to ever collide, what enormous potential it would be,” said Johnson, addressing the crowd the day after the Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday. “That’s what we’re doing here today. ... If you believe that your contract is setting [us] up to build a more just, equitable society, let me hear you say yes.” The crowd roared its approval.

“The UIC faculty are dedicated to this institution,” said AAUP’s Mulvey. “They want UIC to be the best it can be. ... We stand in solidarity with you today, tomorrow and every day until you get the fair contract you deserve. ... You are strengthening the academic labor movement, and we’re here with you for the long haul.”

- A Little Humor



History teachers in 30 years trying to explain everything that happened in 2020, like...



Florida says AP class teaches critical race theory. Here's what's really in the course

January 22, 2023 9:16 AM ET

JULIANA KIM



Under Gov. Ron DeSantis' leadership, Florida has enacted a slew of education rules that limit teaching topics including race, and sexual orientation.

Octavio Jones/Getty Images

Florida's Department of Education has rejected an Advanced Placement course covering African American studies — saying the class indoctrinates students to "a political agenda."

"As submitted, the course is a vehicle for a political agenda and leaves large, ambiguous gaps that can be filled with additional ideological material, which we will not allow," said Bryan Griffin, Gov. Ron DeSantis' press secretary.

But scholars who were involved in creating the curriculum say that's far from the truth.

"There's nothing particularly ideological about the course except that we value the experiences of African people in the United States," Christopher Tinson, the chair of the African American Studies department at Saint Louis University, told NPR.

The course is the latest addition to the AP program, which helps high school students earn college credit. The class is currently undergoing a pilot phase. Sixty schools across the U.S. were participating in that trial run, including at least [one high school in Florida](#). But state officials have taken issue with the possibility that the course would teach about Black Lives Matter and [the reparations movement](#).

The state's rejection of the class comes as a [wave of states](#) attempt to censor the topics of race and sexual orientation in public schools.

DeSantis has been particularly combative on this issue. In 2022, he signed the "Stop WOKE" Act, which — among other things — sets limits on how race may be taught in classrooms.

What's in the course

The purpose of the class is to introduce students to the experiences and contributions of African Americans through a variety of lenses.

"We didn't want to just focus on slavery, although slavery is a part of it," Tinson said. "We wanted to give a comprehensive view of the culture, literature, historical development, political movements, social movements."

Tinson said the course will explore the origins of the African diaspora to Reconstruction, the Harlem Renaissance, the civil rights movement, and then some. It will also examine historical trailblazers including [Valerie Thomas](#), a scientist who invented the illusion transmitter.

He is particularly excited for students to have a fuller grasp of [the Haitian revolution](#), which Tinson argues tends to be underrepresented in history classes compared to the American and French revolutions despite being the most successful slave revolt in world history.

What's not in the course

Among the concerns that Florida officials have raised is whether the course will teach [critical race theory](#), the legal framework that argues racism is not just the product of individual bias, but is embedded in legal systems and policies.

"Florida rejected an AP course filled with Critical Race Theory and other obvious violations of Florida law," Florida Education Commissioner Manny Diaz Jr. [wrote](#) on Twitter on Friday.

"We proudly require the teaching of African American history. We do not accept woke indoctrination masquerading as education," he added.

But Tinson denied accusations that the theory will be taught in the course. While the class will explore the issue of inequality, the framework itself is too advanced for high school students even in a college-level course, according to Tinson.

The College Board told NPR that the African American studies course has been nearly a decade in the making.

"The reason why this is even an important area of study is because of the historical erasures from historical records in public schools of African experiences," Tinson said. "This is one small step to resolve that gap."

Correction Jan. 23, 2023

An earlier version of this article contained inaccurate comparisons to other existing AP courses. AP Chinese and AP German classes focus largely on developing language skills and cultural knowledge. AP European history does not focus on one community's history and culture in the same way as AP African American studies.

• **Tax Time**

**Your CTA
Dues for 2022
\$789**

January 19, 2023

Educator expense tax deduction increases for 2022 returns

Source: NYSUT Accounting



Eligible educators can deduct up to \$300 (up from \$250 in 2021) of qualified expenses paid in 2022.

This is the first time the deduction has increased since it was enacted in 2002.

If you and your spouse are filing jointly and both of you are eligible educators, the maximum deduction is \$600 (up from \$500 in 2021); however, neither spouse can deduct more than \$300 of their qualified expenses.

An eligible educator is a K-12 teacher, instructor, counselor, principal, or aide in public or private school who worked at least 900 hours in a school during the school year.

Qualified expenses include unreimbursed ordinary and necessary expenses paid:

- In connection with books, supplies, equipment (including computer equipment, software, and services), and other materials used in the classroom.
- For professional development courses you have taken related to the curriculum you teach or to the students you teach. But the IRS cautions that, for these expenses, it may be more beneficial to claim another

educational tax benefit, especially the lifetime learning credit. For details, see Publication 970, Tax Benefits for Education, particularly Chapter 3.

- For personal protective equipment, disinfectant, and other supplies used for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19

An ordinary expense is one that is common and accepted in your educational field. A necessary expense is one that is helpful and appropriate for your profession as an educator. An expense doesn't have to be required to be considered necessary.

For further information, consult your tax preparer and/or [IRS Publication 17, Your Federal Income Tax for Individuals](#).

Questions? Contact Amy Ethier at 800-342-9810, Amy.Ethier@nysut.org

TAX CALENDAR FOR 2023 FOR YOUR 2022 TAX RETURN

Note: If any of these tax dates fall on a weekend or holiday, the deadline is moved to the following business day.



Send out W-2s
and 1099s



File 1099s
and 1096



Filing date for partnerships,
S corporations, and multi-
member LLCs



File 1099s
electronically



Filing date for single-member
LLCs, sole proprietors, and C
corporations



Due date for 1st estimated
tax payment



Due date for 2nd
estimated tax payment



Due date for 3rd
estimated tax payment



Due date for 4th and final
estimated tax payment

Source: <https://blog.shoebboxed.com/>
Copyright © 2022 by Shoebboxed, Inc.

shoebboxed

'Everybody is cheating': Why this teacher has adopted an open ChatGPT policy

January 26, 2023 5:01 AM ET

PATRICK WOOD/MARY LOUISE KELLY



Not all educators are shying away from artificial intelligence in the classroom.

Jeff Pachoud/AFP via Getty Images

Ethan Mollick has a message for the humans and the machines: can't we all just get along?

After all, we are now officially in an A.I. world and we're going to have to share it, reasons the associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania's prestigious Wharton School.

"This was a sudden change, right? There is a lot of good stuff that we are going to have to do differently, but I think we could solve the problems of how we teach people to write in a world with ChatGPT," Mollick told NPR.

Ever since the chatbot ChatGPT launched in November, educators have raised concerns it could facilitate cheating.

Some school districts have banned access to the bot, and not without reason. The artificial intelligence tool from the company OpenAI can compose poetry. It can write computer code. It can maybe even pass an MBA exam.

One Wharton professor recently fed the chatbot the final exam questions for a core MBA course and found that, despite some surprising math errors, he would have [given it a B or a B-minus in the class](#).

And yet, not all educators are shying away from the bot.

This year, Mollick is not only allowing his students to use ChatGPT, they are required to. And he has formally adopted an A.I. policy into his syllabus for the first time.

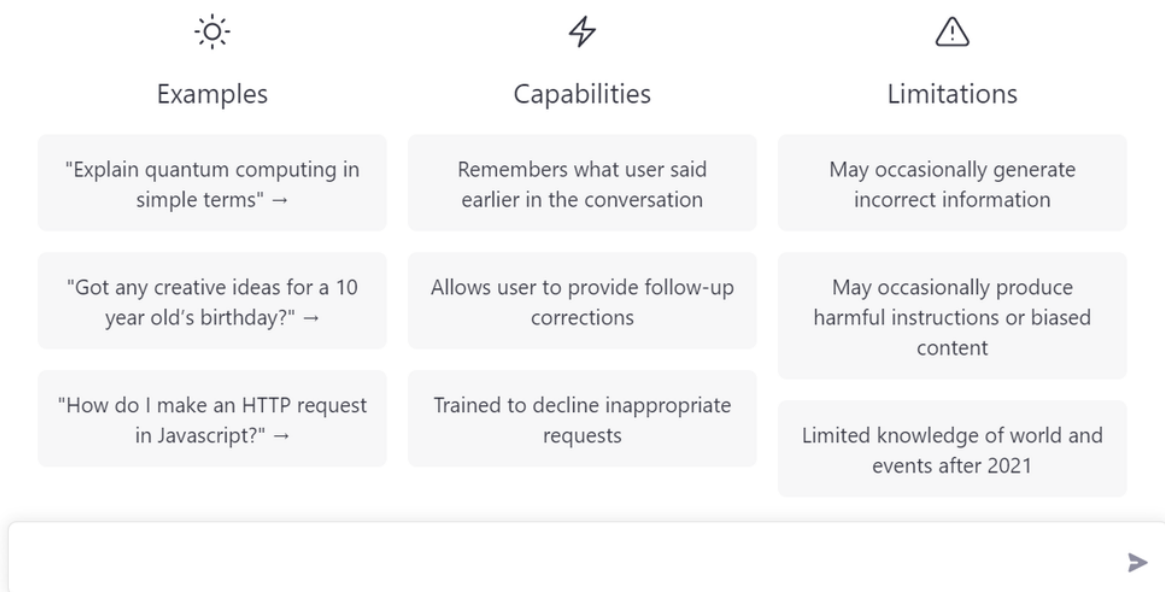
He teaches classes in entrepreneurship and innovation, and said the early indications were the move was going great.

"The truth is, I probably couldn't have stopped them even if I didn't require it," Mollick said.

This week he ran a session where students were asked to come up with ideas for their class project. Almost everyone had ChatGPT running and were asking it to generate projects, and then they interrogated the bot's ideas with further prompts.

"And the ideas so far are great, partially as a result of that set of interactions," Mollick said.

ChatGPT



Users experimenting with the chatbot are warned before testing the tool that ChatGPT "may occasionally generate incorrect or misleading information."

He readily admits he alternates between enthusiasm and anxiety about how artificial intelligence can change assessments in the classroom, but he believes educators need to move with the times.

"We taught people how to do math in a world with calculators," he said. Now the challenge is for educators to teach students how the world has changed again, and how they can adapt to that.

Mollick's new policy states that using A.I. is an "emerging skill"; that it can be wrong and students should check its results against other sources; and that they will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool.

And, perhaps most importantly, students need to acknowledge when and how they have used it.

"Failure to do so is in violation of academic honesty policies," the policy reads.

Mollick isn't the first to try to put guardrails in place for a post-ChatGPT world.

Earlier this month, 22-year-old Princeton student Edward Tian created an [app to detect if something had been written by a machine](#). Named GPTZero, it was so popular that when he launched it, the app crashed from overuse.

"Humans deserve to know when something is written by a human or written by a machine," Tian told NPR of his motivation.

Mollick agrees, but isn't convinced that educators can ever truly stop cheating.

He cites [a survey of Stanford students](#) that found many had already used ChatGPT in their final exams, and he points to estimates that thousands of people in places like Kenya are [writing essays on behalf of students abroad](#).

"I think everybody is cheating ... I mean, it's happening. So what I'm asking students to do is just be honest with me," he said. "Tell me what they use ChatGPT for, tell me what they used as prompts to get it to do what they want, and that's all I'm asking from them. We're in a world where this is happening, but now it's just going to be at an even grander scale."

"I don't think human nature changes as a result of ChatGPT. I think capability did."

Preventing Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents and Educators

If you or someone you know is suicidal, get help immediately via 911, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or the Crisis Text Line (text "HOME" to 741741).

Suicide is preventable. Youth who are contemplating suicide frequently give warning signs. Do not be afraid to ask about suicidal thoughts. Never take warning signs lightly or promise to keep them secret.

Risk Factors



- Hopelessness
- Non-suicidal self injury (e.g., cutting)
- Mental illness, especially severe depression, but also post traumatic stress, ADHD, and substance abuse
- History of suicidal thinking and behavior
- Prior suicide among peers or family members
- Interpersonal conflict, family stress/dysfunction
- Presence of a firearm in the home

Warning Signs



- Suicidal threats in the form of direct (e.g., "I want to die") and indirect (e.g. "I wish I could go to sleep and not wake up") statements
- Suicide notes, plans, online postings
- Making final arrangements
- Preoccupation with death
- Giving away prized possessions
- Talking about death
- Sudden unexplained happiness
- Increased risk taking
- Heavy drug/alcohol use

What to Do



- Remain calm, nonjudgmental and listen.
- Ask directly about suicide (e.g., "Are you thinking about suicide").
- Focus on your concern for their well-being
- Avoid being accusatory (e.g., don't say, "You aren't going to do anything stupid are you?").
- Reassure them that there is help; they will not feel like this forever.
- Provide constant supervision. Do not leave the youth alone.
- Remove means for self-harm, especially firearms.
- **Get help!** Never agree to keep suicidal thoughts a secret. Tell an appropriate caregiving adult. Parents should seek help from school or community mental health resources as soon as possible. School staff should take the student to a school-employed mental health professional.

Reminders for Parents



After a school notifies a parent of their child's risk for suicide and provides referral information, parents must:

- **Continue to take threats seriously.** Follow through is important even after the child calms down or informs the parent "they didn't mean it."
- **Access school supports.** If parents are uncomfortable with following through on referrals, they can give the school psychologist permission to contact the referral agency, provide referral information, and follow up on the visit.
- **Maintain communication with school.** After an intervention, the school will also provide follow-up supports. Your communication will be crucial to ensuring that the school is the safest, most comfortable place possible for your child.



Exterior House Painting

Todd Banaszak
Clarence Middle School
Physical Education Teacher
25 years of Experience
553-0302

Painting
(trim, siding, shake shingle, stucco etc..)
Staining Cedar
Pressure Washing
Deck Refinishing
Fence Refinishing

- No job is too small.
- Many references, East Amherst and Clarence
- Professional crew with many years of experience.
- Complete customer satisfaction.

Call or text for a free estimate.

716-553-0302