



A Union of Professionals

We're Building the Movement to Fund Our Future

For far too long, our public schools, colleges and children have been shortchanged with respect to our nation's wealth. Every elected official says children are important, but that often is not reflected in our spending priorities. The Great Recession decimated school funding, and 25 states still spend less on K-12 public education than before the recession. Similarly, in higher education, 41 states still spend less. On top of recession-era disinvestment, some in power have waged a full-fledged effort to defund and disparage public education and privatize it in order to pay for their priorities: alternatives to public education and tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations. Today, more and more Americans are rejecting the Trump-DeVos agenda to pauperize America's public schools and to destabilize them by diverting resources to market-based, unaccountable charters and vouchers.

Years of disinvestment in our public schools and colleges has hurt our students and faculty and led to overcrowded classrooms as well as schools without nurses, librarians, social workers, sufficient guidance counselors and supports to ensure children's well-being. The testing fixation, coupled with austerity, has meant the loss of instruction in the arts, music and other programs; this has robbed children of the joy in learning and programs that promote student engagement. Deteriorating school buildings with outdated teaching materials, technology and unhealthy, unsafe environments have undermined teaching and learning. We see similar disinvestment in public colleges and universities with huge increases in tuition and student debt as well as fewer course offerings and full-time tenured faculty.

Enough is enough. It's time to make students and public education and public higher education a priority at the local, state and national levels. It's time to Fund Our Future.

The growing frustration of educators, parents and our students has served as a catalyst for activism that is sweeping the nation. The walkouts in West Virginia, Arizona, Oklahoma, Chicago, Los Angeles and elsewhere have been an inspiring spark—as have the funding fights in so many other state capitals and in Washington, D.C. Our members are standing up and are willing to take to the streets to demand the teaching and learning conditions they and their students deserve. This activism reveals a deep hunger for a national campaign that prioritizes our children and the investment in education they need.

And parents and communities are standing with educators. The 2018 PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools made clear that most Americans have trust and confidence in public school teachers. Ninety-one percent of Americans send their children to public schools, but they want public schools strengthened. When asked about strengthening public schools or moving to private alternatives, nearly 80 percent said they wanted to strengthen public schools. Americans believe teachers are underpaid and said they would support them if they went on strike for better wages.

Now is our moment to supercharge this movement. By building on the work that's already been done and that's being planned nationwide—through collective bargaining, legislative and political campaigns—AFT leaders around the country will launch the union's Fund Our Future campaign in March with actions on the local, state and national levels.

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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The campaign brings together local, state and national demands and will launch on the ground and on the airwaves.

All children deserve a powerful, purposeful public education that supports their well-being; engages them deeply in learning; and helps them build the skills to reach their potential, engage in our democracy, and succeed in our economy and society. The Fund Our Future campaign is about prioritizing the needs of our students and demanding that those in power invest in our public schools, colleges and universities, and in the resources students need to succeed—particularly children of color, children with special needs, children who are vulnerable, and children who live in poverty.

Campaign Launch: March 4-18

Locals and states already are planning major investment actions. A cascading set of actions across the country under the Fund Our Future campaign banner that will kick off on March 4—in addition to a digital and paid media campaign—will serve as our national launch to continue the momentum and build a movement around the need for investment, as well as to deepen our engagement with the community.

The AFT will serve as a national clearinghouse for local actions, supports and ideas as well as the vehicle to coordinate our local actions and bring all of this work together to amplify our collective demands; share stories on the harm that systemic disinvestment is having on our students and schools; and demonstrate the power of a national Fund Our Future movement with the media, our members and policymakers.

Strategies may differ to meet local needs, but the goal of Fund Our Future is the same everywhere. Local and state demands can work in parallel with national demands to:

1. Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
2. Fully fund Title I;
3. Increase investment in school infrastructure;
4. Secure real operating funds at the national and state levels to counteract the disinvestment in our public colleges and universities; and
5. Forgive outstanding student loan debt in keeping with the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.

Will you join us and organize public actions sometime between March 4 and 18 in your city/state for increased investment in our public schools? What better time than now and who better than us to expand on the amazing movement that already has been seen in the teacher uprisings that have swept the country, and in the election in so many places of pro-public education, pro-worker governors and legislators.

Now is the time to build the movement for the public education *all* of our students deserve.

Now is the time to ***Fund Our Future***.