

VOICE

Chicago Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff



From the President

The start of the 2011-12 school year also marks our third year as the only union in Chicago that gives a voice to our city's charter school teachers and staff. I am excited to welcome teachers from Chicago Math and Science Academy, Rudy Lozano Leadership Academy, Howard Area Leadership Academy and Latino Youth Leadership Academy to Chicago ACTS, Local 4343. Teachers and staff at 12 campuses are now represented (including CICS-Civitas, Aspira and Chicago Talent Development High School-Union Park) and our local continues to grow—showing teachers, students, parents, community members and charter operators that schools work best when teachers' voices are heard.

In addition to adding four new bargaining units, teachers at Rudy Lozano and Howard have also settled their first contracts. As I watch each new bargaining unit struggle first to become recognized, then to work with administrators to draw up their first union contract, I am more inspired than ever to continue working towards organizing charter schools all over the city of Chicago.

It is disheartening to see our profession being blamed for all the ills in public education today,



Rudy Lozano teachers, administrators and negotiators are all smiles after reaching a tentative contract agreement.

when we know it's hardworking teachers that are public education's greatest asset. We have the responsibility and opportunity to shape the minds of today's youth, so it is more important than ever that we have the ability to help shape the schools where we work.

In this newsletter, Local 4343 members will find important information on upcoming events, union leadership elections, professional development opportunities and other news. Teachers and staff who work at charter schools and who would like to learn more about being represented by our union can contact the Chicago ACTS office at 312/738-3010.

Best wishes for a successful school year.

In solidarity,
Emily Mueller, President
Chicago ACTS, Local 4343

Two More Chicago Charter Schools Secure First Contracts

Agreements bring stability, puts teaching and learning first

Teachers and staff at two more Chicago charter schools will start the school year with new collective bargaining contracts, a first for both schools. Teachers and staff believe the collective bargaining process is the best vehicle for educators to provide input on their school's teaching and learning policies.

The two schools, Howard Area Leadership Academy and Rudy Lozano Leadership Academy, are both part of the Youth Connection Charter School network. The agreements were reached after staff at both schools chose to be represented by the Chicago Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff (Chicago ACTS).

"This contract makes it clear that collaboration and teacher voice

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are essential for school success,” said Peter Jang, a teacher at Rudy Lozano Leadership Academy. “When teachers can work collaboratively with school management, it’s good for kids and fair to teachers.”

Teachers and staff at a dozen Chicago-area charter schools have chosen to be represented by Chicago ACTS, an affiliate of the Illinois Federation of Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers.

“Success in charter schools requires a commitment by school management and educators to work together to develop the best teaching and learning conditions possible. That’s why we’re seeing a growing number of unions in charter schools,” said Emily Mueller, president of Chicago ACTS and a high

school Spanish teacher at Civitas Northtown Academy.

Over the past two years, nine unionized charter schools in Chicago have ratified multi-year contracts. A common issue among teachers and staff at those schools was stability.

Edwin Thompson, a teacher at Howard Area Leadership Academy summed it up this way. “Having union representation gives the teachers in our school a single voice for advocacy and support. There are always issues to be resolved in an organization and during contract negotiations we addressed some important ones like job security, compensation and healthcare. With a unified voice, these issues were addressed more efficiently and effectively.”

“I love being a teacher and sometimes think I have the best job in the world. However, when I had to worry about if I had a job, who my supervisor was and how they could change the rules of the game, it was hard to focus on what’s really important—my students and my teaching.”

—**AMY MILNER-GORVINE,**

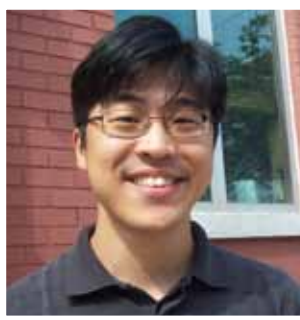
President HAFT, Chicago ACTS Local 4343



Benefits of organizing/teachers who are organized have this in their contracts.

- **Salary Schedule**
based on years of experience, certification, degrees with option for merit pay.
- **Standardized Pay**
for clubs, sports teams and other after school activities.
- **Shared Leadership Model** with contractual guarantees including:
 - » Administration-Teacher hiring committees.
 - » Guaranteed input into professional development.
 - » Community and Parent leadership committees.
- **Evaluation Systems**
mutually agreed upon by administration and staff including peer evaluations.
- **Guaranteed Benefits**
like sick, personal, other leave, health and dental benefits.

- **Jointly Established Working Conditions**
like work year, work day and outside work day requirements (including planning time, before and after student day time).



"A union gives us the platform to make our voices heard, to change the things that need changing and to keep the things worth keeping."

—**PETER JANG**,
President RLAJSE,
Chicago ACTS Local 4343

Ring in the new school year

Chicago ACTS invites you to a back-to-school happy hour! Join us on Friday, Sept. 9th from 4:30–6:30 p.m. at Ethyl's Beer and Wine Dive for drinks and appetizers. Socialize, network, share ideas and exchange stories with other teachers.

WHAT: Chicago ACTS Back to School Happy Hour

WHEN: Friday, Sept. 9th, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

WHERE:
Ethyl's Beer and Wine Dive, 324 S. Racine Ave.

WHO: All charter school teachers and staff welcome

Questions? Call Leah Raffanti at 312/738-3010.

LOCAL 4343 News & Notes

2011-2012 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

- 10/18/2011 5:30 p.m.
- 12/14/2011 5:00 p.m.
- 3/14/2012 5:30 p.m.
- 5/9/2012 5:00 p.m.
- 7/18/2012 2:00 p.m., Budget meeting

GENERAL MEMBER MEETINGS & PARTIES

- 12/14/2011 6:30 p.m.
Membership Meeting and Holiday Party
- 5/9/2012 6:30 p.m.
Membership Meeting and Spring Fling

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

9/14/2011 5:30 p.m.

We are looking for 3 volunteers who would be willing to sit on this committee. It should take about 2 hours. Dinner and a \$50.00 honorarium will be provided to each volunteer. Contact Bret Gaska, btgaska@gmail.com if you would like to volunteer. No experience necessary.

CONGRATULATIONS!

The winners of the Local 4343 Spring Party Door Prizes: Profit Hallom, Jovonna Quinn, Sawan Navejas and Christine Poczik!

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you need a copy of your contract, please see your council president or check your council webpage at www.chicagoacts.org.



A Union of Professionals

Chicago ACTS
Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND: Beyond Classroom Management

Join us for our next
Professional Development
workshop and earn 3 (free!)
CPDUs.

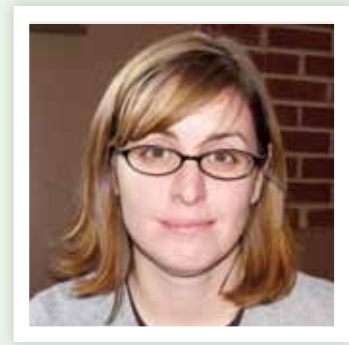
Understandably, most teachers would desire to be characterized as effective managers, but just how is it done? Well-managed classrooms don't just happen, they are designed. This workshop will explore how to effectively establish rules, procedures and consequences and how the physical space and teacher

behaviors impact classroom management.

Presented by **Laura McMahon-Ryan** and **Christine Poczik**, Local 4343 members and teachers at CICS Wrightwood. This professional development opportunity is brought to you by Chicago ACTS and is free to participants.

Saturday, August 27th
9am-12:30 p.m.
Chicago ACTS Office
1400 W Hubbard St., Suite 230

Spaces are Limited—
Visit www.ChicagoActs.org or call **312/738-3010**.



"I supported unionizing to ensure that all staff have security, strength, and voice. An empowered teacher is ultimately an effective teacher."

—JOY EVANS,
Member RLAJSE, Chicago
ACTS Local 4343



A Union of Professionals

Chicago ACTS

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