



THE SPIRIT OF '76

The Newspaper of Local 1776
The Association of Catholic Teachers

*59 Years Strong
1966-2025*

3070 BRISTOL PIKE, BLDG. 2, SUITE 101, BENSALEM, PA 19020– 215-568-4175 – VOLUME XXXXVI-NO.3
Fax 215-568-8270 – email (act@act1776.com) - website (www.act1776.com) **NOVEMBER 2025**



From the President's Desk

Finishing the First Quarter and Heading Towards Negotiations

It's hard to believe that we are already past the first quarter and heading into the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. At different points, the beginning of the year has felt like it was flying by, while at other times, it has felt like a slow slog. The lack of days off in this first quarter certainly hasn't helped, but we've made it this far, and we have plenty of opportunities coming up to take a well-earned break. We just have to press on a little bit longer to get there.

During the first quarter, I was able to visit most of our schools (I still have Neumann-Goretti and Ryan left) and speak with various faculties. Many of our conversations focused on the upcoming contract negotiations. I appreciated all of the feedback I received and hope that everyone fills out the surveys that will be going out soon to further gauge what you find important to address.

A number of local questions and concerns were also raised—some I was able to answer during my visits, while others required a bit more work reviewing contract language and past practices. I wanted to take this opportunity to address a few topics that came up at multiple schools.

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Walkthroughs – The length and number of walkthroughs were major concerns. The purpose of walkthroughs is purely for administrators to get a snapshot of what's happening in classrooms. Used primarily for data collection, walkthroughs should be short, involve minimal interaction with students, and should *not* be linked in any way to a teacher's evaluation. At smaller schools, administrators may conduct them more frequently simply because there are fewer teachers to observe, but regardless of faculty size, walkthroughs should be distributed evenly throughout the staff.

Updating Grades – Another common question involved clarifying teacher requirements for updating grades in Schoology or PowerSchool. According to the contract, all teachers are required to update their grades online using the course management system every five days. In practice, this means that grades should be updated weekly in all classes. Updates can include anything from formative work (entrance/exit tickets, classwork) to summative assessments (quizzes, tests). While it's understandable that you might occasionally miss a class or go slightly over a week between posts for a class, long periods of inactivity should be avoided, as they can negatively affect evaluations and place more responsibility on families to track progress outside of progress reports and quarterly grades.

Lunch – Between my spring and fall visits, this topic consistently came up. To clarify, according to the MOU updated in November of last year, a faculty meal is defined as one entrée, one side, one cookie, and one beverage (except as modified in the next sentence). The only items *not* considered part of the lunch but available for purchase are pre-packaged food items, premium bottled beverages, and breakfast. If Aramark refuses to provide faculty or staff with any of the acceptable items, your local representative should bring it to the attention of the President/Principal so it can be addressed.

Of course, each school had its own specific questions, but the above covers the most common ones. As always, if any of our teachers have questions about issues affecting them or their school, they should not hesitate to reach out to their local representatives or the ACT office.

With that being said, we now look ahead—past the holidays—toward contract negotiations.

At this point, the ACT office and Executive Board have already posted an open call for anyone interested in joining this year's Negotiation Team. While the hope is always to secure a multi-year Early Bird Contract focusing only on salary and benefits, it's best to prepare for the possibility of a more in-depth and extended negotiation process. If you're considering applying, please understand that you may be pulled from school on multiple occasions and possibly over the summer if negotiations continue that long. It's not a position to take lightly—you'll be representing and advocating for the rights and protections of nearly 500 faculty members across our system.

Despite preparing for the possibility that negotiations could extend into the summer, the hope remains that we'll be able to present a contract for a vote by the end of the school year at a General Membership Meeting. At that time, members will vote to either ratify the contract or send our team back to the table.

That said, we thankfully have the holiday season to enjoy before negotiations truly begin.

This gives me the opportunity to thank you all once more for your hard work and dedication to our system. Best wishes to you and your families for a wonderful Thanksgiving.

James

ACT NEGOTIATING TEAM

The Executive Board will be selecting the *2026 Negotiating Team* at its December Executive Board Meeting. Once a team has been selected, you will be notified.

CONTRACT SURVEYS

Contract Surveys were emailed to all ACT Members. It is important that we have your input since the contract affects you and your family. If you have not already done so, please fill out the Google form that was emailed to you and hit “submit”. Surveys are due back to the ACT Office by December 10, 2025.

SYSTEM SENIORITY LIST POSTED

Article V, Section 1a states “On or before October 31 of each school year, the System shall supply to the Association and shall post in individual schools a complete listing of all full-time lay teachers in the System including those on approved leaves of absence arranged according to system seniority and school seniority.”

“Teachers shall have until **December 15** to call attention in writing to errors or to file grievances with the local school administration concerning their positions on the seniority roster.



WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST UNION MEMBERS

Thank you for Joining Us!

Clinton Arthur—BP, Thomas Babcock—CO, Lucinda Baltz—AW, Jacob Beilenson—CO, Gregory Bentley—AR, John Bradley—LC, Christopher Buck—RC, Sharon Casillas—JP II, Michael Castro—CO, Brianna Charles—NG, Christina Cox—FJ, Colin Coyle—RC, Sean Creelman—CO, Margaret Cusatis—JP II, Gina Dondia-Grandizio—BS, Philip Ellefson—SH, Sharon Fessey-Waropay—FJ, Michael Fohner—AC, Kaiem Frink—WC, Crystal Gibb—BS, Antonio Goodman—CE, Laia Goodman—NG, Karen Guinan-Szumski—LF, Marisol Hernandez Vasquez—NG, Jarrett Hurms—BP, Katherine Hyatt—BP, Tyler Johnson—RC, Julian Jones III—BP, Ashley Kaminski—AC, Maura Kelch—JP II, Kassiani Kotsidou—BP, Leon Vladimir—WC, Jennifer Lewis—CE, Labhras MacGabhann—BP, Faisal Malik—AW, Matt Martin—CE, Jeanne McGerry—FJ, David McGovern—AR, Kevin McPherson—FJ, Olivia Millevoi—FJ, Matthew Mitchell—AC, Tyler Neuhaus—BS, Grace O’Kane—LC, Frank Olszewski—AC, Jesse Ordronneau—CO, Rosa Ortega Sosa—BS, Eleanor Padlo—WC, Matthew Pattison—BP, Audine Pierre—NG, Michael Potts—JP II, Karla Rivas Martinez—NG, Katherine Rodriguez—LF, Maureen Roma—SH, Christy Speck—WC, Ryan Steffe—WC, Kayla Sullivan—CE, Sophia Sullivan—CO, Walter Truxell—AR, William Turmel—RC, Nancy Waldorf—CO, Jose Yanez—AC, Christina Zuno—AC.

THE ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS

WILL TURN **60** IN 2026!

How should we celebrate this milestone?

Email your ideas to

act@act1776.com

On Being Thankful

(Just To Be At The Table, *Negotiating*)



The Association of Catholic Teachers has sent each member a contract survey asking that they give input to their Negotiating Team making them aware of their issues and their needs for the upcoming contract talks. The more I talk to workers who do not have a contract, the more I appreciate having one.

I believe that we should be thankful on this holiday that we have a right to be at the table. **A right that was hard-won some 59 years ago.** I celebrate the reality that we, as members of the Association of Catholic Teachers, have the right to be heard. Even though we do not always get everything we want, imagine the frustration of having no real opportunity even to have your voice heard. *So, go ahead, tell the Team what your needs are, and understand how special this opportunity is for all of us.*

Teachers without a contract hope to be hired again each year, for there is no real job security. Fear of rocking the boat and the implications that this may cause often determine if they will dare to raise their voice in protest. The statement “If you don’t like it, then leave” just doesn’t do it in terms of employees feeling esteemed and dignified about their work.

Know that I look forward to the upcoming negotiating process. Your team, as always, will do the best that it can to get you all that you deserve. Most of all, I will keep on reminding myself that it is the strength of what we have now, namely the contract, that allows us to voice in solidarity our needs for the future.

This Issue’s Question: What are you most thankful for?



Send your response by **December 10th** to act@act1776.com with the word “THANKFUL” in the subject line. Responses will be printed in the December issue of *The Spirit of '76.*

OPEN ENROLLMENT FOR THE ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS VOLUNTARY VISION PLAN



Enrollment information for the Voluntary Vision Plan through Davis Vision for the 2026 calendar year was sent out via email. An application is also posted on the ACT Webpage at www.act1776.com.

For teachers currently on the Voluntary Vision Plan: If you have not used the plan this year, try and do so before your benefits expire on December 31, 2025.

All ACT Members wishing to enroll or renew their coverage in the Voluntary Vision Plan for the 2026 calendar year, will need to submit a new completed application form along with payment.

Benefits will go into effect on January 1, 2026.

FSA REMINDER

If you were a participant in the 2025 FSA Program, please remember that all monies in your account should be exhausted by December 31, 2025. Any funds that remain in your account after December 31, 2025 will be lost. However, this does not mean that all your eligible expenses must be submitted by December 31, 2025. You have 90 days after the close of the calendar year in which to submit eligible expenses for 2025.

A.C.T. for Better Catholic Schools

OPTUM'S EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

As a Secondary Lay Teacher in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, you and your family members have access to an *Employee Assistance Program and WorkLife Services* through **OPTUM**. These services are available 24/7, either by phone or on-line, and are strictly confidential. There is no cost for using this benefit. You will need to logon to liveandworkwell.com to register, using access code [Archphilly](#).

You can speak with master's level employee assistance specialists who provide consultation, risk screening, advocacy, referrals and educational materials. Or you can use their web services, which are available in both English and Spanish. There, you can search self-help information, resource databases/directories, video programs, personal empowerment programs and find thousands of articles online at liveandworkwell.com.

Some of the EAP services available to you are

- Face-to-face counseling (3 visits per event per year)
- Financial coaching from experts (up to 60 minutes free consultation)
- Legal counseling and mediation services (free 30 minute telephonic or in-person consultation with a state-specific attorney or qualified mediator per separate legal issue)
- Digital self-care tools
- Talkspace – Support when you need it – no appointments necessary. With Talkspace, you can reach out to a licensed network EAP provider 24/7.
- Virtual Visits – HIPAA-compliant technology delivers video EAP services in the privacy & comfort of your home.

Some of the WorkLife Services available to you are

- Adult care and eldercare support (retirement planning, adult daycare, financial and legal issues, in-home/nurse care options)
- Child and family support (childcare, adoption, day/summer camps, emergency/sick childcare, parent/family support groups)
- Chronic illness and condition support (respite, caregiving, assistive technology, affordable housing, meal and transportation services)
- Convenience services (pet, travel, car, shopping/dining)
- Educational resources (homeschooling, career consulting, adult education classes, individual educational plans, school and college recommendations)

When you have a long list of stressors – and a longer list of to-dos, remember there is help out there. You can access your EAP benefits by logging onto liveandworkwell.com or by calling 1-866-248-4096. Services are available 24/7, are confidential, and are free!

Wells Fargo Center Work Perks Discounted Ticket Program

The Association of Catholic Teachers has partnered with the Wells Fargo Center's **Work Perks Program** to offer you special discounted savings of up to 40% off tickets! Discounts include tickets for the Philadelphia Flyers, Philadelphia Wings, and select family shows throughout the season such as Cirque du Soleil, Hot Wheels Monster Trucks, and Disney on Ice.

The link for purchasing tickets is
<https://www.gofevo.com/group/flyersworkperks> Once you logon to the site, click "buy tickets" on that event, then enter the promo code **ACT1776** to unlock.

The Ten Most Popular Side Dishes for a Teacher's Thanksgiving Dinner

- 1) Stuffed Classroom (with assorted nuts)
- 2) Pension Pie (one thin slice per person)
- 3) Ice Cream (with Gymies)
- 4) Pumpkin Pi (r) squared
- 5) Multiple – Choice Cuts of Meat
- 6) Fine Art - ichokes
- 7) A.P. English Muffins
- 8) Cream Cheese and Salary
- 9) Recruit-mint Juleps
- 10) Math-ed Potatoes

(In memory of Ed Stehle)

The Holidays are Upon Us!

Members are invited to share their favorite Christmas Recipe or a favorite Christmas Tradition.

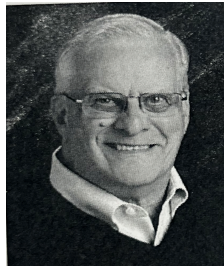
Send your response by **December 10th** to act@act1776.com with the words "Holiday Recipe" or "Holiday Tradition" in the subject line. Responses will be printed in the December issue of ***The Spirit of '76.***



The Association of Catholic Teachers
wishes to thank our members and their family members who are **Veterans**
and who serve or have served our country honorably.
Your sacrifices are appreciated and respected.

Thank you for your Service!

REST IN PEACE



John P. Janasik, retired
Bishop Shanahan High School

*Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and
all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good: his love endures forever."

1 Chronicles 16:34

*The Association of Catholic Teachers
wishes you and your family a
Happy and Festive Thanksgiving!*



We are grateful for your membership and support!