

Art Plichta

Candidate for President of the NTA

Professional Statement

My ties to unionism run very deep. When I was young I heard the stories of garment factories from my great aunt and grandmother who did piece work for years and were strong members of the ILGWU. My grandmother told me about her job and acting as shop steward. She stressed how much the union had given her, insuring a living wage and better working conditions. As an immigrant from Poland, she experienced the worst conditions in some factories and then much better ones with a strong union. Before I was born, my mother worked for the International Labor Organization, in Washington DC. My sister and brother-in-law both do trainings for unions in the Denver area. My mother-in-law, at 92 is enjoying the benefits of a pension from CWA 1180, from her work with the NYC Board of Education. I was a proud member of the Teamsters Union when I worked driving a taxi as I tried to support myself through college. In 1981, as newly married college students, my wife and I received scholarships to study in Poland as part of an exchange program. This was at the height of Solidarnosc, the Solidarity movement. We experienced that struggle firsthand: the university was on strike; food was rationed; there were electric blackouts and major disruptions to the transportation system. We witnessed the brutal crackdown by the Polish government on December 13, 1981. We watched when our friends were arrested, knowing that others paid the ultimate price. This trade union movement stirred the embers of freedom in the Polish people that could not be quenched, and now Poland is a free country with a decent standard of living. I know the importance of unionism.

I started my career in education as a teaching assistant in NYC. I took education credits so that I could start teaching and I worked as a special educator in NYC for three years. I have been an active in-service member of the NTA since 1986. I have taught special education in four different schools in the district, beginning with North Jr. High. I had the experience of working in smaller learning communities, during my time at NFA at Stewart and the STAR program at West Street School. I am currently teaching Math and History inclusion classes at the main campus of NFA. I am committed to learning and education and received National Board Certification in 2008. The experience of going through that certification process led me to greater involvement in my union. I am currently the head delegate of NFA. I am not afraid to speak for what I believe is right, and I have voiced my opinions at Board of Education meetings, delegate meetings, the Delegate Assembly, and in letters to central administration. I wish to restore the NTA to a position of strength, where it is a voice of teachers, TA's, substitutes and retirees. The NTA needs to regain that voice and be heard and respected by the Board of Education and community at large. I will be accessible, treat people with respect and be transparent in my actions. I believe that the greater the involvement of the rank and file member, the stronger our union. We are the NTA.