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## **Macomb Charter School Teachers Form Union Arts Academy in the Woods Teachers and Staff Organize with AFT Michigan**

FRASER, MI – The teachers and staff at the Arts Academy in the Woods, a charter school in Fraser, Michigan, just outside Detroit, voted 20-to-1 today to form a union in order to collectively bargain conditions of their employment with the Academy’s Board. This vote certified the Michigan Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers Michigan, as the official bargaining agent for teachers and staff at the Academy.

The Arts Academy in the Woods (AAW) provides a unique integrated arts and academics educational experience. According to the Michigan Department of Education’s 2011 “Top to Bottom” ranking, AAW is one of the highest performing schools in Macomb County and the staff views the certification of their union as essential to the continued success of their school.

**Phil Cerrasco**, an English teacher at AAW, explained that, “We formed a collective bargaining unit for many reasons: our desire for job security, stability, consistency, and to ensure our professional respect. We look forward to continue to work with the school’s administration to create a contract that reflects our mutual commitment to providing a high quality education and establishing a professional environment for the staff.”

**Russanne Bucci**, who teaches Social Studies, added “I have been a teacher at Arts Academy in the Woods since the doors opened over ten years ago. We have a very special school and now that the faculty has united through the unionizing effort, there is a synergy that I have never experienced here before. It has been uplifting to see how positive and invigorated our staff has become since we decided to unionize.”

AFT Michigan President **David Hecker** welcomed the AAW staff. “AFT Michigan is committed to empowering teachers and staff to improve their school communities and working conditions through collective bargaining. The staff at AAW clearly shares these commitments and we welcome them to our union.”

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*AFT Michigan is a union of 35,000 members in 98 locals working across the state in PreK-12 and intermediate school districts, community colleges, and universities.*

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