

Take advantage of resources at **atpe.org**

www.atpe.org/resources



Expand your learning

If you need **continuing professional education (CPE) credits**, ATPE offers more than 40 hours of CPE free to all members of the Texas education community. Courses cover federal and state education laws, bilingual education, leadership, professional standards and more.

Join the virtual education community

It's not always comfortable to discuss education issues with your next-door neighbor. To that end, ATPE runs the **Idea Exchange**, an online forum on which educators can post ideas and questions and discuss challenges, successes and everything—education-related—in between.



Read and discuss

The **ATPE Book of the Month Club** is an easy way to help your students with their reading. Each month during the school year, ATPE selects books from Texas Library Association reading lists and creates posters and discussion questions for you to download and print.



Recoup your dues

ATPE membership comes with access to a variety of **services and discounts** that can help you save money, from savings on auto insurance and rental cars to cash back on purchases through the ATPE Online Mall.



You can even purchase identity theft protection and supplemental insurance.

The **ATPE** Vision

The Association of Texas Professional Educators is the preeminent educator association in Texas and makes a positive difference in the lives of educators and in the lives of schoolchildren. As professionals, our members are committed to supporting quality public education and the professional rights and obligations of the education community. Working in partnership with parents, business, community and government, ATPE provides the programs and services that enable educators and schoolchildren to achieve their highest potential.

New MRI scans for autism

A new test developed by researchers at Harvard University could diagnose autism in as few as 10 minutes. The test, performed using MRI machines, scans a person's brain to see how well different parts of the brain are communicating with one another. People with autism suffer from weaker connections in the brain, which leads to difficulties in learning and communicating. The scan looks at how water molecules move along a brain's wiring; based on these measurements, scientists can tell if someone has the disorder.

The scan isn't currently available in hospitals, but trials have shown promise. In a study of 60 people ages 7 to 26, the test was 94 percent accurate. Researchers plan to test children as young as 3 years old. The test would also require no additional equipment other than MRI machines already in hospitals.

The test will save parents looking for autism diagnoses money as well as time: This short scan is estimated to cost between \$100 and \$200. Current conventional diagnosis can cost upward of \$3,000.

Source: Mail Online,
www.dailymail.co.uk



More PE waivers belie obesity worry

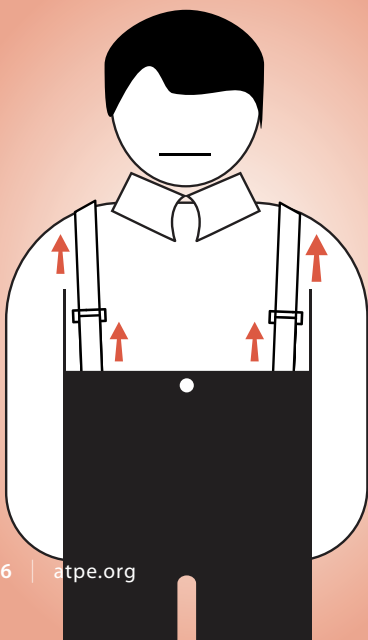
Despite the national concern with childhood obesity, more states than ever are allowing students to forgo physical education classes. Since 2006, the number of states that allow waivers or substitutions for PE classes has risen from 27 to 32.

Students in the 32 states that allow waivers can participate in interscholastic activities such as sports, cheerleading and marching band instead of PE. Some states even offer online PE classes that students can take on their own time.

The increase stems from efforts to save money and get students to take more academic classes during the school day.

Source: *USA Today*

Fig. 1 – Urkeled



“Did I do that?”

Schools around the country have been trying to solve a specific dress code issue for years: how to keep students from “sagging” their pants. While the city of Dublin, Ga., passed a law late last year making the offense punishable by up to \$200 in fines, school districts in other states have found different ways to deal with the problem.

One principal in Memphis, Tenn., was inspired by the 1990s TV show *Family Matters*—specifically the character Steve Urkel, who was known for his high-waisted pants. If students at Westside Middle School show up to school with sagged pants, they are asked to pull their pants up to the bottom of their ribcage. The pants are then tightened with zip ties strung through the belt loops. The practice is known as getting “Urkeled.”

The number of students getting “Urkeled” at the beginning of the school year was around 80 per week; in December, the number had dropped to 18 per week.

Source: www.cnn.com, www.newsfeed.time.com



A shock does a brain good?

A recent study has shown that electrical currents can make people better at math for a period of up to six months. The study used transcranial direct current stimulation (TDCS), which is a noninvasive procedure that passes a very slight amount of electricity through the skull into the outer portions of the brain for a period of no more than 15 minutes. The amount is so small that most patients don't even know it's happening. Depending on the level of current, neuron activity in the brain is increased or decreased.

During the study, TDCS was directed into the parietal lobe of the brain, which is involved with number processing. Researchers gave participants a set of symbols that represent numbers and asked them to organize them while TDCS was being applied. The participants' abilities to organize number symbols increased.

Scientists hope that TDCS might also be beneficial to language learning. The process is currently used to improve brain functions involving pain management and post-trauma rehabilitation.

Source: www.news.discovery.com

The harder to learn, the better

A new study on cognition—the process of thought—shows that the mind actually absorbs information better when it has to work at it. The study looked at “disfluency,” or the process of making material harder to learn, through an experiment in Chesterfield, Ohio, classrooms.

The study challenges the common assumption that easier is better when it comes to learning. Researchers conducted the study in a variety of classrooms, including those devoted to English, chemistry and U.S. history, by changing the typefaces used on standard worksheets and PowerPoint presentations. Some paragraphs were in *Comic Sans Italicized* or *Monotype Corsiva*, while others were in *Haettenschweiler*. The materials were then passed to the students to study. (Another set of students learning the same subject were given the standard materials and served as the control group.) After several weeks, the students were tested for retention. In all of the classes except chemistry, the students with the “disfluent” materials performed better.

Source: *The Wall Street Journal*

Eating right in 2011

The U.S. Department of Education released proposed guidelines for healthy school lunches in January. The guidelines are based on the Institute of Medicine's October 2009 recommendations, which were sought by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.

The USDA is accepting comments on the proposed rules through April 13 at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=FNS-2007-0038-0001>.

After that time, the final rules will be released. The proposed changes include substituting lower-fat items for high-fat ones and adding more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. For example:

- ▶ On Monday, instead of a bean-and-cheese burrito with mozzarella cheese, applesauce, orange juice and 2-percent milk, students would eat a turkey sandwich with cheese on a whole-wheat roll with mustard and/or low-fat mayonnaise, refried beans, jicama, green pepper strips, cantaloupe wedges, and low-fat ranch dressing.
- ▶ On Tuesday, instead of a hot dog on a bun with ketchup, canned pears, raw celery and carrots with ranch dressing, and 1-percent chocolate milk, students would eat whole-wheat spaghetti with meat sauce, a whole-wheat roll with soft margarine, cooked green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, kiwi halves, 1-percent milk, and low-fat ranch dressing.
- ▶ On Friday, instead of cheese pizza, canned pineapple, tater tots with ketchup, and 1-percent chocolate milk, students would eat whole-wheat cheese pizza, baked sweet potato fries, raw grape tomatoes with low-fat ranch dressing, applesauce, and 1-percent milk.

Source: Education Week, <http://blogs.edweek.org>





Five ways to spur healthy cafeteria choices

The Smarter Lunchrooms website (www.smarterlunchrooms.org) is a treasure trove of ideas for school nutrition professionals. The strategies have been developed by experts at Cornell University's Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs. Check out the site, which is highly interactive, for more suggestions such as these:

- 1 Give vegetables creative names. "Rich Vegetable Medley Soup" is more appealing than "Vegetable Soup." Use descriptive, nostalgic or regional (e.g., "Louisiana Spicy Cajun Stew") labels.
- 2 Keep online menu information current. Doing so allows students and parents to discuss nutrition choices in advance.
- 3 Use table tents and posters to advertise healthy choices. You can also convey nutrition information in this way.
- 4 Place healthy items, such as milk and fruit, by the cash register. Don't tempt students with desserts while they wait to pay for their food.
- 5 Prompt students to eat fruits and vegetables. Have cafeteria workers ask them if they would like a serving of fruit or veggies.

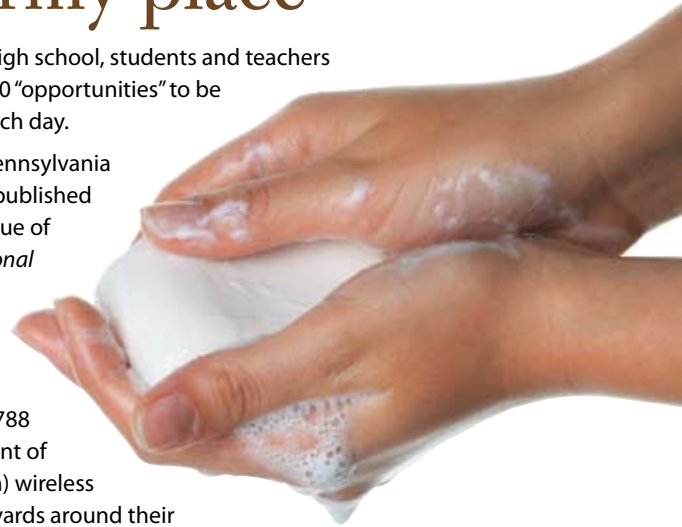
School: One germy place

In a typical American high school, students and teachers have more than 760,000 "opportunities" to be infected with the flu each day.

That's according to a Pennsylvania State University study published in the Dec. 13, 2010, issue of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Researchers gave one high school's students, teachers and faculty members (788 individuals, or 94 percent of the school's population) wireless sensors to wear on lanyards around their necks. The sensors detected the presence of someone in close proximity (aka someone close enough to spread flu germs). Throughout one day, students and faculty members came into close proximity with one another 762,868 times.

Source: *Bloomberg Businessweek*



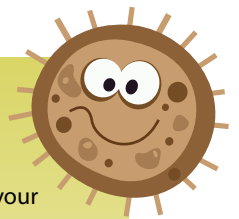
FIGHT THE FLU

Flu season officially runs from October to May. To keep your students—and yourself—healthy, follow these tips each year:

- **GET A DOSE** of the seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccines.
- **ENCOURAGE THE USE** of hand sanitizer in the classroom.
- **STAY HOME** if you are sick. You should be fever-free for 24 hours before you return to school.
- **DISINFECT SURFACES** that are frequently touched, such as door knobs, phones and keyboards.
- **DON'T SHARE** beverages or food.

Austin ISD is practicing infection control by encouraging staff members to teach students proper techniques and etiquette for washing their hands and coughing. Posters with this information are displayed prominently on campuses.

Sources: www.texasflu.org; www.austinisd.org



Proclaiming our **LOVE** for public ed

ATPE turns Valentine's Day into Lobby Day

More than 350 ATPE members dedicated their Valentine's Day to a matter close to their hearts: public school funding. Those who attended the 2011 ATPE Political Involvement Training and Lobby Day Feb. 13–14 in Austin had the opportunity to speak directly with lawmakers on proposed funding cuts, class-size limits and teacher quality.

The two-day event began Sunday afternoon with three training sessions and a live auction benefiting the ATPE Political Action Committee (ATPE-PAC). The closing session featured a legislative panel loaded with major education players: Sen. Florence Shapiro (R–Plano), the chair of the Senate Education Committee; Rep. Rob Eissler (R–The Woodlands), the chair of the House Public Education Committee; Sen. Wendy Davis (D–Fort Worth), a member of the Senate Education Committee; and Rep. Mark Strama (D–Austin), a member of the House Public Education Committee.

On Monday, attendees traveled to the State Capitol for meetings with lawmakers. Both the House and the Senate honored ATPE members with resolutions. In the House, the resolution was sponsored by Eissler; the Senate sponsor was Sen. Jane Nelson (R–Flower Mound).

ATPE extends a special thank-you to all of the members who made the trip to Lobby Day.



ATPE Lobby Day attendees gather in a Capitol stairwell for a photo with Sen. Jane Nelson (R–Flower Mound), who sponsored a Senate resolution in their honor.



Jefferson ATPE members **Karen and Ike Ives** meet with Sen. Kevin Eltife (R-Tyler).



Mesquite ATPE members **Carol Davies** and **Janice Houston** and Region 8 ATPE Director **Rita Long** applaud the presentation of a Senate resolution honoring ATPE.



ATPE State President **David de la Garza** and Past State President **Sam Spurlock** display Senate Resolution No. 228 sponsored by Sen. Jane Nelson (R-Flower Mound) in honor of the ATPE members who attended Lobby Day.



Willis ATPE member **Nancy Blackwelder** celebrates her winning bid in the ATPE-PAC Live Auction.



Willis ATPE member **Cory Colby** explains to Lobby Day attendees how he has worked to develop personal relationships with his lawmakers.



ATPE State Secretary **Cheryl Buchanan** encourages members to participate in the PAC's Peak Challenge and help ATPE-PAC raise \$10,000 by May 1.



Waxahachie ATPE member **Robin Brown** asks ATPE's legislative panel a question on class-size limits and the need for parental notification of districts' requests for waivers.



Sen. Florence Shapiro (R-Plano), third from right, poses for a picture with Plano ATPE members.

LOBBY DAY "TRENDS" ON SOCIAL MEDIA

VIA TWITTER:

@SenatorBirdwell: Meeting w/ members of @OfficialATPE, a group of educators that really care about Texas kids. #txlege

@pmgibbs8: @OfficialATPE #lobbyday Just met with Senator Estes' education specialist. Very nice meeting. Region 9 ATPE and Denton ATPE

VIA FACEBOOK:

Irving ATPE member Sharon Phares commented: "It was the best Lobby Day ever. Some of the [legislative] members even took notes during our meetings ... and they even tried to encourage us!"

Follow ATPE on Twitter @OfficialATPE, and "like" ATPE on Facebook at www.facebook.com/officialatpe.



Rep. Mark Strama (D-Austin), Rep. Rob Eissler (R-The Woodlands) and Sen. Wendy Davis (D-Fort Worth) listen to ATPE members make emotion-filled pleas for the preservation of the hard 22-1 class-size limit in grades K-4. Sen. Florence Shapiro (R-Plano) also served on ATPE's legislative panel.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION ALIVE

Stay involved this session with ATPE's legislative resources

You've seen the dire headlines, and ATPE can't stress enough just how important it is for public educators to be involved in the legislative process. But how can you start, maintain or improve your relationship with your lawmakers? Try taking advantage of the many resources ATPE provides to help educators stay informed and engaged as the session unfolds.



WEB

Bookmark the **Legislative Session Resource** pages in the Advocacy section of atpe.org; consider them your one-stop online resource for everything you need to know about the session. Learn the basics of the legislative process, find out who represents you and read tips on the best ways to communicate with your elected officials. You'll also find ATPE's Legislative Update, which helps you keep up with the latest legislative news from the Capitol. The Legislative Update page is updated regularly with information on ATPE-priority legislation, agency hearings and ATPE business.



E-MAIL

Join ATPE's **Legislative Alert Network (LAN)** to stay plugged-in to the political scene. The LAN is a free e-mail service that helps you communicate directly with your legislators on the issues that matter to you. There are two types of LAN e-mail notices: issue updates and action alerts. Updates keep you informed about the latest news from Austin and Washington, D.C. Action alerts let you know when and how to contact your elected officials to influence important votes and decisions. All you need to join the LAN is an e-mail address. Sign up at www.atpe.org/Advocacy/LAN/lanpromo.asp. LAN members also have exclusive access to ATPE's Advocacy Center, a tool that allows you to contact your legislators directly through an automated e-mail system.



STAFF

Call **ATPE Governmental Relations** when you have questions. In addition to ATPE's six full-time lobbyists, the ATPE Governmental Relations department includes dedicated support staff members ready to help you in any way they can. Simply call the state office at (800) 777-ATPE and ask for ATPE Governmental Relations, or e-mail your questions or requests to government@atpe.org.



PAC

Participate in the **PAC's Peak Challenge**. PAC stands for political action committee, and a PAC manages a fund that allows people with a common interest to pool their financial resources in order to make donations to candidates and officeholders who support their cause. Donating to the ATPE Political Action Committee (ATPE-PAC) is easy and a great way to stay politically active. Right now members are focused on the PAC's Peak Challenge: Raise \$10,000 for ATPE-PAC by May 1. That might sound like a lot of money, but it would take less than 10 percent of ATPE members contributing just \$1 each to reach the \$10,000 peak. Members who participate in the PAC's Peak Challenge will receive special recognition as well as earn credit toward ATPE-PAC awards programs. Learn more at www.atpe.org/Advocacy/pac/pacspeak.aspx.



PHONE

Call the **ATPE Hotline**, a recorded phone message, for updates on legislative happenings. Reach the hotline by calling (800) 777-ATPE after business hours. During business hours, simply ask the receptionist to connect you to the hotline.



PLANO—DOUG ECKART

Plano

Plano ATPE campus representative **Melissa Duffey** and Secretary **Melissa Perez** attend their local unit's campus rep dinner Nov. 18 at Spaghetti Warehouse in Plano. ATPE lobbyist Josh Sanderson and Texas PTA State President Sharon Goldblatt addressed attendees.



DALLAS—DOUG ECKART

Dallas

Dallas ATPE President **Dianne Reed** presents one of three \$1,000 **Ann Sears** Literacy Grants to Lowe Elementary School librarian Gail Shipley during the local unit's fall meeting Nov. 10 at Spring Creek Barbeque. The grant is named after Dallas ISD's longest-serving school librarian, who is a retired member of ATPE.



ENNIS—COURTESY OF MERRY CREAGER

Ennis

Ennis ATPE President **Nanette Moyers** prepares some of her local unit's Operation Christmas Child donations during a local unit gathering at Miller Intermediate School. The local unit donated 30 shoeboxes full of toys, school supplies and other gifts to Operation Christmas Child, which provides Christmas gifts to millions of children in more than 130 countries. The project is an initiative of the Samaritan's Purse, a global ministerial organization that provides assistance to people who are victims of war, poverty, natural disasters, disease and famine.



Garland

Garland ATPE Treasurer **Carol Phelps** presents checks totaling \$5,000 to Webb Middle School Principal Jim Lewis and faculty members who lost the contents of their classrooms and offices in a Dec. 6 fire. The local unit gave \$200 to each faculty member whose items were damaged. The fire affected 25 faculty members, including the office staff, principals, nurse and teachers. Membership Chair **Shenequa Miller** is the first staff member on the left.



Nacogdoches

Nacogdoches ATPE Membership Chair **Katherine Whitbeck** and President **Laura Achterhof** distribute ATPE travel mugs to new members Oct. 10 at the Nacogdoches ISD bus barn. The local unit has more than doubled its number of members in the transportation department this year.

welcome back

The following local units have recently reactivated:

- **ANAHUAC ATPE**, Region 4.
- **ARCHER CITY ATPE**, Region 9.
- **CHINA SPRING ATPE**, Region 12.
- **CROSBY ATPE**, Region 4.
- **HAWKINS ATPE**, Region 7.
- **HOLLIDAY ATPE**, Region 9.
- **KNOX-CITY-O'BRIEN ATPE**, Region 9.
- **LA VILLA ATPE**, Region 1.
- **LOVELADY ATPE**, Region 6.
- **ONALASKA ATPE**, Region 6.
- **PROSPER ATPE**, Region 10.
- **RIO VISTA ATPE**, Region 10.
- **TARKINGTON ATPE**, Region 4.
- **TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-TEXARKANA ATPE**, Region 8.
- **UVALDE ATPE**, Region 20.
- **WILLS POINT ATPE**, Region 10.

highlights

In December, **HUMBLE ATPE** donated \$250 to the Humble ISD Education Foundation in memory of member **William Wiener**, who taught children with special needs at Kingwood Middle School.

REGION 10 ATPE, REGION 12 ATPE and eight Region 12 local units recently made financial donations to Rice ISD to help teachers replace instructional materials and supplies after an Oct. 24 tornado damaged an entire wing of Rice Intermediate/Middle School.



The following ATPE members donated \$50 or more to ATPE's Political Action Committee (ATPE-PAC) between October and December 2010.



Abilene

Tonja Gray

Bastrop

Chris Hansen

Beaumont

Glen Rabalais
Patrice Rabalais

Boerne

Richard Wiggins

Bryan

Sallie McGehee

Clint

Michael Slaight

Conroe

Labana Berry

Dallas

Dianne Reed

Denton

Sandy Starek

Ennis

Ronda Hollingsworth

Fort Worth

Steve Pokluda

Garland

Angie Arey
Julia Lepek
Jed Reed

Gatesville

Skip Omenson

Harlandale

Lee Amende
Marsha Huggins

Huntsville

Deborah Lyons

Kerens

Shirley Curtis

Killeen

Eileen Walcik
Melissa Walcik
Ron Walcik

La Vega

Norma Burns
Jeremy Gilbert

La Vernia

Clay Bordner

Leander

Norma Bishop
Gabriel Serna
Jayne Serna

Lumberton

Jackie Arthur

Mabank

April Coker

Mesquite

Jerry Bonham
Carol Davies
Janice Houston
Debbie Massey

**Monahans-
Wickett-Pyote**

Vicki Greenfield

**Nacogdoches
County**

Ginger Franks

Northside (20)

David de la Garza
Cynthia Sloan

Odessa

Olga Garza

Olney

Trudy Matus
Sam Spurlock

Plano

Ken Eckler
Diane Porter
Doris Ratenski
Shirley Sadowski

Region 20

Irene Rodriguez-
Dubberly

San Antonio

Pearl Valutsky

South San Antonio

Louis Benavides

Stanton

Teresa Griffin

State office

Brock Gregg
Amy White

Tyler

Betty Berndt
Eddie Hill

Waco

Sandra O'Connor

West

Janice Hornsby

Wichita Falls

Belinda Wolf

Willacy County

Pat Brashear

Willis

Judi Thomas

Woden

Malinda Holzapfel



PAC'S
PEAK
CHALLENGE

Help ATPE-PAC reach its goal of raising \$10,000 by May 1 by participating in the PAC's Peak Challenge. Learn more at www.atpe.org/advocacy/pac/pacspeak.aspx.

Website makes the world smaller

Take students on virtual field trips to meet interesting people from all around the world at www.meetmeatthecorner.org. Meet Me at the Corner is an online selection of video podcasts that aim to educate kids about the world in which they live without requiring them to travel.

Topics covered on the site range from architecture and astronomy to poetry and pets. The videos include:

- *A Kid's History of the Biathlon*—A trip to the Tenth Mountain Ski Center in Fort Kent, Maine.
- *History of Yarn*—A stop at the Lion Brand yarn store in New York City.
- *Interview with a Zookeeper*—A visit to the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo in Colorado Springs, Colo.



Each video page highlights links to related websites, and the site's Big Apple Book Club features video book reviews created by kids for their peers. There's even a place where kids can submit their own videos about their "corner" of the world.

A reading tool that's on the level

If you're looking to build a better classroom library, help students find books that match their reading level or access free, book-based resources, look no further than Scholastic's Teacher Book Wizard, <http://bookwizard.scholastic.com>.

This section of the Scholastic website features a variety of search tools, including a quick search of known titles; a leveled search to find books specific to a reading level, subject, interest and more; and BookAlike™, which provides lists of books at a reading level similar to titles entered by the user. The site relies on four of the most commonly used leveled reading systems: grade level equivalent, Guided Reading Level, the Lexile Framework® for Reading and Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA).

Also available on the site is the List Exchange, a community in which authors, celebrities, education experts and educators post book lists covering a variety of topics as well as tips for evaluating and expanding classroom libraries.

"Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow.'"

—Mary Anne Radmacher, American writer and artist (b. 1957)

Loving the ambiguous conundrum

Merriam-Webster Online, www.merriam-webster.com, has compiled a list of the 10 most frequently searched words on its website. Many of these words aren't easily defined:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. pre-ten-tious \pri-'ten(t)-shəs\ | 6. co-nun-drum \kə-'nən-drəm\ |
| 2. u-biq-ui-tous \yü-'bi-kwə-təs\ | 7. al-be-it \əl-'bē-ət, əl-\ |
| 3. love \ləv\ | 8. am-big-u-ous \əm-'bi-gyə-wəs\ |
| 4. cyn-i-cal \si-ni-kəl\ | 9. in-teg-ri-ty \in-'te-grē-tē\ |
| 5. ap-a-thet-ic \ə-pə-'the-tik\ | 10. af-fect \ə-'fekt\; ef-fect \i-'fekt, e-, ē-, ə-\ |

