

VC ECHOES

An AFTCA and New York Teacher Award Winning Publication

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From the President**Out Wit, Out Play, Out Last...**

I received the following at the VCTA web site. It came with the message to "pass this to those who think teaching is easy and to the ones that know it is hard...they will both benefit."

~ Tim Brown

Have you heard about the next planned "Survivor" show?

Three businessmen and three businesswomen will be dropped into an elementary school classroom for six weeks. Each business person will be provided with a copy of his/her school's district's curriculum, and a class of 28 students.

Each class will have five learning-disabled children, three with A.D.D., one gifted child and two who speak limited English. Three will be labeled as severe behavioral problems.

Each business person must complete lesson plans at least 3 days in advance with annotations for curriculum objectives and modify, organize, or create students, handle misconduct, implement technology, document attendance, write referrals, correct homework, make bulletin boards, compute grades,

complete report cards, document benchmarks, communicate with parents, and arrange parent conferences.

They must also supervise recess and monitor the hallways. In addition, they will complete drills for fire, tornadoes, and shooting attacks. They must attend workshops, (100 hours), faculty meetings, union meetings, and curriculum development meetings. They must also tutor those students who are behind and strive to get their 2 non-English speaking children proficient enough to take the Terra Nova and ELA tests.

If they are sick or having a bad day they must not let it show. Each day they must incorporate reading, writing, math, science and social studies into the program. They must maintain discipline and provide an educationally stimulating environment at all times.

The business people will only have access to the golf course on weekends, but on their new salary they will not be able to afford it anyway. There will be no access to vendors who want to take



them out to lunch, and lunch will be limited to 30 minutes.

On days when they do not have recess duty, the business people will be permitted to use the staff restroom as long as another survival candidate is supervising their class. They will be provided with two 40-minute planning periods per week while their students are at specials. If the copier is operable, they may make copies of necessary materials at this time. The business people must continually advance their education on their own time and pay for this advanced training themselves. This can be accomplished by moonlighting at a second job or marrying someone with money.

The winner will be allowed to return to his or her job! Good luck!

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**What
sculpture is
to a block
of marble,
education is
to the
human
soul.**

~ Joseph Addison

Great News for Our "Cohorts"!

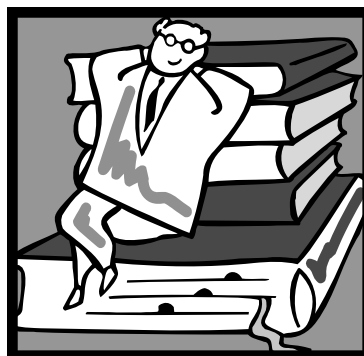
Tired of the state report card on school districts? Naused by the Commissioner's constant harping and fault-finding? Wish you could see some really positive feedback/statistics actually reported to our schools by the state? Well, you've come to the right place! In the recently released cohort report for school districts statewide there were some very encouraging statistics concerning our results in Regents English and Regents Mathematics. Of the 15 districts in Orange County, Valley Central students had the third highest percentage scoring 65 or higher on the English Regents (93%) and the highest percentage scoring 65 or higher (97%) on the Math Regents. In addition, V.C. was third in overall

percentage of students with scores of 55 or higher (99%) on the same two examinations. Those statistics (which should be published as well as the report cards) show that beginning with the elementary grades, continuing through the middle school levels and culminating in the high school years, the teachers of Valley Central do excel at instructing and preparing our students to not just meet but exceed and, in state terminology, master the skills in both of these disciplines by the time they graduate. As other disciplines reach the same stages, we should be confident that we, Valley Central,

will perform just as admirably. Congratulations on the fine job you have always done and will, no doubt, continue to do. You are to be commended, if not publicly, at the

very least within our own schools, community and association. Bravo!

~ Jay Sussdorff, VP



*There are no greater advocates
for children and education,
then teachers and teacher unions.*

~ Tim Brown, Pres.

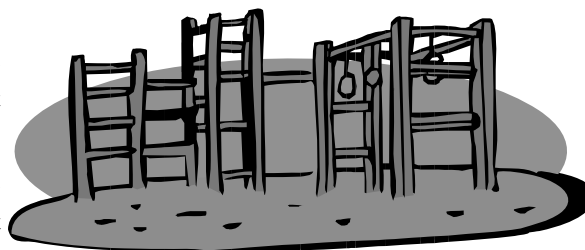
Teachers Caught...Putting Children Center

Recently the Walden Community Playground located at Wooster Grove was built with volunteer labor, donations, and fundraising. Members of the Valley Central Teachers' Association worked side by side with other community members, young children through senior citizens donated their time and skills to help build a playground for our children.

Working together with students, former students and par-

ents, it quickly became apparent that the playground was being built with the heart and sweat of the community as a whole. When the community works together, great things do happen.

The faculty and staff of Walden Elementary School held a Cash-for-a-Cause Casual Day to raise money for the playground project. They raised \$225. If your



eyes are open, you will catch teachers...putting children center!

~ Rich Steger, VP

**On September 11th,
blood donors were
heroes, too.**

**Blood is still
desperately needed.**

**Be a hero...
give the gift of blood,
give the gift of life.**



**The VCTA is the proud sponsor
of an Employee Blood Drive**

**Thursday, February 28th
VCMS Gym**

1:30 pm—7:00 pm

**Make an appointment with Kathy Manning, RN, (MS Nurse)
457-2400 x 6017**

Blood collected and snacks provided by The Hudson Valley Blood Bank

Bush Social Security Panel Recommends Benefit Cuts and Privatization

President George W. Bush's scheme to privatize Social Security took a step forward Dec. 11, with his hand-picked Social Security privatization commission issuing its final report outlining three ways to privatize the nation's retirement system that would require benefit cuts for most future retirees.

"Today the President's Commission to privatize Social Security officially endorses a radical plan to dismantle Social Security. The drastic recommendations adopted by the 16-member commission will bankrupt our nation's most effective family protection program and jeopardize the future of the federal budget," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

An analysis of the commission's draft proposals by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and The Century Foundation notes that "all three plans would reduce traditional Social Security benefits," and "none of the three plans appears to restore long-term balance to Social Security."

"The commission's final report shows clearly that the privatization idea is bankrupt....Depending on which of the three proposals is adopted, younger workers would see disproportionate benefit cuts, as would African Americans, women and lower-wage workers," according to an Economic Policy Institute report.

"If enacted, the commission's proposals would end Social Security's ability to provide an adequate level of guaranteed protection for America's working families," said Hans Riemer, senior policy analyst for the Institute for America's Future.

The commission's plans call for siphoning money from workers' Social Security payroll taxes to pay for privatized accounts—as much as \$1 trillion over the next decade and almost \$3 trillion over the next 20 years, according to the analyses.

The Center/TCF study said funds to finance the contributions to the private accounts "must come from one of two sources, funds diverted from the Social Security Trust Fund or funds transferred from the general revenue."

Using money from the Social Security Trust Fund would accelerate the fund's exhaustion date from 2038 to 2024, according to the joint report. It also notes that tapping general revenues—especially with the Bush recession coupled with his millionaire tax cut darkening the nation's economic outlook—would result in substantial deficits outside of Social Security.

"One of the most dramatic changes proposed by the commission in order to pay for privatization

involves a shift to price indexing as way for benefit computations. While this change may be technically impenetrable to the average worker it will have a huge impact on benefits: reductions of about 24

percent for workers retiring in 2040 (age 28 today) and as high as 43 percent for workers retiring in 2070. It will also reduce disability and survivors benefits, which are calculated using the same formula," according to

the Institute for America's Future study.

Today, according to the institute, nearly 67 percent of workers retire early. The commission uses a backdoor method to raise the retirement age before workers can collect full benefits.

"The commission hides its benefit cuts behind technical changes in the benefits formula. The commission says it wants to 'improve work incentives,' by permanently cutting benefits to those who retire before age 65. This kind of penalty is a big hit against people who work a lifetime in physically demanding jobs and therefore retire in their early 60s, as well as workers who cannot find work after they have lost a job at the end of their careers or who have a shorter life expectancy," Sweeney said.

~ from the AFL-CIO Web Site



Are you approaching retirement (5 years or less away)?

You should make an appointment with the retirement system to find out where you stand and what your options are .

On Good Health and a Safe Environment

Are you feeling a little blue this winter?

Most people have heard about the winter or holiday blues, even Elvis sung about having a blue Christmas. The winter blues is a real medical complaint. In the medical field it is called "seasonal affective disorder" or "SAD". SAD is a form of depression but is often thought of as a sleep disorder as its major symptoms include an increased need for sleep and extreme fatigue. SAD makes a person feel lethargic, irritable and depressed.

It most commonly effects women over 30 (3 of 4 sufferers are women although men also get it).

Sufferers usually find that;

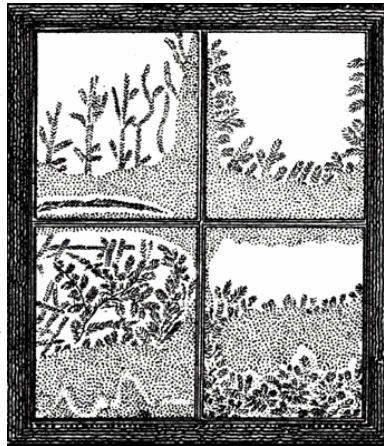
- Depression starts when days are short
- They constantly feel tired
- They have a hard time "getting going"
- Appetite increases, especially craving carbohydrates which leads to weight gain
- They tend to withdraw from relationships
- They suffer from an inability to focus or concentrate
- They feel anxious and despair.

The further north a person lives, the

more likely they are to suffer from SAD since it is related to day light as well as climate, season and weather as well as latitude storms, cloud cover and how much time is spent inside under artificial light. As the days become shorter, and cloud cover hides the sun, people who suffer from SAD literally drag through their life. SAD makes a person want to go into hibernation until the sun comes back out and the days grow longer.

The most effective therapy for SAD is photo therapy, also known as bright light therapy. Light has a proven effect on the brain hormones and its function. This treatment is based on the interaction of light with the eyes, not the skin. The patient is directed to sit in front of the light from a professional bright light box for 30 minutes a day. Exercise is also recommended, sufferers are usually told to use part of their lunch break to go outside and walk on sunny days to absorb the light. Jogging is especially helpful as it releases dopamine in the brain, which SAD sufferers tend to be short of.

Other recommendations include; reducing life stress, increasing the



amount of light in your home and workplace. Let as much light as possible come in through the windows and paint walls a light color and get a light color carpet. Sufferers are also advised to reduce fats, sugar

and sugary foods. B12 and melatonin supplements can also help but should not be taken without consulting your physician first.

SAD sufferers are also told not to overtax themselves by expecting to accomplish as much in the winter as they do in the summer. They are advised to take a winter holiday someplace warm and sunny. Laughter, in huge amounts, supposedly releases a brain chemical which counteracts SAD. And lastly, SAD sufferers are reminded that winter does eventually end, the days will grow longer and spring will eventually return.

Information was gathered for this article through the web site, About.com.

~ Patti Lunden

Heads Up on 15% Hikes in Health Care Costs Projected for 2002

A number of expert analysts project health benefit costs to increase by 15% or more in 2002. A number of trends are again creating the demand for higher premiums from health insurers: rising prescription drug costs, greater use of expensive technologies and the overall aging of the United States population.

A projection from the Segal Co., a national benefits consulting firm, indicates that prescription costs could rise 15% to 20% in 2002, after a double-digit increase for 2001. Many employers will seek higher drug co-payments and introduce more managed care elements into prescription coverage in order to offset increasing costs. ~ NYSUT's *The Bottom Line*



Time To Call It a Career?...Early Retirement Incentive Offered

The District is offering an Early Retirement Incentive to the Teachers' Unit members for this school year. This incentive has been offered in the past, however it is offered for the school year only, and the District is not obligated to offer the incentive in any future year. No teacher is under any obligation to participate in this program, it is strictly voluntary. To be eligible for this incentive a unit member must be the following conditions:

- Over the age of 50; (as of June 30, 2002)
- On Step 20 or above;
- 10 or more years of service to Valley Central School District
- And not otherwise eligible to participate in the retirement incentive set forth in Article XXV, E of the 2002-2004 Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Members who choose to take advantage of this incentive must notify the District of his/her intention to retire prior to March 1, 2002.

Should a member decide to take advantage of the early retirement incentive offer they will receive:

- Effective July 1, 2002 health benefits will be provided in accordance with Article XXV C. of the 2002-2004 Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- Payment of sick leave in accordance with Article XXII B.1 of the 2002-2004 Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- Increment payment as per Article XIX G. of the 2002-2004 Collective Bargaining Agreement
- Retirement Incentive of \$16,500.

The VCTA has provided a form letter to building representatives to help members compose a letter to notify the District of the intention to retire. Should that letter be used by a member who wants to take advantage the early retirement incentive, the member should be sure to include that he/she intends to take advantage of the offer contingent that they will receive the benefits as specified above and that health

benefits will be provide until 55 and continue thereafter as for retirees who leave at 55.

Those Teachers' Unit members who are eligible for retirement this year

are reminded that they must also notify the District of the intention to retire by March 1, 2002 in order to take advantage of the retirement incentive.

Both the District and the Association have heard the rumors of the NYS Retirement Incentive that will supposedly be

offered this school year. However, neither we nor the District have had official word. If and when we do, we will let the membership know.

Contact your building representative(s) for a copy of the retirement form letter. If you have questions about the retirement incentive, contact the VCTA Union Office, 457-5899. Anyone planning to retire this year or in the next five years is strongly advised to contact the NYSTRS as well.

~ Patti Lunden



Teacher Next Door

The *Teacher Next Door* Program is an extraordinary endeavor sponsored by the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development designed to encourage teachers to buy homes in low and moderate income neighborhoods.

Available to any state certified teacher or administrator employed by a public or private school or any city, county, state, or federal education agency.

The *Teacher Next Door* Program provides up to a 50% discount on a HUD owned home in designated areas.

More information can be found the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's web site,
www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/reo/tnd/tnd.cfm

The web site contains general information on the program, frequently asked questions and property listings in the designated revitalization areas.

Federal Education Bill a Step In The Right Direction

The new education reform bill out of Washington provided much-needed encouragement and support for high-need school districts just before the holiday break, but it's only a beginning.

The education reform bill passed by Congress has strong support from President Bush. It boosts federal education funding by more than 20% to a total of \$26.5 billion for fiscal year 2002, of which as much as \$2.6 billion could come to New York state.

"Increases in federal education aid were an early holiday present, especially for the Big 5 urban school districts, which face rocky, if not dire, budget pictures," said Alan Lubin, NYSUT executive vice president. The state Assembly also sent nearly \$10 million in additional funding to Rochester and Buffalo schools and \$23 million to New York City, which was expected to help save hundreds of teachers' jobs after the post-Sept. 11 economy sent the districts into crisis.

However, we can't continue to count on such bailouts, Lubin said, and we can't allow the World Trade Center disaster to be used as an excuse for under-funding education.

Leaders in Congress worked to improve on the President's proposed education bill - including funding increases for Title I - and that will help New York's cities reduce teacher layoffs, Lubin said. It will

also increase the money they can earmark for recruiting and training teachers and helping students, particularly those who are at-risk, to reach higher standards.

Lubin said Sen. Hillary Clinton played an important role as a member of the Senate's conference committee. NYSUT and national affiliate American Federation of Teachers lobbied hard to preserve, enhance or reject certain provisions.

"We are still studying the details of this final package, but at first glance we are optimistic," Lubin said. "The bill includes many reforms NYSUT and AFT have championed, and we will be working with the State Education Department to implement them."

Focus on reading

For example, the bill includes a renewed federal focus on reading and early literacy; provisions that encourage the development and implementation of high standards in core subjects; the alignment of professional development to standards; and accountability for student progress. "And," Lubin said, "we are encouraged so many in Congress rejected vouchers as destructive to efforts to improve public schools."

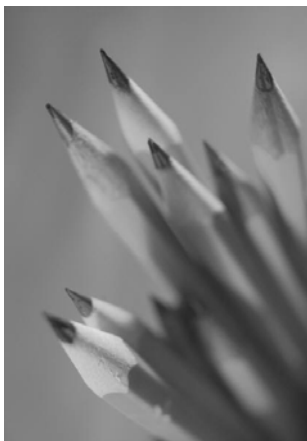
The bill is not perfect. NYSUT supports high-quality tests linked to

state standards and curriculum, but leaders are concerned new federal testing requirements impose unnecessary burdens at a time when so many districts are struggling with budget cuts triggered by the economic downturn and Sept. 11 attacks. Deputy Commissioner James Kadamus, in a meeting with the NYSUT Board of Directors, confirmed the new federal law will mean annual testing for New York students, but that existing fourth- and eighth-grade state tests will fill the requirements for those grades.

In addition, more funding for programs like Title I and special education are a good start, but a much greater federal investment is needed, Lubin said. As it is, federal money represents only about 7% of educational funding in New York.

While additional federal aid is welcome, it represents a small piece of a big puzzle, he said. The pending state budget will have a far greater impact on public schools. Lubin said NYSUT is looking to Albany to build on the investment that Washington, D.C., has made in New York's schools.

~ NYSUT's The Bottom Line



STANDARDS CONFERENCE SLATED FOR APRIL

Second Annual NYSUT Standards and Assessments Conference will be held April 1-2, 2002, at the Desmond in Albany.

The conference will feature content-specific workshops developed by the NYSUT Subject Area Committees and a variety of other content-based programs. There will be keynote speakers at the April 1 dinner and the April 2 luncheon.

A plenary session with First Vice President Antonia Cortese and State Education Commissioner Richard Mills is being planned for the morning of April 1.

White House Wins Hotly Contested 'FAST-TRACK' Bill Close Contest

Despite an extraordinarily intense lobbying effort from NYSUT, the national American Federation of Teachers and other labor supporters, the House of Representatives voted by a margin of one, 215-214, to expand President Bush's "fast track" authority to negotiate international trade agreements.

The win for the president came only after desperate White House arm-twisting on the floor of the House to secure the votes it needed.

"While we were not successful in defeating this measure, the efforts of NYSUT members to reach out to their representatives in Congress undoubtedly had a powerful impact," said NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan Lubin. "Our members' advocacy in opposition made a

difference in the final vote tally, and made this one of the most hotly contested bills in recent memory."

Before the final vote, the AFT had identified four undecided New York members of Congress as targets for political action: Ben Gilman, R-Middletown, Sue Kelly, R-Poughkeepsie, John Sweeney, R-Clifton Park, and Jim Walsh, R-Syracuse. Lubin said Gilman and Walsh deserve credit for supporting the union's position, as did every Democratic member of the New York delegation.

Kelly and Sweeney voted against NYSUT's position, as did Reps. Sherwood Boehlert, R-Utica, Vito

Fossella, R-Staten Island, Felix Grucci, R-Long Island, Amo Houghton, R-Elmira, Peter King, R-Long Island, and Thomas Reynolds, R-Buffalo.

"Over the past years, we have achieved many legislative victories because of the hard work of our politically active members," and this doesn't change that record, Lubin said. "The road ahead will be tougher, but working together we can continue to do the job."

~NYSUT's *The Bottom Line*



Union's 9-11 Fund Goes To Work

Almost as fast as funds are coming in to the NYSUT 9-11 Disaster Relief Fund, they are going back out into the hands of those directly affected by the terrorist attacks.

The fund has received nearly \$400,000 in contributions from NYSUT, its local unions, individual members, staff, students and other union locals from across North America, said Walter Dunn, NYSUT second vice president. That includes almost \$300,000 contributed by 2,000 donors, as well as \$100,000 from NYSUT itself.

"Checks have arrived from as far away as Italy and Israel," Dunn said. At regional retiree conferences held this fall in Mid-Hudson, Rochester, Albany and Buffalo, participants donated their refundable reg-

istration deposits to the fund.

Every penny collected is being disbursed to the families of victims, Dunn said, and the statewide union is bearing any and all administrative expenses.

Approximately \$290,000 has already been disbursed, he said. Checks were forwarded to the families of 34 Public Employees Federation members who died, 120 United Federation of Teachers members who lost someone, and many others. Some \$32,000 was earmarked for school supplies, materials and equipment for schools and staff in the vicinity of the World Trade Center, as requested by the contributors.

In addition to funding, NYSUT is offering pro bono legal and financial planning assistance to the fami-



lies, as well as the assistance of NYSUT Social Services, Dunn said.

~ NYSUT's *The Bottom Line*

Schools Expected To Do More, With Less

Facing declining budgets, growing enrollments, higher standards and more stringent testing requirements, public schools - as much if not more than any other constituency - are struggling to navigate the stormy economic seas.

According to a recent congressional study, the faltering economy is taking a toll on education funding in states throughout the country. The report concludes that states are spending \$11 billion less on education this year compared to last, when inflation and enrollment growth are taken into account. Schools are weighing bleak options as they try to make ends meet. They are beginning to lay off teachers, cut back on textbooks, crowd more students into already crowded classrooms, postpone building improvements and eliminate teacher training, the study said.

"The news will only get worse as states try to restore balance to their budgets, which are running a collective \$25 billion deficit this year, and prepare next year's budgets under the worst fiscal conditions in a decade," the report said. It goes on to note that 11 states found it necessary to adopt a total of \$800 million in mid-year cuts to education since

adopting their initial state budgets this school year.

NYSUT leaders said the report emphasizes the urgency of supporting education now, especially in the wake of September's devastating terror attacks and the resulting economic fallout.

"We see all of these trends across New York state,"

said Antonia Cortese, NYSUT first vice president. The state's schools will suffer lasting damage from the attacks, but the Legislature had already shortchanged public education in its

2001-02 budget, she said.

"It's ironic because in these trying times," she said, "a healthy investment in our education system is the most important investment we can make for the children and the future of this state."

Facing a \$400 million deficit this year, the New York City Board of Education has already cut \$115 million (2.5%) from its budget. In Rochester, a \$24 million budget shortfall threatens jobs; in Buffalo the gap is \$28 million; Yonkers

faces a \$57 million deficit and cuts in staff and programs.

"This year would be even worse if districts didn't have reserve funds to tap into and soften the blow," said Alan Lubin, NYSUT executive vice president. "But those reserves won't be there next year."

Gov. George Pataki is expected to unveil his executive budget proposal soon, and the national study will provide some perspective to help measure his plans.

The study concluded that further education cuts are likely,

yet the demands on schools are growing. It said the goals of the landmark federal education reform package cannot be accomplished with diminished resources.

~ NYSUT's *The Bottom Line*



AFT Optimistic As Bush Signs Education Law

Flanked by both Republican and Democratic members of Congress, President George Bush recently signed into law the newly reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act, now called the No Child Left Behind Act.

The new legislation "provides a framework for a national commitment to education," said Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers, NYSUT's

national affiliate.

The AFT "is pleased and optimistic that the comprehensive legislation embraces a number of positive measures," she added, including the Reading First and Early Reading programs; accountability for student progress and the testing requirement; provisions for adopting high standards in core academic subjects; and the alignment of professional development around the standards.

"It is especially significant that Congress and President Bush made this kind of investment in education and to our urban schools at a time of fiscal austerity," Feldman said. "This commitment should be instructive to states that are considering sacrificing educational investment because of shrinking revenues."

~NYSUT's *The Bottom Line*

A Teacher Code of Ethics

The Regents established the Professional Standards and Practices Board in 1998, in part to address issues that would ensure “an adequate supply” of highly qualified professionals for all of New York’s classrooms. The Professional Standards and Practices Board advises the Regents and Commissioner of Education on issues relating to the quality of teaching and teacher education and it was charged by the Regents to develop a Code of Ethics. The Board consists of twenty-eight members, including twenty-one K-12 (only 9 of whom are practicing classroom teachers) and higher education practitioners, six public representatives consisting of parents, school board members, and community and business representatives and one non-voting teacher education student.

For the past year the Board has been working on developing a code for teachers. A teacher pledge, although not part of the charge, was also developed. The draft documents were presented to the Regents in September 2001 for discussion. Before a Code of Ethics or Teacher Pledge is adopted, the Board will seek public comment.

Initially the teacher pledge was developed as part of the Code of Ethics, but at the November meeting, the full Board agreed to separate the pledge from the code since many Professional Board members felt that including the pledge may distract from appropriate consideration of the Code.

Members of the education community are being asked to comment on the clar-

ity of articulation and appropriateness of each of the six principles that define the Code of Ethics. The six principles are as follows:

- Teachers nurture the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and civic potential of each student.
- Teachers create, support and maintain challenging learning environments for all.
- Teachers commit to their own learning in order to develop their practice.
- Teachers collaborate with colleagues and other professionals in the interest of student learning.
- Teachers collaborate with parents and community, building trust and respecting confidentiality.
- Teachers advance the intellectual and ethical foundation of the learning community.

Regarding the teacher pledge, you will be asked if you:

- Endorse a teacher pledge.
- Would take a pledge.
- Think a teacher pledge would “elevate” the professional status of teachers.

What is NYSUT’s position on a Code of Ethics?

NYSUT, from its inception, has always been a strong proponent of high standards for students and teachers. This version of a comprehensive statement of principles, while not perfect, does a reasonable job of summing up the professional responsibilities that all teach-

ers should aspire to uphold. The draft Code is modeled after the core propositions developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which represents the highest standards of the teaching profession. The language, including the guarantee that the Code not be used for disciplinary purposes, provides a reasonable framework for a Code of Ethics.

Should a Code of Ethics govern teacher discipline?

No. NYSUT strongly supports the position taken by the Professional Board to include language in the Code that clearly indicates the Code is not to be used for local discipline or at the state level for removal of a certificate. Teacher behavior and professionalism are currently addressed in New York State laws, rules and regulations. Education law (Section 3020-a) and Commissioner’s Regulations (Part 83) already define issues of unprofessional behavior or conduct, good moral character and local disciplinary action.

What’s NYSUT’s position on the teacher pledge or oath?

While NYSUT backs the concept of a Code of Ethics that lays out a commonly held set of principles for all teachers, it strongly opposes a recommendation that teachers be required to take a pledge or oath swearing to uphold those principles. A pledge is not a state requirement for licensure or certification for any of the other professions and therefore should not be a requirement for teachers.

~NYSUT Briefing Bulletin 02-01



The VCTA has received notes of gratitude from Arline Friedman for her gift for retirement and from Mary Bleau (MS) for the donation to a scholarship fund made in memory of her husband.

The Officers and Members of Rescue Company 3 also thanked the VCTA for the donation made in memory of Don Regan, father of Shane Regan (EC), who died in the September 11th tragedy.

The monies received to this fund went directly to the eight members who were lost from Rescue Company 3.

Highlights of the December VCTA Meeting

The minutes from the November meeting were corrected to reflect that voting on CBA took place in buildings on Monday, December 3.

President's Report

MOA was approved by both VCTA membership (285 yes votes to 37 no votes) and BOE. BOE vote was unanimous. We have gained ground on bigger districts and do not have to contribute to our health plan.

A chart illustrating nurses' salary increases over the last two contracts was distributed. Most nurses received between 80 and 110% increases over the last two contracts. Money for VCTA shirts should be sent to Tim Brown.

Progress Report Due Dates/Integrate Pro Article- copies were distributed. The District cannot mandate that work be done at home (*HS progress report due dates were changed from Wednesday to Tuesday.*)

Hudson Valley Area Labor Federation material was distributed.

OUSDHP November 20th minutes- copies were distributed. 1) Some drugs that are currently preferred drugs (\$15 co-pay) may be in the non-preferred category effective January 1, 2002 (\$25 co-pay). Therefore, some enrollees affected by these changes may want to consult their doctor or pharmacist to see what alternatives may be available to them. 2) Enrollees have 15 months from the date of occurrence to submit an appeal claim to IN-DECS. Check your statements carefully.

Payment for In-service Credits has been delayed- The middle school has raised concerns regarding the delay in receiving payment for in-service credit. The deadlines to submit credits are October 1st and March 1st. Payments will be prorated. Discussion followed. Cen-

tral Office has been in the process of updating in-service records and payments should begin.

NY Teacher can be sent to administrators- discussion followed. The general feeling was that it would be good for the administrators to see NYT.

Mid-Hudson School

Bell- copies were distributed.

Mid-Hudson Teacher Center minutes- copies were distributed.

AFTCA Catalyst (American Federation of Teachers Communications Association)- The VC Echoes was recognized for its special edition honoring retirees and recognizing achievements of its members. Additionally, one of Patti Lunden's cartoons was featured.

Special Education CSE Meeting Times for School Delays- Copies of a memo (for two-hour delay schedule regarding CSE meeting times) were distributed. If school is closed or delayed, you cannot be required to come in- this would be a change in terms and conditions of employment.

Secretarial Unit Report

Lucy Fox reported that all was well.

Elections Report

Randy Sutter reported that all went smoothly and thanked those who helped count the votes.

Retirees

Kevin McFadden expressed thanks that health benefits in the CBA were not affected.

Kevin encouraged members to consider pursuing National Certification, as it demonstrates commitment to our profession and encouraged the VCTA to seek additional remuneration for teachers who hold National Certification (as in Middletown)

Kevin recommends that those

teachers age 50-55, who are contemplating retirement in the next few years, should contact TRS. It is important to know where you stand,

your retirement benefits, and what your options are. Patti Lunden will put a reminder in ECHOES. March 1st is the deadline to let

the District know if you plan to retire. Tim Brown reminded members that John Solan and Diana Shiner are our TRS reps.

Arline Friedman reported that since ED14 retirees will not address VOTE Cope until next year, she and Kevin will write a VOTE Cope letter to retirees to be included in VC ECHOES.

Carol DeMicco requested clarification on retirement incentives. Tim Brown stated that you can take either the district or the state retirement incentive, not both.

Standing Committees

Kathy Manning reported that the VCTA Blood Drive will take place on February 28.

New Business

Patti Lunden proposed a resolution for the NYSUT RA: That all members of every tier of NYSTRS be granted 2% credit towards retirement for each and every year worked with no reduction in percentage for any year.

Another Executive Council meeting was held on January 15th. The next Executive Council meeting will be held on February 19, 2002 in the professional library at VCHS beginning at 3:50 pm.



Mac's Musings....(from the Retiree side)



tells me that some districts are tinkering with retiree health benefits, an action which I consider absolutely unacceptable and morally corrupt.) This reminds me once again that we all should be writing, e-mailing, faxing the governor to sign into law a bill passed by the legislature several years ago which will assure health benefits to retired teachers statewide. Presently, it is year to year.

Editor's Note: You can also e-mail Kevin via the VCTA web site or directly at vcta@frontiernet.net. We will be sure Kevin gets your e-mail.

Reading Lucy Fox's "Secretariaily Yours" column in the last two issues of Echoes (and a really fine job, Lucy) had me thinking about all the wonderful school-related-personnel I have known over the years: secretaries, paras, custodians, nurses, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, security workers, etc. Where would we be without them? They certainly made my life easier during my active teaching days. If I forgot to say "thank you" as often as I should have, thanks.

Amen...

I would like to do a column (or part of one) on the volunteer work that retirees are doing. I need your help. Write or call-fill me in on your volunteer work. I believe that it will be of great interest to all of us.

I hope that 2002 will bring peace to all of us and health and happiness to you and yours.

Until next time, keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you.

~ Kevin McFadden,
Retiree Representative

Happy New Year!

I know that I am given to cliché, but I can't help myself in this case! Where has the time gone? Where does it continue to go? The Latin poet was so very right: "Tempus fugit." I look back on my teaching life and the decades fall by the wayside. I taught in the '50's, '60's, '70's, '80's and '90's. Thousands of kids, thousands of lessons, etc., etc., etc. My first group of students graduated high school in 1959. They will turn 62 this year. My first VC class ('65) will turn 55 this year. Several who became teachers will retire this year! In the words of the immortal and quasi-extra-terrestrial Vonnegut, "And so it goes."

Glad Tidings

The retirees rejoice in the fine contract for the active teachers—approved, overwhelmingly by the VCTA membership and the board of education. Especially gratifying to me and to all retirees and to those who soon will be retirees is the fact that health benefits remain unchanged. This is of utmost importance as we grow older in retirement. Our thanks and congratulations to the negotiators, Jay Sussdorff and Mary Goldberg, to the hard-working VCTA officers and to the Board in swiftly coming to agreement. (I am especially gratified since the retiree grapevine

Nobody asked me, but...

Congratulations to Marc Newman (HS retiree) on the publication of his new book, recounting the history of Walden and Maybrook. Marc is a tireless researcher, and the book includes many photographs. You will certainly recognize some faces and many names.

If you are wondering where some retired friends have been, try Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina. John Napolitano and Tony Cimorelli hit the links regularly in South Carolina. Bill Tucci reports that he and Becky still enjoy their retirement (and their jobs!) in North Carolina. Jim Tate is hoping to start building soon in southern Virginia.

Retirees remain active in the work force also. George Coates continues to officiate and to serve as president of the officials' association. Pat Iorlano, Marty Bedesky and others do some substitute teaching. Bob Ciganek continues as a very important part of the "Community as School" program at VCHS. Jack Matikiewicz reigns as chairman of the board at Joe's Pizza in the Town of Newburgh. Stan Davie remains the chief at V.C. Federal Credit Union. There are many more, but I need you to send me a reminder! Call me at (845) 778-7236 or write me at 6 Jessup Str., Walden, NY 12586.

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Some important insurance coverages explained

The Member Benefits department of New York State United Teachers offers a variety of insurance plans, each designed to meet a particular need. Brief descriptions of NYSUT's voluntary disability, long-term care and catastrophe major medical plans are provided here. For more information, call NYSUT Member Benefits at 1-800-626-8101, e-mail benefits@nysutmail.org, or visit the Web at www.memberbenefits.nysut.org.

Disability insurance helps replace a portion of your lost income by providing tax-free monthly benefits if an illness or injury prevents you from working. In addition to the plan for NYSUT members and agency fee payers, a separate plan is available for associate members, retiree members, and spouses or domestic partners of NYSUT members. Applicants to either plan must be under the age of 64.

You can tailor the plan by choosing long or short term coverage; your monthly benefit amount up to \$5,000, not to exceed 60 percent of gross monthly earnings; and your waiting period, which is the amount of time you must be totally disabled before benefits will be paid. The longer the waiting period, the lower your premium payments will be.

Long-term care insurance helps pay the cost of custodial care and other long-term care expenses. People may think that they're too young to think about this, but the need for long-term care can happen at any age and at any time, due to an unexpected accident or illness.

Basic health insurance and Medicare often don't cover long-term care expenses. Unfortunately, many people don't find this out until they're actually faced with a long-term care situation. As a result, they end up paying for long-term care out of their own pockets and risk spending their life savings.

NYSUT members, agency fee payers, and their spouses or domestic partners are eligible to apply, as are their parents (and in-laws),

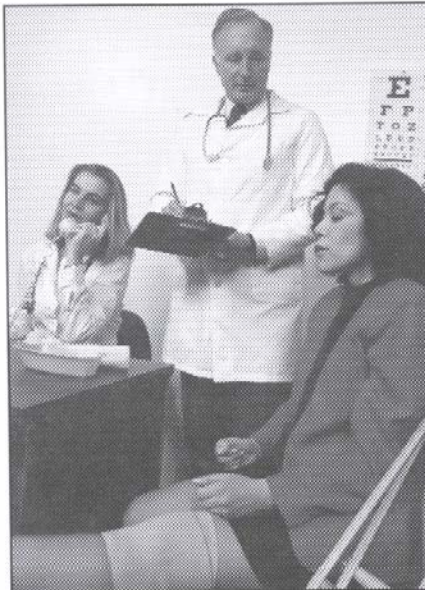
grandparents (and in-laws). The NYSUT plan lets you choose a comprehensive or nursing home plan, daily benefit amount, total lifetime benefit and home care/assisted living reimbursement amount. You may choose additional options to further tailor your coverage.

Catastrophe major medical insurance

supplements your basic health insurance, including Medicare. Once the deductible is satisfied, the plan will pay up to 100 percent of eligible expenses

not recovered by other insurance coverage for up to five years or up to \$2 million, whichever comes first. Your out-of-pocket expenses as well as expenses paid by basic health insurance count toward the \$25,000 deductible.

The plan also offers some nursing home, home health care and private duty nursing benefits. Members can apply, regardless of age. Coverage can be added for spouse, parents (and in-laws) and dependent children.





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throughout the school year.*

**Article contributions or Letters to
the Editor for the next issue
should be sent to Patricia Lunden
at the HS by February 22, 2002.**

*Any articles submitted to the VC
Echoes will also be posted on the
VCTA Web page.*

This month in Labor History

- January 2, 1918—US Unemployment Services open
- January 3, 1870 -Workers begin construction of Brooklyn Bridge
- January 4, 1790—First State of the Union address
- January 6, 1941– FDR delivers “Four Freedoms” speech
- January 7, 1789—First Presidential Election
- January 11, 1912—The Lawrence, MA “Bread and Roses” textile strike begins
- January 17, 1962—President Kennedy gives Federal Employees Collective Bargaining
- January 23, 1964—Poll taxes barred in Federal Elections
- January 26, 1941—13,000 Steel Workers strike in Buffalo
- January 29, 1912—Martial Law is declare in Lawrence textile strike

*“All life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality,
tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”*

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Schools that will not teach...

Earlier this month, the Broadway School in the Newburgh City School District was put under review by the State. State review happens when a school is not meeting expected standards of performance set for that school. Basically, the state is saying that this is a bad school and must keep an eye on it. Meanwhile this month, President Bush signed the \$26 billion Education bill “No Child Left Behind”. To avoid having “children trapped in schools that will not teach” as Mr. Bush says, money is provided to transport students to more successful school or provide money for tutoring.

Schools that will not teach...there's just something about that phase that leaves a bad taste in my mouth after saying it. Schools... must mean the teachers...after all the school building doesn't do the teaching, the teachers do. Whole schools full of teachers who won't teach. Is that what the Broadway School is? I can't imagine a whole

school full of such teachers. Honestly in all the years I have been involved in education I cannot recall that many “bad teachers”. Oh sure, there are a few here and there, but for the most part the teachers I have known as a student and as a teacher have been “good” teachers. I must be lucky to have never stepped foot in a school that would not teach. When I read the article about Broadway School and the article about the Education Bill in the Jan. 9, 2002 edition of the Times-Herald Record, I couldn't help but blend the two together in my mind. Broadway School must be full of teachers who will not teach. How did this happen? Surely, some administrator must be to blame for hiring all those bad teachers in one school. Newburgh has many elementary schools, why don't they take the good teachers who will teach and put them in the Broadway School? Surely, test scores would improve. Of course, if the problem were truly as simple as the politicians would have the public believe the

solution would be simple too. But it's not. Throwing money to bussing students to other schools is like throwing money to the wind. What happens to the students when they show up at the good schools? Who pays for the cost of their education then? Imagine 75 of those Broadway School kids being bussed to East Coldenham. Would these children be suddenly better educated because they traveled a few more miles up the road?

Saying the problem with education is that schools will not teach is like saying the problem with crime is that lawmakers will not legislate. A \$26 billion bill on improving education is a step in the right direction. Making sure “no child is left behind” will require teachers, not politicians, to map out the way making sure politicians don't oversimplify education by declaring that good schools are ones that teach and bad schools are ones that don't. We know it is much more complicated than that.