

VC ECHOES

An AFTCA and New York Teacher Award Winning Publication

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Union Assails Governor's Budget Plan

Gov. George Pataki's \$90.8 billion state budget proposal calls for major reductions in funding for education and health care to deal with what he called the most serious fiscal crisis "in our lifetime."

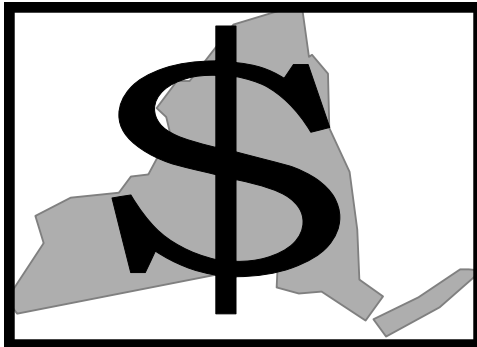
Pataki said his executive budget, which is subject to revision by the state Legislature, attempts to make up a projected \$11.5 billion revenue shortfall over the next 14 months.

The proposal would reduce state aid to elementary and secondary schools by \$1.24 billion, or 8.5%. The current state budget provides more than \$14 billion in aid to schools. He also wants to cut more than \$1 billion in Medicaid and other health care funding.

"This is the exact opposite of what needs to happen," said Alan Lubin, NYSUT executive vice president. "We should be investing greater resources in our future, and New York's future is in

its classrooms.

"Slashing education aid, gutting TAP, hacking higher education funding - all of this leads us nowhere," Lubin said. "When we raised the standards our students



must meet, the other half of the deal was raising the standards our state must meet. This budget sells the promise of tomorrow for a quick fix today."

The plan would cut BOCES funding by 25% and slash monies for special education. It also would reduce aid to community colleges by 15%.

"This budget proposal would stall - and, in many school districts, reverse - the tremendous progress we have made toward improving public schools. It will only make it

harder for children to meet the Regents' standards, harder to attract and retain the best teachers and faculty, and harder for thousands of parents to send their children to SUNY, CUNY and our community colleges. And, this proposed budget would actually lead to tremendous increases in local property taxes by shifting more of the burden of paying for good schools to property taxpayers."

Assembly Education Committee Chairman Steven Sanders, D-Manhattan, called parts of the Pataki plan "reckless" and "irresponsible."

While Pataki refused to consider raising income taxes or major corporate taxes, he proposed fee increases to boost revenue. Among these, he authorized an increase in undergraduate tuition of up to \$1,200 a year for New Yorkers attending the State University of New York.

Lubin said the state cannot turn its back on any potential revenue sources.

(continued page 4)

If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry.

He should sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Tax Cuts Would Hurt Elderly

Proponents of the tax cuts favored by the Bush administration claim they would benefit seniors. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a fiscal policy think tank focusing on issues that affect moderate- and low-income families and individuals, that claim is a distortion.

Analysts estimate about 41% of people over age 65 would benefit from the plan to exempt dividends from taxation. But, CBPP says, while the elderly as a group would receive a large relative share, the benefits would flow predominately to elderly people with high in-

comes.

* Nearly 40% of the benefits would go to the 2.5% of those people with incomes exceeding \$200,000.

* Nearly three-quarters of the benefits would go to the 19% of elderly with incomes over \$75,000.

* Seniors with incomes below \$50,000 - nearly two-thirds of all the elderly in the nation - would receive only 13% of the tax cut going to the elderly and less than 6% of the

total tax cut.

In other words, the vast majority of seniors would not benefit significantly. In fact, many could be adversely affected if the tax cut resulted in fewer resources being available for programs upon which ordinary elderly people rely. For more, see www.cbpp.org.
~ NYSUT The Bottom Line



Retirement System Announces a New Toll Free Number New Toll Free Number for NYS and Local Retirement Centers

866-805-0990

The toll-free number is great news for employees who may have important retirement-related questions but don't want to incur long-distance charges. They can use the number to contact our Call Center and connect with our interactive voice response (IVR) system.

Customer service representatives are available every business day, 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., to give the information that can't be found by using the IVR system.

Property Taxes Will Increase

New York State United Teachers today said school property taxes across the state would have to increase by an average of 15 percent if the Executive Budget proposal was enacted.

"The Executive Budget was crafted to avoid 'job killing taxes,'" said NYSUT President Thomas Y. Hobart Jr. "But this budget would result in 'community killing' property tax increases."

According to the projections developed by the Educational Conference Board, local property taxes would

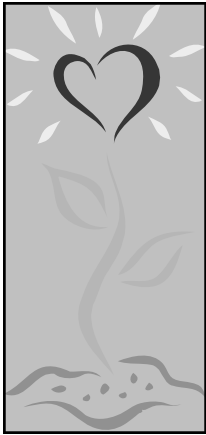
have to increase an average of 15 percent statewide just to maintain the status quo. In many school districts, the projected tax increases could be even higher.

For example, in Erie County, the average school tax increase would reach 25 percent; in Rensselaer County, school taxes are projected to rise an average of 23 percent. Rural counties like Orleans and Franklin will likely face school property tax increases in excess of 30 percent. The ECB is a coalition of education organizations in New York State.



"There's a twisted dichotomy in New York State," Hobart said. "On the one hand, we're demanding higher standards from our school-children. We want them to reach higher, learn more, and achieve more. That's a good thing. "On the other hand, the recently
(continued on page 4)

**The Hudson Valley Blood Bank *only*
has a one-day blood supply left...
*What if someone you loved needed blood?***



**Make a Difference,
Give the Gift of Life!**

***It only takes a little bit of your time,
and you get cookies and juice!***

**The VCTA proudly sponsors an
Employee Blood Drive**

February 27, 2003

VCMS Back Gym

1:30—7:00 PM

**For an Appointment,
Contact Kathy Manning, RN
457-2400 ext. 6017**

***Blood collected and snacks provided by
THE HUDSON VALLEY BLOOD BANK***

putting children center
vcta

Union Assails Governor's Budget Plan

"The governor said he wanted to avoid adopting any 'job-killing tax increases,' but this budget is chock full of job-killing state aid cuts," he said.

"New York needs to look with a fresh eye at new revenue sources, including raising taxes if necessary. Our state's future is at stake. By making sound budget decisions,

New York state can close this budget gap and avoid slashing the education programs all of us worked so hard to build."

Lubin stressed that the work is just beginning. "We'll make our case to the Legislature," he said. "We believe 32 plus 76 will add up to a better budget." That's how many senators and assembly members are

needed for a majority.

For more information on the governor's budget proposal, including links to state-aid runs for your home districts, visit www.nysut.org.

~ NYSUT Press Release

MARCH FOR PUBLIC ED - MAY 3 IN ALBANY - SAVE THE DATE



NYSUT, the Educational Conference Board, the Higher Education Conference Board, the New York State PTA, state associations for school boards, administrators and more are all coming together to MARCH IN SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, from pre-K through post-grad.

The first Saturday in May is tentatively targeted for the unprecedented gathering at the state Capitol. More information to come in future issues of The NYSUT Leader and at www.nysut.org.

Property Taxes Will Increase (*continued from page two*)

proposed Executive Budget would cut education funding by more than \$1.2 billion dollars -- a cut of more than 8 percent. That's a painful message to send to students. New York's future is in its classrooms, but that future is being mortgaged off."

Hobart also said the proposed cuts to the State University campuses and community colleges would be equally devastating to students and communities.

"The higher education reductions cut twice," Hobart said. "Aside from the lost opportunities for so many students, college towns that rely on campuses as economic engines will be hurt."

NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan B. Lubin said urban districts across the state like Troy, Albany and Schenectady would be hit particularly hard. Communities that

can't afford such steep tax increases will be forced to make deep cuts in education programs that are helping students meet the new standards, according to Lubin. Others will seek to raise property taxes even more to provide students with the programs they need, and to meet federal testing and accountability mandates under the federal No Child Left Behind legislation.

"Tragically, children needing the most help to meet the higher standards will probably suffer the most from these cuts in aid," he said.

"Passing huge tax increases along to homeowners isn't fair," Lubin added. "And it's even less fair to cut education opportunities for kids struggling to meet the Regents' higher standards. There has to be a better way."

Lubin called for the state to look with a fresh eye at new revenue

sources, including temporarily raising income taxes on the very wealthy and closing corporate loopholes that allow major corporations to avoid paying their fair share of New York taxes.

"NYSUT will be working with the Governor and Legislature to explore better solutions than mortgaging our children's futures," Lubin said.

Hobart said NYUT would also be fighting to restore proposed cuts in Medicaid, which would also drive up local taxes and cut health care services.

~ NYSUT Press Release

Bush Drops Labor Reps From National Health And Safety Panel

Five members of a committee advising the Occupational Safety and Health Administration - including two long-term union representatives - were dropped from the panel and three members reappointed to new terms Dec. 31.

The appointments to the National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health, announced by Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao, leave the committee without representation from the AFL-CIO. The labor federation has had a representative serving on NACOSH during every administration since OSHA was created except for the first term of the Reagan presidency.

"This is yet another example of the current administration's disregard for the concerns of organized labor, middle-class workers and their families," said Tom Hobart, NYSUT president.

NACOSH advises both the Labor and Health and Human Ser-

vices secretaries on job safety issues. The committee's 12 members represent management, labor, occupational safety and health professions, and the public. Four of the positions - two public representatives and two health representatives - are appointed by the secretary of labor but are designated by the secretary of health and human services.

AFL-CIO Director of Occupational Safety and Health Peg Seminario said this was the first time that the Labor Department appointed the committee without first taking nominations.

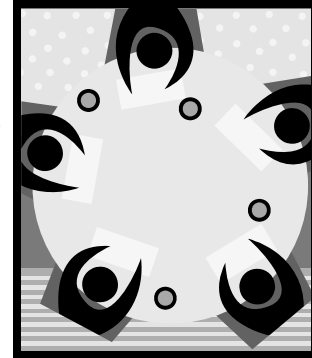
In addition to dropping the AFL-CIO representative from NACOSH, the Labor Department has dropped the AFL-CIO from the Federal Advisory Committee on Safety and Health. The labor group's Bill Kojola was the only member of FACOSH who was not reappointed, according to Seminario.

"They don't want the AFL-

CIO on these committees. It's pretty clear it is the secretary's decision,"

Seminario said. Even though the labor group will not be represented on these committees, the AFL-CIO will continue to make its opinion known, Seminario said.

~ From AFL-CIO Website



Weekly Earnings Fall Behind Inflation

Median weekly earnings of the nation's 97.7 million full-time wage and salary workers were \$615 in the fourth quarter of 2002, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported. This was 1.7% higher than a year earlier, compared with a gain of 2.2% in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) over the same period.

Of note: Women who usually worked full time had median earnings of \$543 per week, or 78.5% of the \$692 median for men. The female-to-male earnings ratio was higher among blacks (90.0%) and Hispanics (88.7%) than among whites (78.8%).

~ From AFL-CIO Website

CONTINGENCY BUDGET CAP SET AT 1.92%

Districts that cannot pass a school budget for the 2003-04 year will face a stringent 1.92% spending cap under contingency. Under 1997 legislation, spending increases under contingency budgets are capped at the lesser of 4% or 120% of the Consumer Price Index growth in the previous year. The average growth in the CPI last year was 1.6%.





Instructors Needed For Undergraduate Paras Program

The NYSUT Education and Learning Trust (ELT) is seeking instructors for its new undergraduate program for paraprofessionals.

An applicant must be a union member in good standing; have a New York state teaching certificate; a master's degree, and at least five years teaching experience. Expertise in the areas of special education or reading is preferred. In addition, prior

experience teaching adults is desired.

The courses are specially designed for teaching assistants seeking New York state certification and paraprofessionals required to meet new educational requirements under the "No Child Left Behind" Act. The program will initially concentrate on upstate New York.

Interested applicants can fax their

resume to (518) 213-6456, or e-mail it to ELTmail@nysutmail.org. For further information call (800)528-6208.

Forget the ELA's—Try this test...

Remember when our grandparents, great-grandparents, and such stated that they only had an 8th grade education?

This is the eighth-grade final exam from 1895 in Salina, KS, USA. It was taken from the original document on file at the Smokey Valley Genealogical Society and Library in Salina, KS, and reprinted by the Salina Journal.

8th Grade Final Exam: Salina, KS -1895

Grammar (Time, one hour)

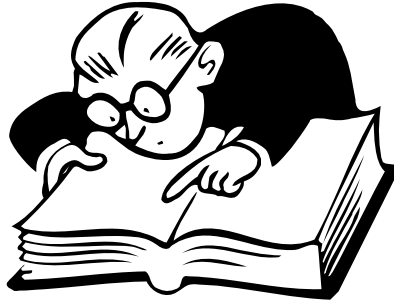
1. Give nine rules for the use of Capital Letters.
2. Name the Parts of Speech and define those that have no Modifications.
3. Define Verse, Stanza and Paragraph.
4. What are the Principal Parts of a verb? Give Principal Parts of lie, lay and run.
5. Define Case, Illustrate each Case.
6. What is Punctuation? Give rules for principal marks of Punctuation.
- 7 - 10. Write a composition of about 150 words and show therein that you understand the practical use of the rules of grammar.

Arithmetic (Time, 1.25 hours)

1. Name and define the Fundamental Rules of Arithmetic.
2. A wagon box is 2 ft. deep, 10 feet long, and 3 ft. wide.
How many bushels of wheat will it hold?
3. If a load of wheat weighs 3942 lbs., what is it worth at 50cts/bushel, deducting 1050 lbs. for tare?
4. District No. 33 has a valuation of \$35,000.
What is the necessary levy to carry on a school seven months at \$50 per month, and have \$104 for incidentals?
5. Find cost of 6720 lbs. coal at \$6.00 per ton.
6. Find the interest of \$512.60 for 8 months and 18 days at 7 percent.
7. What is the cost of 40 boards 12 inches wide and 16 ft. long at \$20 per

metre?

8. Find bank discount on \$300 for 90 days (no grace) at 10 percent.
9. What is the cost of a square farm at \$15 per acre, the distance around which is 640 rods?
10. Write a Bank Check, a Promissory Note, and a Receipt.



U.S. History (Time, 45 minutes)

1. Give the epochs into which U.S. History is divided.
2. Give an account of the discovery of America by Columbus.
3. Relate the causes and results of the Revolutionary War.
4. Show the territorial growth of the United States.
5. Tell what you can of the history of Kansas.
6. Describe three of the most prominent battles of the Rebellion.
7. Who were the following: Morse, Whitney, Fulton, Bell, Lincoln, Penn, and Howe?
8. Name events connected with the following dates: 1607, 1620, 1800, 1849, 1865.

Orthography (Time, one hour)

1. What is meant by the following: Alphabet, phonetic, orthography, etymology, syllabication?
2. What are elementary sounds? How classified?
3. What are the following, and give examples of each: Trigraph, subvocals, diphthong, cognate letters, linguals?
4. Give four substitutes for caret 'u.'
5. Give two rules for spelling words with final 'e.' Name two exceptions under each rule.

6. Give two uses of silent letters in spelling. Illustrate each.
7. Define the following prefixes and use in connection with a word: bi, dis, mis, pre, semi, post, non, inter, mono, sup.
8. Mark diacritically and divide into syllables the following, and name the sign that indicates the sound: card, ball, mercy, sir, odd, cell, rise, blood, fare, last.
9. Use the following correctly in sentences: cite, site, sight, fane, fain, feign, vane, vain, vein, raze, raise, rays. !
10. Write 10 words frequently mispronounced and indicate pronunciation by use of diacritical marks and by syllabication.

Geography (Time, one hour)

1. What is climate? Upon what does climate depend?
2. How do you account for the extremes of climate in Kansas?
3. Of what use are rivers? Of what use is the ocean?
4. Describe the mountains of North America.
5. Name and describe the following: Monrovia, Odessa, Denver, Manitoba, Hecla, Yukon, St. Helena, Juan Fernandez, Aspinwall and Orinoco.
6. Name and locate the principal trade centers of the U.S..
7. Name all the republics of Europe and give the capital of each.
8. Why is the Atlantic Coast colder than the Pacific in the same latitude?
9. Describe the process by which the water of the ocean returns to the sources of rivers.
10. Describe the movements of the earth. Give the inclination of the earth.

Also notice that the exam took six hours to complete.

Gives the saying "he only had an 8th grade education" a whole new meaning, doesn't it?

~ from the Internet

Pre-Retirement Planning Seminars

Members age 45 and older and spouses/companions are eligible to attend.

Seminars are held 8:30 am to 4:00 pm with registration from 8:00 to 8:30 am.

The fee to attend is \$10.00 for members and \$5.00 for a non-member spouse/companion

Call Toll Free 1-800-356-3128, ext. 6180

ALBANY
March 22 (Saturday)
April 25 (Friday)
The Desmond
Albany Shaker Road

FISHKILL
April 10 (Thursday)
Holiday Inn
I-84, Route 9

TARRYTOWN
March 6 (Thursday)
May 17 (Saturday)
Westchester Marriot
670 White Plains Rd.

TO MAKE RESERVATION: Telephone the Retirement System in Albany at our toll-free number for the seminar above you wish to attend. Reservations can only be made by calling the Albany office weekdays between 8:30 am and 4:15 pm. When calling, please provide your Social Security number, date of birth, home address, home and work telephone numbers, and indicate if your spouse/ companion is attending. If your spouse/companion is also a member, please have the above information for him/her also. At the time of your call you will receive instructions on paying the seminar fee noted above. We request that your payment, by check, reach us no later than three weeks after the date of your call. Your reservation may be cancelled and made available to other members if you are unable to meet this deadline. Once payment is received, a seminar agenda and a letter confirming reservation which you should bring to the seminar.

*The seminar fee is non-refundable. **BE PREPARED TO SHOW PHOTO IDENTIFICATION.***

The Facts About Smallpox



You can use the NYSUT Web site, www.nysut.org, to access "The Smallpox Vaccine Program: Should YOU Volunteer?" from AFT Healthcare. The fact sheet explains fully that the program is voluntary and that the vaccine carries significant risks. It provides questions you can use to assess your own situation and links to even more in-depth information.

RX Prices Will Rise 19% In 2003, Say Insurers

Local union leaders and negotiators should be prepared for dramatic hikes in health care costs, particularly for prescription drugs, as they negotiate new contracts over the next year and beyond. Dramatic increases are forecast.

U.S. prescription drug prices will rise 19% in 2003, according to 60 major insurers polled by the Segal Co., which notes that, if these fore-

casts are correct, drug prices will double within five years. In contrast, the government is forecasting lower levels of increase to 2011, although these are still expected to top 10% annually. Last year's overall drug price increase is estimated at nearly 17%.

Meantime, nearly 100 health insurers, health maintenance organizations and third-party administrators say they forecast double-digit rises

in employers' health care costs in 2003. Preferred provider organization plans' costs will rise 15%, with point-of-service plans up 14% and HMO plan costs rising 13.8%, they told a Buck Consultants survey.



~ NYSUT The Bottom Line

Valley Central Teachers' Association

1175 Route 17K • Montgomery, New York 12549 • Telephone/Fax: 845-457-5899 • Internet: www.vcta.net
 Affiliated with the New York State United Teachers, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

VCTA SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

To be eligible you must:

- 1) Be either a VCHS graduating senior, or a graduating HS senior whose parent is a VCTA member
- 2) Have an average of 85% or better
- 3) Fill out the following form completely (*type or print*)
- 4) Submit a letter of recommendation from one of your high school teachers. Have it mailed directly to the VCTA at the address above. Your teacher must sign the back of the envelope across the seal.
- 5) Attach a letter, approximately 500 words, in your own handwriting, in which you should indicate something about your hopes and ambitions in life. Also indicate any part-time or summer jobs, how much you saved last year, your plans for this summer and any other information you feel would be of interest to the scholarship committee. This letter is one of the more important parts of your application.

Name _____ ID # (*office use only*) _____

Date _____ Is your parent a VCTA member? _____

Are you a VC student? _____ If no, what High School? _____

Age _____ College you plan to attend _____

Major Course of Study _____

Father's Occupation _____ Mother's Occupation _____

Siblings living at Home or at College (*first names only*) Age Grade in School or Occupation

Comments: (*include unusual expenses, hardships*)

Honors and Awards—Academic:

Honors and Awards other than Academic:

School Activities:

Community Activities:

Mail application to the VCTA c/o Tim Brown, at the address above by May 23, 2003.

There are no better advocates for children and education, than teachers and teacher unions.



You are invited to an
Orange County Teachers
TGIF PARTY
 At
The Orange Inn, Goshen, NY

Friday, February 28th
 3:00 pm till ?
DJ starts at 5pm



Imagine teachers from every school in Orange County getting together to chat and listen to some great DJ music!

Please come join us and meet a fellow teacher from another town!

Sponsored by the Warwick Valley Teachers' Association



I scream, you scream...

Congratulations to Kathleen Takvam, Montgomery Elementary School!

Kathleen entered a contest on the Edy's Ice Cream web site. She described "a special ice cream moment". She wrote an essay about a Thanksgiving activity she does with her class each year. She invites her 4th grade students to an "I am Thankful for My Wonderful Class Ice Cream Party." At the party Kathleen tells each child while she is thankful for him/her as the child makes himself/herself a big dish of ice cream of all their favorite flavors (Edy's, of course!). Kathleen won an ice cream party for her class in February to teach them the "fine art of ice cream tasting", and certificates for a year's worth of ice cream. Edy's also sent 17 half-gallons of ice cream to Kathleen on Christmas Eve.

Are you a true elementary school teacher?

Let's find out:

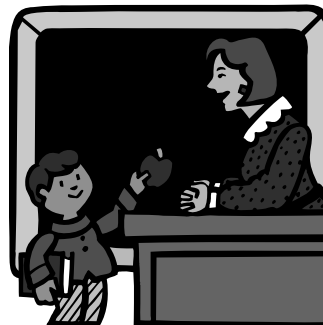
1. Do you ask guests if they have remembered their scarves and mittens as they leave your home?
2. Do you move your dinner partner's glass away from the edge of the table?
3. Do you ask if anyone needs to go to the bathroom as you enter a theater with a group of friends?
4. Do you hand a tissue to anyone who sneezes?
5. Do you refer to happy hour as "snack time"?
6. Do you declare "no cuts" when a shopper squeezes ahead of you in a checkout line?

7. Do you say "I like the way you did that" to the mechanic who repairs your car nice?
8. Do you ask "Are you sure you did your best?" to the mechanic who fails to repair your car to your satisfaction?

9. Do you sing the "Alphabet Song" to yourself as you look up a number in the phone book?

10. Do you say everything twice? I mean, do you repeat everything?

11. Do you fold your spouse's fingers over the coins as you hand



him/her the money at a tollbooth?

12. Do you ask a quiet person at a party if he has something to share with the group?

** If you answered yes to 4 or more, it's in your soul--you are*

*hooked on teaching. And if you're not a teacher, you missed your calling. * If you answered yes to 8 or more, well, maybe it's *too much* in your soul--you should probably begin thinking about retirement. * If you answered yes to all 12, forget it--you'll *always* be a teacher, retired or not!*

The Real Solution to Bullying

How many workshops will we attend and how many news articles will we read and still be left wondering how to end the problem of bullying?

There is a solution. It's easy and enjoyable for teachers and students and it works.

About ten years ago I read Positive Discipline in the Classroom by Jane Nelson, Lynn Lott and Stephen Glenn, and it changed my whole approach to teaching. The authors teach strategies for using class meetings to instill positive behavior and to empower students to be in control of their own effective decision making. They help the teacher to become aware of what has really motivated a student's behavior, to use encouragement rather than praise and rewards, and to recognize the difference between them.

Although Peer Mediation serves a good purpose, it is limited. Small groups of strong students are trained to be better. Mediators only reach a limited number of students who are willing to seek their help, and those with the greatest need are left searching. With class meetings, every child in the classroom is being reached. The meetings are effective for kindergarten through high school and have the potential to change an entire school community. I have seen, year after year, the most difficult and seemingly hopeless cases turned completely around. It is amazing to watch an entire class help a classmate to change negative behaviors that had caused him to be ostracized for years. In class meetings students are empowered through respect and encouragement to address problems and find win-win solutions. This empowerment lets them experience positive power and reduces the need to achieve power through negative behaviors.

Students write a problem in the agenda book, and we discuss anything from a simple classroom annoyance, classroom procedures, to an obnoxious classmate that no one likes. Everyone's idea is taken seriously and, in a nurturing environment, the students learn skills that will serve them well for the rest of their lives. As they work to

develop win-win solutions, students learn first hand the significance of each person walking away from the meeting with dignity. Initially, students may be inclined to punish another because they are used to punitive solutions from parents and teachers. Instead, humiliation and punishment give way to a more respectful, nurturing environment. They learn that related, respectful, and reasonable consequences are a much better alternative to punishment. Teachers benefit as much as the students because they are forced to look at their own behaviors. You can't teach these kinds of skills without modeling them each day for your students. As you relinquish some of your power and control, you enable your student to learn self-discipline and to make good choices. As you lessen your control over them, you increase their cooperation with you. They feel respected, valued and they blossom. Imagine our environment had all adults learned these skills as children. Imagine the future we can create.

Effective class meetings require knowledge, strategies and activities that prepare the students for these new responsibilities. Students need to learn to listen, take turns, respect different points of view, negotiate, communicate effectively, empathize, help one another and take responsibility for their own behavior. They learn that their feelings are separate from what they do and that although feelings are always acceptable, behaviors sometimes are not. During the meetings they are learning oral language skills, attentiveness, critical thinking skills, problem solving skills and democratic procedures. How will children learn the wisdom to make good judgments without the ability to practice? This is what they get to do in meetings.

I let my students know right away that the meetings will make our class a safe place where they never have to worry that someone will pick on them. They learn that it's a place where someone will help. Not all students learn this easily and some problems are challenging, but with the patience to work for long term results instead of short term convenience, the rewards will be significant. Never has a year

passed where I didn't reap the rewards of this program many times over. A student returns from recess after being criticized for striking out at baseball and tells me how no one in our class would ever do that. Instead they tell me how our class comforted her with, "Good try." A belligerent boy had been picked on and disliked since kindergarten is now getting invited to birthday parties. A student tells me how that his family has begun family meetings. He shows me the mismatched outfit he has chosen for school and explains that in the family meeting they arrived at a win-win solution. His mom will pick his clothes for church, and he will pick his clothes for school. Best of all, is when in a class meeting, a student respectfully challenges one of my procedures and offers a great win-win solution for him and for me.

In Positive Discipline in the Classroom the authors take you through the necessary steps to prepare you to introduce and run effective class meetings. They explain the empowering perceptions and skills, identify the behaviors that will be barriers to your success, train you in the building blocks for successful meetings, give exercises for better communication, and close with teacher questions and answers and problem solving steps. The paperback book (\$15) can be purchased through Sunrise Books, 800-456-7770 or ordered from local book stores. In addition, video tapes, workbooks and workshops are available. I found the book to be a very effective tool on its own. I also have a binder of over 300 pages of worksheets to use with students and to use for teacher training. You may borrow them to make a copy for your building.

The authors of this program talk about their dream of a learning environment free of fear and feelings of inadequacy and discouragement—an educational system that nurtures and gives students skills and attitudes that make them happy contributing members of society. The fundamental concept of class meetings is mutual respect. Isn't this the antithesis of bullying?

~ Kathleen Takvam,

Montgomery Elementary

Wait Control

When we think of the homophone, wait, our thoughts weigh heavily and that action to possess one's soul in patience is truly a difficult task. The word control is defined by Webster as having power or authority to guide or manage. We learn soon enough though the earth's tilt causes the four seasons, our inner world can be tilted, even turned upside down. We can't tell nature to wait to snow, and we can't tell life-threatening diseases not to occur. Here at Walden Elementary and unfortunately in other schools in our district as well, distressful health crises have arisen among several stoic staff members.

Quiet resolutions about weight gain come to fruition as the new year fanfare comes upon us. And what about that weight loss? We need to go to the weight room and work off that excess. We need to walk at least 10,000 steps everyday. When faced with a raging illness, Proverbs 2:13 says, "it is a straight path to walk in the way of darkness." We need to walk towards our gourmet gauntlet of fear. We again have a wait room, or prayer room. We are tempted to eat a piece of crumble pie. Revealed in our midst of despair, the ingredients of the bread of angels—the sacrifice of prayer... and a special bread is rosary. Father McAlear, after seeing me at a Mass, knowing of my son Mark's death, once remarked that I had the whole world praying for me. Yes, I am sure that I had over 10,000 prayers feed me in my time of famine that enabled me to have peace of mind. "Peace" in Hebrew means wholeness and well being.

I am just rereading the book by Corrie ten Boom, [A Prisoner and Yet](#). A Hollander who risked her life to provide a haven for Jews from the Gestapo. Imprisoned in one of Hitler's concentration camps, she found solace, beyond the barbed wire fence, with a belief and a faith that passeth all understanding. I am also reading another true story, written by Janet Gleeson, called [The Arcanum](#). It details the life of the alchemist, Johann Frederick Bottger, who searched for the special formula for gold and found instead European porcelain. Imprisoned as well by Augustus

II, King of Poland, Bottger experiments yielded the precious form of gold on March 28, 1709. As Bottger opened the fire stilled kiln, Prince von Furstenberg repeatedly said, "O Jesus", but the King laughed and said to him, "Indeed it is not purgatory." The King then ordered the small teapot removed and Bottger placed it in a bucket of water. A loud explosion occurred. "It's broken," said Augustus. Bottger replied, "No, your Majesty, it must stand this test."

Robber barons of cell division are reeking havoc with the lives of several educators. "Though an army encamps against me, my heart will not fear," Psalm 27. A veil of valor highlights their hidden inner man. They, too, are standing the test of time. Clay is turned into porcelain. The Chinese call the clay the bones and the feldspar as the flesh of the porcelain. The clay must be purified and refined. The compounding stage makes it into a paste and allowed to rest for eight weeks to allow it's plasticity or the ability to be molded, to develop. Once glazed, it is then placed in a fiery furnace. After the transmutation takes place, the porcelain is stronger than steel.

Mysterious ingredients hold these educators together on the plate of virtue. Their love of teaching and children—and yes, their sense of humor, I believe, becomes as rich paste in their recipe for perseverance.

Just as a well balanced diet helps await our next meal, so does the healing support of the community. A study by sociologist Nan Lin, in 1986, showed social support has a strong direct effect on change in undesirable life events. Henri Nouwen wrote, "We need to be angels for each other, to give each other strength and consolation. Because only when we fully realize that the cup of life is not only a cup of sorrow but also a cup of joy will we be able to drink it." Expressions of unconditional love have arisen here in our district as well as when my son, Mark, was in the

hospital. While countless others accented help, several members of the schools went to Westchester Medical Center to visit us. John Bonagura and June Guidry came radiating care and concern. Kathleen and Allan Takvam candidly ministered to Mark with hand held puppets, while Joe Carroll pre-

sented our son, Matthew, with drawing pencils and tablets.

A prisoner and yet... the porcelain soldiers, in this situation, are an elite force that has now set camp within the district. Formally stricken themselves, the vital lessons

learned or digested are not forgotten. They act as encouragers, or burden bearers, sprinkling oil of gladness on the hearts that are troubled. It is a gift to be enriched by life's perspective. I remember a mom coming to Westchester to speak to me the second day that I was there with my son, Mark. Her daughter had been in a coma for over two months and had miraculously survived, a fruitful message of hope.

As I left a store recently after a chance meeting with one of the professional colleagues, I gazed up at the steep hillside across the lot. There hidden on hill was a deer that was struggling to stay upright. I knew how that deer felt from my own past experiences. It didn't let the difficult circumstances overwhelm him or weigh him down. He was able to get to the top of the hill, he waited for the right moment and the strength was there. St. Paul once said, "The trials of our faith are more precious than gold." It was a sign to me that good things happen to those who wait and that I've been blessed with so many extra ordinary people in my life. In the words of Corrie ten Boom, "Misere Mei Deus has mercy on us, O Lord, according to thy loving kindness."

~ Jeanne Marie Flanagan,
Walden Elementary





The VCTA Lunch Box Project

As we get ready for Spring to return, we need to help our kids get ready for summer.

Please collect lunch and snack items for the Montgomery Food Pantry to help feed our children lunch this summer.

Just pick up an extra lunch-type non-perishable item when you do your weekly shopping from Spring through the end of the school year.

Tuna Fish, Peanut Butter, Jelly, Condiments, Spaghetti-o's, Soup, Snack items, Cookies, Juice, Juice boxes, Crackers, Mac-n-Cheese, etc.

Bring the item(s) to the VCTA Lunch Box located in the Faculty Room in your school.

The food will be delivered to the Montgomery Food Pantry which serves the entire Valley Central Community.

The Presence of Christmas—A Personal Reflection

Far too often, unfortunately, the passing of a loved one comes at the season for Christmas cheer and the desire for snow not sadness. As time to be comforted came to pass with our WES Reading Specialist, Linda Kirkpatrick. Her mom, Irene Lillian Kool, was proclaimed for her deeds through the gates of Heaven on December 10, 2002. It is as precisely though, the miraculous birth of our Savior which mirrored the life of Irene. Just as the Blessed mother helped put the super into the natural so did Irene. She provided a stable environment while not having the best of circumstances. Irene showed when she took the “I” out of her life, what she had left was *l,f,e*, love for ever. Her exemplary love showed that desire your desert experiences, when you make room for the cloth of kindness that becomes the golden opportunity to illuminate all of your family members lives as good news to be openly shared. Thus, the rejoicing in the practicality of seeking the presence of every day life be-



comes the treasure of frankincense as it permeates our very being and the gift of letting go becomes moments of myrrh. Irene taught her children to abide in His presence as did the adoring Three Wisemen. Another example of the time honored truth that it is in the giving that we receive infinite riches was magnified in this manner. Before she

left this world, as explained by her son, John; Irene had purchased and wrapped Christmas presents for many members of her family. The presents were brought to the Memorial service as a statement which reflects Christ’s teaching, “Remember Me as loving you.” This wrapping episode brings to mind another story which relates to my son, Mark. I normally bought presents way in advance of Christmas time. The year

that he died was no exception. I wrapped them all and Mark’s brothers unwrapped all of his gifts on Christmas Day. One of the toys was a model which had to be assembled, well— when they opened the box, it was all put together. As we all sat astonished, I thought of Mark’s sense of humor and waiting to see our reaction. I prayed that it was the occasion to answer a question posed earlier by my oldest son, Matthew after being told by his father and me that his brother had died. “Why couldn’t they fix him and put him back together?”

“ You see Matt, I think Mark is trying to say that he is whole now and that he’s in his spirit body and cherished in heaven and on the earth. “ Matt seemed to understand and know that his brother was indeed safe and very happy. In Christ centered family relationships, tender mercies will always surround us as gifts to be unwrapped and worn as an armor our strength and dignity, that is the presence of Christmas.

~ Jeanne Marie Flanagan,
Walden Elementary School

Highlights of the December VCTA Executive Council Meeting

President's Report

Dates and locations for NYSTRS Pre-Retirement planning seminars were distributed.

Mid-Hudson Teacher Center minutes were distributed.

Copies of a letter from Tom Moreau were distributed. The letter addressed some of the issues presented in an article in the October issue of VC Echoes.

Copier Upgrade: To upgrade the VCTA copy machine will cost \$20 more per month. The new machine would have a shorter paper path, would be quicker and can do 150 multi-page copies at a time. The new monthly cost will be \$266.47 per month. Motion carried.

All Night Grad party asked for sponsorship. \$100 was donated.

NYSUT's 7th Annual Leadership Institute is being held August 3-8, 2003 in Ithaca, NY.

OUSDHP November minutes were distributed.

Grievances: Montgomery grievance and Night School (HS) grievance are awaiting selection of arbitrators. There is a new Montgomery grievance. A doctor's note was provided, but the District didn't believe the doctor's note, requested clarification of the diagnosis and chose to withhold the teacher's pay. The VCTA position is that

- 1) the District cannot withhold pay.
- 2) The District can send the individual to a doctor, but the doctor can only indicate whether or not he/she agrees with the original diagnosis.

Tim Brown stated that he does not believe that the District knows more than a doctor with a medical degree. Another issue discussed was: what prevents the district from accessing

medical records through Orange-Ulster?

Paraprofessional Report

Kathy Lennon reported that the paras had met with Steve Berman to prepare for contract negotiations.

Editor's Report

Patti Lunden asked for Kathy Lennon if she would write an article for the paras.

Retirees

Kevin McFadden indicated that a form went out to retirees to ascertain whether or not they would like to continue to receive VC Echoes.

Standing Committees

Tim Brown reviewed the committee assignment list.

New Business

Tony Sperry asked if there is information available regarding the removal of a disruptive student from the classroom. Jay Sussdorff indicated that he will go over SAVE legislation document, contact Toni, and bring information to the next Executive Council meeting.

Arline Friedman questioned whether health insurance covered weight loss. Rich Steger will look into this. Patti Lunden suggested contacting Peter Roden with coverage questions or visiting www.ousdhp.com.

Chris Brand indicated that he had sat in on the technology director interviews. He reported that the candidates were rated on a rubric and the at the three candidates with the most points would be inter-

viewed by Dr. Hooley. He also indicated that he committee's recommendation was unanimous.

Jean McMahon reported that some night school students have excessive absences, that a student under the age of 16 had been placed in a bio class, and additional classes will be added. Discussion followed. Tim Brown believes that night school has the potential to eliminate daytime teaching positions (\$30 per hour vs. \$50-60,000 per year + benefits). Arline Friedman stated that slit sessions would be a change in working conditions which is a mandatory topic for negotiations. It was also mentioned that some classes meet at 3:00 pm and that night school is becoming flexible scheduling. Kevin McFadden spoke against the process of taking students from day school and putting them into night school. Patti Lunden indicated that the history of night school was to offer the main four academic classes to get kids to graduate, not to offer classes for students who could not fit a particular class into his/her schedule.

The next meeting of the VCTA Executive Council was held January 21st at 3:45 at the VCHS Professional Library, Montgomery.

~ Laurie Hey, Secretary

Highlights of the January VCTA Executive Council Meeting

Secretarial Report

Lucy Fox reported that the district has made overtures regarding possibly rolling over the current contract. The secretaries will vote on February 6 to determine which way they want to go.

Editor's Report

Patti Lunden reported that the new copy machine is working well.

Old Business

Laurie Hey reported that the VCTA blood drive will take place on February 27 from 1:30 to 7:00 p.m. in the Middle School back gym. Flyers will be sent to each building this week. Representatives from the Hudson Valley Blood Bank have indicated to Kathy Manning (MS nurse who coordinates VCTA blood drive) that they are operating on a one-day supply.

New Business

Toni Sperry indicated that a retirement information packet would be useful for building reps to have. She suggested that these packets could include information such as form letters, phone numbers to contact TRS, etc. Tim Brown suggested that information could be obtained from the NYSTRS website and from packets received in pre-retirement planning seminars.

2. Rich Steger reported that he attended the last Orange County Teachers' Association meeting and that each district needs to have a representative at Orange Ulster (health plan). Peter Roden has been at the last 7 meetings. Some current issues that have been brought up: Marlboro wants anyone who has retired on the recall list to be covered by OUSDHP.

If a couple retires, they want one spouse to take the buyout. If one

spouse dies, then the surviving spouse buys back in to OUSDHP. ** The contract cannot be superseded.

Employees who are covered by another plan should be able to get back into OUSDHP.

Reps have been asked to support these changes.

3. Tim Brown indicated that a Committee of 100 rep will be needed. This will take place on March 10 and 11. Mary Goldberg will mentor the new rep this year.

4. Toni Sperry indicated that when Jim Coonan was district superintendent, we had ½ days of school for staff development. She requested that the PDT bring up the topic of ½ day

conferences, which could be spent at the building level to keep up with state assessments, changes, etc.

4. Kathy Bordone questioned pay-period-ending-date indicated on paychecks. Tim Brown will look into this and discuss this with Peter Roden.

President's Report

1. OUSDHP Minutes- Copies of 12/17/02 minutes were distributed

2. Child Care Leave request- A copy of a memo from Mary Ann Wilson was distributed. In the Memo, Dr. Wilson indicated that while, contractually, individuals should inform the district of their intention within 2 months of the end of their initial leave, it would be most helpful if they would notify her as soon as possible. March 7 is the deadline, so that staffing plans and budgeting can be addressed. This is a request, not a demand.

3. School Calendar (2003-2004)- Copies were distributed

4. Copy Machine Info- Copies of lease agreement were distributed. Cost is \$266.98 per month. The service contract (\$102) will be placed on the same bill. Total is \$368.98.

5. CO Retirement Meeting- A retirement informational meeting will be held at Central office on Thursday, February 6 at 3:45.

6. Direct Deposit- Memos will be distributed so that more staff will have an additional opportunity to sign up to participate in direct deposit.

7. NYSTOTY- Nominations for New York State Teacher of the Year should have been sent to Randy Sutter (Walden).

8. National Board Certification Guide- Copies are available. If anyone is interested, contact Tim Brown.

9. Financial Building Blocks- If there are not a minimum of 20 people interested, we can't do FBB.

10. A) Night School Grievance-Arbitration is scheduled for March 20.

B) Kathy Takvam Grievance- VCTA position is that the District cannot withhold pay, nor can they ask for specific information regarding a diagnosis.

C) Montgomery Grievance- We are awaiting a new arbitration date.

The next Executive Council meeting will be held February 18 at 3:45 PM at the VCHS Professional Library, Montgomery

~ Laurie Hey, Secretary

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



deadbeat daddy." My word, thought I, we have a governor like that at home!

Reminder to retirees.

Last call on responding to question of whether or not you wish to continue receiving Echoes. Call me at 845-778-7236 if you misplaced the form we sent out in November.

Preface

How come the December issue is late and how come there are two, "Musings?" A few reasons: The copier broke down before Christmas and I rushed off to Seattle to see new grandson, Joe McFadden (after his great-grandfather and grandfather—me! Joseph Kevin McFadden—another mystery resolved—my first name is Joseph. The McFadden story re: this would take up too much space—as it already has!) The good news is that young Joe is a healthy and happy baby, born on Christmas Eve. Daughter-in-law Joan had a very difficult time, but is now well again. Son Matt (VC '88) is all smiles!

After all that verbiage, the bottom line is that we are including the December "musings" with the February "Echoes" for the retirees. Again, a happy 2003 to all!

Reminder of home while away

A columnist for the Seattle Times likened the governor of Washington State—in his budget shenanigans re: education—to a "smooth talking

Life after VC

I heard from some folks, who responded to the above-mentioned question, whom I hadn't heard from in many years. Bob Decker, middle school teacher and long-time track/cross-country coach has relocated to Florida. Retired HS art teacher, Carol Maas sends regards from Florida. More recent correspondent Joan Kirbach greets from Lake Placid (in Florida). Joan Downey Palmer as active and vivacious as ever, writes from Florida. Ed Hart, retired department chair at HS, says hello from nearby Philipsport. He recently published his first book. Congrats, Ed. John Napolitano is well and happy in Edisto Beach, SC. John was a VC football coach in the '60's and '70's. He enjoys golfing with retired Berea principal and SC resident, Tony Cimorelli. Linda Sisto remains upbeat while caring for her ailing mom. Linda retired as an art teacher from the middle school. A grand note came from Montgomery's Geri Cadzow, always a delightful correspondent. Ed Kubina, retired from Berea,

signs his note with Table #5, notorious group of zany retirees at the retiree luncheon. I'll bet Ed is doing spring training camps as I write this (2/11/03). Ed is truly a super fan. Al Paules, with whom folks often confused me (*poor Al!*) pens a greeting from the wilds of Western Pennsylvania. Al says, "I always wait with baited breath for your words of wisdom." Many of you will recall that Al is almost as cynical as yours truly! He reports being "active and alert, as always." Al retired as a brilliant social studies teacher from the HS. Enough! We will continue the ongoing saga of "Life after VC" in the next issue of Echoes.

A Reflection ...

I was asked to attend a workshop on writing at the high school, given by Jan Cheipko (VC '69) Jan has had three books published. The latest is called RAT. Jan's audience is the high school reader. He was terrific. The VC students at the workshop were attentive, courteous, questioning, etc. I was doubly proud of old friend Jan and the current VC English scholars and their teachers. Thanks to Bob Mooney and Bob Klein for allowing this old dinosaur to take part in this. Also special thanks to Bob Ciganek.

Amen!

May the winter get warmer and, until next time... *keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you. Peace.*

~ Kevin McFadden,

Retiree Representative

If you plan to retire this year, inform CO by March 1st if you are eligible for the incentive.

When you need expert help, turn to your union!

Everyone sets goals. The problem is, we sometimes don't quite know how to achieve them. Wouldn't it be nice to tap into some professional expertise to help you?

Your statewide union, New York State United Teachers, offers a couple of plans that may be of assistance in this area - the Legal Service Plan and the Financial Counseling Program. These two separate plans are each available at very affordable rates.

Many lifestyle decisions involve legal aspects, including marriage, children and real estate. The **Legal Service Plan** can help you put necessary plans in place. One benefit of this plan is a free Simple Will. With a legal Will, you'll never have to worry about who raises your children or who receives your money and possessions. Your intentions will be carried out.

The plan provides other benefits at no additional charge, including consultations with a Plan attorney, *Preventive Law Guide* newsletter with easy-to-read articles covering legal concerns and consumer issues, and unlimited toll-free access to experienced attorneys for advice or consultation. Attorneys will write letters and make phone calls on your behalf at no charge, often resolving consumer protection and credit issues.

If your situation can't be handled by letter or phone, a network of referral attorneys is ready to assist you. These attorneys charge discounted rates to plan

participants. Optional Elder Law and Business Protection riders may be purchased to provide legal benefits in this area.

Just about every lifestyle decision involves money. Should you buy a car or lease? What's the best way to save for college education? The **Financial Counseling Program** provides you with toll-free access to Ernst & Young LLP

financial counselors, who will answer your personal financial planning questions and provide objective guidance based on your needs - objective because E&Y sells no financial products. You can call with questions about changing lifestyles, tax returns, credit card issues, real estate, insurance, retirement savings, pensions and more.

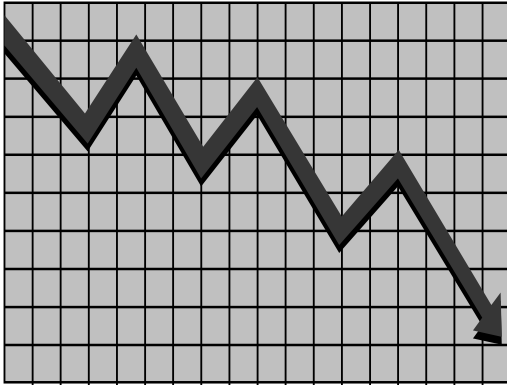
In addition, you are entitled to receive customized financial analyses based on your individual circumstances. These analyses suggest savings strategies, action steps and practical tips to help you reach your goals. You'll receive E&Y's *Understanding Personal Finances* newsletter every other month. You have the option of requesting an in-person financial planning consultation with an E&Y financial counselor or an ING Financial Advisers, LLC financial planner (consultation may be at an additional fee).

For more information about these plans or for enrollment forms, contact NYSUT Member Benefits at 800-626-8101, e-mail benefits@nysutmail.org, or visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org on-line.



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These ads will be seen by over 750 members of the VC Educational Community and their households. If you would like to advertise in the next issue of the VC ECHOES, contact Patti Lunden, 457-5899 for rates.



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Walden: Patty Joy, Randy Sutter,
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1-800-962-7487



The VC Echoes is the official publication of the Valley Central Teacher's Association – Local 3076 and is published regularly throughout the school year.

Article contributions or Letters to the Editor for the next issue should be sent to Patricia Lunden, HS, by April 4, 2003.

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

Teacher Certification/ Credits

It is each teacher's own responsibility to be certain that he/she is aware of the qualifications he/she needs to meet to be permanently certified.

While the District can assist teachers, it is up to the teacher to file the proper paperwork, and pay the required fees to obtain certification. It is also the teacher's responsibility to pursue the Master's degree in a timely fashion for certification.

Teachers should bear in mind that according to Article XIX, Section D, "Teachers will receive \$42.00 per credit hour for all approved courses beyond the BA to a maximum of 30 hours and beyond the MA to a maximum of 60 hours...Teachers taking hours beyond the MA+60 schedule may be paid for those hours provided that they are approved by the Superintendent."

Teachers are strongly encouraged to keep a file of course approval forms and credit approval forms and to keep a running tally of his/her credits (graduate and in-service). Be sure to have credit approval with the supporting paperwork filed with Personnel by Oct.1st/March 1st.

Budget Woes

NYSUT has been very clear in its directive to local leaders—this is going to be a tough year for budgets—districts will need our help—not in April or May, but now.

The VCTA has a strong history of supporting our district's budget. To the credit of our President Tim Brown, the VCTA has mailed a postcard to each and every NYSUT member within in our district asking them to support the VC budget. However, the current budget woes call for even more action. NYSUT is predicting property tax increases of 15% and certainly, our district will not be immune. As the Hudson Valley's population explodes, the property values increase and along with them, property assessments. Folks throughout the district, those who have lived here for five years or fifty years will certainly be feeling the pinch of increased taxes. STAR has done much in the past years for helping to pass budgets, but STAR's twinkle seems to be fading and it won't be providing the relief it has in the past. So where does that leave the Valley Central children?

Reading the articles concerning the state budget



and listening to our administrators concerning our budget transports me back to the early 1990's and the budget fights we endured in those days. It is a trip I do not want to take. The one hopeful thing I see in this present situation is that ours is not the only district being impacted—the story is the same throughout the state and the country as the No Child Left Behind Act impacts budgets as well. Of course, this is only a small glimmer of hope—at least there is company in budget misery. So the question is not 'where does this leave Valley Central's children' - but where does this leave all of New York's children?

We owe our children a quality education as we prepare them for a world that becomes more complicated daily. Our country's current financial situation, the constraints put on local budgets by state and federal mandates,

and the global political climate will demand our children be educated to the best of our ability. This means that we must embrace the reality that passing budgets will be more than a local fight. We cannot just wait until all this goes away or hope that our elected officials will do the right thing. We must be vigilant in speaking out—attend the Citizen's Budget Advisory committee meetings in the district where you live, contact elected officials through the NYSUT web site and the AFT web site. Plan to join the March on Public Ed (see page 4). It will take more than vowing to vote yes. We must speak up for our children—they have no voice but ours and as our VCTA motto states, "There are no greater advocates for children and education than teachers and teacher unions."

~ Patti Lunden, Editor