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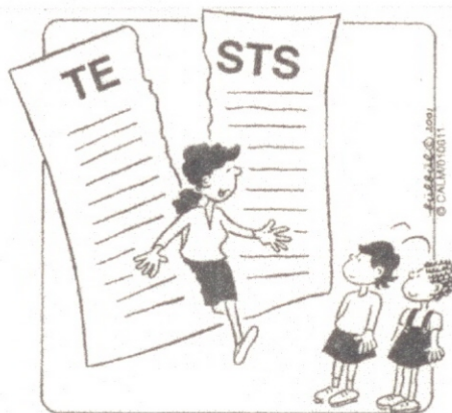
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Math A and Physics Regents exams

By now, many NYSUT members are well aware of the concerns about the Math A and Physics Regents exams. *Editor's Note: The June 2002 Physics Exam experienced a higher fail rate state wide.* We have been contacted by a number of members and have been monitoring statewide listservs in Math and Science. The frustration, and in many cases anger, is running high and seems to be well founded. We are hearing many anecdotal reports of very low pass rates, as well as many concerns about the content and wording of the questions and scoring rubrics.

We are in contact with other statewide educational organizations who report similar concerns from their members. NYSUT will conduct phone surveys next week of randomly selected members of Math A and Physics teachers asking for information about the exams.

Together with these other organizations, we will work on a set of problems and



"Now class, cutting through obstacles to problem solving, critical thinking and relevant learning"

solutions to present to the State Education Department.

~ NYSUT Department of Education and Research

NYSUT UNIONS AWARD \$3 MILLION IN SCHOLARSHIPS

Local union affiliates of the 500,000-member New York State United Teachers are awarding approximately \$3 million in college scholarships this month to deserving high school students, most of them graduating seniors heading off to college.

NYSUT President Thomas Y. Hobart Jr. said the scholarships recognize those students who meet high academic standards or who demonstrate exceptional leadership qualities. Most of the scholarships will be presented at high school graduations by local unions representing teachers and other school employees.

"These scholarships, many funded from

teachers' own pockets, represent in a tangible way how proud teachers are of their students' accomplishments," Hobart said. "And, certainly we're happy we can help some families to defray college tuition costs."

More than 90 percent of NYSUT's local teachers' unions offer scholarships every year to graduating seniors and other deserving students, said NYSUT First Vice President Antonia Cortese.

"Our local unions are integral parts of the school communities they serve. These scholarships help to motivate students, reward excellence in the classroom and re
(continued on page seven)

To
arrive at
the
simple is
difficult.

~ Rashid
Elisha

Hobart Celebrates Victory of Budget Vote

This year's statewide school budget vote is a resounding victory for public education. New Yorkers again affirmed their strong support for their public schools, and for the direction that public education is headed. The results are a vote of confidence in the work that teachers - and so many others - are doing to raise standards and improve student achievement.

"The vote also underscores the importance of state aid to public schools. Without the Legislature's courageous rejection of the Governor's budget proposal, today's headlines would undoubtedly tell a different story. The overwhelming support for school budgets across the state should send a clear, lasting message to Albany. As the giant May 3rd rally so clearly demon-

strated: New Yorkers are willing to invest in public education - and even pay slightly higher taxes - but they expect an even greater investment from the state.

"Even in those districts where voters defeated budgets, our sense is the 'No' votes did not result from voter dissatisfaction with the quality of local schools. Rather, voters expressed their frustration at a specific local issue or at higher property taxes that resulted from inadequate state aid.

"Our enthusiasm for the high budget pass rate, however, is dampened by the knowledge that, in real dollars, state aid fell about \$800 million short of what public schools needed this year. Many of the school budgets that passed contain harmful program cuts and devastating layoffs of teachers and staff. These cuts would

not have been necessary had the state's leaders enacted a stronger education budget much earlier in the process. We expect better next year."

Thomas Y. Hobart, Jr.

President

New York State United Teachers

NYSUT members and public education supporters turned out in high numbers June 3 to approve 93.8% of local school budgets, the highest approval rate recorded over the past 35 years. Voters passed 636 school budgets and defeated 42, including a tie vote in the tiny Southern Tier district of Stamford. The previous approval record was 93.6% in 1998 and the average is 85%.

NYSUT Website/The Bottom Line

COMMITTEE OF 100: OUR WORK CONTINUES

Hundreds of NYSUT activists from locals all over the state converged on Albany June 2-3 for the second Committee of 100 volunteer lobbying day.

"This was our opportunity to share with legislative representatives the real-life, front-line stories of how their decisions and positions affect people living in their districts," said Alan Lubin, NYSUT executive vice president. "It's crucial that we showed them the people who voted are watching what they do."

Topics on the legislative agenda ranged from K-12, through higher education, health care and retirees.

"This was also a chance for us to thank them in person for their courageous stand in the battles over the 2003-04 budget," Lubin said, "and it's the first time the Committee of 100 has been in Albany since the massive March on Albany earlier this

month.

"It was a special day."

Among the items NYSUT lobbyists-for-a-day discussed:

* Numerous pieces of pension legislation, including a bill to make permanent protections that prohibit school districts from diminishing the level of health insurance coverage or their contribution toward its cost for retirees, unless there is a corresponding cut for in-service employees. Of note, last week the governor signed the temporary Health Insurance Moratorium extender to do the same thing. It will remain in effect until May 15, 2004.

* A school safety initiative that includes mandatory suspensions for repeatedly disruptive students, authorization of involuntary transfers as a disciplinary option and a new penal classification for "aggravated harassment of a teacher."

* Comprehensive charter school re-

form bills that would modify enrollment, financing and employee benefits. Among other things, the legislation would limit the enrollment of charter schools to no more than 5% of a district's enrollment. NYSUT also is seeking a moratorium on any new charter schools until after the state has solved its public education funding problems.

* A bill to exclude core expenses beyond local control from the contingency budget cap.

* A bill to require higher education employers to assume the 3% employee contribution for optional retirement program members with more than 10 years membership.

* Legislation to improve working conditions for nurses, including an anti-mandatory overtime bill, a safe-staffing bill, and legislation to boost recruitment and retention.

NYSUT, The Bottom Line

Report on the Committee of 100

The purpose of the committee of 100 lobbying Day was to thank the legislators who supported education or overriding Gov. Pataki's proposed budget. A list of assemblymen who voted with the Governor was announced and in our district, Nancy Calhoun and Howard Mills voted with the governor. Senator Larkin and Assemblyman Kirwin stood up and voted for the override which took courage and determination to help education and students in the state of New York. Twelve Republican assemblymen crossed the line to override the budget. They voted 119 times in four hours to complete the process.

Howard Mills and Nancy Calhoun both stated that they voted on principle. They felt the budget did not include any reform. They do not believe that closing the corporate loop holes is in the best interest of NYS for trying to keep business here. Both stated that they could see mid-year cuts possible with the present budget. Nancy Calhoun pointed out that she has voted "No" on state budgets since 1991.

Senator Larkin and Assemblyman Kirwin were both adamant that the override was the right thing to do for all the kids of New York! Senator Larkin thanked all those who sent letters of support on the

Purple Heart Stamps!

We also discussed upcoming proposed legislation concerning retirement, K-12, and New York City, Safe School initiative, Higher Education, Labor issues and Health Care Professionals.

~ Mary J. Goldberg,

MS Representative,

Legislative Committee

From Lee Cutler, Director of NYSUT Election District 13-14:

It would be appreciated if each of you would take the time to make a few phone calls to key Republicans to follow up the recent budget votes in Albany. These calls are important in that they make the legislator aware that we care and are tracking their voting record.

First, call Tom Kirwan at 562-0888, Tom Morahan at 425-1818 and Bill Larkin at 567-1270 and thank them for their support. All three broke rank with their Governor and are paying a political price for doing the right thing. I would especially encourage you to call Tom Kirwan, who broke with the minority Assembly leadership to do what he knew was right for the teachers, children and working families of his district.

At the same time I encourage you to call Nancy Calhoun at 564-1330 and Howard Mills at 291-3631 to express your outrage at their refusal to vote to override the Governor's irresponsible vetoes. These are two legislators who showed that they value partisan loyalty over their responsibility to the children and working families who depend on their leadership.

We Cared, We Were There on May 3rd!

On Saturday, May 3rd, a contingent of the Valley Central family representing the Administration, Faculty, Para-professionals, Parents and Students traveled by school bus to Albany to attend the March for Public Education. Our sixteen folks joined about 30,000 others to make our voices heard concerning the governor's state budget and education. Valley Central was represented by VCTA President Tim Brown (HS), VCTA Vice President Rich Steger (Walden), VCTA Secretary Laurie Hey (MS), VCTA Editor Patti Lunden, Middle School Teacher Kathryn Phillips, MS PTA President and MS Paraprofessional Maggie Steigelman and her son and high school student Louie Steigelman, Walden Building Representative and Speech Therapist Patty Joy, Walden Building Representative and Teacher, Kathy Bordone, VC Superintendent, Dr. Richard Hooley, Montgomery Paraprofessional Maureen (Morrisey) Wiseman, Parent Wayne Wiseman and Montgomery student Zach Wiseman, Walden teacher (first year!) Christine Southard, Walden teacher, Janet Malloy and Wal-

den teacher Mary Ellen Manigimele.

The crowd was a rally of speeches and entertainment all making the point that budget cuts must not ill affect the education of New York's children. Speakers ranged from Carl McCall who pointed out that "had we done the right thing last November, we wouldn't be in this mess now!" to Sex and the City star, Cynthia Nixon who spoke as a concerned parent whose child's NYC school lacks enough supervision and art and music classes for its 700 students.

Our day began at 9:30 and we were home by 6:00 pm and our impressions were positive. Christine Southard found the rally inspiring and felt it was well worth the time she took to attend it. Janet Malloy, a second year teacher, said that she thought it was very educational to see the power of the union, Mary Ellen Manigimele said she found



the rally energizing to her teaching. Rich Steger, Laurie Hey, Kathryn Phillips, and Tim Brown commented on the number of people expressing their concern (continued on page six)



Take good care of yourself....

Summer is an excellent time to catch up on many tasks you've been putting off. One of those tasks most of us put off is going to the doctor for a regular check-up. Early detection is the key to surviving many illnesses, so getting in the habit, and staying in the habit, of yearly exams could actually save your life.

One disease educators should be particularly aware of is breast cancer.

According to a study of 130,000 female teachers and administrators in California, educators have a higher risk of breast cancer. The study was noted in the professional journal, Cancer Causes and Control. Teachers have a higher than expected incidence of breast, ovarian and endometrial cancer. Researchers cite several factors that may contribute to the higher rates of breast cancer, such as postponing childbearing and participation in

hormone-replacement. Breast cancer can be detected through monthly self-exams and mammograms—early detection is the key to surviving breast cancer.

If you have been putting off a doctor's visit or a test... do yourself and those who love you a big favor—use your time this summer to take care of yourself.

Research information: American Teacher, February 2003

IT'S NOT TOO EARLY TO PLAN FOR MORE 'MAKING STRIDES' SUCCESS

Last year, its first as a statewide sponsor, NYSUT sent about 6,500 participants marching through the October chill to raise more than half a million dollars in the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer fund-raising event for the American Cancer Society.

"We were thrilled at the level of participation last year," said Antonia Cortese, NYSUT first vice president. "And you'd better believe we want to do even better in 2003."

NYSUT The Bottom Line

Many VCTA members have participated in the local "Making Strides for Breast Cancer" Walk held each October.

The VCTA would like to help our members with this walk. Patti Lunden (HS, x7664) is serving as the Team Coordinator for the VCTA and will have a table at the TSA/Health Fair. Building Team Leaders are asked to contact Patti so we can recognize and support our members' participation in this worthwhile event.

This year's walk will be held Sunday, October 19th.

SENATORS SEEKING \$175 MILLION FOR NURSE REINVESTMENT ACT

Citing a "severe nursing shortage" in the United States, a bipartisan group of 34 senators urged Senate appropriators to include \$175 million for nurse education programs to target the nurse drought in fiscal year 2004.

The \$175 million would go to Title VIII nurse education programs, including those created under the Nurse Reinvestment Act. The 2002 law authorizes funding for scholar-

ship and loan repayment programs for nursing education, as well as for nurse recruitment.

Nurses, including the NYSUT Health Care Professionals Council and the national American Federation of Teachers Healthcare, have lobbied Congress for \$250 million to implement programs authorized in the law. In February, Congress provided only \$20 million in funds for Nurse Reinvestment Act-related



nurse education for fiscal year 2003.

NYSUT The Bottom Line

We cared, We were there... (continued from page four)

about education. Kathryn Phillips commented, "I hope the amount of people here will make the legislators pay close attention to this issue."

The Wiseman family had many reasons for attending. Maureen works as a paraprofessional and as a substitute at Montgomery Elementary where she is also a PTA member. Her husband, Wayne came as first, a concerned Montgomery Elementary parent and second, as a CSEA member and state employee at an alternative education school that would be "suspended" under Pataki's budget plan

VC Superintendent Dr. Richard Hooley expressed his reason for attending the rally extended past this year's budget. He projects what many, including NYSUT President, Tom Hobart, predict—next year's budget fight will be even worse than this year's. He saw May 3rd's rally as just a battle in the longer fight for education in New York State. Had the legislator

not voted to override the governor's budget, the rally's organizers were prepared to have another rally and another until the voice of the people was listened to. Fortunately, for this year, the budget was overridden and most of the funding restored. However, the fight will likely repeat itself next year.



VCTA President Tim Brown noted, "This rally shows the power that educational stakeholders have if we (teachers, parents, administrators, support staff and school boards) have if we all work together. I am proud to be part of this small contingent of people from Valley Central who represent those stakeholders for our community."

Brown said, "I stated this was not a union rally, but it was a rally our union would attend. And we will attend every rally necessary to make the NYS government understand that they cannot balance budgets on the backs of New York's children. We must find a way to give our next generation the opportunities that were given to ours."

~ Patti Lunden,

Editor

~ All Photos courtesy of Janet Malloy,

Walden Elementary School

A License to Teach

NYS has approved two changes in regulation:

Temporary License

Provides for the issuance of a new "limited" certificate in classroom teaching titles for certain teachers who now hold a temporary license.

Eligibility Requirements:

- ◆ Currently employed under temporary license
- ◆ Commitment from school for employment in same area for 2003-04
- ◆ Bachelor's degree or higher in area
- ◆ Passed LAST and ATS-W and CST
- ◆ Commit to completing all college coursework for provisional by September 1, 2004

Renewed Provisional

A one-time opportunity for persons with expired provisional certificates to renew the certificate for five years.

Eligibility Requirements:

- ◆ Hold expired certificate issued after 9/1/84
 - ◆ Have taken or take and pass LAST and ATS-W
- Available until February 1, 2004. The requirements for permanent certification are those in effect at the time renewed provisional certificate is issued.

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*The VCTA Executive Council Wishes
All Our Members a Wonderful Summer Break.
See You in September!*

NYSUT UNIONS AWARD \$3 MILLION IN SCHOLARSHIPS *(continued from page one)*

mind community members that teachers and other school employees - and the unions that represent them - care very deeply about the students they work with every day," Cortese said.

The scholarships range from \$25 to the giant \$1 million scholarship fund operated by the United Federation of Teachers, NYSUT's affiliate in New York City. Last week, the UFT presented 200 deserving stu-

dents with \$5,000 scholarships, which are awarded over four years. The UFT scholarships recognize both academic merit and financial need.

Cortese said NYSUT locals raise money for their scholarships in a variety of ways. Some sponsor events - such as dress-down days, charity basketball or softball games, or bake sales - to raise money. Many fund their scholarships using

the profits from soda machines placed in their faculty rooms. Others simply set up a collection basket. Excluding the massive UFT scholarship program, NYSUT local unions award an average of \$2,200 in scholarships each year.

NYSUT Website, www.nysut.org

Editor's Note: The VCTA will award 5 scholarships in the amount of \$400 each at the VCHS Graduation, June 28.

NYS Deferred Compensation Plan (457b) *Now Available to Valley Central!*

The VCTA and CO have entered into a side agreement* which makes the NYS Deferred Compensation Plan available to our members. Like the TSA (403b), this plan allows you to shelter money pre-tax for retirement savings. The 457b plan coupled with the 403b has now almost doubled the amount of money that you may shelter! The July 1st deadline for submission of paperwork for a September 1st effective date has been extended to August 1st for this year. *For a review of full language, contact your building representative.

To obtain more information on the Deferred Compensation Plan:

Toll Free: (800) 422-8463 24 hours a day

Web Site: www.nysdcp.com

Central Office also has informational booklets

NYSUT DEMANDS MORATORIUM ON NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS

NYSUT has called for a moratorium on the approval of any new charter schools, contending the \$214 million they would divert from public schools would only exacerbate the fiscal difficulties New York's schools are facing.

"Clearly, there have been no charter school miracles," said NYSUT President Tom Hobart. "It's wrong to expect school districts to continue to write checks to new charter schools when they can't pay for the essential programs their own students need."

Hobart praised the Legislature for taking \$6 million from funds targeted toward charter schools and using the funds to help restore the Governor's cuts to public education.

While the State has authorized the creation of 100 charter schools, to date, only 51 have been opened. NYSUT wants to ensure that no new charters are issued until the state's financial crisis abates and the Board of Regents concludes a required study and analysis on the effectiveness of New York's charter schools.

NYSUT Second Vice President

Walter Dunn, who monitors and analyzes charter schools for the union, said guaranteed payments to charter school operators - many of them private, profit-making companies - are among the first checks that school districts must write.

"Before a school district can buy chalk or a new book, they have to cut a check to the charter schools," Dunn said. "School districts already face scarce funding. Money that could pay for academic and remedial programs and minimize property tax increases goes right out the door to charter schools instead."

Using the most current payment formulas, a NYSUT study showed that the 51 existing charter schools in the state would drain \$214 million a year from public education when they reach their maximum enrollment. Charter schools would divert \$35 million from city school students in Buffalo and \$95 million from children in New York City schools, with lesser - but equally damaging - amounts coming from other school districts.

So far, Dunn said, New York's experience shows that "charter schools are no panacea. They face many of the same challenges that public



schools are working to overcome." He noted many children enrolled in charter schools - like

those in nearby public schools - live in poverty, come from single-parent households and do not have access to quality early childhood education.

"It's no surprise that test scores for children in charter schools, almost without exception, mirror the performance of children in the struggling public schools they left in the first place," Dunn said.

"Most people don't realize that public schools pay the cost of students who attend charter schools. And there are no real savings to the districts. It costs the same to run a bus whether there are 45 kids or 48 kids on board. Because districts' fixed costs don't fall significantly when children leave, the opening of a charter school can leave a giant shortfall in school budgets," Dunn explained.

~ NYSUT *The Bottom Line*

4TH-GRADE ELA SCORES CONTINUE TO RISE

Eighth-grade scores, however, remain low statewide.

Scores on state tests in elementary English continued their steady improvement, according to fourth-grade test scores released May 20, and the achievement gap continued to close for the fourth year in a row, the State Education Department said.

More than 64% of fourth-graders met all the state standards by scoring in Levels 3 and 4 (up from 48% in 1999, the first year the test was given).

Minority students also continued to make significant gains, and high need districts also continued to close the achievement gap, the state said.

"This is more evidence that public schools are on the right track," said Antonia Cortese, NYSUT first vice

president. "In general, student achievement continues to rise, with striking improvement in New York City. The state's investment in public education is clearly beginning to get better results. This fourth straight year of higher student test scores validates the Legislature's decision to restore the money cut from public education," she said. However, middle school students have made no net gains statewide, according to eighth-grade English scores, also released May 20.

"There is still a very long road ahead," Cortese said. "Too many students, particularly in the Big 5 school districts and rural communities, are still not meeting state standards. And, generally, scores on the eighth-grade Math and ELA tests are not yet near what anyone would call acceptable."

Cortese said we all know what works: "Programs to lower class

sizes; quality early childhood programs; hiring and training highly skilled teachers and extra help for those students who need it are smart uses of our education dollars. It is likely that New York will continue to face tough budgetary challenges. But if we are serious about closing the performance gap and giving every child a fair chance to meet the Regents' standards, funding for public education must be the No. 1 priority."

Go to www.nysut.org for links to the SED data on the test results. The union is polling members regarding the fourth- and eighth-grade assessments given in May, and will be doing the same for June's Regents exams.

NYSUT/ The Bottom Line

MIDDLE SCHOOL 'MALAISE' CAN BE FIXED

While student performance on fourth grade tests continued to climb this year, middle school test scores generally stayed stagnant for the fifth straight year, a condition The New York Times termed "the Bermuda Triangle of education" in an editorial, "Middle School Malaise" (5/28).

The Times correctly pointed out that the pattern keeps repeating itself in the newest state reading and writing tests, where fourth-graders showed "significant gains" but eighth-graders still lagged behind.

The Times editorial concluded with what NYSUT has repeatedly stated: "The first phase of the standards movement shows that

reforms will fail unless schools are strengthened grade by grade, right up the ladder. These reforms must begin with a competent, qualified teacher in every class, in every grade."

Responding to the Times editorial, NYSUT First Vice President Antonia Cortese wrote a reply in which she agreed but pointed out problems preventing progress in middle school student achievement. She noted that the State Education Department "has been studying middle school reform since 1989, the year most current eighth-graders were born. Regrettably, all that studying has led to little progress."

Cortese said the middle school problem has been "studied long enough" and that it was time to implement "a long-term commitment to follow through on basic,

logical reforms." She pointed to NYSUT's 2002 report, *Caught in the Middle*, that detailed changes that could "dramatically improve middle school education." Cortese said what's needed is a "change in mind-set. Because middle schools are often molded to meet district's space needs rather than children's education needs - for example, some middle schools include fifth-graders, some ninth-graders - there is an urgent need for the state to provide instructional guidance.

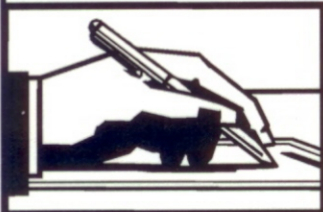
A statewide core curriculum and syllabi for grades 5-8 would provide consistency regardless of the configuration of the buildings in which these students are housed, the NYSUT report said.

NYSUT/ The Bottom Line

Congratulations to the Thirty-Three Teachers who were granted Tenure!

Talk about "passing the buck"....

A professor was giving a big test one day to his students. He handed out all of the tests and went back to his desk to wait.



Once the test was over the students all handed the tests back in. The professor noticed that one of the students had attached a \$100 bill to his test with a note saying "A dollar per point."

The next class the professor handed the tests back out.

This student got back his test and \$64 change.

~ from the Internet

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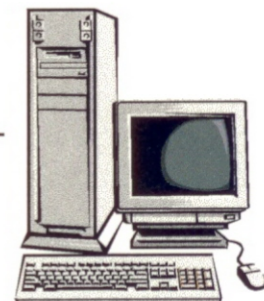
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visit the special AFT PLUS Web site at www.unionvoice.org/ct/O71WNIn1x71z/computer.



Patti Lunden Wins Prestigious NYSUT Community Service Award

For her service to the community, (*in the largest sense of the word*), Patti Lunden was recently honored by NYSUT. These awards were created to recognize individuals who have given outstanding volunteer service to their communities. Along with NYSUT, we would like to recognize our members who generously give their time and expertise so unselfishly to the people of their

communities. In Patti's case, that would include her present community of Goshen, Port Ewen and other places where she has lived in the past, and the Valley Central community. Much of this has been through her association with her church, but also would include her association with the VCTA and its work for and with the people of the district, such as the lunchbox and antique and art show, to name a

few. By being the kind of person she is and by being recognized for that, Patti has done both herself and our organization proud. Thank you and congratulations for your untiring efforts on behalf of all those you touch. You set a fine example and are a model for others to follow.

~ Jay Sussdorff
Vice President

What is your favorite part of the Representative Assembly (RA)?

I have been asked many times what I consider to be my favorite part of the RA. I could say that it is the inspiring speech after speech, so eloquently delivered by all the sincere politicians. I could say that it is the five to seven hour trip to the exotic destinations of Buffalo, Rochester, New York or Washington, DC. I could say that it is the food. The highlight of each RA is the Journalism Luncheon.

Each year I get to sit in a room with the editors of the local newsletters. This is the day that they are acknowledged for all their hard work, dedication and sacrifice. Our very own Patti Lunden has consistently produced a newsletter of superior quality. Patti puts her heart into every issue. The hours that Patti spends in front of the computer, at meetings and chasing down articles that were due yesterday are hours that she could be spending with her family. Her efforts have not gone unnoticed. She has received three awards this year. Patti received a **First Award** in the category, **Best Article on Health Issues**, "Feeling Blue", January 31, 2002; an **Award of Merit** in the category, **Best Original Cartoon**, "Air Conditioning", April 30, 2002; and an **Award of Merit** in the cate-

gory, **Best Front Page or Cover**, January 31, 2002.

I am very proud to attend the Journalism Luncheon with Patti. There are three things that are guaranteed to happen, every year.

1. Patti will win multiple awards.
2. Patti will blush from ear to ear when she goes up to receive her awards.
3. I will wind up carrying the awards. (*Hey, they're not light!*)

Patti, congratulations on another great year. We are all very proud of your work. We thank you for bringing the important issues to our membership and pride to the VCTA.

~ Rich Steger,
Vice President



Editor's Note:

Thank you, Jay, Rich, Tim, Laurie, John and the VCTA Executive Council for all your support! Thank you to all who contribute articles—Keep them coming!



Are you receiving your
Newspapers and Magazines?

As a NYSUT and AFT mem-
ber,
You should be receiving:

New York Teacher (newspaper)
American Teacher (newspaper) and
American Educator (magazine)

**If you are not,
Contact VCTA Treasurer,
John Bonagura, (EC)
457-5899.**

Give him your name, the building you
teach in, the level/subject taught and
your current address.

Your name and address need to be
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457-5899**



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The Interactive Museum
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Legislation won't make Children Learn

Educators know the truth but are afraid to say it: All children cannot learn.

I am an educator, and in my profession it is a mortal sin to say that all children cannot learn. Now that I have said it publicly, I will probably lose my job and be excommunicated from my profession. At the very least I am certain it will give Arizona's state superintendent of public instruction a bad case of heartburn.

Perhaps I can redeem myself by rephrasing the statement: All children can learn but all children cannot learn as much as all other children. And all children cannot learn to some preset state or federal standard, as is currently mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act and Arizona Learns legislation.

I am a principal of a school the state has labeled "under-performing". Does this embarrass me? Not in the least. The label is a misnomer. Schools are simply brick and mortar. They do not perform, under or over. The label really means that the school's instructional staff is under-performing. Since I know that the teachers at my school are effective, dedicated professionals who are actually "over-performing", I am not the least bit embarrassed by being mislabeled as a result of this ridiculous legislation.

Color me defensive if you must, but I believe labeling schools is nothing more than name-calling, something most of us learned not to do in kindergarten. Labeling schools will not improve them and actually runs counter to the intended purpose.

The goal of the law is admirable and sounds great to voters. Schools will be held accountable to ensure that all children learn and succeed; the achievement gap between rich and poor kids will magically disappear; and no child will be left behind. The only phase missing is that everyone will live happily ever after.

Like the emperor in the classic fairy tale, the No Child Left Behind Act has no clothes, but no one is saying so. The punitive nature of the legislation is forcing teachers to teach to a test instead of teaching children; conse-

quently, there may be a superficial rise in test scores. However, for solving the problem of low achievement by at-risk children, it is tantamount to putting a Band-Aid on a headache.

Saying that "all" children must achieve to a predetermined standard on a test is like saying that all children in physical education classes must run a six-minute mile on a physical fitness exam. And saying that all children must show one year's academic growth for one year in school is like saying that all children in the school lunch program must gain 10 pounds and grow 2 inches in one year.

Children are not created equal in athletic ability or physical characteristics. Neither are they created equal in their ability to learn. Any first-year teacher knows this; apparently politicians do not. They have created a law that is focused on fixing the schools and just possibly schools aren't broken.

I am not saying the schools are perfect or that we cannot improve. And I firmly believe that the education profession must be held accountable for what it does. But this is true of every profession, including law and medicine.

The professional educator, however seems to be at the bottom of the food chain. Unlike any other profession, we are constantly asked to do more with less. And politicians, who say things that are politically expedient but not educationally realistic, relentlessly criticize us. Doctors and lawyers are never subject to such political philandering and shortsighted legislation.

Doctors are not required by law to cure all their patients. It is acknowledged that there are circumstances with each patient that are unique. Some patients will not follow their doctor's instructions; some simply

have illnesses that cannot be cured.

Lawyers are not required by law to win all their cases. It is recognized that every client has a unique set of circumstances that will directly affect their attorney's ability to bring them success in court.

Teachers, on the other hand, do not fare so well with lawmakers. The law ignores the fact that schools in the low-income areas serving predominantly at-risk children have much higher percentages of children with special "medical problems and legal circumstances."

Under the threat of a "failing label" teachers must cure every child irrespective of his or her illness; win every case in the courthouse of the classroom no matter what the legal circumstance of the child.

In the *Emperor's New Clothes*, it takes a small child to tell the truth and bring the adults to their senses. Maybe our legislators need to come into the "under-performing" schools. They might learn some things they did not know before. Perhaps this would bring about some responsible legislation aimed at solving some of our problems instead of creating new ones, such as the exodus of quality teachers from the at-risk schools, where they are needed most.

Fairy tales usually have a happy ending, but I fear not with this one.

~ David Finley,

Principal Webster Elementary School
Mesa, Arizona

Educator for 32 years

Reprinted from the Internet



Like the emperor in the classic fairy tale, the No Child Left Behind Act has no clothes, but no one is saying so.

Highlights of the VCTA April Executive Council Meeting

Paraprofessional Report

1. Kathy Lennon reported that negotiations are moving slowly.

Dental/ Optical Trust

1. Jay Sussdorff reported that we are considering adding to benefits. More information will be available as decisions are made.

Retirees

1. Kevin McFadden reported that he has been looking over the VCTA ledgers and that all is going well.

New Business

1. Donna Lloyd reported that some VCTA members in Maybrook have had deaths in the family and that 1 day is not enough in some cases. A suggestion was made to modify the language that specifies the definition of a family member. Discussion followed.

2. Carol DeMicco reported that there was a flyer out for Network Basics training in-service classes. She was told that she could not take the in-service course because she had already been trained. Discussion followed regarding the inadequacy of the conference day training. Tim Brown reiterated that unit members have a right to choose whether or not to be an instructor on conference day.

3. Toni Sperry reported that 2 teachers from Montgomery will be retiring, with their parties in May. Tim Brown reported that checks to retirees will be distributed at the June VCTA dinner meeting.

4. Joe Collins reported that lunch ISS in the Middle School is becoming an off-shoot of lunch duty. Tim Brown reported that this is something that can be addressed.

5. Tim Brown reported that a shared HS/MS teacher does MS pre-session duty, which is a good teaching/management compromise and was addressed by a side agreement with Dr. Nugent.

7. Rich Steger asked about leaves of absence; Tim Brown indicated that leaves of absence are totally at the discretion of the district.

President's Report

1. March for Public Education on May 3rd- A statewide march in support of public education will be held at the Empire State Plaza in Albany. The organizers would like over 27,000 at this

rally- not just teachers. The cost for the bus will be \$300. We received \$1,600 from

VoteCope, which can be used for political action. The bus will leave East Coldenham at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday and will return, at the latest, by 6 p.m. The estimated time for the rally will be 1:30- 2:30. Beverages and snacks will be provided on the bus. PTAs, retirees, administrators, teachers, BOE members are all invited to attend. **Motion to spend Vote Cope money to attend Albany rally promoting quality education in the state of New York on May 3rd: Carol DeMicco. Second: Patty Joy.** Motion carried.

2. Vote Cope Reimbursement-- \$1,698.20. Valley Central won an award. .

3. NYS Deferred Compensation- Information was distributed. This is similar to a 403B- voluntary pre-tax, thereby reducing taxable income. \$12,000 maximum contribution in 2003. **You cannot access your money, unless in extreme circumstances, until you terminate. This would double what you can put into tax sheltered annuities, and ultimately allowing you to shelter every penny of sick day buy-back and retirement incentive.

Motion to give Tim Brown approval to make the decision that best suits our needs after discussing with NYSUT's Rob Lemoraux: Marc Sperry. Second: Carol DeMicco. Motion carried.

4. OUSDHP- Draft Letter to Superintendent concerning deficit- Copies of this draft letter from Pine Bush were distributed. OUSDHP has a \$6 million deficit. Next year, OU charges for family coverage will be almost \$11,000. A study will be undertaken. VCTA officers have discussed the viability of OU with Central Office and that Empire was the plan with which OU was supposed to be comparable. Benefits for retirees in our contract specifies that retirees are covered and state law currently requires that the benefit may not be reduced.

5. OUSDHP March Minutes- Copies were distributed.

6. United Way Contributions- Copies of a memo from Mary Ann Wilson were

distributed. VC's contributions for 2002-2003 were \$8,779.80. Bob Jurgens represented the district at the United Way awards presentation dinner.

7. Night School Grievance- Copies of the grievance settlement were distributed.

8. Budget Vote Post Card- Copies of the post card were distributed. Post cards supporting the district budget will be sent to NYSUT members in the district. **Motion to endorse Patsy Iorlano on the budget vote postcard: Marc Sperry. Second: Toni Sperry.** Motion carried.

9. Community Service Award- Patricia Lunden will receive a community service award from NYSUT. More details will follow. Our congratulations to Patti!

10. 2003-2004 Training-Upgrade Funds- AFL-CIO Unions are eligible to receive funds to assist their training and upgrading efforts. Applications are due by May 20th. Let Tim Brown know if you have any suggestions for training.

11. VC Desktop Ads: Armed Forces and Families- Copies were distributed.

12. Corinne Feller Memorial Race Sponsorship- **Motion to approve donation of funds for Corinne Feller Memorial Race Sponsorship in order to get VCTA logo on the shirt: Marc Sperry. Second: Joe Collins.** Motion carried.

13. E-mail follow-up- We are not opposed to e-mail, but we don't want this to become a required obligation. We want definitive guidelines on the district's expectations. This is an issue of unionism and protectionism.

The next Executive Council meeting was held May 20 at 3:45 PM at the VCHS Professional Library, Montgomery.

~ Laurie Hey, Secretary

Highlights of the May VCTA Executive Council Meeting

Secretarial Report

1. Jay Sussdorff reported, on behalf of Lucy Fox, that talks with Central Office regarding negotiations are on-going.

Paraprofessional Report

1. Kathy Lennon reported that last summer's conference resulted in one free room for this summer's conference. The para officers have indicated that they would like to attend this conference again this summer.

Motion to approve 3 para officers to attend the conference this summer: Toni Sperry. Second: Jay Sussdorff. Motion carried.

2. Kathy Lennon requested that the para officer stipend, which is divided among four officers, be increased. Tim Brown recommended that John Bonagura and the officers meet to go over the books to determine what would be feasible.

3. Negotiations: Kathy Lennon reported that Mark Reinhartz only wants to discuss salary proposals, but Steve Berman recommends waiting until after the budget vote.

Elections Report

1. VCTA budget passed with 161 'yes' votes and 8 'no' votes.

2. Patty Joy and Patti Lunden were elected as TRS reps with 168 and 178 votes, respectively.

3. It was noted that Berea had the best voting turnout.

4. Tim Brown suggested having teachers vote as they enter or exit the building to get a higher vote turnout.

Board of Education Report

1. John Bonagura reported that many high school positions are being filled.

2. Peter Roden's replacement, Christina Howe, has been appointed.

Retirees

1. Kevin McFadden reported that all was quiet.

Old Business

1. Toni Sperry distributed Vote Cope packets to a rep from each building. Send money collected to Toni in 2 weeks. If someone gives you cash, Toni needs to know their name and the amount donated. Tim Brown suggested an incentive for building reps whose buildings have 90% teacher member participation in payroll deduction. John Bonagura and Tim Brown will work together on this idea. (Vote Cope money may be used for political action)

2. Kevin McFadden stated that retirees will send their Vote-Cope donations directly to Toni Sperry.

3. Tim Brown stated that our goal is \$25-50 per member for the year. Patty Joy requested clarification on how forms should be completed: Write in 'for the year' and Polly will divide your deduction among the number of paychecks in the year.

New Business

1. Copies of VCTA postcard supporting the district budget vote were distributed. Discussion followed, resulting in a decision to support Patsy Iorlano. It was felt that we didn't know enough about the other candidates. Tim Brown suggested that, in the future, we invite BOE candidates to speak to the Executive Council before the vote.

2. Rich Steger reported on the Montgomery bus situation. Possible solutions being discussed include: a. talk of extending the para day, but this would involve \$, b. shifting the para day, c. shifting the teachers' day, d. Peg Lyons suggested a rotating bus duty one week out of every 3 weeks, with teachers being able to leave early the other 2 weeks to make up for the time that they stayed late for bus duty (a flexible scheduling situation). Toni Sperry reported that their building meeting would address all four suggestions and that a meeting will then take place with the Superintendent.

3. Tim Brown stated that in a discussion with the Superintendent that he and Dr. Hooley felt hopeful that two grievances could be resolved: the Takvam grievance and the Montgomery grievance. Tim stated that

paras could be used (in relation to the Montgomery bus situation) and that they were not required to be in the classroom unless it was specified on a student's IEP. Tim stated that if we have to go to arbitration, we would grieve that the District agreed to put paras in place at 3:30. We would not try to argue the length of the school day; this is simply the agreement that we had. All we want is that paras are to be in place and teachers are able to leave at 3:30 as they are supposed to. Rich Steger stated that the District doesn't want the length of the school day for the paras to be over 6 hours because then they would be full-time employees and would have to receive benefits. Tim stated that we also need to look ahead to next year, not only with Montgomery, but also with Walden, due to bridge construction.

4. John Bonagura reported that NYSUT sent him a list from New York Teacher regarding undeliverable issues resulting from incorrect addresses. Reps will provide John with the information requested.

5. John Bonagura requested that reps instruct their building members to return the yellow stipend information sheets. Toni Sperry asked how to go about getting paid for an activity- the contract outlines the procedure for obtaining a charter.

6. Carol DeMicco will take the leftover VCTA snacks to the VCTA lunchbox.

7. Laurie Hey reported on how recycling is being addressed at the Middle School. Tim Brown strongly encourages teachers not to carry trash from one end of the building to the other- carrying heavy things are not part of your job responsibilities and gets into all sorts of other issues- Worker's Comp, etc. It is the District's responsibility to provide extra baskets in classrooms, it is not the teachers' job to do custodial work by carrying those waste baskets to another location. No other building in the district is recycling.

8. Rich Steger reported that comp ed, reading and math specialists are being used to handle make up testing. Tim Brown stated that, while student IEPs may not be compromised, this sends the message that

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



June Column –Another year over!

It is that time again to wrap things up, to wish everyone a peaceful, pleasant and prosperous summer; to wish the active teachers and staff a well deserved respite from the hurly-burly of the school year and to urge our dynamic (!) retirees to keep on keeping on.

- Special wishes and congratulations to this year's retirees who now enter a new and wonderful phase of their lives: more freedom, time to travel, possibilities for hobbies and new careers—a second spring for those who have dedicated their lives to imparting knowledge and entrusting wisdom to VC's kids. Our thanks to our retirees: from Berea, Al Takvam and Pat Darney; from Walden, Connie DeSantis; from Montgomery, Kathleen Takvam and Nancy Schmidt; from Maybrook, Jan Borland; from East Coldenham, Ralph Depew; from VC Middle School, Rod Clune; from VC High School, Bob Klein and Patty Depew (Jan. '04); from Central Office, Peter Roden and Ilahna Wygant (Sept. '02)

Dates to Remember:

Wednesday, September 3rd—Twenty-first Annual Retiree Luncheon at Camillo's/ Crossroads. You will be receiving all information for ALL retirees in the summer edition of Mac's Musings. Mark your calendar now. Let's get over 100 retirees in attendance once again.

Retirees made a very generous contribution to VOTE-Cope last year. VOTE-Cope was the main reason for retirees' cost of living adjustment (COLA) and did not endorse George Elmer Pataki for governor.

Two good decisions! Please be generous again and send checks made out to NYSUT– VOTE/Cope to Toni Sperry, VOTE/Cope Chair, at 11 Westwood Drive, Walden, NY 12586. The time frame is the next month. Many thanks to all retirees for recognizing the importance of this and to Toni Sperry for her years chairing the drive.

Nobody asked me, but...

I apologize for knocking Joe Bruno, not completely, but in a tempered fashion. He did the right thing in restoring education aid to the "education governor's" ridiculous state budget.

Thanks to the officers and building reps for their dedication to VCTA, to award-winning editor Patti Lunden for her continuing dedication to keeping us informed, to Orin Segall and Arline Friedman for helping me with retiree "stuff", to all the retirees who take the time to drop a line (re: Life after VC) To Ken and Marlea Smith for their great good humor when I identified Ken as Fred. And thanks, Marlea, for that wonderful letter.

Thoughts Recollected in Tranquility

The first of the dinners, brunches, lunches, receptions, gatherings, etc. for this year's retirees was held last night to honor Rod Clune. (I wish I could attend them all, but June is also a busy time for Pana and Gramma Mac (*Ginny and me*), with "grandchildren stuff." I was reminded last night one more time that the VC people are very special people.

The mix was great: active (*and young!*) teachers and staff, a plethora of Rod's fellow administrators, his family, a great group of retirees. The loyalty of men like Bill Moran and John Mirola—both retired over 20 years—continues to amaze me. We are most assuredly a diverse group, people ranging in age from twenty-two to the eighties, and yet there is a real bond. I've been hooted at more than a few times for using the term "VC Family", but that is exactly what we are. We are VC.

Amen

I hope to have a lot of "Life after VC" snippets when we return in September.

Another reminder to retirees about the big alumni bash on August 30th: "VC: the first decade." Classes from 1959 to 1969 will be celebrating. I sent info with last month's Echoes. The alumni would love to see their former teachers. Further info call 457-3808 or e-mail vcalumni@aol.com.

Have a great summer and until next time . . .

Keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you. Peace.

~ Kevin McFadden,

Retiree Representative



VC's Newest Retirees

Advertising Section

Ads that appear in the VC ECHOES are seen by the 750 members of the VC Educational Community and their households. If you would like to advertise in the next issue of the VC ECHOES, use the form below.

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Issues ad is to appear in: Sept. 3 _____, Oct. 03 _____, Dec. 03 _____, Feb. 04 _____,
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*Size of Ad: _____ \$10 _____ \$20 _____ \$30 _____ \$50 _____ \$100

**Please attach scanner ready ad sketched design.*

Siz

1/8th page = \$10 per issue 1/4 page = \$20 per issue 1/3 page = \$30 per issue 1/2 page = \$50 per issue, Full page = \$100 per issue (An additional \$30 first time set up if not scanner ready)

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By signing this contract you agree to the following:

We = VCTA, You = advertiser

- 1) We reserve the right to deny an application without explanation. We do not accept applications for political advertisements, lest they be considered endorsements. We also reserve the right to cease publishing any ad at any time, refunding any money prepaid for publication. We do not accept advertisements from those who attack the AFL-CIO, AFT, NYSUT, or the VCTA.
- 2) We reserve the right to choose the ads published according to space available per issue, refunding any prepaid money should we choose not to publish the ad in a given issue. Should you choose to terminate this contract prior to its fulfillment, you will be refunded money prepaid for issues not yet printed on the date of termination.
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- 4) You will receive the page on which your advertisement appears from each issue in which it is published as proof that it was published by fax or mail. You understand the entire issue is provided only to members, however it can be viewed on the VCTA website: www.frontiernet.net/~vcta
- 5) We reserve the right to change the date of publication within 2 calendar weeks.
- 6) You agree to prepay by cash or check (*payable to the Valley Central Teachers' Association*) for the advertisement(s) upon acceptance of this application. You understand that if we owe you a refund due to conditions #1 or #2, you will receive a refund check after the publication of the issue from which your ad was omitted with notification that it was omitted.
- 7) You understand that this contract expires at the end of the school year. You will receive an application for the next year's issues at the end of the contract year. You will be given preference as a returning customer at the discretion of the editor.

Signature _____

Please Return this form with ad to be scanned or information to: Patricia Lunden, VCTA, 1175 Rte. 17K, Montgomery, NY 12549
Ad can be e-mailed to vcta@frontiernet.net and then check/form sent under separate cover.

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Vice President, Richard Steger (Walden)
Secretary, Laurie Hey (MS)
Treasurer, John Bonagura (EC)

Building Representatives

Berea: Carol DeMicco, Sara Ackerson,
Robin Sinclair-Scott, Joanne Daniels

Maybrook: Donna Lloyd, Linda Siegel

East Coldenham: Holly Bacon, Beth Como

Walden: Patty Joy, Randy Sutter,
Kathy Bordone, Barbara Wutch

Montgomery: Toni Sperry, Chris Brand

MS: Mary Bleau, Mary Goldberg, Dana DeMasi
Marc Sperry, Joe Collins, Mike Steele

HS: Heather Ford, Peter Meisel, Glenn Eckert,
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Secretarial Representative: Lucy Fox (HS)

Paraprofessional Representative: Kathy Lennon (W)

VC ECHOES Editor
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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
July 31, 2003.

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

The Sixth Annual VCTA Health and TSA Fair

Tuesday, September 2nd
7:00 am—8:25 am
(before Convocation)
In the HS Lobby



Representatives from Health Insurance Companies and Financial Advisors will be present.

At the Fair, you can gather materials for review to make sure that you have the best health coverage for your family and yourself, and give you an opportunity to consider investment options that will help you save on taxes now while at the same time preparing for your retirement.

If you wish to change your health coverage, you can sign up for the new coverage in October 2003 and the change will take effect in January 2004. You may also make changes to TSA's. TSA changes filed by July 1st (August 1st this year) take effect July 1st. TSA changes filed by November 1st, take effect by January 1st.

The best way to prepare for the Fair is to take some time this summer, to review your current health coverage and financial investments and be sure that they best suit your needs.

The gift to be simple

Ah, summer drifts easily into our windows after a long soggy spring and one can feel the hands on the clock slow down to a more comfortable pace! The race is over, this day is done. Summer offers the greatest gift to teachers and students alike . . . time. I always approach summer break with great anticipation; there will be more time—time to sleep a little longer, time to sit and watch a TV program, time to spend with my own kids, time to catch up on hobbies, time to do what I want to do. Summer provides time to take a collective breath before the cycle of the school year begins again. There is much to be said

for enjoying the simple things in life. It certainly helps to reduce the stress level. It also provides an opportunity to reassess, and redirect one's energy according to those things that have been deemed important enough to make a priority.

This summer I hope each of you have an opportunity to take things a bit slower and to appreciate the simpler things in life. May this give you a chance to refresh and recharge yourself before we



return in September.

~ Patti Lunden,
Editor