

VC ECHOES

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Valley Central Teachers' Association

June 2012

2012 OCTA ADVISORS OF THE YEAR!



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

Valley Central Teachers' Association

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VCTA Officers:

President, Tim Brown (HS)
Vice Pres, Richard Steger (W)
Vice Pres., Patti Behr (HS)
Secretary, Christine Mello(HS)
Treasurer, Jennie Sexton (HS)

Contribute to the next issue!
Articles or
Contributions
should be sent to
Meghan Rilley, HS, by
20 August 2012

Executive Council Building Representatives

•Berea: Lisa Daily, Robin Scott, Deborah Simons
•E. Coldenham: Cathi Heil, Laura Casey
•Maybrook: Linda Draughn, Jeanne Cassel
•Montgomery: Gail Nozell, Andrea Turso, Susan Page
•Walden: Mary Ellen Raskopf, Susan Driscoll, Randy Sutter
•Middle School: Chris Arndt, Sonya Berger, Joe Collins, Derek DeVoe, Frank DiPasqua, Anne McKallen, Dana Sorbello, Pat Weigel

•High School: Nancy Brother, Deborah McKenney, Antoinette Oakes, Melissa Verlin, Scott Warner
•Secretarial Representative: JoAnn Cassisi (HS)
•Paraprofessional Representative: Kathy Lennon (W)

The VC Echoes is the official publication of the Valley Central Teachers' Association—Local 3076—and is published regularly during the school year. Any articles submitted to the VC Echoes will also be posted on the VCTA web site.

The VCTA will sponsor a District-wide team for the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk.



Date: Sunday October 21st 2012
Where: Woodbury Commons

Nancy Brother, HS, RN will be our new coordinator!

Congratulations, Carole and Henry!

On May 7, 2012 Carole Fitts and Henry Pizzonia were recognized by the Orange County Teachers' Association as Co-Advisors of the Year.

Carole and Henry have been senior class advisors for the past seven years. The responsibilities of this position have evolved and escalated to such an extent that any one person would be overwhelmed by the multitude of tasks that are expected of anyone courageous enough (some might say naive enough) to step up to the plate and take this on.

Senior class advisors must have exceptional organizational skills, great rapport with staff and students, and the patience of saints. Carole and Henry have been able to hold on to many of the traditions that have been a part of so many VC activities and events while simultaneously creating new activities and traditions that are often community minded. Some of these activities include a formal senior-faculty tea, blood drives, a food drive, homecoming activities, senior week with fun night and the senior dance, the senior ball, the senior dinner with skits and a senior video, an awards night, the end of the year party in the courtyard for

seniors and, of course, graduation.

Carole and Henry believe that many students need to experience more than what their core academic subjects can offer. Students having the ability to join clubs or run for student government positions (such as senior class officers),

creates opportunities for personal growth and self-expression that might otherwise be unavailable.

In their role as senior class advisors, Carole and Henry have also been recognized by the New York Blood Center for their annual blood drives, the Senior Citizen Community for the annual senior citizen brunch and the Montgomery

Food Pantry for the annual food drive. Their efforts on behalf of VC children and the VC community have also been recognized internally by the BOE, building principals, faculty and staff, particularly with regard to their traditional graduation ceremony.

Congratulations to Carole Fitts and Henry Pizzonia for their well-deserved recognition as Orange County Advisors of the Year.

—Tim Brown, HS, Health, VCTA President

“Carole and Henry believe that many students need to experience more than what their core academic subjects can offer.”

Ten-Second Inspiration:

“The dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called ‘truth’.”

—Dan Rather

“What a teacher writes on the blackboard of life can never be erased.” —Author Unknown

Lousey News

Nothing instills panic into a teacher or parent's heart as fast as the discovery of an infestation of pediculosis or head lice in a child. For years school nurses have diligently screened hundreds of students and have picked thousands of nits, the tiny louse eggs that are cemented to the hair shaft, out of students' hair. They have also followed district policy or procedure to exclude students from attending school until they were nit free.

Current evidenced-based research is changing the protocol for dealing with this problem. The American Academy of Pediatrics, The Centers for Disease Control and the National Association of School Nurses have all issued statements encouraging school districts to abandon policies that exclude students from school because of a head lice infestation and/or the presence of nits. The research shows that these policies have not proven to lower overall infestation rates and may actually be harmful to student academic progress. The American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a strong statement against head lice policies that keep children out of school. The report, which begins its recommendations by affirming that "no healthy child should be excluded or allowed to miss school time because of head lice", further advocates keeping children in the school even if they have a lice infestation, provided that the child is being treated properly.

Here are the basic arguments against the traditional 'no nits' policy:

- There is no objective medical or scientific evidence to support the adoption, enforcement or continuation of a no-nits policy (or, for that matter, a 'no-live-lice' policy).
- The manner in which 'screenings' are conducted within schools may violate the confidentiality of the students.
- The exclusion policies have never been

demonstrated to reduce incidence or prevalence of head lice in the school population.

- The condition of pediculosis rarely manifests with more than mild and transient pruritus, and is not associated with other infectious processes.
- Head lice are acquired mainly by direct head-to-head contact with an infested person (rarely via inanimate objects).
- Head louse eggs ('nits') are, for all practical considerations, non-transmissible.
- Exclusion policies restrict educational opportunities for the affected students, and may (because of increased absentee rates) reduce state funding to schools.



'No-nit' as well as 'no louse' policies are discouraged by the American Academy of Pediatrics <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/peds.2010-1308v1.pdf> The National Association of School Nurses <http://www.nasn.org/Default.aspx?tabid=237>), and by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/lice/head/parents.html>) also discourage the 'no nit' policies, and; Certain prominent school systems have eliminated or modified their policies (e.g. New York City), and the feared 'epidemics' of lice have not materialized. See: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Health/Pediculosis/default.htm>

In addition to this discussion, interested readers are directed to a National PTA-commissioned article: <http://www.pta.org/2151.htm> pertaining to the management of head lice in schools.

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Lousey News (continued from page 4)

The Valley Central School District on advice of council is adopting the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, The Centers for Disease Control and the National Association of School Nurses. Students who present with active head lice infestations will be sent home. The parents will be provided with suggestions for treatment. Following treatment the student may return to school and the progress of treatment will be monitored by the school nurse.

Respectfully submitted,

—Nancy Brother, RN

VCSD School Nurse Coordinator



Social Studies: The Forgotten Discipline

Next year, the Common Core Curriculum Standards are being launched in New York State. The standards primarily address ELA and Math. Indirectly, in the form of a six page add-on to the ELA standards, Social Studies and Science are addressed—if that is the right word. Science is also emerging as a focus for New York State through its STEM program. That leaves Social Studies. As a discipline, Social Studies is at least as important as the other core subjects. Why then is it being marginalized to the dangerous extent that it is today?

Those of you who teach ELA, Math, and Science recognize that it is understood that you did not ask for this highest priority status and the spotlight that has been cast upon your academic subjects. Some of you are probably wishing right now that you taught Social Studies. Frankly, you shouldn't. Social Studies teachers have the least clear guidance on what the Common Core will actually mean for them and their students. Granted, NYSED has not

been particularly stellar in terms of clarity to date. However, the much-touted website EngageNY contains clear examples for your curricular fields. For Social Studies it does not. In fact, the only Social Studies included are exemplars for an ELA classroom.

Arne Duncan tried to put history teachers' minds at ease by issuing an article entitled The Social Studies are Essential to a Well-Rounded Education assuring them of the continued importance of Social Studies education. When you read the article, he puts the entire burden on Social Studies teachers to fight in their states to re-establish the subject as a vital one. He goes on to say "Principals, particularly those at elementary schools, tell me that though they would like to allow ample time for social studies education, they feel constrained by pressures to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP). By sacrificing civics, economics, and history, these leaders have felt forced to neglect the long-term benefits of a well-rounded education, instead allowing less important,

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Social Studies: The Forgotten Discipline

short-term goals to take over.” Excuse me, Mr. Duncan, but aren’t you the person putting these pressures on the administrators to sacrifice in areas that are not tested? There are clearly double-talk and patronizing placations abounding at the federal level.

Finding no guidance from the US Department of Education, it is natural for one to turn to their state leaders. Did you know that there is currently a Social Studies Curriculum Revision Committee at NYSED discussing the role of Social Studies and Curriculum changes? It was a difficult piece of information to obtain, but I managed to find out the name of the head of the committee, a Dr. Lawrence Paska. I sent him the e-mail which follows:

Hello Dr. Paska,

I am writing to inquire about the status of the Social Studies Curriculum Revisions. I have several questions and was hoping you could provide some information:

- 1. Is there a timeline associated with the project?*
- 2. The focus on ELA and math at the expense of Social Studies, Science, and other disciplines is distressing and hurtful to the students of New York State. How does the committee view this perspective?*
- 3. As it stands, the Common Core Standards relegate Social Studies, Science, and the "technical subjects" to an add-on of about 6 pages to the ELA standards. Will they be revised to reflect the importance of Social Studies and other important social studies skills not addressed by these standards?*

Any light you can shed would be greatly appreciated.

I thanked him and added my name, etc. I received a response which directed me to his underlings. After several weeks of waiting, I re-sent the original e-mail to the two individuals he

had pawned me off on and requested a response. The following is the text to that response:

Dear Ms. Riley, (the spelling error is his)

The department has always felt Social Studies has an important place in New York Schools.

Commissioner's Regulations 100.3, 100.4, and 100.5 require social studies in schools. The exact text may be found at:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/>

Thank you for your concern.

Sincerely, Mr. Casey Jakubowski

Needless to say, I wrote him back. I asked that he actually answer my questions as I was already well aware of what the regs say about Social Studies. I am still awaiting that response.

The implication here is clear as day (at least to me): until Social Studies teachers at large band together and form a united, intelligent, and cogent front, we will be ignored. Our kids and our democracy will suffer the consequences. In fact, America is already suffering for the marginalization of Social Studies. Few students are graduating as productive informed citizens. Unfortunately, Arne Duncan is right: it has to come from us. The educational leadership of NYSED is about as useful as a screen door on a submarine. Please consider joining the New York State Council for the Social Studies if you aren’t already a member and begin writing letters and articles, anything to do what we do best: EDUCATE!

—Meghan Riley, HS, Soc St

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

Another year! I know it is a sign of age, but the years seem to fly by at greater speed each year; of course this should not surprise me, since I shave each morning looking in the mirror. Who is that old guy in there? I am thankful for so many things: health, family, the ability to still teach a few courses each year in Mt. St. Mary's LIFE program, to run some book discussion at the Walden Library, to chase around the newest grandchild, Declan (youngest of our eight grandchildren). Life is good, life in retirement is especially good. I am pleased to welcome into the ranks of retirees the VC Retiree group of 2012 who were celebrated in the last issues of ECHOES. May their retired lives be healthy and happy and, most of all productive and exciting. Ad multos annos.

Reminder:

—A reminder to all retirees: Present plans call for the annual retiree luncheon to be held on Wednesday, September 5th. Information will be forthcoming in July. A group of retirees has agreed to take over the responsibility of arranging the retiree luncheon. These folks are truly appreciated: Donna Barletta, Arline Friedman, Marc and Toni Sperry, Penny Centers, and Pat Iorlano. A meeting of the group will take place in July.

Nobody Asked Me, But...

—It has been forever that we have all known that funding for education has been a mess. Certainly this governor is not the solution.
 —New York kids are overtested.
 —The new teacher evaluation process is a mess.
 —Socrates still had a better answer towards teaching and learning than centuries of pundits and politicians.
 —I still feel that the VC family is working towards placing kids center.

Amen

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

—Mac, (AKA Kevin McFadden,
 Retiree Representative)



Getting Ready for a New Year!

This school year has simultaneously flown by and been the longest one in many years. This is a strange paradox and an uneasy feeling to have. The alphabet soup and constant drum-beat of impending doom combined with change on an unprecedented (and poorly planned, horribly confused, and almost certain to be abysmally implemented) scale has made our work this year and for the foreseeable future much more difficult. We could complain and rage bitterly against the Albany machine, but really, where would it get us?

The summer will provide a much-needed respite (playing it hard and fast with this word!) during which to work to understand all that the state is throwing at us next year so that we can be the best teachers possible for our kids...because that is what we do. Albany be damned. We will meet any challenge you feel compelled to send our way. And we will do it together. Have a great summer!

—Meghan Riley, HS, Soc St, Editor

Elections Matter



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election2012](http://www.aft.org/election2012)**



Don't let your rights
go up in smoke.



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