

VC ECHOES

Volume 17, Issue 5

Valley Central Teachers' Association

March 2015

CUOMO ON THE THRONE



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

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*The VC Echoes is the official publication
of the Valley Central Teachers' Associa-
tion—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.*

About the Cover

Governor Andrew Cuomo's Iron Heart Throne was forged utilizing the cold greedy iron hearts of hedge fund CEOs and political campaign contribu-
tors from the Kingdom of Wall Street. The cold Iron Heart Throne is
warmed daily with the shattered hopes and dreams of peasant children
throughout the state who have lost AP courses, art, music, library, kindergarten and
various electives. Governor Andrew Cuomo seems to take a great deal of pride in
modeling the entitlement, elitism and disdain for lesser subjects depicted by King
Joffery Baratheon in the Game of Thrones. To Cuomo, the end goal always seems to
justify the means. Children, teachers and public education BEWARE! Public educa-
tion—the last best hope for us serfs without rich, entitled and connected parents—is
being gutted and skewered by a wannabe King who took five (5) attempts to pass his
own standardized test (i.e. NYS Bar Exam). It is interesting to note that many public
school graduates passed their NYS Bar Exam on their first attempt.

Andrew Cuomo's Phantom Triple

According to Governor Andrew Cuomo, standardized tests are the be-all and end-all criteria of educational success for both students and their teachers. So...just how well would Cuomo and his teachers fair if evaluated on this limited criteria? Poorly, it would seem. Andrew Cuomo's academic experience was so poor that it took five (5) attempts for him to finally pass the Bar exam. Notice, I use the words "academic experience" loosely as I question the rigor of Cuomo's study habits. Is it possible for four (4) failed attempts at the Bar exam to be Andrew Cuomo's fault? Certainly not! Did Fordham University and Albany Law School fail this entitled rich kid? This seems the more likely answer based on Cuomo's recent political scapegoating of teachers and educational institutions. Should these inadequate failing schools be denied funding for their failure to adequately educate Andrew Cuomo? Will Cuomo's professors be deemed ineffective and lose their jobs? Oh...I forgot...there were, of course, many students who graduated from Albany Law School that did pass the bar exam by their fourth attempt...some by their third attempt...some by their second attempt and yes...many even passed on their first attempt.

So just how could a miserable academ-

ic failure such as Andrew Cuomo be so successful finding employment as an attorney or be winning elections for political office? The answer is, unfortunately, very simple: rich kids tend to do better economically and/or professionally than poor kids regardless of effort or levels of personal responsibility. With regard to Cuomo, this likely implies a lack of effort and work ethic on his own part, not on SUNY Albany's part. Research demonstrates that, despite the prevalent myth of social/economic mobility, the poor tend to remain poor and the wealthy tend to remain in the upper class regardless of merit, principles or work ethic. Translation—the wealthy have a distinct advantage.

The children of average or poor income parents have to work harder to overcome barriers to economic and social mobility. The rich, regardless of effort, talent or true success, will have the advantage of rich and powerful family and friends to bail them out, often giving them a false sense of their own talents. Governor Andrew Cuomo's life story is representative of a famous quote attributed to Barry Switzer: "Some people are born on third base and go through life thinking they hit a triple." Cuomo's delusional belief in his own phantom triple remains unshakable even when contradicted by overwhelming evidence. —*Tim Brown, HS Health, President*



DID YOU KNOW?

"Make the lie big, make it simple, keep saying it, and eventually they will believe it."

Andrew Cuomo tells everyone he can that NYS Public Schools are failing. The Answer: Charter Schools. Hmm....Did you know that \$1.6 million in contributions to his campaign chest was from Charter Schools? And that

Charter Schools look to turn a profit on the backs of the children they serve? Is that *really* what is best for your child's education?

Wonder where the quote is from? It was said by Adolf Hitler.

Cuomo's been practicing it every time he talks about public schools.

King Joffrey Baratheon or Governor Andrew Cuomo?

Simplified NYS Standardized Multiple-Choice Test: Answers have been limited to options (a) and (b) to accommodate our current governor's obvious difficulty with standardized tests. Perhaps Governor Cuomo will do better on his first, second, third or fourth attempt at this test than he did on the NYS Bar Exam. However, in fairness to Governor Cuomo, it is possible he misunderstood the term "Bar" and studied for a different "Bar" exam. Please indicate which famous spoiled rich kid is responsible for each of the following quotes by circling the letter (A) or (B).

1. I am the king [governor]! I will punish you [even if I must hurt kids to do it]!
 - A. Fictitious King Joffrey Baratheon
 - B. Wannabe King Andrew Cuomo
2. If I tell the Hound [Commissioner] to cut you in half, he'll do it without a second thought. [Of course, with only a few years of pseudo teaching experience, former Commissioner King may have never really had a second thought...]
 - A. Fictitious King Joffrey Baratheon
 - B. Wannabe King Andrew Cuomo
3. YOU'RE TALKING TO A KING [GOVERNOR]!
 - A. Fictitious King Joffrey Baratheon
 - B. Wannabe King Andrew Cuomo
4. What are you doing? I want these people [teachers] executed!
 - A. Fictitious King Joffrey Baratheon
 - B. Wannabe King Andrew Cuomo
5. My father won the real war. [My daddy was richer and more powerful than your daddy!]
 - A. Fictitious King Joffrey Baratheon
 - B. Wannabe King Andrew Cuomo
6. Everyone [including teachers and students] is mine to torment! You'd do well to remember that, you little monster [i.e. public schools].
 - A. Fictitious King Joffrey Baratheon
 - B. Wannabe King Andrew Cuomo
7. So long as I am your king [governor], treason [i.e. failure to kiss my ring] will be punished.
 - A. Fictitious King Joffrey Baratheon
 - B. Wannabe King Andrew Cuomo
8. I'll tell you what [charter schools]. I'm going to give you a present. After I raise my armies, and kill your traitor brother [i.e. public schools], I'll give you his head [i.e. public funding] as well.
 - A. Fictitious King Joffrey Baratheon
 - B. Wannabe King Andrew Cuomo
9. The Stark forces [i.e. forces for good that support children] are distracted. Now is the time to strike.
 - A. Fictitious King Joffrey Baratheon
 - B. Wannabe King Andrew Cuomo

If you selected the HBO Fictitious King (i.e. the one who has done the least damage to children), for each answer, you are correct. The real Wannabe King hurts children everyday by dashing the hopes and dreams of struggling students with his lack of support for public education. In the words of Tyrion Lannister: "We've had vicious kings and we've had idiot kings, but I don't know if we've ever been cursed with a vicious idiot for a king [until now]!"

—Tim Brown, HS Health, President

When You Fail Your Bar Exam 5 Times, It's Time to Raise the Bar!

I learned Governor Andrew Cuomo failed his bar exam four times. His war against NY State's teachers has finally been put into context for me. Whereas I once thought his words reeked of harmful stupidity, now I feel the boy that is still in the man. Because I feel his pain, I can understand his philosophy.

1. It is time to blame the teachers.

If Cuomo failed four times, it surely can't be his own fault. How could anyone as successful as the Governor accept the fact that he lacks merit? It can't be that he failed to study enough. It can't be that he lacks natural brilliance. It can't be that he relied too much upon his family name. It must be his teachers, doctors of jurisprudence, no less. Even if others from his class managed to pass, shame on his teachers!

2. Test prep is sacred.

If only Governor Cuomo had been lucky enough to have a teacher who cared enough to prep him to perfection. Then, he would not have had to suffer this embarrassment and set back four times in his young life. Incompetent teachers confused him with a broad range of concepts, many of which never appeared on the exam. All they needed to do was align him to a good review book. They should have called in Professor Pearson. Perhaps, you don't even need a living and breathing professor. Why not use online computer-generated, test-prep models?

3. At least 50% of teacher worth must be measured by student test scores.

If only tests had figured so heavily in his day in his teacher's sense of self, he might have passed--or at the very least taken quite a few teachers down with him, again and again and again and again.

4. This never would have happened with the

equivalent of a Success Academy.

If regular law schools cannot propel the likes of Cuomo to exam success, then let private competitors step into to focus on test prep and do the job right. Apparently, New York Law School has hired "commercial bar review courses" to increase the passing rates of its students. Why couldn't Cuomo's Albany Law School have done as much? Oh, the inhumanity of it all!

5. Close schools with failing students.

Nobody cared enough to close Albany Law School when Cuomo failed more than three times. Albany Law School should have been dismantled brick by brick. Out of the rubble, a "turn-around expert" could have risen to work a miracle. No one need have ever failed another bar exam. Let Cuomo not have suffered in vain.

6. Award merit pay to test-prep maven.

Anyone who could have helped the likes of Cuomo pass his bar exam on the first try, or a student his high-stakes Core exam, surely deserves an extra big bonus to the tune of a least \$20,000.

7. Student passing rates on killer Common-Core tests must correspond perfectly to teacher retention rates.

For every student who fails, a teacher must be held accountable. If 38% fail new Common-Core tests meant to wear down the hardiest of test takers, then don't even speak to me about 98% of NY's teachers being effective. Are you daft? Do your math? Are you so poor at it that you don't see that sixty-two percent of teachers must be removed? I bet you're also one of those who failed that "twelfth-grade literacy" entrance "bar exam," referenced by Cuomo!

Do you now sense the bittersweet use of the term "bar exam" in Cuomo's speech? Who would not feel for Cuomo, has no heart. There is still a young man inside him who relives the bitterness of his four-time battle with the bar exam--when no teacher stepped (*continued on pg 6*)

When You Fail Your Bar Exam 5 Times, It's Time to Raise the Bar!

the darkness.

If you have a strong constitution, reread his State of the State, and where you see the words "young people" or "child," substitute the name of "The Young Andrew Cuomo" and you, too, will feel the pain of the young man that still lives on and places him in the peculiar position of being able to feel the plight of young people more strongly than most.

See if you don't agree with me. In the underlined portions of his speech below, I've changed Cuomo's original words:


"It was about helping The Young Andrew Cuomo. It was not about creating an educational

industry that then supports ancillary organizations. Let's remember The Young Andrew Cuomo in this process and then we'll wind up doing the right thing."

Just remember though, if you become teary eyed, at least Cuomo never had to suffer on account of being poor or a minority like so many of our students!

—Posted by Arwen E. on nyceducator.com,
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Andrew Cuomo has decreed that Meteorologists must be evaluated. NYS is 38th out of 50 in accuracy of winter storm predictions. Cuomo finds this unacceptable. Cuomo blames the Meteorologists Union, stating that NYSUM (NYS United Meteorologists) is more interested in protecting its salaries and could care less about the snowflakes in the skies. So Cuomo is promoting a new evaluation plan that would depend on outside evaluators (50%) and the actual performance of all precipitation (50%). After all, meteorologists should be able to control where and how snowflakes fall in Cuomo's opinion. (And does anyone else's opinion really matter—NO, according to Cuomo). Cuomo is refusing to release any aid to all municipalities so that they are unable to buy salt or afford to plow any roads to ensure that this decree becomes law. —Patti Behr, MS, Art, Vice Pres.



The Weathermen Got it Wrong

I Blame the Teachers!

FEMA Funds Needed in Wake of Hurricane Andrew!

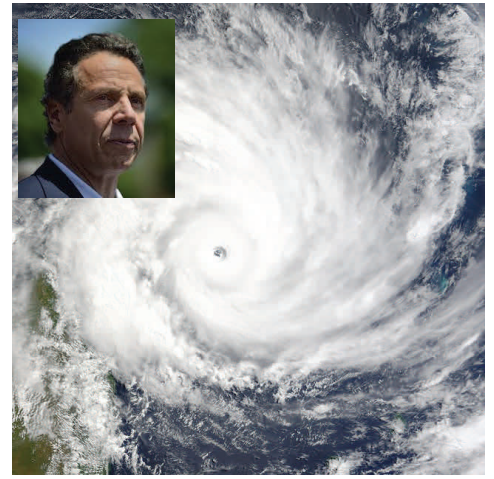
Hurricane Andrew (AKA Governor Cuomo) made landfall in New York in 2011. This brutal, unrelenting storm has caused tremendous damage to our educational infrastructure and the children of our state. In fact, the destruction continues to decimate our communities with no end in sight and no help on the horizon.

Unfortunately in this circumstance, the only one who can declare a state of emergency is the cyclone himself. Hurricane Andrew's eye is still far from its landfall. The calm, peaceful center is nowhere to be seen. Instead, the storm threatens to ravage every county, every town, and every village by withholding valuable information from the school districts that must formulate a budget with no guidance from the powers that be. Unlike conventional tempests, this super squall takes hostages. Young, innocent, and helpless captives who need to be educated, regardless of political maneuvers and squabbles, are the victims in this. The teachers who try to protect them are vilified and attacked by those who would love to see them powerless—cast aside by the gale force winds as useless debris.

Let us look at only one case study: a mid-Hudson school district called Valley Central. Since 2011, this district has lost over 100 positions, made millions of dollars of cuts to valuable programs for its children such as Kindergarten, library, art, music, advanced placement courses, athletics, extracurricular activities, enrichment for gifted students, and even transportation. Parents don't even receive report cards or progress reports in the mail anymore, which makes it difficult for parents without Internet access to get their children's information. The monetary value placed on these cuts is around 28 million dollars.

To truly ascertain the cost of the damages, though, is considerably more involved than simple monetary calculations. Consider

the damage done to any student who attended half-day Kindergarten in this district last year. They have been short-



changed on a proper education and the effects of this will follow them for years to come. Parents and teachers estimate the cost of this to be priceless. No amount of money would be enough to right the wrong and make up for the damage to those children. Students who went through elementary schools in this district did not have art, music, or library education last year. Though some parents may have been able to afford providing this privately, not every family could do so. Students who did not have electives and sat in multiple study halls for the past few years and continue to do so have lost valuable access to courses that educate them, but also that improve their college applications. It is a cost to students and their futures that no amount of money can make right. Education cuts never heal.

Valley Central School District and every other district in New York State should apply to FEMA for emergency funding to stop the natural disaster that is Hurricane Andrew from continuing to inflict harm on our most vulnerable citizens: our children. New York State Public Education should be declared a disaster area and relief sent immediately to defend against the raging of our misguided governor. Damage has already reached a catastrophic level.

—Meghan Riley, HS, Soc Stud

The Decimation of Democracy

Democracy:

- A political system for choosing the government through free and **fair** elections.
- Protects the human rights of **all** citizens.
- A rule of law, in which the laws and procedures apply **equally** to **all** citizens.
- Contrasts with forms of government where power is held either by an individual (Monarchy) or a small number of individuals (Oligarchy).

Governor Cuomo has forgotten that the country he lives in is in fact a Democracy. The essence of every move he makes is in fact contradictory to Democracy. Let's take a look at some of Cuomo's anti-democratic policies.

NYS Tax Cap:

Pre-Cuomo Era: A school board locally elected by the community it served set a tax levy. The board determined what it needed to meet the needs of its students. This levy was voted on and if a majority of the people chose to vote YES the tax levy would be set. As most of us who have been voting for a couple of decades know sometimes the budget would pass and other times it would be voted down by a **majority** of the people.

Cuomo Era: The school board still sets the levy and if it is a 2% increase or less it would take a vote of a **majority** of the people to pass. However, if the board determines that a levy higher than 2% is needed to meet the needs of the students it will now require a YES vote by 60%+1 of the voters.

Pre-Cuomo Era: every vote is valued **equally**.

Cuomo Era: the YES vote carries less value than the NO vote. How can we value one person's vote less than another?



Cuomo Education Reform Dictate:

Cuomo has come up with an ill conceived Education Reform Policy that he has put out as a decree. He has decreed that he will raise state aid to school districts. However the legislature **must** adopt his education reform as he has commanded or no increases. Democracy?

Guilty Until Proven Innocent:

Under Cuomo's Education Reform, if a teacher is accused of child abuse s/he is suspended without pay. While no one wants a teacher who abuses children in the classroom, most if not all Districts will place an accused teacher on administrative duty pending the outcome of a thorough internal and law enforcement investigation. In this country we are innocent until proven guilty, **except** as Cuomo believes if you happen to be a teacher. Laws are supposed to be applied equally without **exception** to all citizens.

Property Tax Rebates:

Governor Cuomo has allowed property tax rebates for New York's 1%. If you lived at 157 West 57th Street in Manhattan you received a 95% property tax rebate. (continued on pg 9)

The Decimation of Democracy (from page 8)

Who lives there? New York's elite who make million dollar campaign contributions to his political campaign. Some of these NY elite also happen to own charter schools. Where are your property tax rebates? Did you pay **all** of your property taxes? Yes you did. Would it help you significantly if you only had to pay 5% of your property taxes? If your property taxes are \$8,000 if Cuomo's applied the rules **EQUALLY** you would only be required to pay \$400.

Governor Cuomo seems to have forgotten that the United States of America is in fact a Democracy. Cuomo has not forgotten. He simply doesn't care. Cuomo has decided that the rules, our constitution, simply do not allow him to rule as he desires. Governor Cuomo is a Tyrant

(an absolute ruler unrestrained by law or **constitution**). He does not protect the human rights of **all** citizens. He does not apply the laws **equally** to **all** citizens. History has shown that stopping a Tyrant requires the people to remove him. It is time for us to rise up and make our voices heard by our legislators. We need to let them know that we will stand beside them in the fight to bring Democracy back to New York. They need to know that we will be relentless in our fight to remove the Tyrant currently known as Governor Cuomo. Let your voices be heard by Tyrant Cuomo, our Legislators, and by everyone. Be the change that ends the Decimation of Democracy.

—Richard Steger, EC, Phys Ed, Vice President

Dear Editors: Response to Teacher Salary Article in THR

I find it deeply troubling that when the NY Times said, "25 hedge fund managers made more than twice as much as **all the Kindergarten teachers in America combined**," I saw no story about this in THR. Teachers making 78k a year – **this** you treated as front-page news. But your story fails to report that the median earnings of men with a bachelor's degree or more all over the US is 76k. Meaning Hudson Valley teachers make what most Americans with higher education make. Is this even news? What's really news is that this median income is down from 82k in 2000, something your story also failed to mention.

Today, 80% of all US wealth goes to 1% of the population. That's like 100 people sharing 100 pizzas, but 1 person eats 80 pies, leaving 99 people to split the remaining 20. It is **only** newsworthy that 1 person gets to eat 80 pies - not that highly-educated teachers get slightly larger crumbs than some of the others who struggle to live off the morsels that remain!

Portraying teachers as over-paid and ineffective is a ploy by some rich people to undermine public education and turn it into a profit vehicle for themselves. Now Governor Cuomo schemes and plots with Wall Street to do just that. But when profit dictates education policy – our children will suffer! No matter what teachers are paid. Now **that's** a front-page story! Sadly, it's one your readers have yet to see.



Sincerely,
John Fisher

EC Students Learn the Importance of Giving

The students at East Coldenham Elementary School have integrated writing with community service. While learning letter writing skills and improving conventions of writing, the students at E.C. continue to give to others. In December, the Kindergarteners wrote holiday cards and letters to the residents of Elant nursing home. They were delivered by the Kindergarteners with hundreds of cookies and a holiday singing performance.

Second grade students in Mrs. Gesso's class and Kindergarten students in my class joined "Letter Project", a non-profit organization that sends letters to terminally ill children. They have been writing to Zack in California. He was diagnosed with Alveolar Rhabdomyosarcoma (ARMS), a rare cancer. While improving their writing, they are sending joy and support to this terminally ill little boy.

In February, the entire student body participated in sending Valentine's Day letters and cards and hundreds of home baked cookies to the veterans at the Castle Point Campus. Mrs. Demar was the project coordinator for this program. Many parents, staff and community members helped in organizing and delivering the letters and cookies. East Coldenham Elementary School teachers and students have had dress down days and spirit days to collect money and give to many non-profit organizations that do research, give support and provide medical treatment to those in need, including www.feedingtubeawareness, American Heart Association, Diabetes Association and raredisease.org. Mrs. Guidry facilitated a project in which students and staff purchased hearts which were displayed in our lobby, the money raised was donated to the Children's Cancer Society. Our next big campaign, is "Pasta for Pennies." The money collected from this fundraiser goes to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.



EC students have learned valuable life lessons about recognizing those who are facing chronic illnesses. They've experienced how important it is and how good it feels to give to others.

—Mrs. Denise Bromm, EC, Teacher, Bldg. Rep.



Middle School Spirit Club: "Pasta for Pennies"

The Middle School Spirit Club will be kicking off it's annual "Pasta for Pennies" campaign this week. For the past 17 years we have collected money for the Leukemia Lymphoma Society which helps to find a cure for people with blood cancers. Last year the Spirit Club raised \$4,086.00 for this worthy cause. This year the goal is \$6,500.00 to help the children and their families affected by Leukemia and Lymphoma. The VCMS Spirit Club through the years has raised a total of \$55,000 with the help and support of the VC Community. Please watch for posters and announcements and events being planned to help with this worthy cause. This year the Spirit Club has also added an online donation site so that students can set up a page and collect online. Please send your donations in to your child's first period class. The class that raises the most money will have lunch brought to them from the Olive Garden.

Runner up classrooms will get either breakfast or pizza from VC Spirit. So check the couch cushions, car floor or wherever else spare change may be found and send it in by March 20!

—Mrs. Rypkema, Ms. DeGraw, and Mrs. Heil



"EC Students Can Make A Difference"

The students at E.C. had a food drive in January. They collected hundreds of cans and boxes of food which were donated to the Montgomery Food Pantry. The student council counted, sorted and packed up the food under Mrs. Guidry's direction. The students enjoyed helping out their neighbors as this food pantry feeds families in V.C.S.D.

—Denise Bromm, EC, Bdg. Rep.



Collaboration: The Key to Real-World Success!

On January 14, 2015, the Record On-Line posted an article by James Walsh, where local residents learned about a collaboration between the “real-world” and our district’s very own technology teacher, Nick Longo.

Last fall, Town of Wallkill Supervisor Dan Depew wanted to start an initiative to link together manufacturing companies and local schools in an effort to better prepare students for industrial jobs close to home. Student tours were held at President Container, which manufactures corrugated shipping containers. It was at one of these tours that Nick Longo met Richard Goldberg, Vice-President of Operations for President Container.

Since then, Goldberg and Longo have collaborated to offer students an opportunity to put their skills to use! Mr. Goldberg has begun visiting and mentoring students in an introduction to manufacturing class at Valley Central High School each Wednesday. His visits are intended to introduce students to career opportunities in manufacturing through the class and plant tours. While in their class, students listen and learn about manufacturing, but it is with

Nick that they have the opportunity to put theory into practice! Students come to the Middle school early in the morning, and eagerly report to the tech room to apply the research they have conducted, and utilize the math that the Common Core has promised they would use some day! When asked, Nick stated that, *“The challenge is getting them to apply the math. They know the math, but when you ask them to apply it to a miter joint to make an angle, they don’t realize they can do it.”*

Students have completed tasks such as manufacturing cardboard sleds that were raced in February. In order to do so, the students have had to research corrugated fiber board to see how it could be water-proofed as well as ways to make it stronger. Students have also cut and measured cardboard to match designs that would be used as prototypes.

Nick’s curiosity for learning, proficiency in his craft, and his willingness to be part of a team has led to sparking an interest in the minds and hands of many Valley Central High School students....and opened a window of future possibilities for them.

—Dana DeMasi, MS



To Members of the Valley Central School Community:

I want to thank everyone for your kind condolences and sympathy over the death of my mother. At a time like this, I have really appreciated my large family. The Valley Central Family, too, has been a blessing. Your many kind words, cards, donations and Holy Masses said in Mom’s honor have wrapped me in your kindness and care. My family and I are grateful for your support at this time. Thank you.

Richard Hooley

Nurse's Notes

Opioid use and abuse has become a growing concern for the Valley Central community. However, we are not alone; drug overdose deaths have been rising steadily over the past two decades and have become the leading cause of injury death in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control. The most common drugs involved in overdose leading to death are pharmaceuticals. These are either prescribed or over the counter drugs as opposed to illicit drugs. The drugs causing the most deaths are opioid analgesics or pain killers. Heroin is an example of an illicit opioid. Heroin has been identified as the drug responsible for causing the overdose deaths of several former Valley Central students in the past few years.

At a recent faculty meeting, members of the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Council of Orange County were present to discuss the formation of a school-based coalition concerning drug use and abuse. Jim Hession and Cathie Heil are the people to contact for more information on the coalition. During this meeting the faculty identified a need for more information on the signs and symptoms of impairment. I believe the administration is arranging for a presentation on this subject. In the mean time I thought it would be a good idea to talk about what impairment might look like in the classroom and review how we address it.

As I've mentioned in the past, teachers are our first line of defense. Teachers spend more time with their students than any of the other staff in the building. They recognize changes in attitude, behavior and physical well-being faster because they see these students every day. So, what does impairment look like? The signs and symptoms will vary depending on the causative substance. The most common drugs we see in school are alcohol, cannabis, narcotic analgesics, depressants and hallucinogens or a combination thereof. Depressants like alcohol cause everything to



slow down or be "depressed". You might smell alcohol. In the case of cannabis you may notice the pungent odor of the smoke, the eyes will be watery and the whites of the eyes will be red, with enlarged pupils. You may notice eyelid and body tremors. Cognitively, relaxed inhibitions and an impaired perception of time and place may be present. Narcotic analgesics may cause students to be drowsy and or nod off, their pupils will be constricted. You may notice them scratching... this is caused by a histamine reaction that makes the skin itchy, and again you may hear a change in the voice so that it is low, slow and raspy. These drugs depress respiration and an overdose can lead to hypoxic events or times when there is a definite lack of oxygen. The hallucinogens can cause bizarre behaviors. The student may seem to be seeing something that simply isn't there or hearing things that you don't. They will appear distracted and will have difficulty staying focused. Again, depending on the dose, body tremors, nausea, excessive perspiration and goose bumps may be present.

We have developed a protocol for addressing suspected chemical impairment occurring in school and at school-sponsored events. It is important for the teacher to report his or her suspicions to an administrator at once. Waiting to do so in an overdose (continued on page 13)

Nurse's Notes (continued from page 12)

situation could mean the difference between life and death. The administrator will either escort the student or have a hall monitor escort the student to the health office for a DITEP assessment. To ensure staff safety the student is searched prior to the assessment for any weapons, drugs or drug paraphernalia. DITEP (which is Drug Identification Training for Educational Professionals) is a 12-step, noninvasive assessment that allows the examiner to determine if the impairment is chemically induced and which of the seven categories of drugs is causing the impairment. DITEP was adapted from the Drug Recognition Expert Training used by law enforcement. It was developed at Johns Hopkins

Medical Center and is used worldwide by police officers in driving under the influence investigations. It has met the Frye standard and has been accepted as evidence in courts of law. Together with another school nurse from Nyack NY, Donna Cashin, I was fortunate enough to help the New York State Police in the adaptation process back in 1997-98. Since that time the Valley Central School District has supported the program with yearly updates and training for new nurses and administrators. The assessment involves visual examination of the skin, oral cavity, and nasal cavity. Vital signs, including body temperature, heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure, are recorded. Eye examinations in different levels of light are conducted and divided attention tests are administered. The results are used to determine chemical impairment and the category of drug responsible.

Some drugs will cause agitation and even volatile or violent behavior. At Valley Central we have developed a protocol that ensures the safety of the examiner and the student by completing the search, keeping an administrator in the room and having a back-up plan that involves law enforcement. The district has been very pro-active in addressing drug use. Once identified, medically cleared and disciplinary action implemented, appropriate referrals are made for treatment and rehabilitation. On-going support is offered through our Student Assistance Program and in some cases students are referred to Restart, which is a school-based rehabilitation program.

I was delighted to hear the faculty asking for more information on this subject. I'm

sure the presentation being planned will be much more complete than this short overview of signs and symptoms, and I hope that explaining the process, protocol and relationships with law enforcement and Restart provides a better understanding of how we continue to keep students center and work toward improving their educational and overall success.

—Nancy Brother,
HS, Nurse, Bldg.
Rep.

“Depending on how high the dose, you may observe low, slow, raspy speech, droopy eye lids, a lack of coordination and the inability to stay awake.”



Life Lessons in Life Skills



The Valley Central High School Life Skills class raised money this year as they have done in the past. This money was raised from items that The Life Skill students make and sell at their craft fair as well as on teacher conference days. Each year the Life Skills class picks which organization they would like to donate to. This year the students chose the Montgomery Food Pantry. Pictured above are Life Skill students and teacher Carole Fitts providing Peter Sullivan, Montgomery Food Pantry Treasurer, with a \$250.00 donation that will help to provide food for people in our community. Thank you to the following teachers and paraprofessionals for creating opportunities for life lessons within the Life Skills curriculum: Teachers Carole Fitts, Lisa Aguilera-Ingelson and Darci Fletcher; Paraprofessionals Kathleen Gasperetti, Etta Maxwell, Ellen Sanchez, William Dial, Sibyl Librandi, Cerissa Miedema, Linda Palmieri, Lori Sibley, Susan Sewart and Allison Gillette.

Montgomery Food Pantry Payroll Deduction:

Please join the VCTA's payroll deduction initiative for the Montgomery Food Pantry. Payroll deduction forms can be found on the vcta.net website. If you choose to participate, deductions for the Food Pantry will be taken two times per month from October to June (i.e. 18 deductions). For example \$1 per pay will equal \$18 per year (i.e. $\$1 \times 18 \text{ pays} = \18 per year), \$5 per pay will equal \$90 per year (i.e. $\$5 \times 18 \text{ pays} = \90 per year) and \$10 per pay will equal \$180 per year (i.e. $\$10 \times 18 \text{ pays} = \180 per year). All deductions will be deposited into a designated account and then forwarded to the Food Pantry. By agreeing to payroll deduction you can ensure that the Montgomery Food Pantry receives your funding monthly, making their mission of providing food to Valley Central families and children more efficient.

Rally Against Cuomo NFA

