

NORTA NEWS

Newsletter of North Rockland Teachers' Association

January / February 2006

Another Year Passes and Challenges Lie Ahead

Dear NRTA Members,

It is always hard to believe another year has passed and we are half way through our teaching year. We scramble to get our holiday obligations in line, cards sent, gifts purchased, dinners planned, cookies made, trips to Synagogue, Mosque or Church attended, visits to friends and family organized. Before we walk out of our classrooms for holiday break, we review where we are in the curriculum, make sure our lessons are prepared for when we get back in January, and have our grades completed for progress reports and report cards. We balance all this and manage to keep our patience and our sense of humor! Congratulations!

This is my second year as your union president. I felt inexperienced and overwhelmed in my first year. I had the benefit of guidance by Dennis Tracy and the existing officers. The NYSUT community offered workshops, phone contacts, legal literature and guidance, which I devoured. This year I feel immensely stronger and adequately resourceful to support the needs of the NRTA members. I have never felt more satisfaction than I do at this point in my professional life. I enjoy the political and community piece of being a union president. What I take the greatest pleasure in is working out solutions that are beneficial to our teachers and teaching assistants. I want to be the best advocate I can be for all members of NRTA.

I alone would never be effective. It is our union reps in every building and the NRTA officers that deserve the credit for everyday successes. We work as a team to cover every facet of our teachers' needs. We work constantly at communi-



NRTA Building Reps: (from l to r) Debbie Brennan, Evan Tobias, Reyna Texler, Virginia Stellato, Judi Chiodo-Kennedy, MaryEllen Holden. NRTA President: (far right) Robin Brennan.

cation and seeing ideas come to fruition. I feel confident saying we are all focused on a bright future for NRTA and work together daily to that end. North Rockland is our home.

We have a challenging year ahead. The new requirements kick in for English Language Arts and math tests in grades 3-8. This will be a responsibility for teachers and students alike. New York is tripling the size of its testing program. What I would say to all our teachers and teaching assistants is to do what you have always done. You are dedicated

teachers who will find ways to keep your students engaged and excited about learning even under these questionable mandates. Please don't let the pressure of testing and accountability to NCLB lead to an abandonment of creativity and "the art of teaching." This would be yet another assault on our profession and our students. We all realize this is not easy. We all take our responsibility to educate the children in our classes very seriously. I have unwavering trust in all the teaching staff at North Rockland to rise

(Continued on page 2)

New Teacher Certification Regulations: New hoops, hurdles, rules and terminology

Gone are the terms "provisional" and "permanent" for people applying for new certificates; in are the terms "initial," "transitional" and "professional" certification. Local leaders need to be keenly aware of these changes for they will have profound impact on our newer members for years to come.

Who is impacted?

- All candidates applying for NYS teachers' certificates on or after February 2, 2004.

- Teachers holding valid Provisional Certificates may still seek Permanent Certification for those provisional certificate titles under the "old" regulations.

- Teachers holding Permanent Certification are not affected unless they apply for additional certification(s).

What **will** the new certificates be called and for how long are they valid?

- Initial**; Valid for five years from effective date.

- Transitional**; Valid for three years from effective date.

- Professional**; Continuously valid provided that the professional development requirements are met.

To whom does each certificate apply?

- Initial**

Generally, candidates who are completing baccalaureate or higher degree programs and who have also completed required coursework and student teaching; and who have passed New York State certification tests.

- Transitional**

Alternative certification candidates with a commitment of employment from a school district.

- Professional**

Candidates holding initial or transitional certificates and meeting the additional education and experience requirements of the professional certificate.

What are the certificate requirements?

Initial

- Baccalaureate degree; Coursework in liberal arts and sciences, certification area and pedagogy (including student teaching); and

- LAST (Liberal Arts and Sciences Test);

- ATS-W (Assessment of Teaching Skills Test);

- CST (Content Specialty Test) - *Except for certification in speech & language disabilities.*

Professional

- Master's degree;
- 3 years of teaching experience including one year mentored teaching experience; and

- No examinations (CST required for speech & language disabilities.)

How will certificate titles be different than under the current regulations?

Titles will be aligned with both school subjects and school grade levels in **narrower** ranges than the "old" regulation.

See NYSUT Information Bulletin No. 200510, Mar. 05, **Teacher Certification in NY State.**

Challenges

(Continued from page 1)

above the average expectation, as always.

The second challenge is the unrelenting town, state and federal tax hikes in our community. The only tax anyone can vote on to voice frustration is the school budget. We understand the frightening situation people on fixed incomes, minimal salaries or one income families face in North Rockland. Many are our own retirees, new teachers, teaching assistants and one income teacher households who live in North Rockland themselves face this crisis. We have an obligation to support our community through this time and also make them aware of what we have to lose if this budget goes down in May.

There may be jobs lost, a hiring freeze, class size increases, advanced placement classes dissolved, building needs not met and extracurricular programs ended. The eventuality of failed school budgets leads to property value decreases due to under funded schools. A perfect example is a difference in the sale price of a home in Pomona. There can be a as much as a \$70,000 to \$100,000 increase in price when the home is zoned in North Rockland Central School District verses the neighboring school district. Gaining the support of the community for our schools budget would impact on everyone positively.

Whether we work as the school nurse, custodian, school secretary, cafe staff, or educators in our schools - whether we are newly hired or retired - we all bring different contributions to our school district. Each of us today understands that our strength is not in focusing on our diverse professions, but in our common desire to see North Rockland prosper. In essence, our strength is our solidarity. My hope is we will begin yet another year, working together with the joy of teaching as our motivation, and the health of our community and our students ever present in our thoughts and actions.

A quote by Edith Hamilton always reminds me why teaching is my calling. I hope it resonates with you as well. Happy New Year!

It has always seemed strange to me that in our endless discussions about education so little stress is laid on the pleasure of becoming an educated person, the enormous interest it adds to life. To be able to be caught up into the world of thought — that is to be educated.

Sincerely,
Robin Brennan

Mark Your Calendar . . .

January 10th: New Teacher Workshop for first year teachers on "Positive Classroom Discipline and the Code of Conduct" presented by Kevin Metcalf

January 26th and February 23rd:

Teacher Certification Video Conferences

Session A: Info on Permanent Certification 4:30-5:30

Session B: Info on Initial and Professional Certification 5:45-6:45
Call Courtney at NYSUT Elmsford Regional Office (914) 592-4411

February 1st: Financial Building Blocks Workshop
Free for NRTA members
Pearl River High School
4:15-7:00
(deli buffet will be served)

March 3rd: Harlem Rockets
7:00 NRHS Annex Gym

March 31st: The Music Faculty Recital
7:00 Fieldstone Secondary School Auditorium

NRTA Executive Board Meetings:
February 7th; March 7th
4:00 NRTA Office

SED Sets up Web Page for 3-8 Testing

In an alert to local leaders, NYSUT Vice president Maria Neira is urging members to use a State Education Department Web page to find updates and provide feedback on the states new English Language Arts exams this month.

The new grades 3-8 ELA tests, which will run from Jan. 9-20, are part of the state's effort to comply with the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Field testing is slated for Jan. 23-27.

Neira said the SED Web page will be a place where educators can get the latest information on the tests, such as corrections or administration changes. For example, in early January SED

posted a notice that the testing time for the grade 6 ELA session one exam would be extended.

The site, www.emsc.nysed.gov/3-8/latest/update06.htm, will be updated on a daily basis, as needed. In addition, two phone lines at SED, (518) 474-8220 or (518) 474-5902, will be used to answer questions from teachers and administrators regarding problems with the tests that require immediate feedback. Teachers may use the SED e-mail address emscassessinfo@mail.nysed.gov to correspond with SED directly.

The NYSUT Leader 1/6/06

Update on NYSUT-NEA/NY Unification and Governance

As progress continues toward unification with NEA/NY, members of the NYSUT Board of Directors have begun receiving electronic updates from NYSUT, focusing on the process and issues surrounding unification. The first issue to be addressed was governance.

Under the unification agreement, initially the boards of directors of both organizations will be combined. From September 2006 to April 2011, representation of former NEA/NY members on the unified board of directors will decrease from 60 representatives to approximately six, in proportion to the 36,000 NEA/NY members expected to join the unified organization.

During the transition period, the

former NEA/NY board members on the unified board will account for six votes. Also during the transition, current NYSUT election districts and voting procedures will remain unchanged.

Prior to the 2011 RA, the board will begin a redistricting process to create four additional ED's and two at-large seats. The actual number of additional director seats will be proportional to the number of NEA/NY members who become part of the unified organization. Voting distinctions between NYSUT members and former NEA/NY members will cease with the 2011 elections.

The NYSUT Leader 11/4/05

Know Your Contract

Article VII Section G Teacher Rights

Every teacher has the responsibility to conduct class in an orderly and effective manner. Therefore, every teacher shall have the right to temporarily remove from class and refer to the building principal or his/her representative any child who through serious overt action disrupts the classroom instruction to the detriment of other students.


Whenever a teacher finds it necessary to remove a disruptive student from a class, the teacher shall immediately notify the principal or his/her representative that the student has been disruptive and needs to be detained for a conference. That student may be returned to class at the principal's discretion.

The readmittance procedure for such children shall involve teacher participation in an effort to ensure that pupils are not returned before they are ready to participate in group education.

A teacher shall, at his/her next unassigned period or sooner, if possible, report the details of the disruption to the principal or his/her representative.

A conference involving the teacher shall be held then, or at a mutually agreed upon time, to discuss the course of action to be taken regarding the student.

Tired of speaking to computerized voices to contact a business?
Then go to
www.paulenglish.com/ivr/ to find tips to bypass phone systems to quickly find a human.



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THE 'UNION-MADE' LABEL IS NOT JUST A FABLE!



HUNT FOR IT!

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Clayton

A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes and With MarcoPolo Teachers' Dreams Have Come True

Once upon a time there was a teacher who was exhausted from writing lesson plans, and surfing the web to locate support materials. One day, while sorting through 100's of sites on Google, she fell asleep at her computer, and dreamed that she was traveling the world with MarcoPolo. Wherever they went, she collected ideas and activities for great lessons in every subject area and for every grade. She brought home thousands of the finest, most creative, engaging materials from all over the world. When her journey was done she had amassed over 37,000 resources and 2,300 lesson plans.

Her joy quickly turned to concern as she became overwhelmed by the enormity, depth, and breadth of her resources. "If only they were aligned with the New York State Standards and Performance Indicators", she sighed. Instantly, a team of experts from: the New York Teachers' Centers, New York Institute of Technology, New York State Education Department, and the MCI Foundation, appeared, and went to work matching them up. They fulfilled her wish

and went beyond her wildest expectations, by sorting them by grade levels and key words, for easy access. They put all this information

Rockland Teachers' Center Institute



online, for free, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Then the teacher woke up. "What a wonderful dream!" she thought. "If only it were true, then doing lesson plans would be a snap." She looked up at her computer monitor and gasped in amazement. She was at: www.marcopolo-education.org. All the resources she had dreamed about were right there. She discovered that her dream had come true.

This is not fairy tale. New York State has launched a huge initiative to introduce, and train teachers, to effectively use this powerful search engine, called MarcoPolo. By providing online access to quality, comprehensive educational content for grades K - 12, they hope to improve

student achievement, empower and support teachers, and integrate technology into the classroom.

The Rockland Teachers' Center Institute will soon be offering professional development workshops where attendees will explore MarcoPolo and the Content Partner Web sites and learn how to effectively integrate MarcoPolo Internet-based content into their classrooms. Sessions will be interactive and hands on, with the trainer simultaneously introducing MarcoPolo content and modeling effective teaching practices. Check our website to see when workshops will be coming available, at: www.rockteach.org, or call the Rockland Teachers' Center Institute, and ask for Betty McAleer, at (845) 942-0354.

Songbirds Needed

Calling all singers! Come and sing in the Faculty/Staff Chorus!

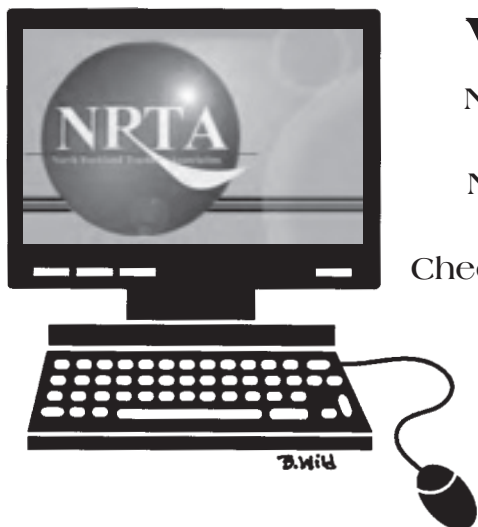
The Annual Music Faculty Recital will be held on Friday, March 31, 2006 at 7:00 PM at The Fieldstone Secondary School Auditorium.

This year, the Faculty/Staff Chorus, under the direction of Mrs. Melanie Lattimer, will be performing three pieces, one to open the show and two for the Finale. The Chorus rehearsals will be held on Friday, March 24 and Thursday, March 30, 2006 at 4:00 PM, Fieldstone Secondary School Auditorium. If you would like to join this year's Chorus, please contact Mary Ellen Holden at Farley Middle School. All proceeds from the show will be donated to the North Rockland Family Assistance Fund. This fund is used to assist students, residents and staff of the North Rockland School District who are facing medical or other devastating catastrophes. The Fund also supports an NRHS scholarship in memory of Olaf Theuerkauf.

Teaching by Design

Make a weekly check of your classroom to keep things in working order. Does your projector work? What about that slow-rolling computer mouse? And when you pull down that map does it roll back up? The few minutes you spend fixing things can result in days of academic harmony.

(From the book Feng Shui for the Classroom by Debra Keller)



www.nrta.net

New, easier to remember,
Web Address for the
North Rockland Teachers'
Association website.

Check out the links listed below.

- Home • Calendar
- Executive Council
- Links
- Member Benefits
- NortaNews

Please e-mail me with any comments or suggestions.
Reyna Texler, NRTA Webmaster
reyjillb@yahoo.com



The North Rockland Educational Federal Credit Union is excited to announce that effective December 1, 2005 our ATM cards will have surcharge-free access to ATM machines in 7-Eleven stores nationwide!!