



THE EDUCATOR

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State Budget Threatens Arlington

Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposed 2011-2012 budget would dramatically reduce state funding for education, cutting school aid by \$1.54 billion statewide and slashing Arlington's share of money from Albany by nearly \$5.3 million. The governor's planned reductions would come on the heels of a \$1.86 billion reduction in school aid since 2008.

"These proposed cuts are significant and, if enacted, would impact the classroom both directly and indirectly," said NYSUT President Richard C. Iannuzzi. "I can't say that we share the executive's belief that a cut in state aid this significant - coming on top of a nearly \$1.9 billion decrease over the previous two years - can be ab-

sorbed without teacher layoffs and the loss of other important education professionals."

The projected loss of state funds comes at a difficult time for districts across the state, including Arlington. While a portion of the cuts in state aid

for employee retirement and health care, could mean a budget gap of nearly \$20 million in the district, far outstripping previous shortfalls.

In addition, Gov. Cuomo has made the enactment of a tax cap a centerpiece of his legislative agenda. The tax cap, which passed the State Senate January 31st but has not yet been taken up in the Assembly, would severely restrict the ability of Arlington and other districts to raise revenue from the only other available source: local property taxes. The version of the tax cap that passed the Senate would limit school districts to a 2% annual increase in the tax levy. A 60% supermajority of voters would be required to override the 2%

See Page 3 for an update on contract negotiations and information about a general membership meeting on Feb. 23rd.

over the past two years has been offset by emergency funds from the federal government, it seems unlikely that increased funding from Washington will materialize this year. This loss in revenue, coupled with increased costs

See Budget on page 3

Donors Choose to Fund Projects at UVMS

Educators are often faced with the dilemma of having a need for classroom supplies or special equipment, but no funds available to purchase them. Even in this time of ever-shrinking budgets, items like textbooks and paper are usually available, but the extra little things that make a student's school experience memorable, like art supplies or specimens for a science lab may not be. Recently, two teachers at UVMS found a way to obtain some items that they did not have school funding for.

Terri Acosta, a UVMS special education teacher, wanted



Photo courtesy Sheri Altieri

From left to right, volunteer Amanda Popavero (former TA), and art teachers Brett Booth and Sheri Altieri use donated supplies to run an after-school ceramics program at UVMS.

py that her students receive as part of their academic instruction. "My assistant principal, Christine Jamin, encouraged me to try to obtain small grants for equipment from a website called DonorsChoose.org, something she had done in her past, as a teacher, that had allowed her to obtain science equipment for her classroom," Acosta said. "I tried it, and found the grant writing to be simple and straightforward." Sheri Altieri, a UVMS art teacher, runs

to purchase gym mats for her classroom in order to enhance the sensory integration thera-

See Donors on page 2

Political Action: Legislative Luncheon

Trivia Challenge

Answer the question below correctly and you could win an ATA Polo shirt !

What is the name of the amendment that prohibits a public employer from altering any provision of an expired labor agreement until a new agreement is reached?

Last month's winner, selected at random from among the three correct responses received, was **Liz Dunn** from AHS. She correctly identified **the NEA** as country's largest labor union. Liz is now the proud owner of an ATA polo shirt. Answer this month's question and you could win a polo shirt

Submit your answer to the above trivia question to rmchugh@acsdny.org by February 25th. The winner will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.



Photo by Robert McHugh

ATA members Betsy Marshall (right) and Greg Nieman (second from right) met with NYSUT Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta (second from left) and NYS Assemblyman Marc Molinaro.

On January 29, teachers from the Hudson Valley sat down with state legislators at Hillside Manor in Kingston to express their concerns over the volatile state of affairs in education today. Foremost on the agenda were the proposed deep cuts to the state's education budget and the looming reality of a two percent property tax cap, the effects of which would be catastrophic to the quality of

instruction our students would receive. The Arlington Teachers' Association sent three representatives to the gathering: Betsy Marshall, Robert McHugh and Greg Nieman.

The three of us implored the legislators to realize the devastating consequences these proposed cuts would have on our school. We reminded them that we and our students are also their constituents and that they should be mindful of that fact. We pointed out that a two percent tax cap without exemptions, such as on rapidly rising healthcare and pension costs, would gut the schools in our communities. We asked them to ease the burden of costly state mandates, such as those on the seemingly ever expanding array

of standardized tests.

What did we take away from this event? First, we must stand together. We need to educate ourselves about these issues and discuss them with one another. We must work together, while remembering what being part of a union has meant for all of us. It has meant securing defined benefits such as healthcare, pensions and a sick bank. These benefits are vital to our quality of life and they are at risk amid the anti-union, anti-teacher sentiments so prevalent during the economic downturn we are mired in today. Second, we must get involved. We must work together to protect the quality of our lives and the education that we provide our students. A crisis has a way of bringing members together; do not allow it to pull us apart.

If you would like a member of the ATA leadership to attend a building meeting to talk to your faculty please contact the ATA office at 454-7002 or ATA4547002@aol.com.

—Greg Nieman

Donors Fulfill Grants Written by UVMS Teachers

Continued from Front

an after-school ceramics program. She decided to apply for a grant when over 80 students came to an informational meeting about the program and she knew that she would not have enough clay and glaze for all of them. She was told about DonorsChoose.org by Sue Lesser, Arlington's district grant coordinator. Within a few weeks of submitting a grant proposal her project was fully funded.

DonorsChoose.org is a website where public school teachers can request items needed for classroom projects. Donors can browse all of the requests on the site and choose to fund all or part of any project. Once a project reaches 100% funding, DonorsChoose.org will deliver the materials to the school and en-

sure that the donor is properly thanked. Both Acosta and Altieri found the entire process very easy to navigate. According to Acosta, "Applicants follow instructions on the website - it leads you through the process. Once the grant application is complete, you select the desired items from the website's retail partners. The website has reviewers who approve your application, or they will ask you for revisions. Then, once approved, they post your application on their site. Donors log onto the site and contribute to your grant in small increments. You have the opportunity to respond to donors during the process, to thank them and to encourage future donors."

Both teachers are enthusiastic about using DonorsChoose.org to receive more funding in the future. Acosta would like a mini-

trampoline for her classroom. "Because the site is based on points," she said, "applicants earn the opportunity to request more items as their prior submissions are successfully funded. So, it's in the applicant's best interest to continue to participate in the program - you are rewarded for your participation with the opportunity to apply for more expensive or elaborate equipment as you go on."

Altieri advised other teachers interested in DonorsChoose.org to try it out. "Go for it! Even if you don't get the funding the first time around, you can recycle your grant and try again." If that website is not a good fit, she adds, "There are many grant programs out there, including the Arlington Education Grant. If you need something- don't be afraid to ask for it."

Outlook for the 2011—2012 Budget is Bleak

Continued from Front

cap. Moreover, the cap does not include any provisions that would reduce costs for the school district or relieve it of unfunded mandates imposed by the legislature as similar tax cap laws in other states do.

The *New York Times* was sharply critical of the Senate bill in an editorial the day after its passage, saying it, "would devastate school districts in the state." The *Times* specifically denounced the 60% requirement for override, arguing that it, "would give people who oppose school spending more voting power than people who support it," and expressed concern that the bill would widen the gap between high and low income schools. "Mr. Cuomo's tax cap effort is a bad bill that promotes a bad idea," the

editorial concluded. "People do need property-tax relief but not another state law that makes matters worse."

"I can't say that we share the executive's belief that a cut in state aid this significant - coming on top of a nearly \$1.9 billion decrease over the previous two years - can be absorbed without teacher layoffs and the loss of other important education professionals."

—NYSUT President Richard C. Iannuzzi

The governor's budget cuts need to be approved by the state Legislature to take effect. The deadline for an agreement is April 1st.

NYSUT Executive Vice President

Andrew Pallotta said that in light of the governor's proposed budget the responsibility to restore education funding now rests with the Legislature. "This is not the way to start. Our role now is to work with the Legislature to ensure the state budget it adopts meets the governor's vision of turning around the state's economy, while still protecting education," Pallotta said.

You can contact your legislators and urge them to restore school funding in the budget and oppose the tax cap through the TAKE ACTION! section of NYSUT's website, which can be found at <http://www.nysut.org/contactelectedofficials.htm>.

NYSUT Blog Enables Collaboration

In the age of social networking and blogging it is great to see that NYSUT, though a bit late to the game, has a new blog up and running. It can be found at NYSUT.org, by clicking on "News" on the left side of the page, and then "Blog". According to Betsy Sandberg, the woman who is in charge of posting, the blog was started just after the 10-2-10 rally in Washington last fall. She posts stories about what schools and teachers are doing across the state. She also posts news articles on political happenings that have rele-

vance to the lives and careers of teachers and their students. So check it out, post a comment, or make a suggestion. In isolation we will surely be steamrolled by political forces that are beyond our individual control. If we start talking to each other and taking action when action is called for, we are sure to weather the current political storms and find out that we are actually stronger, and have more control over the future of public education than we imagine. —Betsy Marshall

Spotlight on the Contract: Personal Days

Each issue of The Educator will spotlight a particular part of our contract in an effort to make our members more familiar with their rights and the terms and conditions of their employment. If you have a section you would like to see featured, email rmchugh@acsdny.org.

"Teachers may defer up to one (1) personal day per year into the following year. That day may be used for the same reason as stated above in paragraph 1. Any unused personal days in excess of the permitted accumulated three (3) personal days shall accrue to the teacher's accumulated sick days."

Explanation: According to this provision of the ATA contract (Article XVI, page 26), if a teacher does not use his or her personal days they are not lost. Two new personal days are granted per year, to be used for "personal matters, such as cannot be performed at a time other than during school hours." If these two days are not used, one of them can be carried over to the next school year, for a total of three personal days to be used that year. Any additional personal days that are not used are converted in to sick days, and can then be used as such in the future.

Negotiations Update:

"Most of you are aware that negotiations have been ongoing since October. Bob Maier, the negotiations team and I met with representatives of the district over the course of several months to discuss and explain our proposals. Unfortunately, in these discussions we were unable to come to a mutually beneficial agreement. In our last meeting, it was agreed upon by both parties that we would declare ourselves at an impasse. In doing so we agree that we are deadlocked and cannot come to an agreement at this time. The next step involves mediation. This is a third party who comes in to hear both sides and then make recommendations that, we hope, lead to a settlement.

*There will be a **general ATA membership meeting** to provide members with more detailed information about the status of negotiations. This will take place on **February 23rd at 4pm in the newly renovated auditorium at the high school**. In the event of snow it will be held the next day, February 24th, in the same location."*

— Donna Doerrier

This is your tax filing status, which determines the level of income tax withheld from your paycheck. Changes can be made by downloading a **W-4** form from the Human Resources section of the district's website and sending the completed form to the payroll department at **Central Office**.

The total amount of union dues that you have paid during the year can be found on your December 22nd pay stub. This can be included as an itemized deduction when filing your taxes. Of your full dues payment, \$313 goes to NYSUT, \$198.60 to the AFT, and \$228.50 to the ATA. All full time teachers pay the same amount in dues, but numbers for tax purposes may be different due to number of payments and the fact that the dues structure changes school year to school year. The dues structure is based upon the school year and not on the fiscal year.

DEDUCTIONS		Y - T - D
Deduction	Amount	
DUES ATA	\$ 49.34	\$ 730.16
LIFE	\$ 2.00	\$ 28.20
UN WAY	\$ 16.00	\$ 42.00
VOTECOPE	\$	\$ 160.00

PRE TAX DED		Y - T - D
Deduction	Amount	
HLT PPO	\$ 68.91	\$ 781.97
TRSAVANG	\$ 91.44	\$ 1993.80
	\$ 400.00	\$ 8000.00

Any charitable contributions that you have made through payroll deduction can be found here. The total amounts that you have contributed for the year can be found on your December 22nd pay stub. In addition, your (non-deductible) contribution to **VOTE/COPE** is recorded here.

“**TRS**” is your contribution to the **Teacher’s Retirement System**. Teachers hired between 1976 and 2009 (Tiers 3 and 4) contribute 3% of their salary for the first 10 years of employment. Teachers hired beginning in 2010 (Tier 5) contribute 3.5% throughout their employment.

If you are enrolled in a **TSA** (tax-sheltered annuity) or **FLEX** savings plan, it will appear here. **FLEX** contributions are taken out over 15 paychecks, this year from **October 29, 2010** to **May 13, 2011**.

Still have questions? Contact the following people at Central Office (486-4460):
 Payroll: Donna McLendon
 Benefits: Doreen Stewart
 Direct Deposit or Attendance: Marcel Miench

2010—2011 ATA Officers

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UVMS — Dave Lazarus

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What's Going On?

"What's Going on" is a monthly feature of The Educator. It highlights noteworthy accomplishments by ATA members. Do you know of a colleague who deserves recognition? Let The Educator know by emailing sfalk@acsdny.org. We can't know what's going on at all of your schools without your help!

Congratulations to the following ATA members for their contributions to the Arlington community and beyond.

Meghan Dorsey - Noxon

Ms. Dorsey serves on the Executive Board for the Dutchess County Music Educators' Association as corresponding secretary, and is currently chairing the chorus for the Dutchess County Music Educators' Association Elementary All County Festival. The festival will take place on February 25 and 26.

Eileen Snook - Beekman

Ms. Snook recently received a grant from the Community Foundation to take her class to Sharpe Reservation.

Richard Jackob - AMS

Mr. Jackob was recently selected by 7th grade student Fio-



Photo courtesy Amanda Buhler

Kate Choromanski - Traver

Ms. Choromanski was recently honored by the New York State Art Teachers Association (NYSATA) Region 7 chapter. Pictured from left to right are: Amanda Buhler (NYSATA Region 7 Co-Chair, Awards Event Coordinator, Titusville Intermediate), Kathryn Paulsen (LaGrange Middle School, Award Winner), Sheri Altieri (Union Vale Middle School, past Award Winner), Choromanski, Micah Brown (Traver Road Primary School, Principal), and Kathi Clark (Union Vale Middle School, past Award Winner).

na Ryan as her hero. The essay that she wrote about him for the *My Hero Project* can be found at http://www.myhero.com/go/hero.asp?hero=Mr_Jakob_arlms_US_2010

Karen Sipperley - UVMS

Ms. Sipperley is a past president and active member of the Friends of the Red Hook Public Library. She started an annual

fund-raising trivia contest for the library nine years ago, and ran this year's on January 30. The event is popular among ATA members, with several competing on teams every year for a trophy and bragging rights. This year's winning team was led by Dave Moss (AHS). His team, 24k Unobtainium, had previously placed second eight times.

Spaghetti Dinner Benefits Traver and West Road Schools



Photo by Siouxzanne Harris

From left to right: Christine Scott (2nd grade, TRS), Christine Oberreith (psychologist, TRS and JDWR), Micah Brown (principal, TRS), and Rose Wilson (2nd grade, TRS) show off their food-serving skills at the spaghetti dinner held to benefit the PTA at their schools.

On the night of Friday, January 28, teachers and administrators from Joseph D'Aquanni West Road and Traver Road elementary schools served pasta and meatballs at their second annual spaghetti dinner. Four hundred people attended the event. It was held to help raise money for the PTA, which supports many activities for the students. Food was donated by local merchants and there were also home-made desserts at a large table that featured a cake that had a plate of spaghetti and meatballs on it. Families enjoyed the dinner at tables with red and white checkered table cloths that had Italian-themed centerpieces. To complete the scene, an accordion player strolled up and down the aisles. In addition, classroom teachers at both buildings also assembled huge baskets with themes such as Top Chef, golf, and summer fun that were raffled off to raise more money. In total, the event earned \$4100 to benefit the students.

—Siouxzanne Harris



Arlington Inspires Romance



Most ATA members will agree that Arlington is a great place to work, but some have also found that it has been a great place to meet a spouse and start a family. In honor of Valentine's Day, the following are stories of just a few of the married couples of the ATA who were brought together by the Arlington community.

Chris & Janice Rifenburg



My assistant principal at the time, Paul Hackett, set me up with my wife - she was his nanny. He told me to call his house some time to talk to her. I remember passing him in the hallways at AMS and he would say, "You haven't called yet - Do you have tenure?" Ha Ha Ha. So I did. I think he

was surprised by this apparent bravery. I met Janice at his house one March evening and went on what was to be my first blind date - out for Mexican food and margaritas. We talked all night, non-stop. After a few dates I knew she was "the one" when she banged her head on the back of the booth we were sitting in while laughing out loud and spilled wine on her shirt; I thought it was funny and endearing. She was not a teacher yet, but working hard on her graduate work at Columbia. At that time, I had been teaching for about six years. The year we were married we were building our house. It was also the year that she was hired at Beekman Elementary and I was transferred from AMS to Union Vale Middle School, so it was a very busy year. We have been happily married for almost seven years. I have been teaching art for 13 years and Janice has been teaching 4th grade for 7.

—Chris Rifenburg

James & Tricia Muraco



James and I met in the fall of 1997 when he was at what was then South Campus and I was at North Campus. We were introduced at a happy hour at the Dutch Cabin in Poughkeepsie, where teachers from both campuses would go

each Friday after school. We started dating in March of 1998 and married in August of 2000, so we've been married for 10 and a half years now. James could tell you exactly what I was wearing on our first date, he remembers every detail!

—Tricia Muraco



Angie & Marie Scagnelli



I had been working at Traver Road and Angie was at Beekman. We were both transferred to Vail Farm when it was built. We met the summer before school opened when we were spending hours and hours unpacking boxes and getting our classrooms

ready for September. Two years later we were married; this coming May will be our five year anniversary. It's been a great seven years! We recently had a daughter and couldn't be happier! Well, maybe if we won the lottery, or it stopped snowing...

—Marie Scagnelli

Marc & Kristen Ouimet



Kristen and I met at what used to be Titusville Middle School in my first year of teaching, 1997-98. She was a student teacher that year. I was trying to fix the copy machine and she walked in, so I said hi. We got to know each other better when she would sometimes "help" me with my daily

crossword puzzle. Then one day I invited Kristen to go to an AHS basketball game. We did, and then we went out to Gentleman Jim's in Pleasant Valley and I let her drive my new Camaro back to AHS to get her car. Our first official date was at the Nick-L-Inn on February 9, 1998. We got engaged on February 9, 1999, and married on July 9, 2000, so we have been married for 10 years.

—Marc Ouimet



Dates to Remember



FEBRUARY

- 15th—ATA Executive Council Session, 4 p.m., AHS room 1432
15th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., AHS
Second BOE Budget Study Session
17th—Deadline for donations to the Jackie Higgins Memorial SPCA Drive
18th—Superintendent's Conference Day
21st—Presidents Day — No School
22nd—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., AHS
23rd—ATA General Membership Meeting, 4 p.m.,
AHS auditorium. Snow date February 24th



MARCH

- 8th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., NES
11th—Unity Pub, Location TBA
12th—Community Budget Forum, AHS
15th—ATA Executive Council Session, 4 p.m., AHS room 1432
15th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., AHS
Third BOE Budget Study Session
22nd—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., AMS



Announcements

All ATA members should have recently received an email on their home account about the upcoming general membership meeting. If you did not and you would like to receive similar emails in the future, please email ATA4547002@aol.com.

Reminder — now that the district's allotment of snow days is used up, and the 27th of May has also been given back, any more snow days will result in spring break being shortened. Additional days given back will start with Monday, April 18th. Teachers must be in school during all of these make-up days, regardless of vacation plans.

VOTE/COPE Drive Continues

The 2010-2011 VOTE/COPE drive is under way at all schools. Contributions can be given to the PAC member at your building or sent to Steve Hertzog at the ATA office.

Don't forget to donate to the Jackie Higgins Memorial SPCA Drive! Donations such as pet food, cleaning supplies, legal-sized envelopes and postage stamps can be left in the box provided in your school's mail room.