



THE EDUCATOR

Newsletter of the Arlington Teachers' Association

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 7

JUNE 2011

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

PR Update 2

The ATA raised over \$30,000 this year for various charities this year

Trivia Challenge

Last month's winners are revealed

Political Action

Governor Cuomo has introduced a new pension tier

APPR 3

Many questions remain about the new review process

Contract Information

This month's spotlight is on vandalism

Survey Results 4

The results of the recent LAP survey are in

What's Going On? 6

Member accomplishments are highlighted.

Recognition Dinner

Retirees were honored at the annual ATA event

Retiree Goodbyes 7

This year's retirees say their farewells to Arlington

Calendar and Announcements 8

A Year Full of Changes Comes to an End

As another June winds to a close it is important to reflect back on the past nine months in order to make some sense of the myriad changes the 2010-2011 school year brought to Arlington, and to prepare for the multitude that we will be faced with next year.

We all began September with a new superintendent, and many of us were in a new building, but we started this year like any other: unpacking boxes, making copies, and looking forward to the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our students. It became evident right away though that things were starting to change. No longer would we enjoy collaborating with our colleagues on our own terms in order to grow and learn together, now we would be formally organized into "Professional Learning Communities" whose meeting schedule and results were carefully scrutinized by our administrators. At this point phrases like "Race to the Top" and "teacher evaluations" were thrown around, but they didn't keep most of us up at night.

It's hard to pinpoint exactly when the tide turned, but it is clear that at some time this

year the general attitude at Arlington became a lot more negative. We found ourselves sitting in more meetings and being given more directives about how to do our jobs than we ever have before.

Along with the mood at school, the external climate also changed. We are used to hearing disparaging comments about our profession from taxpayers during the school budget development process, but we are not used to being at-

Take your well-deserved break over the summer, but stay connected. Although the classrooms will soon be quiet, the issues affecting us next year will not go away.

tacked at the state and national level also.

It became a lot harder to do what we have always done — come to work every day and keep a positive attitude in front of the classroom so that our students would know that we care about them and want to help each one of them succeed.

We can't let ourselves be discouraged by the current sentiments toward educators and the perceived need to improve us. If we stick together and show appreciation for each other we will get through this.

As you read about the various issues that will be affecting all of us next year, from the possibility of a tax cap that would threaten our economic reality to a new evaluation system that will change the way that we must teach, fight the urge to hide in your classroom and hope that this will all pass. More change is coming and the best things that you can do are to stay informed and stay unified.

The ATA is here to help in both of these areas, from providing information in this newsletter to organizing activities to bring members together. These efforts are wasted though unless you take advantage of them. Take your well-deserved break over the summer, but stay connected. Although the classrooms will soon be quiet, the issues affecting us next year will not go away. Be on the lookout for more information from the ATA and NYSUT in the coming months and when you're ready to begin setting up your classroom again for the fall, know that you are part of an organization that will give you the tools to overcome any new obstacles that might be headed your way. Know that we are all in this together as long as we allow ourselves to be.



The ATA Office has moved!

We are now located at: 46 Davis Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

Phone, fax, and email contacts remain the same: Phone: 845-454-7002/ Fax: 845-454-7005

Email: ATA4547002@aol.com

PR Committee Ends the Year on a High Note

Trivia Challenge

Last month's winners, selected at random from among the five correct responses received, were **Caroline Ferreiri** from Beekman and **Kristen Angevine** from Traver/West. They correctly identified **Arthur S. May** and **Joseph D'Aquanni West Road** as the two Arlington schools that are named after former employees. Caroline and Kristen are now the proud owners of ATA polo shirts.

Be sure to look out for the next trivia challenge in September and you could win a polo shirt too!



Photo by Siouxzanne Harris

L-R, Kristin Angevine (Traver/West) Danielle Collica (AHS) and Diana Parise (Traver) work the raffle table at the mini-golf event.

The skies threatened rain, but it didn't dampen the spirits of those attending this year's ATA Miniature Golf Outing to benefit the Arlington Education Foundation. Over 80 golfers

attended this 7th annual event organized by our public relations committee.

The day was highlighted by food, crafts, raffles, door prizes and, of course, miniature golf! For the 7th year in a row, Raymond Opticians was a gold sponsor of this event. The Daily Planet and

The ATA raised over \$30,000 for various organizations this year.

Education Foundation! Special thanks to those public relations representatives who worked so hard to make this event a success. It was a great way to end the year!

Through the generosity of the ATA membership, we raised over \$30,000 for various organizations this year alone, including the American Cancer Society, the March of Dimes, Dutchess County

M & T Bank also generously supported the cause. It was a great day with smiles all around. Best of all, the ATA raised \$3,000 for the Arlington

SPCA and more. In addition, we supported a host of community events and charities through donations and volunteerism. This year Team Arlington even won the award for "Most Money Raised by a Corporate Team or Organization" at the Relay for Life event that took place in early June and was given a certificate for being one of the top ten teams in the northeast



Photo by Siouxzanne Harris

John Filor (AHS) expertly handles wieners at the mini-golf event this year, as he does every year.

division. The ATA public relations committee is committed to our work in the community, and thanks you for your support through-

out the year.

—Kristi Bogaczyk,
PR Committee Chair

Cuomo's Pension Bill Latest in Assault on Teachers

Union-bashing Governor Andrew Cuomo introduced legislation earlier this month that would drastically reduce pension benefits for new teachers and raise the minimum retirement age for educators to 65. Cuomo's proposed Tier VI, which would only apply to new hires, would require teachers to contribute 6% of their salaries toward their pension for the entirety of their careers. Tier IV members contribute 3% for only their first 10 years of service and Tier V members – a tier created less than two years ago – contribute 3% each year of their employment. The new proposal would also raise the

age at which teachers are eligible to retire to 65 from 57 under the Tier V system and 55 under Tier IV. Cuomo's attack

seniority rights for teachers; and implementing a destructive tax cap on public schools.

Please contact your elected officials to oppose the governor's disastrous pension plan. You can call the AFL-CIO hotline at (877) 255-9417 or send a fax from NYSUT's Website, NYSUT.org. Simply go to the link for *Legislative Action Center*, located on

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the main page under *Resources*. From there, click on "Reject the Proposal for Tier VI" under the *Take Action* heading and follow the instructions provided. The whole process takes about 2 minutes.

—Robert McHugh, CAC Co-Chair

APPR Implementation Process Remains Hazy

Over the course of the last school year state legislation was enacted that required an overhaul of the process of annual professional performance reviews (APPR) for all teachers and administrators. Under this law, the new evaluation system would go into effect for classroom teachers of grades 4-8 math and ELA and their building principals in the 2011-2012 school year, and all other teachers and principals in the next school year.

While a few provisions of the new APPR process are dictated by state law, much of it is to be decided through collective bargaining. The entire process has been complicated by many factors, including a lack of specifics by the State Education Department (SED) and disagreements between NYSUT and SED over certain provisions of the legislation. In light of this, it is impossible to provide a clear picture of exactly what the new APPR process will look like and even when it will actually go into effect. Information about the state regulations can be found at www.nysed.gov. The following is an attempt to answer some of the most commonly asked questions.

How will the new ratings be determined?

A single composite effectiveness score will correspond to a rating of "highly effective," "effective," "developing," or "ineffective." The composite score will be composed of points determined from 20% student growth, 20% student achievement, and 60% teacher effectiveness. (In coming years, a value-added growth model may be determined that would increase the student growth component to 25% and decrease the achievement component

to 15%.) Teachers rated as "developing" or "ineffective" will receive a Teacher Improvement Plan or TIP.

How is student growth measured?

For subjects that have state tests that can be compared from one year to the next, such as 4-8 math and ELA, growth can be measured by comparing a student's score from year to year. The stu-

Components of Teacher Evaluation:

- ✓ 20% Student growth on state assessments or a comparable measure of student growth
- ✓ 20% Locally selected measures of student achievement
- ✓ 60% Other measures of teacher effectiveness

dent's change in score will be put in to a percentile range as compared to students with similar academic histories, akin to how a pediatrician compares a child's height and weight on a growth chart. SED is in the process of selecting a vendor to delineate the specifics of these growth percentiles.

What does "value-added" mean?

A value-added score is the difference between the amount of growth a student is expected to make and how much his actual growth differed from that. It is to be based on a complex statistical evaluation of factors such as gender, ethnicity, absenteeism and class size. SED is in the process of selecting a vendor to provide a value-added formula.

What happens if the ATA and the district cannot agree on the provisions that must be collectively bargained?

This is a matter that NYSUT and SED disagree on. The Public Employee Relations Board has held that a school board can unilaterally impose its bargaining position on a union under certain circumstances when there are "compelling reasons" as per their 1972 ruling 5 PERB 3074. It has not yet been determined whether these reasons exist.

The ATA would like to assure its members that it is working to obtain answers to all of the unresolved issues surrounding the APPR process and it is in talks with the district in order to negotiate all possible aspects of the reviews. It is also in contact with NYSUT about pending legislation over the portions of the regulations that it believes are not authorized by the law. NYSUT and the ATA are currently waiting for more state guidelines to be released in July.

Negotiations Update:

"The most recent action in contract negotiations, a June 1 mediation session with the District, was cancelled by the mediator. Several dates were brought forward for rescheduling, however, it was impossible to assemble both parties in June. This was decided before Mr. Hicks' announcement to return to western New York. As of this writing, there are no new meeting dates scheduled for June or for the summer months. I will keep you posted on our progress but I am not optimistic that you will return to school in September with a contract in place. With that note, have a great summer."

— Donna Doerrier, Chief Negotiator

Spotlight on the Contract: Vehicular Vandalism

Each issue of The Educator spotlights 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 sfalk@acsdny.org.

"If a teacher's vehicle is vandalized while on school property and the damage to that vehicle exceeds \$200.00, the District shall compensate that teacher for such vandalization up to \$200.00 provided that the teacher first files a police report and a claim against his or her insurance carrier. The teacher must carry appropriate insurance against which such claims shall first be made."

Explanation: According to this provision of the ATA contract (Article X, page 12), if a teacher has a police report and insurance claim for over \$200 stating that his or her vehicle was vandalized while on school property, the District will pay \$200 toward the repair. Contact the ATA office with any questions about filing such claims with the District.

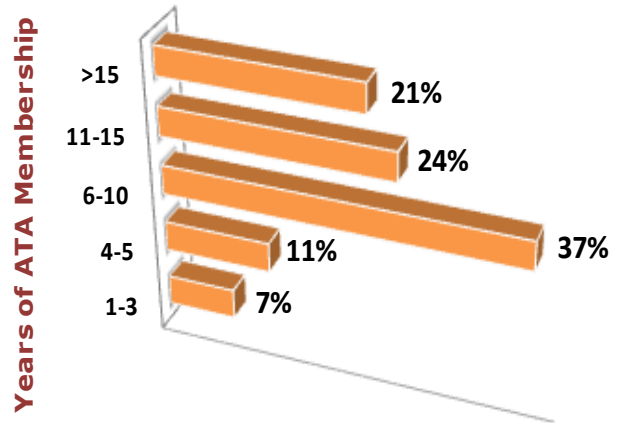
Your Opinion Counts

As part of its participation in NYSUT's Local Action Project (LAP), the ATA recently conducted a telephone survey of its members. Participants were asked about their opinions of union activities and their current involvement in the union. Open-ended responses were also collected about topics such as what activities the ATA should be more involved in.

Total Participants: 258 (33% of total membership)

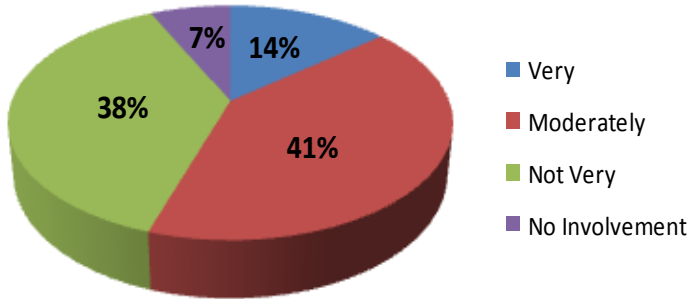
Questions should arise with any survey — Have enough people responded to make the results valid? Were the respondents representative of the group as a whole?

While only 1/3 of all ATA members responded to the survey, the distribution of their workplace and years of service did correlate to district data. For these reasons survey results can be reasonably taken to represent the ATA as a whole.



INVOLVEMENT:

How would you describe your current level of involvement with the ATA?



- 97% said that they were familiar with the activities of the ATA
- 93% of had a favorable general impression of the ATA
- 59% said that they would be willing to become more involved with union activities

87% know that executive council meetings are open to all members, yet . . .

65% say they never attend.

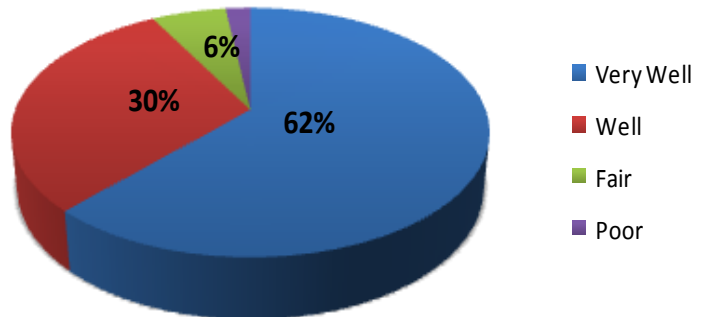
What do you think are the Strengths?

- Communication
- Solidarity
- The ability to collectively bargain
- Strong leadership
- Listening to concerns

COMMUNICATION:

- 97% know who their building representative is
- 80% have sought the advice of a union colleague regarding a problem
- 64% feel that the frequency of general membership meetings is about right

How well does the ATA communicate with its members?



Although **82%** always read *The Educator*, and **96%** find it useful, there were some suggestions for improvement.

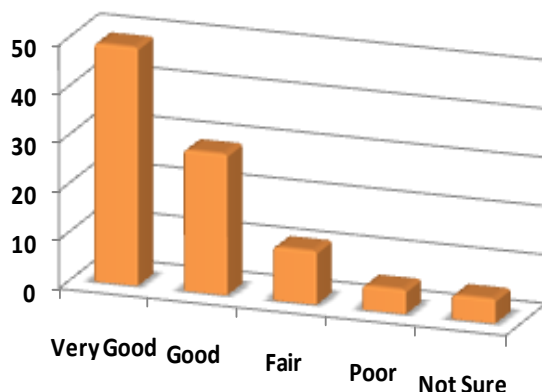
50% access the ATA's website less than once a month.

- More diagrams
- Put it on the ATA website
- Include a schedule of upcoming events

ACTIVITIES:

- 96% know that the ATA is active throughout the year
- 71% would attend a social hour at a local restaurant
- 28% would participate in a golf league

What is your opinion of the ATA holiday party?



What are the ATA's Weaknesses?

- Communication
- Not enough teacher involvement
- Not enough support for new teachers
- Public image

Many suggestions were made for activities that the ATA is already involved in, such as a charity basketball game and supporting local food pantries.

2010 — 2011 ATA Officers

President

Bob Maier

First Vice-President

Greg Nieman

Second Vice-President

Edward Hotaling

Treasurer

Kathleen Blank Cicala

Chief Negotiator

Donna Doerrier

PR Committee Chair

Kristi Bogaczyk

Community Action Chairs

Steve Hertzog

Robert McHugh

Welfare Trust Chair

Ron Higgins

Newsletter Editor

Sam Falk

Copy Editor

Robert McHugh

Senior Building Representative

ASM — Johanna Pungello

BES — Anne Schillinger

NES — Elise Pattison

VFES — Pam Goetz

OPS — Anne Marie Beesmer

Traver — Siouxzanne Harris

JDWR — Betsy Marshall

TIS — Jen Spagnola

AMS — Greg Fredricks

LMS — Patty Bauerlein

UVMS — Dave Lazarus

AHS — Steve Hertzog

AHS — Noreen Mills-Martin

CAO — Sue Lesser

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.

Beekman

Kindergarten teacher Xiang'e Bove was recently awarded Taconic Region PTA teacher of the Year. The Taconic Region comprises over 80 units across three counties.

Arthur S. May

Once again Arthur S. May has lived up to its name as the "Amazing Achievers", when on May 26 over 100 students, staff and parents participated in a mini-Relay for Life. While K-104 FM entertained us, we walked the trail on our playground, decked out in our t-



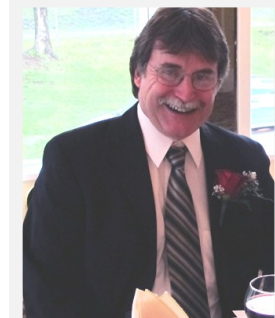
Photo by Kelly Sutton

Noxon

Nine teachers recently participated in the first annual Noxon Follies, an event that grew out of a tradition from the former LaGrange Elementary school. Follies is a variety show in which students perform music and dance numbers. The teachers pictured above (along with the photographer) also took part in the event and entertained their colleagues and students by dancing to the song ABC by the Jackson 5. They are (from left to right); Kristen Levine, Cheryl Moreau, Betty Ann Adams, Donna Piehler, Kari Morrison, Meghan Dorsey, Vivian LaColla, and Elise Pattison.

shirts, which were sponsored by we were able to raise \$3,759.91 for local businesses. Through the the American Cancer Society. generosity of the students and staff, —Johanna Pungello

Recognition Dinner Honors Retirees



The ATA's annual recognition dinner was held on Friday, June 17, at Christo's in Poughkeepsie. Thirteen June retirees were honored, along with six retirees from the past year, retiring assistant superintendent Barbara Donegan, and recently retired associate superintendent Ed Lynn. Pictured (clockwise, from above left) are retiree Eileen Weber with her husband, retiree Michael Ghee, event organizer Tina Tamweber with retiree Kathy DeMarco, and retirees Deborah Carrier and Eric Gidseg with photographer Siouxzanne Harris (center). Many more photos of the event can be found at www.arlingtonteachers.com.



Retirees Say Goodbye

Victoria Caswell – 18 yrs with Arlington
Arthur S. May, 5th Grade
"I have come full circle in the district. I went to kindergarten here at ASM, and now I will be retiring from here."

Kathy DeMarco – 36 yrs with Arlington
Overlook, 2nd Grade
"I have always felt so proud to be part of such an outstanding school district as Arlington. It will continue to be strong in the future because of all the dedicated teachers who work so hard to make it that way."

Jean Fox – 43 years with Arlington
Arlington High, Math
"I hope all teachers at Arlington have a long, happy, fulfilling career like I have had."

Muriel Gaw – 38 yrs with Arlington
Arlington High, Social Studies
"Hard work and a smile go a long way. I have been lucky enough to work with great colleagues that I am proud to call my friends"

Michael Ghee – 35 years with Arlington
Arlington Middle, Art
"Eat at Joe's."

Eric Gidseg – 22 years with Arlington
Traver Road, Kindergarten
"I want to thank all of the wonderful folks with whom I have worked over the years. I have a concern for the future that I'd like to leave in the hands of my colleagues. In the standards and accountability culture in which the schools now operate I have noticed that the discussions seem, more and more, to revolve around assessments and scores. Although these may be important issues, the first and foremost reason for our work is to help prepare individuals for a world that is ever more complicated and for a democracy that requires free thinking, involved thinkers. We must always keep these individual children

in our minds and hearts and in the forefront of our conversations. In the words of Eliot Eisner, "... we need to remember that not everything that is measurable matters and not everything that matters is measurable."

Nancy Leibowitz – 38 yrs with Arlington
Titusville Intermediate, AIS-Reading
"It has been a gratifying 38 years and I feel fortunate to have worked with so many gifted professionals at Overlook (25 years) and Titusville (13 years.)"

Sue Lesser – 22 years with Arlington
Central Office, AIE/Gifted/Grants/Home Teaching

"My advice to the colleagues that I'm leaving behind is to complement each other as often as possible. We need the support of one another more than ever, as we continue to be held accountable for everything and given so little authority over anything."
—Eileen Weber, Retiree

"I have loved working with so many people throughout the district. This is an amazing district!"

Cheryl Moreau – 25 yrs with Arlington
Noxon, 1st Grade
"I am grateful to have been educated in Arlington and to have spent my teaching career here as well. I have worked with wonderful colleagues, students and families! It has been a very rewarding time of my life; my best wishes to all who are continuing their careers in this great district. I extend my thanks to the ATA for its support and dedication to all of our educators."

Robert Rowley – 23 yrs with Arlington
Union Vale Middle, Music
"It is funny at times how the unex-

pected small things in life stay with you. I have two such moments - both were printed slogans/sayings from commercial products: The first was found on a tea bag years and years ago - 'A pupil from whom nothing is ever demanded which they cannot do, never does all they can do,' by John Stuart Mill. The second was found in a fortune cookie - 'To teach is to learn twice,' author unknown. The first has given me motivation to keep high standards and expectations. The second is the truth."

Katherine Schiller – 39 yrs with Arlington
LaGrange Middle, Home Economics
"I have been very happy in Arlington and will miss my many dear friends. At a time when we, as teachers, feel like we're having the rug pulled out from under us, it's reassuring to have the ATA looking out for us and protecting the education of our students."

Joanne Valeo – 22 yrs with Arlington
Arthur S. May, Speech Pathologist
"Be proud to be a teacher, no matter the public sentiment. It's easy to make a buck, it's really tough to make a difference, and we do - every day."

Eileen Weber – 27 yrs with Arlington
Vail Farm, 1st Grade
"Now that LaGrange is closed, I have been working at Vail Farm Elementary. I miss my colleagues and the families from L.E.S., but I have had a very nice last year....here at the FARM! My advice to the colleagues that I'm leaving behind is to complement each other as often as possible. We need the support of one another more than ever, as we continue to be held accountable for everything and given so little authority over anything. Good luck and I hope you get a great contract!"

Dates to Remember



JUNE

24th—Start of Central Office relocation to LaGrange Elementary

26th—High School Graduation, 6 p.m., Dutchess Stadium (rain date, 6/27)

JULY

30th—Save Our Schools Rally and March, 12 p.m., Washington D.C.

(for more information visit www.saveourschoolsmarch.org)



AUGUST

3rd—ATA Night at the Renegades, 5:30 p.m., Dutchess Stadium

2011-2012 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL SCHEDULE



September 20

October 18

January 17

February 14

March 13

April 17

May 15

June 5



All meetings are at 4 p.m. in room 1432 at AHS

Announcements

The Educator needs you!

Would you like to see more information about *your* school in here? We need representatives from each school to aid in gathering information to print! Please contact Sam Falk at sfalk@acsdny.org if you are interested.

The ATA is looking to hire members who are carpenters, electricians, landscapers, or snow-plowers to do work at the new office. If interested, please call the ATA Office at 454-7002 or email ATA4547002@aol.com.

Do you need help preparing a grant? Call the ATA Office for help from one of our volunteers.

VOTE/COPE Drive Continues

The 2010-2011 VOTE/COPE drive is ongoing at all schools. Contributions can be sent to Steve Hertzog at the ATA office.

Check out the newly updated ATA webpage at www.arlingtonteachers.com for photos, contact information, benefit forms, issues of *The Educator* and more.