Arlington Teachers'



THE EDUCATOR

Newsletter of the Arlington Teachers' Association

VOLUME2, ISSUE I

SEPTEMBER 2011 Arlington Welcomes a New Superintendent, A

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Dr. Larry Licopoli, Arlington's new interim superintendent for the start of the 2011-2012 school year, likens his job to that of a runner in the middle leg of a relay race. "My really, as the baton is being passed, to maintain the journey the school system is on. I fully understand

that part of my job is to put Arlington in the best possible position, so when a new superintendent comes I can pass that baton and the district would be in the same place it would be if [former superintendent] Geoffrey Hicks were still here."

Dr. Licopoli is aware that the handoff may be difficult. He has come into a job that not only requires him to create a district budget while facing decreasing state aid and a new tax cap, but also to negotiate several employee contracts and the new APPR regulations that must be agreed upon with the ATA. He believes that 17

years of experience as a superintendent, and many as a teacher and principal before that, have prepared him well for the tasks that confront him.

After obtaining his certificarole as an interim," he says, "is tion as a social studies teacher from SUNY Brockport in 1970, Dr. Licopoli taught special edu-

> 'I know that things that I discuss with the Board in terms of achievement for this year are big things and I'm thinking about how I can accomplish them in a one-day-at-a-time process." -Dr. Larry Licopoli, Superintendent

cation to emotionally disturbed students in Poughkeepsie for a year. Although he was, in his own words, "completely not prepared" for the difficulty of that position, by the end of the school year he was committed to a career in teaching. He decided to learn more about diverse learning styles and received a master's degree in educational psychology from SUNY Albany in 1972. After that, he remained in the Capitol Region for many years and worked as a teacher and union president. When the opportunity arose for him to either pursue a career as a regional NYSTA (the precursor to NY-SUT) representative or take a sabbatical to study for a doctorate, he chose the route which would allow him to

continue to work directly with children and earned a Ph.D. in educational administration and policy studies from SUNY Albany and the Rockefeller School of Public Policy in 1983.

That degree allowed him to enter the arena of administration, first as a director of special education, and then as an assistant superintendent in several districts until he was recruited to be the superintendent of the Chatham school district in Columbia County in 1993.

During his tenure of eight years in Chatham, and then as

See Superintendent on Page 3

ATA LAP Committee Enters Its Second Year

Members of the ATA's LAP (Local Action Project) committee spent part of their summer vacations discussing ways to increase member involvement in the ATA and how to create a positive relationship with the local community. The ATA first became involved with NYSUT's LAP initiative last year. The program provides assistance and funding to local unions for



Members of the ATA LAP committee, accompanied by NYSUT Vice President Andy Pelotta (left) and LRS Kathy Schwartz (right), successfully obscure a NYSUT banner.

the purpose of strengthening political action and improving communication, in addition to the concerns that the ATA has focused on. Locals make a three year commitment to the program and attend a conference about it in Saratoga each July.

This year's conference, from July 17-22, was attended by ATA LAP coordinator Donna

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Trivia Challenge

Answer the question below correctly and you could be the proud winner of an ATA Polo shirt !

What does the acronym "APPR" stand for?

Submit your answer to the above trivia question to rmchugh@acsdny.org by September 16th. The winner will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.



It is with great pleasure that I can welcome all ATA members back to work this September. This is a very exciting

time of the year. This year, the meaning of a new beginning takes many forms for us. Personally this beginning brings me back to work, and back to the helm of the ATA. The last six months have been a long journey for me and my family, but I am poised to return to what I enjoy: teaching students and leading this Association. It is important to thank Greg Nieman, the officers, and the negotiations team for their unwavering service to the organization in my absence. I would also like to thank all of you for your support and well wishes during my health crisis and recovery.

The past year brought us all some major challenges. We are now poised to move forward with a new year, and all the excitement that it brings. There is much to focus on, as we will continue working to settle our overdue contract and create a new APPR plan. We all have the opportunity to start a new day with the leadership at central office. We will welcome Larry Licopoli, our interim superintendent, and Lynn Rafalik the replacement for Barbara Donegan who retired in June.

Welcome Back Arlington!

To update you on our outstanding issues, we are proud to be moved in to the new ATA office. This initiative was several years in the making, and now that we are moved in, it is really shaping up. We are up on line and fully operational, and as we are straightening up, we will invite our membership to come

by and see the wonderful space that our Association owns. This is a proud progression for the ATA which will carry us through the 21st century.

As for the outstanding issues with the district, we will be moving towards mediation for our contract negotiations. This should help us reach a settlement. We hope that it is sooner rather than later. We also will be working with the district to create a new evaluation system to meet the APPR requirements of the legislation from the State. Both of these issues will take great effort, but it is in the best interest of our future. Once again, I want to welcome you back to work this September, and I look forward to seeing us moving forward from our difficulties of the past.

-Bob Maier, ATA President

LAP Committee Makes Plans for the Year

Continued from Front Doerrier (AHS), committee mem- ing clothing with their local's logo bers Colleen Napora (AHS), Laura

DiStefano (AMS), and Sam Falk (AHS), and the ATA's LRS (Labor Relations Specialist) Kathy Schwartz, along with 20 other LAP teams

Laura DiStefano (left) and Kathy Schwartz diligently take notes at the LAP conference. from across

the state. The goals of the program seemed especially relevant this year in light of the increasingly negative attitudes toward the teaching profession and labor unions in general that have been spreading across the country. Keynote speaker AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth Shuler began the conference by encouraging everyone to be proud union members at community functions

by doing simple things like wearon it. She concluded that, "All of

> us have to challenge ourselves to face the misconceptions about the labor movement when we hear them."

Another facet of the LAP initiative is to give locals direction on how to promote the concerns of education and teachers' unions

through political means. Because union dues cannot be used for

this, collecting VOTE/ COPE funds, which can, is vital. Regional VOTE/COPE coordinator Peter McMahon explained to conference attendees that increasing members' contributions to VOTE/ COPE is important because it is a way to have our voice heard equally to that of a hedge fund

manager who has influence over politics simply because of money.

After attending many insightful workshops and talks, the ATA's LAP committee decided on specific tasks for the year. In the coming months members can

> expect to see new opportunities for community involvement, such as partnerships with the local Head Start and senior citizen centers. Pride in our organization will be

> > promoted by

Colleen Napora (left) and Sam Falk participate in a LAP workshop in Saratoga.

> offering more ATA apparel and bringing members together through a variety of ways, such as membership in a Facebook group. The LAP committee will be meeting throughout the year to make sure that progress is made on the overall goals of the program.



New Superintendent Aims for Increased Collaboration

Continued from Front

superintendent of the Mineola school district on Long Island for another eight, one of the areas Dr. Licopoli championed was the use of data in assessing teachers and students. To him though, this does not

simply mean using test scores to rate teachers. "Comparing one year's assessment results to another," he said, "is like comparing a toaster to an iron. There's no relation."

Dr. Licopoli hopes to use that experience to usher Arlington into a new era of state-mandated teacher assessments. "What is embedded in these [APPR] regulations is really good stuff," he said, "Moving forward, I think that it is important that we try to separate out the politics of it from the professional op-

portunities that are a part of it." He acknowledges, however, that many educators are not happy with the September 2011 deadline imposed for implementing the first stage of the regulations. Even so, Dr. Licopoli is of the belief that "the things that have been discussed are good for our profession and any reasonable person can see that the process sometimes becomes as important as the subject is. At the end of the day, districts that have practiced true collaboration in developing professional assessments and common-core curriculum have a focus on kids first."

Even in his short time here it has become clear to Dr. Licopoli that Arlington is such a place, and he is looking forward to being a part of the community during his



Photo by Sam Falk

brief tenure here. Aside from Arlington's academic reputation, he is impressed by its facilities, such as the new high school auditorium, and can't wait to see the fall theater production take place there. His family's love of theater is what initially led to their move from Chatham to Mineola. Moreover, as an avid Yankee and Giant fans, living closer to New York City allowed the family to more easily attend games. Today, Dr. Licopoli maintains a home in Northport, Long Island, where his wife is a certified yoga instructor and the youngest of his four children attends school.

After his retirement from Mineola in 2009 Dr. Licopoli spent some time consulting and tutoring, but found that he missed work. When Peekskill offered him the position of interim superintendent for the 2010 school year he found himself

Arlington's new interim superintendent, Dr. Larry Licopoli, sat down in his office for an interview with *The Educator* in early August.

"happily back in the saddle." Still thinking of himself as a teacher has helped him to maintain his enthusiasm for the job. "When you start your day," he said, "you have, in your mind, what it is that you expect your students to leave knowing. And then you're thinking it doesn't end there; I have to set the

stage for the next day and the next. Good teachers do that day in and day out. And then they're sensitive to what the learning needs and styles of the kids in the class are. I don't see that as a lot different from what I do. I know that things that I discuss with the Board in terms of achievement for this year are big things and I'm thinking about how I can accomplish them in a one-day-at-

a-time pro-

--Sam Falk

cess."

Negotiations Update:

While we are still without a contract, we are optimistic that the current administration is willing to work with us. Interim Superintendent Dr. Larry Licopoli has stated that, "Like anything else, I think that we have to revisit proposals and reassess them. Sometimes putting a set of fresh eyes on things enables you to find a different path toward a settlement." Negotiations are set to resume in early September.

Spotlight on the Contract: Scheduling Meetings

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.

"Each building representative shall have the right to schedule Association meetings before and after school in his or her building, not in conflict with a meeting called by the Principal.

The building representative shall be provided with not less than ten (10) minutes time at the end of all building faculty meetings to report on matters involving representation of the teachers by the Association."

Explanation: According to this provision of the ATA contract (Article V, page 7), building representatives have several options for calling membership meetings. Meetings may be scheduled on school grounds before or after school hours. In addition, representatives are entitled to at least 10 minutes at the end of all faculty meetings for the purposes of talking about union matters. Contact the ATA office if you have tried to schedule such a meeting and were met with resistance from administration.

In Case You Missed It...

Summer is a time for many teachers to unwind and get away from home for awhile. Here are some updates on important issues and ATA events that you may have missed while you were away.

Headway in the Fight Against Anti-Union Legislation

Republican Legislators Recalled in Wisconsin

When Governor Scott Walker signed a bill last spring that severely limited the rights of public sector unions he spurred an effort to recall not only six of the Republican state senators who supported the bill, but also three of the Democratic state senators who had fled the state in an attempt to prevent the bill's passage. After a massive campaign that raised almost \$40 million, the elections took place in August. The final result was that while all three Democrats and four Republicans kept their seats, two Republicans were unseated. Previously, there had been only 20 state-level recall elections in U.S. history.

Vote Will Take Place to Try to Repeal Senate Bill 5 in Ohio

Senate Bill 5, legislation that eliminated most collective bargaining for public workers, was signed into law by Ohio Governor John Kasich last spring. Since then a group calling themselves "We Are Ohio" has gathered nearly 1.3 million signatures in order to force a ballot referendum allowing voters to decide whether or not to repeal the bill. The vote will take place on November 8.

Progress is Made on APPR Changes

ATA, District Continue Work on New Evaluation System

The ATA and the district continue to negotiate the specifics of a new method of teacher evaluation created by New York State in its campaign to secure a federal Race to the Top grant. While the two sides met several times over the summer to discuss the new APPR (Annual Professional Performance Review) system, which must include new evaluation components like student test results and classroom observations for all teachers,

no agreement has yet been reached. While the legislation lays out a broad vision for the new system, many of the details – who determines what tests will

There will be a meeting for all 4th - 8th grade teachers on September 15 at 4p.m. in the cafeteria at UVMS to address the new APPR system that will take effect for them this year.

be used to measure student performance, how many classroom observations there will be per year, who oversees the appeals process if a teacher is unhappy with his or her score, among many others – need to be collectively bargained by the ATA and the district.

Under the new system each teacher in the state will receive an annual grade out of 100 points. Based on that grade, the teacher will be placed in one of four categories: highly effective, effective, developing, or ineffective. If teachers are deemed ineffective for two consecutive years, the district has the right to remove them, regardless of tenure, through a newly created process.

The new evaluation system goes into effect for 4th through 8th grade math and ELA teachers this year and for all others during the 2012-13 school year. Currently the ATA is negotiating a temporary plan that would apply to those teachers who must be evaluated under the new system starting this year.

Court: APPR Details Must be Collectively Bargained

In a ruling on a lawsuit filed by NYSUT against the State Education Department (SED) an Albany County Supreme Court judge held that many of the details of a new APPR (Annual Professional Performance Review) system must be collectively bargained with the union. While the original legislation established only broad guidelines for the new system, SED released a much more detailed set of regulations, which reduced the number of

areas that need to be negotiated with the union. For example, the overturned state regulations proposed (1) potentially basing 40% of a teacher's evaluation on a single

standardized test, instead of the 20% the law initially envisioned; (2) counting classroom observations for a minimum of 40% of the total score; (3) limiting a professional growth plan to no more than 5% of the aggregate score; and (4) creating a scoring band that prevented teachers whose students performed poorly on state tests, but excelled in other areas from being rated effective. The judge overturned all of these regulations, writing that SED did not have the authority to impose them in the absence of a collectively bargained agreement with the local union. The decision allows the ATA much more freedom to negotiate an evaluation system that is fair for all members and does not place an undue emphasis on either student test scores or subjective evaluations by principals. Meanwhile, the Education Commissioner and his allies on the Board of Regents have vowed to appeal the court decision in a renewed attempt to restrict collective bargaining rights at the local level.

VOLUME2. ISSUE I PAGE 5 ATA Night at the Renegades: Baseball and Bonding









Although no baseball was played due to rain during the initial ATA Night at the Renegades on August 3, attendees who braved the weather were still able to enjoy the all-you-can-eat food. Some of the proud holdouts are pictured to the left. No one went away unhappy because not only could they use their tickets to attend a double-header the next day, but a make-up ATA Night at the Renegades was scheduled for August 23, complete with more food. An enjoyable time was had by many, including ATA President Bob Maier, who got frisky with mascot Rene the Raccoon (top left) and AHS teachers Dan Pitt and John Filor, who relished the opportunity to show off their summer styles (top center). The highlight of the night was a 7th inning competition hosted by the Renegades between AHS teachers Noreen Mills-Martin and Steve Hertzog (top right) to see who could name the most items in a given category. Mrs. Mills -Martin triumphed and was awarded tickets to an Army football game.

Schedules for State Testing Have Been Altered

After the NY State Board of Regents voted last May to eliminate all January Regents exams in order to save money concerns were raised about what would happen to students who were counting on those exams in order to graduate. In early August New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced that he and several anonymous donors had raised the \$1.5 million necessary to reinstate the exams statewide for one year. All foreign language Regents exams remain

given at Arlington, but information is not yet available about the exact scheduling of the exams, such as whether students will be attending classes during Regents week or not.

Dates for 3-8 Tests Have Been Moved

NYS Education Commissioner John King announced in late August that the dates for the spring Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics assessments would be moved up a month in order to ensure that

January Regents Exams Are Back eliminated. January Regents exams will be the tests could be graded and the results analyzed in time to evaluate teachers under the new APPR (Annual Professional Performance Review) plan. Although there will be significantly less time to instruct students on required material teachers can be assured that there will be enough time for their yearly performance evaluations to be completed based on the test results. A schedule of exact test dates can be found at http://

www.p12.nysed.gov/apda/schedules.

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2010 —2011 ATA Officers

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President	b
Bob Maier	le
First Vice-President	ti e
Greg Nieman	c
Second Vice-President	a
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Edward Hotaling	C
Treasurer	A b
Kathleen Blank Cicala	n
Chief Negotiator	т
Donna Doerrier	•
PR Committee Chair	h
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	K
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Steve Hertzog	v
Robert McHugh	-
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NES — Elise Pattison	р

NES — Elise Pattison VFES— Pam Goetz OPS — Anne Marie Beesmer Traver — Siouxzanne Harris JDWR—Betsy Marshall TIS — Sue Ramsden AMS — Greg Fredricks LMS — Jill Freeswick UVMS — Dave Lazarus AHS — Steve Hertzog AHS — Noreen Mills-Martin

What's Going On?

"What's Going on" is a monthly feature in 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.

Fitusville

Art teacher Amanda Buhler had some of her artwork exhibited at the Millbrook library in July as part of their "While the Kids are Away the Teachers Will Play" installation.

Vail Farm

First grade teacher Jonathan Nix attended NYSUT's 2011 Mid-Hudson Regional Office Leadership Conference from August 28 to 30 in Cooperstown, NY. Workshops given included topics such as the pitfalls of electronic communication and how to be a successful union representative.

Arlington High

Science teachers Lori Beer, Maribel Pregnall and Gwen Saylor, and social studies teacher Julia Bucklin escorted a group of students to Costa Rica in July as part of an Edu-Ventures expedition. They stayed in a sustainable eco-friendly lodge in the rainforest and learned about the local wildlife.

Gwen Saylor also attended the ASM Materials Camp, held at RPI from July 25 to 29 where she was taught about real-life applications of materials science through hands-on activities.

AHS teachers (L-R) Gwen Saylor, Julia Bucklin, Lori Beer, and Maribel Pregnall posed in front of the Arenal volcano during their trip to Costa Rica last July.

"Save Our Schools" Event Inspires JDWR Teacher

I spent four days in Washington D.C. attending the Save Our Schools (SOS) March and National Call to Action from July 28 to 31. The SOS event included two days of conference workshops, held at American University, a Saturday afternoon rally and march on the National Mall, and a half day congress on Sunday where parent, teacher, and student activists met to make

plans for future collaboration, organization and political action. On the first two mornings I had the opportunity to hear writer Jonathan Kozol and education histori-

and education historian Diane Ravitch deliver inspirational keynote speeches. They voiced their support for teachers and spoke out against federal policies that have been too heavily influenced by business leaders and too little influenced by teachers themselves who see how political policies play out in classrooms. Two of the best workshops I attended during the conference sessions were:

1. Defending Public Education by Building a Grassroots Movement of Parents, Teachers and Students. This workshop was led by a group of NYC teachers who have been actively organizing to stop school closings, charter school colocations, high stakes testing, and other privatization schemes. Through their Grassroots Education Movement (GEM), they produced an excellent documentary called *The Inconvenient Truth About Waiting for Superman*, in response to the 2010 film *Waiting for Superman*, which

More information about the grassroots movement to "Save Our Schools" can be found on their official website at http://www.saveourschoolsmarch.org/ was written and produced to further undermine public education, teachers and their unions, and support instead school privatization through the charter school

movement.

2. The Myths of Standardized Tests: Why They Don't Tell You What You Think They Do. This session was led by a husband and wife team, Phillip and Joan Harris, who have published a book by the same name.

The SOS Conference and March was not union organized but actually a grass-roots event organized by teachers, parents and others who



National Board Conference Enlightens Attendees

Colleen Napora and I attended the 2011 National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Conference, "Reboot! Teaching Transformed" in Washington

motivated by money. In addition, Arne Duncan, the U.S. Secretary of Education, spoke about education reform. Along with keynote speeches, the

conference had

many great

sessions on

topics such as

teaching meth-

ods and educa-

tion legislation.

Subjects such

corporate stu-

dent movement

into your teach-

ing and how to

help your stu-

vocabulary

dents figure out

were discussed.

The sessions

revived teach-

ers and provid-

ed many new

as how to in-

D.C. from July 26 to 30. We spent July 26 on Capital Hill speaking with aides and members of congress, such as local representative Chris Gibson, in order to build support for National Board certification. It was a day of advocating for education and the importance of funding it. Specific topics included re-



National Board certified Arlington teachers Stephanie Rice (right) and Colleen Napora (left) met education historian Diane Ravitch after she spoke at the 2011 national Board for Professional Teaching Standards conference.

forming the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and gaining National Board certified teachers recognition as leaders when designing new teacher evaluation plans.

The four day National Board Conference followed Capitol Hill Day with many phenomenal speakers. Author Dan Pink and education historian Diane Ravitch received the loudest ap-

plause. They both spoke about the need to support teachers, with Pink focusing on the misconception that teachers are

ideas for teachers to bring into their classrooms this September.

Colleen and I also spent half of a day learning about the renewal process for National Board certification. All teachers

who want to renew, whether it is next year or in 9 years, can start now to help the process. Both Colleen and I are willing to meet with any currently

certified teachers who think they will want

--Stephanie Rice

to renew when their certification expires.

Congratulations to Newly Tenured **ATA Members**

Elementary

Arthur S. May Andrew Boland

Overlook Tara D'Orazio Tammy Rodriguez Angelique Schneider

Middle

- <u>Arlington</u> Jill Dunlop Kristine Jackson William Mueller Vincent Spadero
- LaGrange Daniel Erceg Victoria Frank Catherine Ma-Passudetti Shannon Neville Marisa Ouranitsas Felecia White

Union Vale Lara Ivchenko

High School

Melissa Albright **Douglas Carpenter** Cassondra Cruger Dominick DeMatteo Darrell Flynn Gwen Saylor Maeghan Schmitt

Contact Stephanie Rice or Colleen Napora at AHS for information on renewing your National Board Certification.

D.C. March and Conference Attempt to "Save Our Schools"

Continued from Page 6

have been moved to take a stand against the negative effects that No Child Left Behind legislation has had on our schools, our students and the entire teaching profession. As Anthony Cody, a member of the organizing committee explained in an interview after the event, "This march

was about big ideas in education. We offered a clear critique of test-driven reforms, and positive alternatives rooted in our own schools, and our expertise as teachers and parents. We have experienced the effects of No Child Left Behind far too long to allow it to continue."

If you are interested in learning more

about the guiding principles and the coalition of organizations that have joined this grassroots movement to "Save Our Schools" you can go to the official website at: http:// www.saveourschoolsmarch.org/.

--Betsv Marshall

Dates to Remember

SEPTEMBER

- 8th—Senior Building Rep Meeting, 4 p.m., ATA Office
- 13th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO
- 15th—APPR Meeting for 4-8 Grade teachers, 4 p.m., UVMS Cafeteria Flex Benefit Plans Meetings, 3 p.m. and 4 p.m., AHS room 1432
- 20th—ATA Executive Council Session, 4 p.m., AHS room 1432
- 27th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO
- 29th—Rosh Hashanah—No School
- 30th—Unity Pub for New Teachers and Mentors, 4 p.m., Billy Bob's BBQ Meet your new colleagues while enjoying free appetizers and drink specials

OCTOBER

- Ist—Deadline to submit information for graduate or inservice credit
- 1st—Deadline for using 2010-2011 Welfare Trust Benefits
- 10th—Columbus Day—No School
- 11th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO
- 18th—ATA Executive Council Session, 4 p.m., AHS room 1432
- 25th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO

Announcements

Join the New Communications Committee!

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. Committee members would also be involved with developing other internal and external ATA communications. Please contact Sam Falk at sfalk@acsdny.org if you are interested. Have you seen the ATA's new Facebook page? Go to www.facebook.com, search for "Arlington Teachers' Association" and "Like" the page in order to receive updates about important issues and ATA events. Do you need help preparing a grant? Call the ATA Office for help from one of our volunteers.

Don't forget that the ATA office is now located at 46 Davis Avenue in Poughkeepsie. It can still be reached at 454-7002 or ATA4547002@aol.com. Visit the website at www.arlingtonteachers.com for information such as benefits forms, contract details and calendars.