



THE EDUCATOR

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Challenges Lie Ahead for the ATA

President Bob Maier's 2012 State of the Union Address

This past year has been quite a roller coaster ride. Professionally we all face pretty serious challenges. The field of education is under fire and during these tough economic times our profession has been identified as a target to address all of the issues of society.

The Governor is no friend of public education; Andrew Cuomo has his own vision for the future of our profession. He has not asked, nor will he accept any input from professional educators. Clearly he views us as the cause of the deterioration of our educational system.

Here in the Arlington District we face some pretty tumultuous times. When this year is

complete we will have had four superintendents in four years. This has never happened in the history of the district. Further, many other leaders at Central Office have been re-

portive of our educational philosophy, to run for those board positions. Put it all together, and things here at Arlington are not as bright as they once were.

The officers continue to work with the Superintendent to refine the new evaluation program, and we will not rest until our members are given a fair and transparent system.

We are in the middle of the first year of the new evaluation program. As we are already seeing, there are many issues that need to be addressed.

Rest assured, the agreement that we have only applies for this year, and the results of the evaluation will not carry over into next year. The officers continue to work with the Superintendent to refine the new evaluation program, and we will not rest until our members are given a fair and transparent system.

See Challenges on Page 2

Negotiations Update: Talks Are On Hold

Despite intense weekly meetings and a recent mediation session with the district we are still without a new contract. The ATA stands poised and ready to settle this at any time; however, the district continues to offer us proposals that we cannot live with. It has been our position that we need a fair contract that respects our work as professionals and takes into consideration economic realities.

These economic realities, by the way, do not exclude us. When we go to the gas pumps the price we pay is the same as everyone else. Many of you

have shared with me that suddenly you have become the sole wage earner in your household due to layoffs. In addition, I highly doubt that if we agree to accept the district's proposals, we will be "heroes" and instantly the appalling lack of respect for the teaching profession in our country will cease. My best advice is to continue to hold yourself and your students to the highest standards and continue to do what makes our district so well respected.

The current status of our negotiations is that we do not have any more meetings

scheduled and are waiting until after the May budget vote to resume our discussions. As in the past, we will be mobilizing ourselves, forming coalitions, and generally doing the best we can to aid in getting the budget passed. In the coming months we will be calling on our members to actively participate in this process. As always, I thank you for your support and if you need to contact me, I can be reached at the ATA office.

--Donna Doerrier,
Chief Negotiator



Trivia Challenge

Answer the question below correctly and you could win an ATA fleece vest!

What island is directly north of Jamaica?

There were no winners last month because no answers at all were received.

Correct answers would have identified **random ATA members** as what the photo on the ATA's home page is of. The pictures rotate and are different each time you visit the site. Go check it out! Answer this month's question and you could win a fleece vest!

Submit your answer to the above trivia question to rmchugh@acsdny.org by Feb. 10th. Winners will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.

Challenges Lie Ahead for the ATA

Continued from Front

In any event, this is nothing that should stand in the way of improving our educational practice, nor is it anything to be so concerned about that it ruins our ability to provide the children with the best education available.

Personally I have had a very challenging year. This February is the one year anniversary of one of the most profound events of my life. It was last February 15 that I almost didn't make it. It was through the quick thinking of Greg Nieman, and then the efforts of the paramedics, nurses, and doctors, that I was fortunate to receive medical attention in time and now to battle back to a complete recovery. The last

chapter in this journey was completed this past December at Columbia Presbyterian hospital in New York City. I underwent the final surgery to put a plastic plate in my head and finally close the hole in my skull. With this surgery, my recovery is complete, and I am safe to go back to living a normal life. I am now back to work and back to the helm of the ATA. Greg and the officers have done an amazing job in my absence. This year has helped me to personally grow. I have learned that with all that is going on around us, there are few things in life that are as important as your family or friends.

Now that my personal

journey to recovery is complete I want to focus on the recovery of my profession, and yours. We face so many challenges from the Governor's office, our school board, and Central Office, that each day provides new experiences. The ATA continues to navigate our path in the most professional way that we can. Remain optimistic that better days lay ahead. We all hope they come sooner rather than later. Our profession is under fire, and we stand ready to defend what we believe in as we are the experts in the field.

Thank you all for your continued support!

--Bob Maier, ATA President

Spotlight on the Contract: Sick Bank

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 sfalk@acsdny.org.

"The purpose of the [Sick] Bank shall be to provide continuing pay to teachers who have exhausted their sick leave. Eligibility to join the sick leave bank shall be extended to all teachers who have completed one full year of teaching service in the Arlington School District. . . Teachers wishing to join the bank shall be required to waive the right to use one (1) sick day in order to participate in the sick leave bank. No member of the sick leave bank shall be granted in excess of 180 days in the aggregate while employed by the District, except in a case of catastrophic illness or disability that presents with extraordinary circumstances."

Explanation: According to this provision of the ATA contract (Article XV, page 22), if an ATA member who has been with the district for more than one year experiences a prolonged illness or disability and runs out of sick days, he or she may be eligible to use days from the sick bank. In order to enroll in the sick bank members donate one of their accrued sick days. The district matches these donated days with up to 200 per year. When the sick days in the bank are depleted it is necessary for members to donate another sick day. The most recent numbers available show that at the start of the 2009-2010 school year the bank contained 976 days and during that year 490.5 of those days were used.

Requests for use of this benefit must be submitted to either the ATA's sick bank chairperson, Debbie Fealey, or the school district's sick bank representative, Robert Rodriguez. They review each request and decide whether or not it can be approved. There are two forms that must be completed for each request: one by the member, and one by the member's physician. Fealey advises members not to wait until the last minute to get these forms and to submit them before personal sick days have been exhausted. Any questions can be directed to her at dfealey@acsdny.org.

APPR Update: Stories From the Front Lines

Elementary School

Under New York State law I am not required to be a part of the APPR process this year. I am a Special Education/AIS Math Teacher at West Road Intermediate School. I teach math to many of the eight, nine and ten year olds at West Road who think of themselves as "Bad at Math". My goal every day is to open their minds to the possibility that they might be mistaken. I show them they can use numbers to understand and talk about important things. As they realize how numbers help them to observe, understand and talk about the world they are always eager to learn more.

I volunteered to go through the APPR process this year in order to understand how the new APPR initiative might help or hinder the yearly goals that I set for myself and for my students. To date I have gone through one pre-observation meeting, one actual Marzano driven observation and one post-observation meeting. My initial reaction is:

- The APPR observation and evaluation process is time consuming.
- Being asked to formulate and articulate a lesson that demonstrates my knowledge of subject area, my knowledge of teaching, and my knowledge of the individual children that sit in my classroom each day was challenging but also invigorating.
- I was fortunate to have a trusted colleague, who also happens to be an administrator, go through the process with me.

The district-wide observation and evaluation process under APPR will encourage professional collaboration and greater student growth if that is the agreed upon objective going in. I found the process useful. There is, however, extensive research that shows why using student test scores to determine teacher effectiveness invalidates the entire APPR process. The numbers that the state will assign to teachers, based on state test scores, will be invalid in almost every case this year, but that is a separate issue. You can easily find extensive research that shows why using Value Added Measures (VAMs) to evaluate teacher effectiveness is a giant impediment to the goal of providing a better education for all of our students.

--Betsy Marshall, JDWR

Middle School

I am one of the teachers required this year to undergo the new state-mandated APPR process. My pre-observation conference was held with my principal and a

Misconceptions About APPR Aboard

You are not required to write anything up for your post-observation conference.

The only formal language in the ATA's APPR agreement for this year states that "the observation shall include a pre-conference, a post-conference, and an evaluator's summary." Post-Observation Conference Domain 3 of the observation rubric merely requires that the teacher "reflect on" the lesson. This reflection need not be expressed in writing.

You do not need to write your lesson goal on the chalkboard.

Indicator 5 of the observation rubric states that the teacher must "provide clear learning goals." It does not require that this needs to be done in writing, although posting your goal is given as an example of how to fulfill that indicator in the long form version of the rubric. This is merely one example as to how you can make the lesson goal known.

representative from Central Office. I had to provide all the paper work for them and discuss what they would observe in my lesson. I explained about the make-up of students in the class, what I've taught prior and what I have planned in the future. I had to demonstrate I had a comprehensive understanding of the Common Core Standards and how they compare to the current NYS standards. I met with my observers a few periods after the lesson to

discuss it. I gave my impression and answered questions they had about it. One of the observers referred to the checklist of the Marzano plan during the whole time to ensure all points were addressed. After eight days, I met with the building observer (my principal) to discuss my write-up and my overall number rating. I was given time to reflect and then respond to the comments. I wrote up a response to one of the suggestions made because I found it did not concur with my evaluation of the lesson, nor was it discussed in the informal post-observation conference. He then rescinded the suggestion and changed my observation before I signed it.

The emotional toll of receiving a "number assigned" based on how well the teacher met the expectations of the "plan" is exhausting and frustrating to say the least. The Marzano plan does not take into consideration different teaching styles, and thus many teachers find it awkward, uncomfortable, and frustrating to conform to. Please know that none of my colleagues have found this to be a fair judge of their professionalism, dedication, and overall true value to their students and the Arlington community.

My recommendation for those anticipating this evaluation process would be to thoroughly prepare by reading over the entire Marzano plan, making sure that the lesson to be observed embraces ALL of the 21 elements to be observed as ALL of the elements are given a grade! If students waiver in transition from one thing to the next or do not grasp the concept quickly, the lesson is not rated very well at all. It is extremely unfortunate that the district values this style of teaching in lieu of embracing the uniqueness each and every teacher can bring to the classroom as he or she crafts their lessons to meet the individual characteristics of each class. In addition, I would advise talking with other teachers who have endured the process and practice the elements that may be new to you. Certainly, it is difficult to be judged positively on doing something in which you do not feel comfortable. While doing all of this, remember to be true to your students. They are the true judge of who we are and what we do every day! Let the meaning of your work and belief in your students shine above all else.

--A Middle School Teacher

Tax Deductions are Available to Teachers

Tax season is upon us once again. Did you know that there are several deductions that you may be eligible for as an ATA member? It is definitely prudent to consult a trained professional for tax advice, but here are a few of the basic deductions that all ATA members should take into consideration when preparing their taxes.

Charitable Donations

Form 1040, Schedule A	Gifts to Charity	16	Gifts by cash or check. If you made any gift of \$250 or more, see instructions.	16	
		17	Other than by cash or check. If any gift of \$250 or more, see instructions. You must attach Form 8283 if over \$500.	17	
		18	Carryover from prior year	18	
		19	Add lines 16 through 18	19	
	Casualty and Theft Losses	20	Casualty or theft loss(es). Attach Form 4684. (See instructions.)	20	
	Job Expenses and Certain Miscellaneous Deductions	21	Unreimbursed employee expenses—job travel, union dues, job education, etc. Attach Form 2106 or 2106-EZ if required. (See instructions.)	21	
		22	Tax preparation fees	22	

If you itemize deductions on Form 1040, Schedule A, you can deduct charitable contributions that have been made to qualified organizations. A contribution to the United Way made through payroll deduction is one example. The amount that you have contributed is entered on to line 16 of Form 1040, Schedule A.

Union Dues

Your union dues are also eligible to be deducted as long as you itemize on Form 1040, Schedule A. All ATA members who are employed full time pay the same ATA dues, but because the dues structure is based on the school year and not the fiscal year and there are different payment options, the amount that can be deducted varies. See the chart below to determine the amount that you can deduct for calendar year 2011.

For more information about how to fill out tax forms check out www.taxguideformorons.com (You don't have to be a moron to have questions about your taxes!)

Members Employed for All of 2011

Payment Option	Dues Deduction
6 Payments	\$755.70
10 Payments	\$749.46
15 Payments	\$746.34

Members Who Started in September 2011

Payment Option	Dues Deduction
6 Payments	\$755.70
10 Payments	\$453.42
15 Payments	\$302.28

Educator Expenses

Form 1040	Adjusted Gross Income	23	Educator expenses	23	
		24	Certain business expenses of reservists, performing artists, and fee-basis government officials. Attach Form 2106 or 2106-EZ	24	
		25	Health savings account deduction. Attach Form 8889	25	

As long as you have worked at least 900 hours this year you are eligible to deduct up to \$250 of unreimbursed educator expenses (\$500 if you and your spouse are both educators and filing jointly.) No itemization is necessary. This deduction can be found on line 23 of Form 1040 or line 16 of Form 1040A.

Form 1040A	Adjusted gross income	16	Educator expenses (see instructions).	16	
		17	IRA deduction (see instructions).	17	

How do I know if it is worth it to itemize?

Itemizing is only beneficial if your eligible deductions on Schedule A add up to more than the standard deduction you are allowed. For example, if you are able to take a mortgage interest deduction of \$5,000, a state income tax deduction of \$900, and also deduct your \$750 in union dues, this would add up to \$6,650. If you are a single taxpayer who is eligible for a \$5,800 standard deduction, in this case you would save more in taxes by itemizing on Schedule A. If the only itemized deduction that you are eligible for is your union dues it will not be worthwhile.

ARLINGTON *Team Hope*

The 5th Annual Gift of HOPE dress down day will be taking place on March 30th. HOPE stands for Helping Others Pursue Education. For the past six years college scholarships have been awarded to over 50 students in the Arlington School District who have suffered the loss of a parent or guardian at some point in their academic endeavors. We currently have 29 graduating seniors who are eligible to receive a scholarship.

Along with our new shirt design we have also decided to continue our tradition of a March Madness basketball tournament. This is an evening filled with fun and excitement that will involve the entire district. This year we will have hamburgers, hot dogs, and sausage and peppers served with a side and a drink available from 4:30pm throughout the entire evening.

We have a round-robin-style basketball tournament, two preliminary games, a consolation game, and the finals. Each game will consist of two ten minute running halves. Doors will open at 4:30pm on March 30th at Arlington High School. Introductions will begin at 6:00pm, with tip-off at 6:30pm. Admission will be \$5.00, or \$3.00 for anyone wearing HOPE apparel!

Order forms will be collected no later than March 2nd. Forms are available at all schools. Please send orders to Marc Provost at AHS through interoffice mail. Cash or checks accepted.

Checks can be made payable to: **Gift of HOPE**

Sent to: **Arlington High School (Attention Marc Provost)**

1157 Route 55, LaGrangeville, NY 12540

All of the proceeds will benefit the students of Arlington High School. Please show your support by ordering a shirt and wearing it on the day of March Madness. All of your continued support and cooperation with this great cause is appreciated. Thank you for your time.

T-SHIRT \$15.00	SIZE: SMALL MEDIUM LARGE X-LARGE XX-LARGE
Quantity: _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
HOODIE S.S. \$30.00	SIZE: SMALL MEDIUM LARGE X-LARGE XX-LARGE
Quantity: _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
LONGSLEEVE \$20.00	SIZE: SMALL MEDIUM LARGE X-LARGE XX-LARGE
Quantity: _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____



NAME: _____ SCHOOL: _____ GRADE: _____

Check or cash for my shirt order is enclosed in the amount of \$ _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

I would like to additionally donate \$ _____ to "The Gift of HOPE" (optional)

2011—2012 ATA Officers

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Bob Maier

First Vice-President

Greg Nieman

Second Vice-President

Edward Hotaling

Treasurer

Kathleen Blank Cicala

Chief Negotiator

Donna Doerrier

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Community Action Chairs

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Éminence Grise

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BES — Anne Schillinger

NES — Elise Pattison

VFES — Pam Goetz

OPS — Anne Marie Beesmer

Traver — Siouxzanne Harris

JDWR — Betsy Marshall

TIS — Sue Ramsden

AMS — Carmine Anastasio

LMS — Jill Freeswick

UVMS — Donna Curran

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@acsdcny.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.

Arlington High

On January 25 band director **Darrell Keech** was sworn in as the president of the New York State Field Band Conference (NYSFBC). Started in 1972, the NYSFBC annually

hosts over 35 contests across NY, culminating with the State Championships in the Carrier Dome at Syracuse University. Keech's responsibilities include scheduling of the circuit, adjudicator management, new director education, rules and regulation enforcement, and public relations.

Social studies teacher **Omer Alptekin** had an op-ed article entitled "Education Reform Needs a Distinct American Focus" published in the *Poughkeepsie Journal* on January 8. In the article Alptekin posits that in order to make our country competitive in today's economy we need to reform our

education system to provide opportunities for every level of student. This would include things like offering more AP classes and also programs for students to attain employable skills without an expensive college degree.

Arlington Middle

English teacher **Kristine Jackson** and special education teacher **Jessica Streck** were recently honored by the Hudson Valley chapter of the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) for their work with their school's Friends of Ryan club. The aim of the club is to promote kindness and raise awareness of bullying.

Race to Nowhere Educates Viewers

Race to Nowhere, like *Waiting for Superman*, is a film that illustrates how students are being poorly served by American public education. In *Waiting for Superman* the focus was on how underprivileged children are caught in a system of poorly performing schools so that their only hope for a quality education is through a lottery for spots at magnet and charter schools. In *Race to Nowhere* the focus is on highly motivated students who get burned out by homework and AP classes as they compete to get into a "good" college.

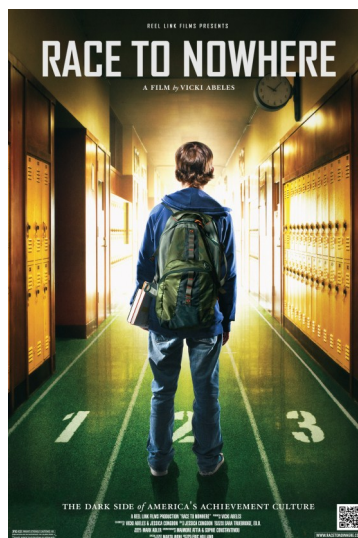
The film takes place largely in California and shows how students have lost their childhoods as a result of the demands of homework. Students resort to cheating, exhibit physical symptoms such as headaches and loss of sleep and depression due to the pressure put on them by parents, school and themselves. The teachers in the film agree that homework is an issue and the byproduct of content heavy curriculums that are "a mile wide and an inch deep." Students, therefore, become data storage machines who

memorize information to spit out on a test but end up with little authentic understanding of the material. Cheating is widespread because what is important is the grade, the number, the class rank, not the process of learning. Students end up being tutored, coached and encouraged to do what may be beyond their ability or developmental stage to comprehend.

Race to Nowhere asks parents and teachers to help students focus on being kids rather than just "doing school." With all the focus on success (as measured by test scores and GPA) to get into a "good" college children have no time to play. Play is a form of creative development that is increasingly being denied children. Failure in this culture of success is not an option, however, failure is one of the most important ways in which young people learn and grow. The film raises these and other important concerns for parents and educators. The solution will require a

rethinking of the entire education system. What do we want children to learn? Are we educating students to be whole people, consumers or employees?

—Julia Bucklin, AHS





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.

Becky & Marc Provost



In April we will celebrate 18 years together! We met while students at Arlington Middle School and dated all through high school at AHS. We had Bob Maier and Ellen McCutcheon as teachers, and both of them allowed us to sit near one another. After

four years of a long distance relationship while completing our undergraduate degrees, we went to graduate school together at Springfield College in Massachusetts. In 2004 we were both hired in Arlington, Marc as a guidance counselor at AHS and Becky as a 4th grade teacher at Vail Farm Elementary. In 2006 we were married after 12 years together. Three years ago we had our first daughter, Gianna, and in May we are expecting a son! We are in the process of planning our dream home to be built in Pleasant Valley, where our children will go through Arlington as well. Neither of us can imagine growing up and learning about love with anyone else!

Jean & Jim DeBonis



Jim and I had been working in the Arlington District for several years, Jim at AMS and me at LMS, but our paths had never crossed. Fortunately, we both requested a transfer to Union Vale

Middle School where we met in September 2004. We got to know each other as we chaperoned concerts together and worked on creating the UVMS yearbook. We were married soon after and even had several of our students attend our wedding! Our son Daniel was born in 2007 and will be starting kindergarten in Arlington this September.



The 2nd Annual Jackie Higgins SPCA Drive is Underway

In 2010, the ATA and community lost a dear friend and life-long supporter with the passing of Jackie Higgins. Jackie had been the ATA's administrative assistant for many years, but she was so much more than that to anyone who knew her. Jackie was an ever-positive person who made the ATA office feel like a home. Visitors were welcomed and greeted as though walking through a family member's door. Even hearing Jackie's voice on the phone was enough to warm the heart of any caller. Though she was not an ATA member, Jackie dedicated her life to our union's cause and its membership. She is dearly missed!

Jackie loved animals, and so we are proud to honor her memory through the 2nd Annual Jackie Higgins Memorial SPCA drive. This is an annual fundraising event that helps us remember Jackie and support a cause she held dear. Starting now we will

be collecting donations for the Dutchess County SPCA. Monetary donations are also welcome and appreciated. If you choose to give money, please make your check out to DCSPCA.

Items to Donate:

- Canned cat and dog food
- Paper Towels
- Cake-sized paper plates
- Bleach
- Non-clumping kitty litter
- Laundry detergent
- Clean, dry towels and blankets
- Hoses and hose nozzles
- Long handled scrub brushes
- Legal sized envelopes
- Sponges or Brillo pads
- Postage stamps
- Garbage bags: 60 gallon size
- Copy paper

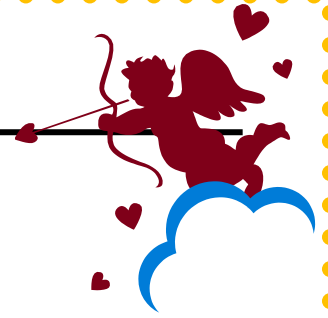
Please place your donations in the boxes labeled "Jackie Higgins SPCA Drive" in your school's mailroom. The drive will run from now through February 22nd.

Thank you for your support of this great cause and for honoring the memory of a wonderful individual, Jackie Higgins.

--John Filor, SPCA Drive Chairperson



Dates to Remember



FEBRUARY

9th—Community Budget Forum, 7 p.m., CAO

14th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432
Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO

17th—Staff Development Day

20th—President's Day—No School

22nd—2nd Annual Jackie Higgins Memorial SPCA Drive ends

28th—Board of Education Meeting/Budget Workshop, 7:30 p.m., CAO

MARCH

2nd—Unity Pub, Location TBA

13th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO

15th—Community Budget Forum, 7 p.m., CAO

20th—Special Assembly Election for 100th and 103rd Districts

27th—Board of Education Meeting/Budget Workshop, 7:30 p.m., CAO



Announcements

The ATA's website has been recently updated. Go to www.arlingtonteachers.com to find:

- Benefit claim forms
- Retirement checklist
- ATA-wear order form
- 2012 tax deduction info
- Committee member lists
- Issues of *The Educator*
- Photos

And much more!

Volunteers are needed to serve dinner at Dutchess Outreach's soup kitchen on

the 2nd Monday and Friday of February, March, April, May & June.

4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

Please email Colleen Napora at cnapora@acsdny.org to sign up.

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

VOTE/COPE Drive is Soon!

The 2011-2012 VOTE/COPE drive will be coming to your school in the near future. Contributions can be given any time to the PAC member at your building or sent to Steve Hertzog at the ATA office.

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.