



# THE EDUCATOR

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

### Collaboration 2

Elementary students are learning science at the high school

### Trivia Challenge

Win an ATA fleece

### PAC Update

Don't forget to vote on March 20 in the special election

### Gift of HOPE 3

This year's basketball tournament in on March 30

### Contract Information

This month's spotlight is on unused snow days

### APPR Advances 4

Articles describe the creation of local assessments and how APPR has developed over the years, and answer some of

### What's Going On? 6

Member accomplishments are highlighted

### Unity Pub 7

See pictures from the recent event

### Calendar and 8

### Announcements

## Don't Worry, Be Happy

On a recent Monday morning I absolutely dreaded getting out of bed to go to work. Not because of the fact that it was not yet light outside, (well, not primarily) but because I had been reading about the new APPR process all weekend in order to write about it for this newsletter. It had become ingrained in my thoughts and was pushing all other aspects of school aside. Value added, student learning objectives, local assessments, and Marzano crowded my brain. How could I face a day where I had to deal with all of that?

I got up and went to school anyway and was miraculously in a better mood by 9 a.m. Once the students got there and I began class it occurred to me that I come to work every day because I enjoy teaching chemistry. My job entails instilling a joy of learning in my students and providing them with knowledge

about a subject I care about. No observation rubric or 20 point score should be able to take that away.

How many of you have been reluctant to go to a job you once loved because it has been complicated by new state legislation? Those of us at Arlington who have felt that way

*My job entails instilling a joy of learning in my students and providing them with knowledge about a subject I care about. No observation rubric or 20 point score should be able to take that away.*

are not alone. The results of the annual MetLife Survey of the American Teacher were recently published in *The New York Times* and *The Huffington Post*. Among other things, the survey found that roughly one in three teachers said they were likely to leave the profession in the next five years over concerns with job security and funding cuts.

I've heard more than one colleague at school voice this same thought and I wonder what we can do to counteract this feeling of hopelessness amongst those in our profession. For me, it has helped to remember why I became a teacher in the first place. Try to focus on the students and not the bureaucracy. If that

is not enough to get you through the day, also remember that the ATA is there for you. We are doing our best to work with the framework of the state regulations to negotiate an APPR plan that is as fair and painless as possible for our teachers. In the following pages you can read about how this is going, along with some positive stories about collaboration among ATA members for the benefit of their students. You know how great teachers can be, even if that is not what you see in the media every day. Keep your chin up!

--Sam Falk, Newsletter Editor

## High School Class Connects With Younger Grades

A new course offered at the high school this year, "Teaching Science Theory and Practice", is not only educating students about the field of teaching, but also allowing for collaboration between the students and teachers of AHS and Arlington's elementary schools.

AHS physics teacher Marc Ouimet is to thank for this opportunity. "A few years ago," he explained, "the district built a K-8 science room at the high school. The room



Photo by Sam Falk

Carrie Green's 4th grade class from Titusville recently visited Marc Ouimet's "Teaching Science" class at the high school and learned about ferns.

was intended to be used by elementary teachers and students so they could do more in

-depth science activities, and have common science experiences across the district. However, given the current economic climate, we do not have the funds to make this happen. AHS teachers Maribel Pregnall and Jacob Lawrence have had some of their students prepare science lessons a few times a year, and I thought, why not have a class that could do that every day?"

See Collaboration on page 2



## Trivia Challenge

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

**What is the airspeed velocity of an unladen swallow?**

Last month's winners, selected at random from among the correct responses received, were **Shaun Boyce** from AHS and **Chris Hopper** from LMS. They correctly identified **Cuba** as the island directly north of Jamaica. They are now the proud owners of ATA fleeces.

Answer this month's question and you could win a fleece too!

Submit your answer to the above trivia question to [rmchugh@acsdny.org](mailto:rmchugh@acsdny.org) by March 30th. Winners will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.

# Political Action Update: March 20 Elections

A special election will be held on March 20 to fill vacancies in the NYS legislature. In the Arlington vicinity one of these vacancies is due to the election last November of Assemblyman Marc Molinaro to the position of Dutchess County Executive. The other vacancy arose upon the death of Assemblyman Thomas Kirwan on November 28. With Molinaro vacating his 103rd district seat and Kirwan's 100th

district seat also being empty most of Dutchess County was left without representation in the State Assembly.

Because New York is currently going through a redistricting process it is possible that boundaries may change before next November's election. Nevertheless, it is still important that candidates who understand the importance of public education are elected, no matter how long they are

likely to serve. NYSUT has endorsed the following candidates based on their stances on education and labor issues.

- **Frank Skartados (D)**  
100th Assembly District
- **Didi Barrett (D)**  
103rd Assembly District.

**Please remember to vote on March 20!**

## Science Class Provides Collaboration Opportunities

*Continued from Front*

And thus the "Teaching Science" class was born. It has attracted students who think that they want to be teachers or work with children in some capacity. There are currently 26 students in the class who, under Ouimet's guidance, first learned about teaching pedagogy, and then began to develop science lessons to teach elementary students.

According to Ouimet, "The biggest problems at the elementary level seem to be access to science equipment, and time to teach science. We can use some of the materials we have here at the high school to do activities they can't easily do at the elementary schools." Last year he asked some elementary teachers which topics they felt they could use the most help with. He then compiled a list of those topics and allowed his students to choose what topic to teach and which grade level to work with.

So far, 13 different elementary classes have come to the high school to participate in the program for one, two, or three days each. By the end of the school year about 35 different elementary classes will have visited Ouimet's class.

Beekman first grade teacher Kim Paesano heard about the program at a meeting of the

district science council. She decided to take her class to learn about heat and energy because

learned about the circulatory system by dissecting chicken hearts.

Ouimet explained that all of his students have work to do, even when they are not teaching. For a lesson like the chicken heart dissection, "To ensure safety, we have the elementary students work in pairs, and there is one high school student assigned to each pair, so this allows about 13 of my students to participate in that class. As we all know, with teaching there is always something to do, even if it is just helping out a colleague. I am trying to get my students to experience and understand many aspects of teaching, and they are finding out just how hard, but rewarding, it really is."

He plans to offer the course again next year and has submitted a grant proposal to get more materials. Fellow AHS physics teacher Gwen Saylor has already secured some funding from Vassar College for this year. Ouimet's goal is to expand the scope of topics that can be taught and to provide even more hands-on activities for the visiting elementary students.

Elementary teachers who are interested in participating in this collaboration opportunity can email Ouimet at [mouimet@acsdny.org](mailto:mouimet@acsdny.org).



Photo by Sam Falk

AHS science teacher Marc Ouimet and TIS 4th grade teacher Carrie Green watch as Ouimet's students teach a lesson to Green's class on March 12th.

of the opportunity for it to be such a good learning experience. She found that, "The kids were excited to visit the high school and interested in learning from the older students."

Vail Farm fifth grade teacher Michael Barley echoed her sentiment by voicing that the advantage of having Ouimet's students teach a science topic instead of doing it himself is that, "It exposed my students to different teaching methods, and they enjoy listening to high school students." Barley's class

# Annual Gift of HOPE Tournament Scores for Charity

On March 30, The Gift of HOPE (Helping Others Pursue Education) will host its 5th annual March Madness Tournament with the goal of raising money to award scholarships to graduating seniors who have suffered the loss of a parent or guardian at any point in their lifetime. All of the money raised at the tournament, the accompanying district-wide dress down day, and all the other HOPE fundraisers during the year will be divided evenly to all eligible graduates. In the past six years approximately \$40,000 in scholarship money has been awarded to over 50 students. This year alone there are 29 graduating seniors eligible to receive a scholarship.

This year's basketball tournament will have its tip off at 6:15 p.m. and will con-

sist of two preliminary games, a consolation game, and then the finals. All games



will have two ten-minute running halves, with a five-minute intermission between each game. For the past two years over 60 faculty members have played in the

games. This year teams consisting of over 40 faculty members from AHS, UVMS, LMS, AMS and ASM will be participating.

There are also two new additions to this year's Day of HOPE. Doors will open at 4:30 p.m. for a barbeque outside the main entrance of the high school with Cafeterias A and B available for seating. Plates will be sold for \$3, \$4, or \$5 that will include a hot dog, hamburger, or sausage and peppers with a side and a drink.

HOPE will also be "joining hands" with the Friends of Rachel club. During the course of the evening, you can paint your hands on the "Hall of Hands" at AHS. One hand costs \$3 and a pair is \$5. Proceeds will benefit both Friends of Rachel and the Gift of HOPE.



Photo courtesy of Diana Judge

## DCSPCA Drive is a Success

As a result of the 2nd Annual Jackie Higgins Memorial SPCA drive, held in February, the ATA was able to donate two carloads of supplies and over \$700 to the DCSPCA. Members of the PR team pictured with the donations are (from left to right) Dianne Blazek (OPS), Diana Judge (Traver), Kristi Bogaczyk (ATA), Kristine Jackson (AMS), Debbie McCaffery (ASM), and Heather Blatz (TIS).

The next charity drive will be the Thanksgiving in April event, which will run from April 9 to April 25. Nonperishable items and monetary donations will be collected to benefit Dutchess Outreach, the Trinity Food Pantry, and the Pleasant Valley Food Bank.

# Spotlight on the Contract: Unused Snow Days

Each issue of The Educator spotlights a particular provision 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](mailto:sfalk@acsdny.org).

"Effective July 1, 2009, the work year of teachers (other than new personnel, who may be required to attend additional orientation sessions) will be 182 work days, at least one of which shall be used by the District for professional activities which do not involve student contact and will not be scheduled prior to Labor Day. The work year of teachers shall not begin earlier than one day prior to the first day that students are required to report at the opening of school."

**Explanation:** According to this provision of the ATA contract (Article XII, page 16), the length of the work year for teachers is set at 182 days. This means that teachers would have to be compensated for any days worked beyond that number. When the district calendar is set each year five additional days are added to the schedule to account for days off due to inclement weather. If these days are not taken off because of weather they must be scheduled as days off in the spring in order to keep the total number of work days at 182. Although the district calendar only states when the first two of the days are given back (April 9 and 10), any other unused snow days will also be accounted for. If necessary, a decision will be made by the ATA and the district after spring break as to when those days will take place.

# APPR Process Moves Forward

## *Committee Meets to Make Decisions About Local Assessments*

One of the portions of the APPR system that must be collectively bargained is the local assessment, which will count for 20% of the total evaluation. A committee was recently chosen in order to accomplish this task. The Local Assessment Committee held its first meeting on February 22 at Central Office. Three groups of teachers were present: one representing all Arlington elementary schools, one representing ELA teachers from the three middle schools, and one representing math teachers from the three middle schools. Central Office staff members Christine Lowden, Lynn Rafalik, Dawn Galente, Margaret Ruller, and Audrey Roettgers, principals Dan Shornstein and Steve Kerins, and ATA first vice president Greg Nieman were also present.

The committee reviewed the NYS APPR regulations, explored options for local assessments, and drafted a proposal for what to use as the method of assessment. They were asked to review the NYSED website's information on local assessments before this meeting. Five options for the local assessment were given by the state:

- Use state tests (but use the data in a different way than the first 20% they must count toward)
- Use third party or pre-made assessments
- Create locally developed assessments
- Use school-wide measures
- Use student learning objectives (SLOs are academic goals set for students representing the most important learning goals for the course.)

The ELA group decided to make their own assessment instead of going with a pre-made one. It would be given in June and would take the place of whatever final exam teachers are now

giving in their classrooms. They favored choosing to create their own exam because they felt their own exam would test what the students had really learned in their classrooms all year long. In addition, at some point in the future, they would have to create a diagnostic test to be used in September that could show students' growth throughout the year.

The math group discussed using the pilot assessments created last summer that align with the Common Core Standards. These would have to be modified so that they are multiple

***The teachers who attended the March 7 meeting were asked to share the drafts of these local assessments with their colleagues and principals and present any feedback by March 23. Another half-day meeting will be planned for some time after March 23 to finish the assessments.***

choice and could be graded using a Scantron form. The reason they chose this form of assessment was that teachers felt it was the fairest means of assessing the students given the timeframe we have to work in. They chose not to buy assessments because they didn't feel it would be appropriate since the math standards are changing as of September 2012.

The elementary group considered that each of the choices had a downside. In the end, the Terra Nova Survey tests were discussed as possibly being doable given the limited time frame, but only if accommodations could be made for below grade-level students. There was also discussion about looking at computer-based local assessments for future use that would give students a fairer experience. These programs would establish a baseline of student performance in the beginning of the year and then monitor student growth. Arlington would have to be technologically prepared for this with appropriate hardware and computer facilities.

The committee convened on the 22nd with the plan of returning to their buildings and getting feedback from their colleagues in order to further define the work plan. For the next meeting of the committee on Wednesday, March 7, they recommended that there be one person per grade level, per building present, including special education teachers.

On March 7, after getting positive feedback from teachers in their schools, the elementary group reconvened and listened to a presentation from a Terra Nova representative. It was decided

that a shortened version of the test, the Terra Nova Survey, would be given to fourth and fifth grade students during the third week of May with results to be returned a week later.

During their meeting on March 7, three teams of ELA teachers representing grades 6, 7, and 8 came close to completing the local assessments

they will give this June. The exams are made up of reading passages, poems, and some general English questions.

During the math team's meeting on the 7th a new 25 question multiple choice test was created since some schools had already given the Common Core pilot assessments this year. The new tests were created using ExamView Pro since the team felt this was the most unbiased and fairest way to do it. Each grade will decide on the date to give the test since all buildings have different activities ongoing.

The teachers who attended the March 7 meeting were asked to share the drafts of these local assessments with their colleagues and principals and present any feedback by March 23. Another half-day meeting will be planned for some time after March 23 to finish the assessments.

--Local Assessment Committee members  
Dana Newsom (LMS),  
Tracey Jaehnert (LMS), and  
Michael Yarmosky (ASM)

# APPR Through the Years

2009

*July 29* - President Obama announces the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative designed to spur innovation and reform in K-12 education at the state level.

2010

*May 28* - NY Education Law 3012-c is signed by Governor Paterson. It implements a new system of annual professional performance reviews (APPR) for educators.

*August 24* - New York is among the winners announced for Phase 2 of the RTTT competition. \$700 million is awarded.

2011

*June 28* - NYSUT files suit against the NYS Board of Regents and Education Commissioner John King, declaring that the May 2011 regulations violate state law and exceed the Regents' authority.

*May 16* - The NYS Board of Regents adopts regulations designed to set the rules for the new APPR system.

*August 24* - The Albany County Supreme Court rules largely in favor of NYSUT in their case against NYS. NYSED immediately files an appeal.

2012

*January 17* - Governor Cuomo presents his budget that gives a 4% increase in state aid only to schools that adopt an APPR plan consistent with the 2010 law. He gives NYSUT and NYSED 30 days to settle their lawsuit before he imposes his own solution.

*February 16* - NYSUT reaches an agreement with NYSED to end their ongoing lawsuit. Governor Cuomo proposes budget legislation to amend Education Law 3012-c to reflect the agreed upon changes.

## Your APPR Questions Answered

Although APPR legislation has been in place for almost two years it has been poorly defined by the state and has changed repeatedly. New questions arise every day as we try to follow the law that has been set for this year and consider how it will affect us next year. The following is an attempt to answer some questions recently submitted by ATA members.

### How does the APPR framework apply to non-classroom teachers ?

The only ATA members who will not be evaluated under the new APPR system are those in pupil-personnel services, such as social workers and guidance counselors. They will continue to use the same system that has been used in previous years. Since the new APPR system can only accommodate one teacher as the "teacher of record" for computing a student growth score, all teachers who are not labeled as such (i.e. - speech teachers, library media specialists, etc.) will need to complete a SLO (Student Learning Objective) that is based on the main learning objectives of the course. The terms of this will be collaboratively developed between each teacher and his or her administrator.

### The newest APPR regulations say that at least one observation must be unannounced. How will that work?

Although one observation each year will have to be unannounced, there is no other aspect of it that is legislated. It does not have to count for as many points as the announced observations we are doing this year, and obviously cannot follow the same rubric. NYSUT gives examples of schools who notify teachers that this observation will happen during a specific two week period (so, not completely unannounced), and schools who have the unannounced observation be of a shorter duration than the formal, pre-planned observation. The ATA has not yet negotiated the terms of next year's APPR agreement. All options will be considered in order to make the best decision for our members.

## 2011—2012 ATA Officers

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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](mailto: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.

### Arlington Middle

Music teacher **Michael Siless** was the site-chair of this year's DCMEA Elementary All-County Music Festival, held on February 24 and 25 at AMS. He is also the site-chair of this year's NYSSMA Solo Festival, which will be held on March 23 and 24 at AMS.

### Beekman

Fourth grade teacher **Lynn Grainger** had a unique way for her class to observe Leap Day. For them February 29 was a day focused on the number 465, much the way students focus on the number 100 on the hundredth day of school in grades 1 and 2. Students built their own place value blocks and created word problems based on the number, among other activities.

### Noxon Road

Social Worker **Susan Grencer** organized a school wide "Friendship Week". The week began with a kick-off assembly and read-aloud which highlighted what it means to be a good friend. Then, every student made a link for a friendship chain to be put on display in the lobby that tells something about friendship. Throughout the rest of the week, the students heard inspirational quotes during the morning an-

Traver Road teachers **Siouxzanne Harris (left)** and **Janice Zafonte (right)** actively participate in the **Healthy Heart Walking Challenge** at their school.

### Traver Road

To celebrate American Heart Month teachers **Kate Choromanski** and **Debbie Easton** have launched the 2nd annual Healthy Heart Walking Challenge at Traver Road Primary School. Teams of

two have been formed and each team member is wearing a pedometer to keep track of his or her steps. The goal of the competition is to see which team can collectively walk the most steps during the six week challenge. At the end of the challenge the top three teams will win prizes and a donation to the American Heart Association will be made.



Photo by Kate Choromanski

nouncements, participated in a daily friendship challenge, and signed a friendship pledge. The students also dressed up for "Have a Heart Day", "Kind Words" t-shirt day, and Noxon Pride Day.

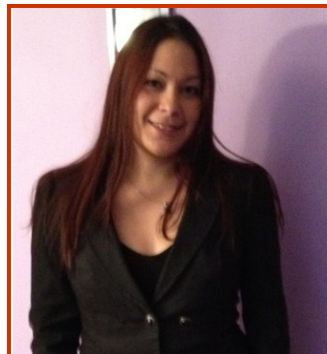
Teachers **Nicolle McMorris** and **Donna Piehler** led the kindergarten classes in an effort to collect 100 cans of food in honor of the 100th Day of School. As a 100th Day activity, the students counted, sorted, and graphed the number of cans. Some of the cans were donated to Noxon families in need and the rest went to a

local food bank.

### Union Vale Middle

As a complete departure from her everyday role as a social worker who serves as an advocate for children, **Paula Dante** is now in rehearsal for a musical version of *Jane Eyre* in which she will play Mrs. Reed, Jane's very cruel aunt. The show, which will take place at the end of April in New Paltz, is a production of Ninety Miles Off Broadway, a community theater company which is over 40 years old. The aim of the company is to promote the reading of good literature among young people.

Please join the ATA in welcoming another new teacher !



**Melissa Meneses-  
Tirado**

OPS/NOX—ESL

Favorite Book: *My Sister's Keeper*, by Jodi Picoult

Favorite Food: Seafood

# Unity Pub Raises Spirits

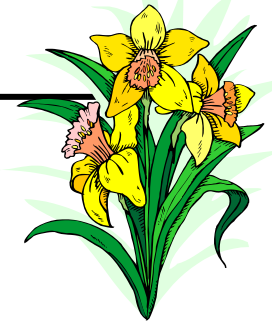


The second ATA Unity Pub of the school year was held at Billy Bob's BBQ in Poughkeepsie on Friday, March 9. Over 80 members enjoyed free appetizers and drink specials along with the company of colleagues from other schools whom they might not otherwise see. Sponsored by the LAP program, the Unity Pub events are meant to help boost morale and camaraderie, especially in the recent climate of negativity toward teachers. In such a big school district it is important for ATA members from all schools to have the opportunity to get to know one another after the school day ends.



Photos by Siouzxanne Harris

# Dates to Remember



## MARCH

- 15th—Community Budget Forum, 7 p.m., CAO
- 20th—Special Assembly Election for 100th and 103rd Districts
- 24th—District Art Fair, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., LMS
- 27th—Board of Education Meeting/Budget Workshop, 7:30 p.m., CAO
- 30th—5th Annual Gift of HOPE Basketball Tournament, 4:30 p.m., AHS

## APRIL

- 2-6th—Spring Break
- 9th—Thanksgiving in April drive begins
- 10th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO
- 17th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432
- 24th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO
- 25th—Thanksgiving in April drive ends
- 28th—Rebuilding Together Dutchess County



## MAY

- 8th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO
- 12th—Arlington Children's Bike Rally and Car Seat Check, AMS

# Announcements

This year the ATA will be helping our community by taking part in Rebuilding Together Dutchess County on April 28. No skills are necessary, just the desire to help others! Volunteers are needed to aid in the renovation of a house in our area. More information can be found at [www.rebuildingtogetherdutchess.org](http://www.rebuildingtogetherdutchess.org). Contact Laura DiStefano at [ldistefano@acsdny.org](mailto:ldistefano@acsdny.org) with any questions, or to volunteer.

**Please consider volunteering to serve dinner at Dutchess Outreach's soup kitchen. The ATA is committed to being there on the 2nd Monday and Friday of every month from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Email Colleen Napora at [cnapora@acsdny.org](mailto:cnapora@acsdny.org) to sign up.**

*Volunteers are needed to help out from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Children's Bike Rally and Car Seat Check that will be held at AMS on May 12. The event will feature safety checks, tire inflation and a children's bike course. Contact Laura DiStefano at [ldistefano@acsdny.org](mailto:ldistefano@acsdny.org) to volunteer. Bring your friends and family!*

**Visit [www.arlingonteachers.com](http://www.arlingonteachers.com) for benefits information, forms, and ATA photos!**