



# THE EDUCATOR

Newsletter of the Arlington Teachers' Association

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## Support the School Budget on May 15

This year's school budget vote will take place on Tuesday, May 15. The support of every ATA member is vital to ensure a positive outcome to the long budget process. If you do not live in the district it is important that you talk to your friends and family who do and encourage them to get out and vote on the 15th. Make sure to tell them why passage of the budget is important to you and how it will benefit the children of the district.

This year's budget process has been relatively quiet with no substantial cuts being threatened, unlike the past few years. Because of this, and the lowest tax levy increase in the past 15 years being offered (1.998%), there is a real fear that potential "yes" voters may feel complacent and stay home. As a result, we need to make sure to get all of our supporters

out to the polls.

If the school budget does not pass after two attempts this year the new state regulations dictate that the district would



have to pare the budget down to a 0% tax levy increase. That would mean cutting an additional \$2.9 million. If that were to happen the value of an Arlington education would definitely be compromised and many jobs would be lost. The district has identified the fol-

lowing areas as potential ways to reduce spending if necessary:

- Eliminate middle school teaming (12 FTE)
- Eliminate 30% of high school/middle school extra-curricular activities (8 FTE)
- Eliminate 30% of high school non-mandated classes (10 FTE)
- Eliminate four high school guidance counselors
- Reduce the number of assistant principals

You can help prevent these cuts from taking place just by spreading the word and reminding everyone you know in the Arlington district to vote.

More information about the budget, bus proposition, and school board candidates can be found at [www.arlingtonschools.com](http://www.arlingtonschools.com) or [www.arlingtonbudgetfacts.com](http://www.arlingtonbudgetfacts.com).

## State Regulations are Testing Our Patience

In this article about the most recent round of state tests we could talk about pineapples with no sleeves and math questions with no answers, but the media has been doing a pretty good job of covering the more flashy issues that have arisen. Everyone can agree that

questions on tests being used to rate both teachers and stu-

dents need to make sense and have correct answers.



Photo Courtesy of Anne Schillinger  
Faculty and staff at Beekman Elementary wore black on the final day of state testing this year to protest the exorbitant length of the testing process.

What we need to talk about are all of the other issues that

are obvious to those teachers who have given these tests

that the outside world has not been privy to. Where to start? The challenges that you have found in trying to get an eight year old to sit still for a 90 minute test six days in a row? The other issues with the quality of these secure tests that you're not allowed to talk about? How about the other

great things you would be See Tests on page 2

## Trivia Challenge

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

### What is the state flower of New York?

Last month's winners, selected at random from among the correct responses received, were **Tara Paradise Dwyer** from Traver and **Heather Dennis** from UVMS. They correctly identified roughly 11 m/s as the airspeed velocity of an unladen swallow (though it does matter if it is African or European.) Each is now the proud owner of an ATA fleece. Answer this month's question and you could win ATA gear too!

Submit your answer to the above trivia question to [rmchugh@acsdny.org](mailto:rmchugh@acsdny.org) by May 25th. Winners will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.

# State Regulations are Testing Our Patience

*Continued from Front* doing in the classroom if you didn't have to spend so much time on test preparation, administration, and grading?

You didn't become a teacher to give tests; you became a teacher to teach. According to Lynn Grainger (BES), "My job satisfaction has decreased. As a 28 year veteran teacher, I know I love teaching. This year I've lost three of the best weeks of the year for project-based learning about birds and plants to the tests. That's the biggest loss for my third graders. Renewing the enthusiasm for learning after such a monotonous grueling process will be challenging."

We are not saying that students should never take tests, but when they do they should be appropriate in scope and length and not take away from

*If you would like your opinion on this year's state math and ELA tests heard, visit [www.nysut.com](http://www.nysut.com) and click on the Survey link on the top right of the page.*

the learning experience. Anne Schillinger (BES) summed up the frustration of her colleagues by asking, "How many days of 90 minute exams does it take to test a kid to see if they know how to read and write and do math?" Grainger added, "A vid-

eo camera would have informed any legislator that six days of 90 minute tests is not appropriate, as children squirmed in their seats, requested to leave and created interesting playthings out of erasers and pencils."

If you would like your opinion on this year's state math and ELA tests heard, visit [www.nysut.com](http://www.nysut.com) and click on the "Survey" link on the top right of the page. NYSUT has already written a letter to State Ed with some concerns, but they need your help to get as much information as possible to pass along. Let's make sure that our state legislators know the whole story.

## New CAC Co-Chair Wants to Make a Difference

I would like to thank everyone who voted in the election for the position of ATA Second Vice President last month. It is encouraging that a large majority of our friends and colleagues took the time to make their voices count in the election. There is another very important vote coming up on May 15th. I hope that 100% of our members participate in the school budget votes in their home districts.

The ATA leadership has asked me if I would fill the position of CAC (Community Action Committee) Co-Chair. It is the position that Steve Hertzog will be leaving as he takes on the responsibilities of Second Vice President. I agreed to accept the position for the same reason that I decided to run for a leadership position within the ATA. After witnessing the negative impact that 10 years of misguided education policies have had on the lives of students and teachers in our schools, especially in grades three through eight, I feel a

responsibility to take action. I know that my voice alone is unlikely to make much of a difference in the ongoing debate over the future of public education in this country. After all, I do not have great wealth and I am not the son or daughter of the political elite. What I do

not improve current educational or future career opportunities for our children. In fact, here in New York State our students were making better progress before we started wasting our precious time and money on yearly testing. I know that it will take more than my one small voice to make a difference. It will take a large community of voices to reverse the failed policies of top down "education reform" and begin an honest dialogue about education that includes the voices of teachers, parents and students.

Fortunately in the last year or so there have been an increasing number of parent-teacher-student grassroots organizations building coalitions and working together to end the education policies of the past decade.

If, like me, you are interested in saving our schools from the corporate-driven "education reform" of the past 10 years there a few websites you might want to check out (see the fact box above.)

Visit these websites to find organizations working toward grassroots education reform:

<http://parentsacrossamerica.org/>

<http://www.dianeravitch.com/index.html>

<http://www.saveourschoolsmarch.org/>

have is determination coupled with a desire to push back against education policies that have led to the creation of personal wealth for a few in the testing industry at the expense of our children's education and their future.

It has been more than 10 years since NCLB was signed into law. The research has been done. Data has been collected. It turns out that yearly "high stakes" standardized tests do

--Betsy Marshall, JDWR

# APPR Questions Abound; Answers are Less Abundant

As all ATA members are aware, New York State's new Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) system was mandated to begin this year for 4th through 8th grade ELA and math teachers and next year for all other classroom teachers. Although we are almost done with the school year many questions remain, especially for those who will be rated this year under the new system. While the state has recently put out some new guidelines, many issues remain unexplained. The following is an attempt to answer some questions that members have recently submitted.

**If you are a special ed teacher, can you be observed as the teacher of record of a subject you are not certified in? For example, a 7th grade English or math class if your certification is Special Ed K-12?**

The short answer is yes. According to the state's guidelines, the teacher of

record is defined as "an individual who has been assigned responsibility for a student's learning..." The guidelines also state that, "For non-assessment measures, like classroom observation, evaluators should consider all students in the class to be that teacher's responsibility during the observation..." Certification is not a criterion for being assigned as a teacher of record or to decide which class a teacher should be observed in.

**What are those SLOs that I keep hearing about?**

SLO stands for "Student Learning Objective." Any teacher who does not teach a subject with a state-provided measure of student growth (i.e. - everyone other than 4th through 8th grade math and ELA teachers) must have a SLO for the 20% student growth portion of their evaluation. This SLO will be a docu-

ment that the teacher creates (according to guidelines set forth by the state, the district, and the school) that consists of information for each course he or she teaches about the students in the course, the major learning goals of the course, and a specific and measurable goal for student achievement. How well this goal is met will translate into a score for the teacher. For subjects with a Regents exam the course goal must be tied to student scores on that test.

The state is in the process of putting forth more guidelines for issues such as who sets the SLO goals and the corresponding numerical scores for the teacher. The ATA will work to clarify this process as much as possible in the coming months. For more information about SLOs and all other APPR matters, go to [www.engageny.org](http://www.engageny.org) or email [ataupdate@gmail.com](mailto:ataupdate@gmail.com) with your questions.

**New ATA-logo items are available!**



Find the order form on our webpage to see the new aprons and workout shirts, plus end-of-winter clearance prices!

## Rubric Evaluation Committee is Formed

Now that the school year is almost over it is time to re-evaluate the tenets of our one year APPR agreement in order to make decisions as to what parts of it should be kept for next year and what parts should be amended. The ATA leadership has formed a committee of teachers from all schools in order to evaluate the possibility of changing from the Marzano observation rubric to the one written by Charlotte Danielson. Contrary to what is being heard in some buildings, no decision has been made yet and it is up to the ATA to determine which rubric is best for Arlington. At the first committee meeting on May 3 members were given copies of the compete Marzano and Danielson rubrics to read and talk over with their colleagues. The next meeting will take place on May 21 to discuss their findings. For more information about available rubrics go to [www.engageny.org](http://www.engageny.org) or email [ataupdate@gmail.com](mailto:ataupdate@gmail.com) with any questions.

## Spotlight on the Contract: Leave of Absence for Public Office

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](mailto:sfalk@acsdny.org).

- "1. Subject to the provisions of this section, the District shall grant a leave of absence not exceeding two (2) years, without pay or increments, to a teacher to campaign for or serve in public office.
2. Eligibility under this Section E shall be limited to tenured teachers with five (5) or more years of service in the District. The "public office" for which leave is requested must be one which requires a full-time presence (for example, the State Assembly) as opposed to a part-time presence (for example, a school board)."

**Explanation:** This provision (Article XVII, page 25) states that tenured teachers are eligible for a leave of absence to run for a full-time public office as long as they have been with the district for at least five years. While this leave is unpaid, upon his or her return the teacher will be placed on the salary schedule he or she would have achieved in the year immediately following the commencement of the leave of absence.



# 2012 NYSUT RA Enlightens Attendees

The 2012 NYSUT Representative Assembly (RA) took place in Buffalo on March 26, 27, and 28. ATA delegates to this annual con-



Photo by Donna Doerrier

ATA Second Vice President Ed Hotaling (right) and ATA Second Vice President-Elect Steve Hertzog attended the 2012 NYSUT RA.

vention were Bob Maier, Donna Doerrier, Ed Hotaling, and Steve Hertzog.

There are multiple purposes

of this convention. The first is to bring together delegates from each local in New York to hear reports directly from each of the NYSUT officers, as well as be addressed by elected officials. We heard positive and encouraging speeches from Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, AFT President Randi Weingarten, NEA President Dennis VanRoekel, NYS AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento, members of the NYS Assembly from western New York,



Photo by Donna Doerrier

ATA President Bob Maier (left) had a nice conversation with the president of the Sweet Home Education Association at the NYSUT Representative Assembly.

Buffalo's Mayor Byron Brown, and other "friends of education". Many of these individuals believe that education is the key to "Reclaiming The Dream" (which was the theme of this year's RA) and were very supportive of our work and sympathetic to our daily life.

Delegates have a chance to do some networking and work in committees to form resolutions and amendments to the NYSUT constitution to set the future direction of

our statewide union. The RA is also a time to celebrate the accomplishments of members who have won awards such as "Teacher of the Year" and recognition of new National Board certified teachers. The ATA was proud to take home the Solidarity Award for Journalism. We are one of three locals in the state to receive top honors for our fantastic publication, "The Educator".

One event of this year's RA which left a lasting impression was the address given by New York State Education Commissioner John King. The commissioner of education is invited to address the delegates every year, and King's predecessors would also take advantage of this opportunity. These speeches

were rarely the highlight of the session and often were great opportunities to

stretch our legs or go to the bathroom. King accepted the invitation to address the RA in a year when frustration and anger over assessments, budget cuts, and changes in APPR had the whole convention hall seeing red. Just moments before King took the podium, NYSUT Vice President Maria Neira's speech had the crowd shouting "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not gonna take it anymore!". The rookie commissioner provided a brief autobiographical speech and explanation of his philosophy regarding the role of his position and the education department. King then did something no speaker has ever done at the RA: with an audience of about 2000, Commissioner King opened the floor to a question and answer session which was moderated by NYSUT President Dick Ianuzzi.

Delegates lined up at the microphones throughout the convention hall floor to fire tough criticisms, questions, and comments at the figurehead of their frustrations. NYSUT members wanted to know how King was going to manage the business of assessment, harness the beast of APPR, and take responsibility for his department's missteps. One member even called for his resignation. King responded to each individual question or comment for about a half hour, and overall the exchange was very professional, albeit tense. Many gave the commissioner credit for this gutsy move, though he left the room gaining few new friends. Throughout his responses he tried to be reassuring that we are all in

*NYSUT members wanted to know how [John] King was going to manage the business of assessment, harness the beast of APPR, and take responsibility for his department's missteps. One member even called for his resignation.*

this for the well-being of the students of New York state and that all education department policies and procedures will be continually im-

proved to meet that end. The interactions that take place during the Representative Assembly are truly critical to the functional operation of NYSUT and the locals that comprise it. ATA President Bob Maier had many opportunities in his "Presidents' sessions" the day before the rest of the delegates arrived to participate in meetings and workshops with all of the NYSUT officers, and some officers of the AFT, including President Randi Weingarten. Our ATA contingent met delegates from other parts of the state who were all dealing with similar challenges to ours. Your ATA delegates return from this convention informed and re-energized to help our organization meet the challenges ahead.

--Steve Hertzog, CAC Co-Chair



# The Arlington Teachers' Association 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Miniature Golf Outing

For the benefit of the Arlington Education Foundation

Bring the whole family for a day of Miniature Golf, Free Food, Music, Crafts, Prizes, Raffles, and Lots of Fun!

\$8.00 per player

Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup> 11am–2pm

Overlook Golf Center

DeGarmo Road, Poughkeepsie

**NEW! Register by May 28th and registration is only \$7.00 per player PLUS you will receive an additional door prize ticket on the day of the event!**

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### Registration

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Players: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

*Make checks payable to: Arlington Teachers' Association*

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**PLEASE RETURN THIS REGISTRATION FORM AND FEE IN AN ENVELOPE MARKED, "ATA MINI-GOLF" TO THE MAIN OFFICE OF YOUR SCHOOL BUILDING OR SEND DIRECTLY TO:**

**Arlington Teachers' Association, 46 Davis Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603**

**NO TICKETS WILL BE ISSUED.**

**Simply check in at the registration table on the day of the event!**




Sponsored By:


Arlington Parent Teacher Association, Arlington Teachers' Association, Raymond Opticians

## Come to the 2012 Recognition Dinner!

On Friday, June 15th, the ATA will hold its annual recognition dinner/dance. The evening provides an opportunity to recognize and say goodbye to those who have decided to retire. The event will be from 6:30–11:30 p.m. at Christos, with dinner at 7:30 p.m. The cost is \$48.00 per person, which includes hors d'oeuvres, dinner, and a cash bar.



**New teachers — fill out the entry form at right to enter a raffle for two free tickets!**



**ENTRY FORM**

2 Free Tickets to the ATA Recognition Party

*You must be in your first three years of teaching at Arlington to be eligible.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Send completed form through interoffice mail to the ATA Office.

# What's Going On?

## 2011—2012 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

### Editorial Assistant

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 — Sue Ramsden

AMS — Carmine Anastasio

LMS — Jill Freeswick

UVMS — Donna Curran

AHS — Steve Hertzog

AHS — Noreen Mills Martin

"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@acsdeny.org](mailto:sfalk@acsdeny.org). We can't know what's going on at all of your schools without your help!

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

### LaGrange Middle

Music teacher Cassie Leonard recently organized a fundraising concert by Cornell University's a capella group, Ithacapella, to help the family of Bill Adams, an Arlington parent who is undergoing treatment for a form of blood cancer. Ithacapella also present-

ed two assemblies and a workshop for students to learn their craft.

### Union Vale Middle

The 8th grade math classes held their first Pi Day on March 14, 2012. The students participated in various activities in our library. One of the activities included a canned food drive that was used for a measuring activity. For fun and refreshments, the students brought in round dessert items (way too much to eat.) The students were so generous that a jam-packed SUV full of food donations was delivered to Dutchess Outreach that very day. The staff at Dutchess Outreach said that the dessert items were especially appreciated since they are not the norm. Our students got to have fun with math and enjoy Pi Day and the chil-

dren of Poughkeepsie also benefited from the generosity and success of the day. We hope to make this an annual event!

--Kathy Falcone

### Vail Farm

Members of the school staff and community raised money and fielded a team at this year's March Hoops for Hope tournament in honor of Cathi DeLeon, the school's administrative assistant to the Principal, and 12-year breast cancer survivor. The Miles of Hope Breast Cancer Foundation was established to fund support services for people fighting breast cancer in the Hudson Valley. They hold numerous events per year to raise money to support the foundation's activities, including the Hoops for Hope basketball tournament.

## ATA Aids Community Organization

In its latest effort to support the Arlington community the ATA joined forces with the Dutchess County affiliate of the national organization Rebuilding Together. According to their website, the mission of Rebuilding Together Dutchess County (RTDC) is "To preserve and revitalize houses and communities in Dutchess County, assuring that low-income homeowners, particularly those who are elderly, with disabilities, or have school-aged children, live in warmth, safety, and independence." While as educators we support families during the school day, joining with this organization was a chance to make a difference with their home lives also.

This year the ATA was able to help RTDC by donating money to sponsor a building site, and through the labor of three of our members, Kat Spinelli (AMS), Judy McGuire (ASM), and Betsy Dennis (UVMS). The site selected by RTDC for this

year's work on National Rebuilding Day (April 28) was right down the road from the ATA's office on Davis Avenue in the Town of Poughkeepsie.

Some of the work that needed to be done included painting, cleaning gutters, repairing the front steps, installing a railing, and other general maintenance. McGuire had the job of staining the back porch. She states, "I would definitely do it again! Mrs. Scano, the women whose house we worked on, is expecting me to come back so she can make me dinner. She was adorable and extremely thankful."

The ATA's next community service effort will be its annual trash cleanup along route 55. Starting this year each school will take a turn at the cleanup in the spring and fall on a rotating basis. On May 19 it is the high school's turn to do their part in improving the Arlington community.



Photo by Susan Artuz

ATA members Kat Spinelli (AMS) (front left), Judy McGuire (ASM) (front center), and Betsy Dennis (UVMS) (front right) joined other volunteers to help make repairs to a home on Davis Avenue in the Arlington school district.



# Events Give Students in Need Some HOPE

This year's Gift of HOPE basketball game was held on March 30. Event coordinator Marc Provost (AHS) would like to extend "a giant thank you" to everyone who "helped, attended, volunteered, and donated time, energy, and effort to make it possible." According to Provost, "From the commercials on the morning announcements, to the barbecue, all aspects of the night were a success. Between the dress-down day, all of the concessions, admission, raffles, the senior class' donation, and the Friends of Rachel contribution, The Gift of HOPE was able to raise approximately \$11,000 throughout the course of the night. Many special thank yous go out to all of our sponsors, our DJ Chris Benedetto, who has donated his time for the past four years, the ATA who sponsored our uniforms, and to all of the students for showing their support." Although this year's event raised almost twice as much as last year's, more money is needed to adequately fund scholarships for this year's graduating seniors who have lost a parent or guardian. Two more Gift of HOPE events are planned for this month. There will be a faculty talent show taking place in the auditorium at AHS at 7 p.m. on Friday, May 18, and the 5th annual Car, Truck, and Auto Show will be held at 12 p.m. on May 19th (rain date of May 20th) at AHS. Come and show your support.



**Team UVMS**



**Team LMS**



**Team AMS/ASM**

**This year's HOPE basketball game raised over \$11,000. In the final game Team AHS beat Team LMS with a score of 47 - 11.**

**Team AHS**



# Dates to Remember



## MAY

### 15th—School Budget Vote

ATA Executive Council Session, 4 p.m., AHS room 1432

18th—Faculty Talent Show to Benefit HOPE, 7 p.m., AHS Auditorium

19th—Spring Highway Cleanup, 8 a.m., AHS

Car, Truck, and Bike Show to Benefit HOPE, 12 p.m., AHS

22nd—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO

25th-28th—Memorial Day Weekend, No School



## JUNE

5th—ATA Executive Council Session, 4 p.m., AHS room 1432

9th—Relay for Life, 10 a.m. - 10 p.m., AHS Track

ATA Miniature Golf Outing, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m., Overlook Golf Center

12th—Last Day of Classes, AHS

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

15th—ATA Recognition Dinner, 6:30 p.m., Christos

21st—Last Day of Classes, Elementary & Middle Schools

26th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO



# Announcements

This year's date for ATA Night at the Renegades is Monday, July 23rd. Ticket order forms can be found on our web page.

The 2nd annual golf outing to support the AHS football program will be held on Saturday, May 19 at James Baird State Park. There will be a 1 p.m. shotgun start following registration and a barbecue lunch at noon. The cost is \$125 per golfer. Go to the AHS web page for more information or contact Vinny Martin at 845-214-6162.

After having some fun at the ATA's annual mini-golf event on June 9, come out to the high school track to participate in Relay for Life! Join us in walking around the track from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. to raise money for cancer research. There will be food, games, and activities for the whole family! Go to [www.relayforlife.org/arlingtonhighschoolny](http://www.relayforlife.org/arlingtonhighschoolny) for more information or to register your team.

**Check out the ATA webpage at [www.arlingonteachers.com](http://www.arlingonteachers.com) for photos, contact information, benefits forms, issues of *The Educator* and more.**