



THE EDUCATOR

Newsletter of the Arlington Teachers' Association

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Back-to-School Time Brings Changes

Back-to-school time is upon us again, and as with every year, it brings many changes. Some changes are simply those small personal recalibrations we always must make after the summer: setting the alarm for an ungodly hour, planning ahead to pack a lunch every day, getting our feet used to dress shoes again after a few months of only flip-flops and sneakers.

Other district-wide changes, though significant, have become almost routine because they seem to happen so often now: new math and ELA curricula, new state tests, new security procedures.

In addition, there have been many new faculty and staff members added to the Arlington family this year. Along with approximately 35 new teachers, we have two new princi-

Parent Portal is an ongoing process, a public referendum on school safety is in the works, and in November a recommendation will be made to the school board about which school (if any) should be closed next year.

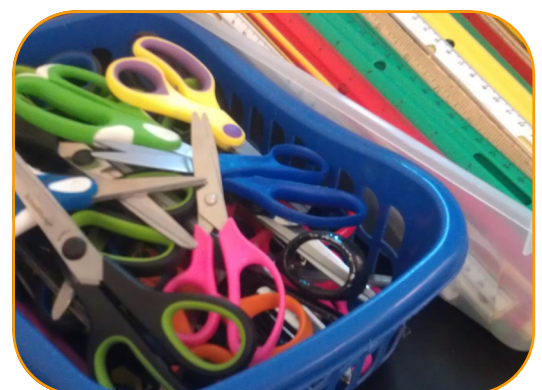
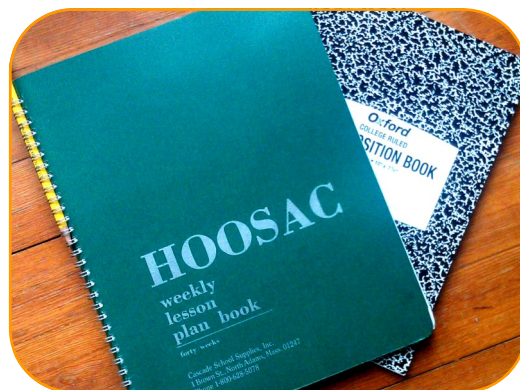
But more important than all of that is the change that we each face on the first day of school: a classroom full of new students. And that is why we are here. If we wanted a job that was predictable we wouldn't be teachers.

Good luck as the new school year begins and remember that the ATA is here to support you and cheer you on as you do what you do best: teach.

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pals, a new superintendent (see page 2), a new deputy superintendent, and a new director of ELA and social studies.

And that is just to start the school year. Other changes are in the pipeline: the evolution of the



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Lyons Shares His Outlook

Trivia Challenge

Answer the question below correctly and you could be the proud winner of ATA gear!

What is the name of Arlington's newest school board member?

Submit your answer to the above trivia question to rmchugh@acsdny.org by September 20th. The winner will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.

In August Arlington's new superintendent Brendan Lyons sat down with The Educator to talk about his outlook for the upcoming school year. Lyons began his career with Arlington in 1995 as a social studies teacher at the high school, progressing to assistant principal there, then principal of Arlington Middle in 2003 and back to the high school as principal from 2010 until 2012, when he became deputy superintendent. Here are his responses to some of our questions:

Last year saw the introduction of the term "right-sizing" to Arling-

ton. Will that practice continue this year?

The last big class is in 8th grade this year and as they move up we've been cutting behind it. But sooner or later that big group

"I think that if I retired 12 years from now and people could look back and say 'he always made decisions in the best interest of the kids' that would be huge because that is what is all about."

-- Superintendent Brendan Lyons

graduates and there is nothing left to right-size. As we look at our long-range fiscal future we will have to take some pretty drastic action to preserve all of those things that are important to the Arlington community as far out as we can. There will be some really tough decisions over

the next several years. If you have to cut what should it be? We have been in good shape. We may have been able to shift resources in the past, but the reality is that when we pro-

ject that out over the next four or five years you see the cliff coming. The question is do you go whole-hog until you

can't anymore and then have massive cuts or do you cut a little bit each year so that when you get to that point it's not so dramatic? All of these are judgment calls. You try to balance being fiscally

See Superintendent on Page 6

Negotiations Update:

As per our June 2012 contract settlement, the ATA agreed to negotiate with the district on the recalibration of our salary schedule. If agreement on a recalibrated salary schedule, which would only apply to newly hired members, is not reached by June 1, 2014, the current contract will expire on June 3, 2014. This is one year less than if an agreement is reached.

Spotlight on the Contract: 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 sfalk@acsdny.org.

"Five (5) additional after school meetings per year not to exceed one hour and fifteen minutes for the purpose of teacher collaboration relative to improving student achievement. These meetings shall be for the purposes of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), the establishment and discussion of student learning objectives (SLOs) and similar purposes. These meetings shall not be used as administrator led faculty meetings."

Explanation: According to this provision of the ATA contract (Article XII, page 17), members are required to attend five additional afterschool meetings per year on top of the faculty and department meetings that may be scheduled each month. A key difference is that these additional meetings must not be led by administrators, but only used for teachers to work together on tasks such as writing and grading pre- or post-tests.

Find Out if a Flex Plan is Right for You

A flexible spending account (FSA) allows you to pay for eligible medical and day care expenses with pre-tax dollars, thereby lowering your taxable income. I know that as a parent of three children, the flex plan offered by our district worked out well for my family as there was always somebody at a doctor's office for something.

What it is: A *healthcare* FSA allows you to set aside money on a pre-tax basis to pay for qualifying out-of-pocket health care, dental, vision or hearing expenses. Out-of-pocket expenses are those that are not covered by your existing insurance plans. For example, for years I was receiving allergy shots twice a week, with a \$15.00 co-pay every time I entered the office for shots. Having a flex plan enabled me to have money set aside to reimburse myself for these fees. Another common use of the healthcare FSA is for orthodontic expenses. Our plan allows for salary contributions between \$150 and \$2500 for the plan year.

A *dependent day care* FSA allows you to set aside money on a pre-tax basis to pay for child or adult day care expenses. These expenses include day care, before-and-after school programs, preschool, or summer day camp. Our plan allows for salary contributions between \$150 and \$5000 for the plan year.

Our plan year begins on October 1 and runs until the next September 30.

How it works: The amount of money you wish to set aside is deducted from your paycheck on a

pre-tax basis over 15 pay periods. This year that will be from October 25 until May 9. As you incur healthcare and/or dependent day care expenses throughout the year, you can access your funds by submitting an online reimbursement claim or by completing a paper claim form and submitting it via fax or mail.

You must re-enroll each year if you want to continue participating.

your state tax will generally bring your tax savings to approximately 30% on the money you elect to contribute to your FSA.

Potential Problems: A flex plan means that you will have to estimate your medical expenditures for the year. That can be difficult to do, and it's hard to anticipate medical issues. Please know that any funds left in your account at the end of

the year are forfeited. If you aren't someone that keeps and collects receipts, and aren't able to do a minimal amount of bookwork then think carefully before starting an FSA. We are allowed a 90 day "grace period" with which to use our FSA funds, but please note, the expenses must have been incurred between the Oct 1-Sept 30 enrollment. You can avoid forfeitures if you plan carefully by reviewing your prior year's out-of-pocket expenses to estimate what you will spend in the next year. Be conservative and plan only for predictable expenses for your first year.

How to learn more: If you have any questions you can consult the Preferred Group at (518) 591-4960. Representatives are available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday to help with any questions or problems you may have. More information is also available on the district's web page at http://www.arlingtonschools.org/pages/arlington_schools/Departments/Human_Resources/Forms/FLEX_Benefit_Plan.

How to Participate in an FSA:

- ✓ Decide if you will be using a healthcare or dependent day care FSA, or both.
- ✓ Estimate the amount you spend on out-of-pocket health care expenses and/or dependent care expenses during a year.
- ✓ Decide how much you wish to set aside into your healthcare account and/or your dependent day care account, keeping in mind that unused funds are forfeited at the end of the plan year.
- ✓ Go to http://www.arlingtonschools.org/pages/arlington_schools/Departments/Human_Resources/Forms/FLEX_Benefit_Plan to obtain forms. You must be signed-up by September 27 for this plan year.
- ✓ Attend the informational meeting on September 16 at AHS in room 1432. There will be two sessions, one at 3 p.m. and another at 4 p.m. (This is strongly advised for first-time FSA participants.)

Benefits For You: If you have paid a large doctor bill (say \$2,000) you can collect it back even though your \$2,000 hasn't been completely collected from your salary yet. You can save on federal taxes and social security taxes as well as state income taxes. Generally, federal taxes range from 15% to 28% and social security taxes equate to 7.65%. Adding these amounts to

-Anne Schillinger, BES



Sali Wohlbach (center) and Kathryn Paulsen (right) refine their art skills in the work room at the Sagamore Lodge in Raquette Lake, NY.

NYS Art Teachers Association Summer Institute

In July, 30 art teachers from school districts throughout New York state gathered at historic Camp Sagamore in Raquette Lake. Now a conference center, Sagamore is the former mountain retreat of the Vanderbilt family. Sali Wohlbach (AHS) and I represented Arlington. We all enjoyed a week of excellent workshops, classes, demonstrations, and presentations. Surrounded and inspired by beautiful Adirondack scenery we shared teaching ideas, created and displayed our art. It was a wonderful opportunity to network with other teachers near and far.

-Kathryn Paulsen, LMS

Hudson Valley Writing Project Summer Institute

I attended the Invitational Summer Institute of the Hudson Valley Writing Project (HVWP) at SUNY New Paltz for four weeks in July. HVWP is one of many sites across the country providing in-service to improve the teaching of writing and to promote literacy pre-K through college. I worked with teachers across all subject areas and grade levels across the Hudson Valley. Together we read, wrote, instructed each other and discussed many issues facing today's learner and educator. Digital story telling, blogs and other technology applications were woven throughout the Institute. Based on my experiences I believe we are better teachers of writing if we write ourselves. Each workshop presented at an HVWP requires the teacher participants to write in ways similar to what a student would do. Consider attending one of their fall Saturday Seminars. You can find more information at <http://www.newpaltz.edu/hvwp/index.html>.

-Lynn Grainger, BES



Lynn Grainger works with her HVWP reading group at the Tea Room in New Paltz.

While summer can be a time to unwind, enjoy nice weather, and spend time with family and friends, it is also time that many educators use to enrich their teaching skills. Along with attending district-offered training in things like Go Math and Edline, here are just a few examples of other professional development opportunities ATA members took advantage of this summer.



ATA members attending EdCamp included: Kate Sprague Hicks (UMS); Sean Bayliss, Kathy Bellino, Lauren Collet, Julie Jee, Ellen McCutcheon, Lucy Miller, Katie Nixon, Dina Warnken-Ellis, and June Wheeler (AHS); Christine LaGuardia (BES); and Kristine Jackson (AMS).

EdCamp

Thirteen Arlington employees represented all levels of the district on August 20 at EdCamp, held at Ulster BOCES in New Paltz. EdCamp is a free, vendor-free “un-conference” that is made up of sessions determined the day-of based on the interest of the participants. Some of the sessions included: apps for the classroom, using LiveBinder, digital storytelling, and project-based learning. What is particularly unique about this professional development is anyone can present or lead a discussion on anything he or she feels knowledgeable about.

Two ATA members, Kate Sprague Hicks (library media specialist at UMS) and Julie Jee (English teacher at AHS), led sessions. Hicks led the discussion about using the librarian at your school as an asset to your teaching, while Jee discussed the 80/20 “genius hour” she does with her class.

-Kristine Jackson, LMS

Physics of Atomic Nuclei (PAN)

During the last week of July Sam Falk (AHS) and I travelled to the University of Michigan's cyclotron laboratory to join 20 other science teachers from across the country in learning about nuclear astrophysics. PAN was a great way to see first-hand the skills that are necessary for students to succeed in advanced STEM fields. It was fascinating to see how the topics that we teach at the most basic level in high school are applied in much greater detail by researchers investigating the greatest mysteries of the universe. The program was very helpful in demonstrating how scientists are able to connect particle physics with processes occurring in the stars.

-Gwen Saylor, AHS



Sam Falk (left) and Gwen Saylor pose with a prototype liquid metal-cooled target for a particle accelerator at the University of Michigan.

NYSUT Conference Enlightens Attendees

2013—2014 ATA Officers

President

Bob Maier

First Vice-President

Greg Nieman

Second Vice-President

Steve Hertzog

Treasurer

Kathleen Blank Cicala

Chief Negotiator

Donna Doerrier

PR Committee Chair

TBA

Community Action Chairs

Betsy Marshall

Robert McHugh

Welfare Trust Chair

Ron Higgins

Media Specialist

Sam Falk

Éminence Grise Emeritus

Robert McHugh

Senior Building Representatives

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 — Steve Bronzi

UVMS — Jim DeBonis

AHS — John Filor

AHS — Noreen Mills Martin

Each summer NYSUT's Mid-Hudson regional office holds a leadership conference at the Otesaga Hotel in Cooperstown. This year members of approximately 35 different locals attended the event from June 25 through 27. Representing the ATA were Carmine Anastasio (AMS), Sam Falk (AHS), and Betsy Marshall (JDWR).

The first two days of the conference were structured as an extended problem-solving session. Locals from nearby areas were seated together and given different topics related to increasing member involvement to brainstorm. The ATA's attendees had the opportunity to get to know their neighbors from the Dover-Wingdale and Red Hook

Teachers' associations during these sessions.

"I enjoyed collaborating with other school union professionals about solving common and uncommon problems within the school community," stated Anastasio.

He also took advantage of the short course offered on the third day about legal updates where he learned about recent court cases and decisions pertinent to education.

Other courses that were offered covered topics such as student learning objectives,

the teachers' retirement system, grievances, and union communications.



Photo by Sam Falk

Betsy Marshall (JDWR) took part in a problem-solving exercise at the NYSUT regional leadership conference in June.

New Superintendent Shares His Thoughts

Continued from Page 2 conservative and preparing for the future while also maintaining Arlington as a great district.

What would you say to those teachers low on the seniority list about their future at Arlington?

My advice would be, first, don't lose heart right away because in a large district like this there is natural turnover, whether it is from people resigning, retiring, or going on leave. We've been very lucky so far; there were very few people that permanently lost their jobs until this last school year. The second

thing is, as a professional, also don't be naïve. Don't wait until May to realize that you may not have a position. Polish up your resume and make sure you are ready to go. When things get more clear in the spring when the budget comes together watch, look, listen, and be informed: don't be a passive victim. Lastly, don't lose all hope. There clearly will be some layoffs at all levels if a school is closed, but as to how many, we're not into that level of detail yet.

What would you like your legacy as superintendent to be?

I think that I want to be known as having weathered the storm. With all of the stuff that is swirling around us right now; financial, state mandates, APPR, the new assessments. . . all that stuff, if we can stay up on top instead of being overwhelmed by the tsunami, that would be a great thing. I think that if I retired 12 years from now and people could look back and say "he always made decisions in the best interest of the kids" that would be huge because that is what is all about. I'd want to be known as advocating for students.

Third Year of Renegades Rain Can't Dampen ATA Spirits



ATA offspring used the evening's downpour as a chance to get to know one another.



Seating on the left field patio allowed for ATA members and their families to converse while enjoying food and drinks before the game.



Rain couldn't stop the fun, though it did cause it to be temporarily relocated to the space under the left field bleachers.

On June 24 ATA members gathered at Dutchess Stadium in Beacon for the 3rd Annual ATA Night at the Renegades, and for the third year in a row it rained. After enjoying some pre-game all-you-can-eat food spectators took shelter under the left field bleachers during a torrential downpour. Although the rain eventually stopped and after a lengthy delay the game was played, ATA members were rewarded for their patience with vouchers for free tickets and food for a future Renegades game. In the end, all who attended enjoyed a night filled with camaraderie, food, and some soggy baseball.

Photos by Sam Falk

Congratulations to Newly Tenured ATA Members

Elementary

Arthur S. May

Alice Estevez

Titusville

Jennifer Marino

Traver Road

Barbara Mackey

Middle

Arlington

Emily Gorton

Michael O'Halloran

LaGrange

Sarah Mesuch

Cara Ann Murray

Union Vale

Pamela Sammarco

Gina Ward

High School

Cindy Binnie

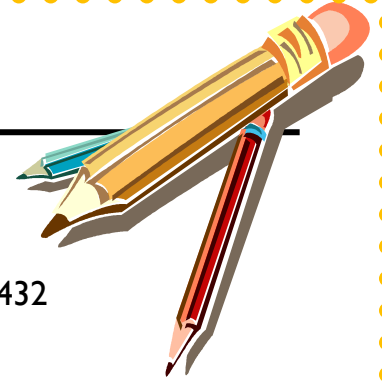
Lauren Collet

Melissa Curcio-Timmins

John Lacey

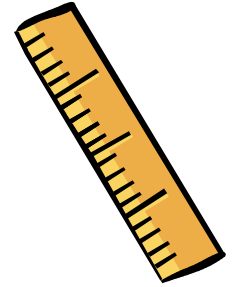
Alan Zollner

Dates to Remember



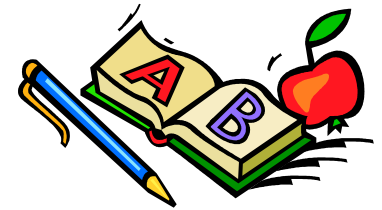
SEPTEMBER

- 10th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., AMS
- 13th—Flex Benefit Plans Meetings, 3 p.m. and 4 p.m., AHS room 1432
- 17th—ATA Executive Council Session, 4 p.m., AHS room 1432
- 19th—Middle School Open House
- 21st—Arlington Street Fair, 12 - 6 p.m., Raymond Ave., Poughkeepsie
- 24th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., ASM



OCTOBER

- 1st—Deadline to submit information for graduate or inservice credit
- 1st—Deadline for using 2012-2013 Welfare Trust Benefits
- 3rd—High School Open House
- 8th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., NOX
- 14th—Columbus Day—No School
- 15th—ATA Executive Council Session, 4 p.m., AHS room 1432
- 22nd—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., CAO



Announcements

Welfare Trust Update:

The trustees of the ATA's Welfare Trust have made the following changes in benefits:

1. The payment for the personal health account will increase by \$25 beginning October 1, 2013. This brings the maximum payment for the year to \$375.
2. The payment for the vision account will increase by \$25 beginning October 1, 2013. This brings the maximum payment for the year to \$325.

There is no change to the dental schedule at this time.

PR Chair Needed!

Would you like the opportunity to make a difference in our community? The ATA is in immediate need of a chairperson for our PR committee. Contact the ATA office at ata4547002@aol.com or (845)454-7002 for more information.

Stay informed! Like us on Facebook or check out www.arlingtonteachers.com for forms, photos, calendars, and more.

This year's Arlington Street Fair is on September 21. Please contact the ATA office at ata4547002@aol.com or (845) 454-7002 to sign up to help at the ATA's booth.

Volunteers are needed to serve dinner at the Lunch Box in Poughkeepsie from 4 - 6 p.m. on September 13 and October 11 and 14. Contact Colleen Napora at AHS to sign up.