



THE EDUCATOR

Newsletter of the Arlington Teachers' Association

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A Battle May Be Lost, But the War Is Not

I hope that you spent your spring break someplace warm and sunny, away from the cares of everyday life. Maybe you got to take a vacation far from the April snow and news about the New York State budget.

I'm sure that at least a few of you did.

Many of you did not. I know that because I saw you at school when I was also there doing work. You, like me, were grading papers, and making copies, and planning lessons. When else was it going to get done? Spring break is a great time to do work; there is a pleasant sense of stillness in the school building when the students

aren't there. It is peaceful and conducive to being productive.

The hallways and classrooms were quiet, but a battle that had been raging elsewhere was coming to a disap-

pointed conclusion. As many of us spent our "vacation" time doing schoolwork the message from Albany came: "Don't bother. You're no good." Or at least that's what it felt like.

forms that we fought so hard to stave off. We wrote postcards and attended rallies. We made phone calls.

Above all, we made sense. We thought that we had that going for us.

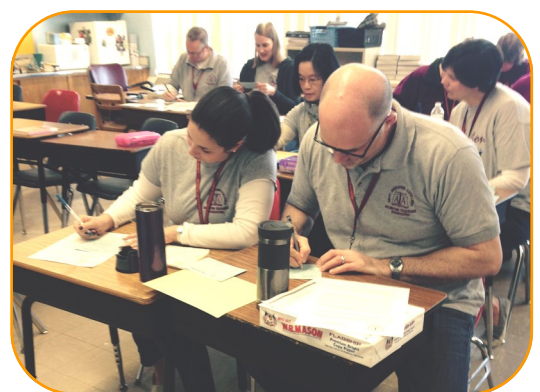
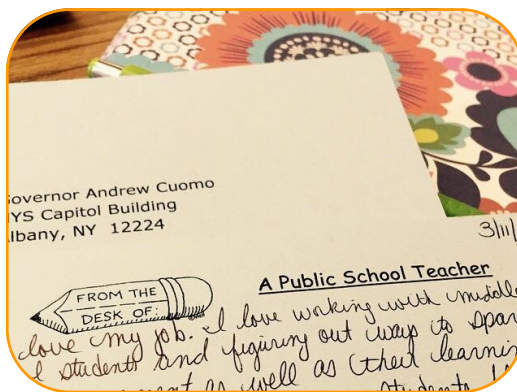
The natural conclusion of a perfectly sensible argument should be a just decision. Not in Albany. As we kept working to do what is best for our students the word came down that the already bad evaluation system that we have lived with these past few years would be made worse.

I recently tried to explain all of this to a non-teacher acquaintance of

Inside this newsletter you will find details of the new education reforms that we fought so hard to stave off. We wrote postcards and attended rallies. We made phone calls. Above all, we made sense.

Inside this newsletter you will find details of the new education re-

See War on Page 7



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Trivia Challenge

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

What is the name of New York's Acting Education Commissioner?

Last month's winner, selected at random from among the correct responses received, was **Cindy Vandermark** from LMS. She correctly identified **1967** as the year the ATA was founded. She will be the proud owner of ATA gear. Answer this month's question and you could win ATA gear too!

Submit your answer to the above trivia question to rmchugh@acsdny.org by April 17th. The winner will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.

SPOTLIGHT ON ARLINGTON

It may seem odd to us, in our present state, to envision an Arlington district as a fragmented land mottled with a veritable plethora of one-room school houses, yet that was the case in Arlington's early days. In 1903, the towns of Union Vale, La-Grange, Pleasant Valley and Poughkeepsie had a total of 33 schools, 37 teachers, and a total student population of approximately 1200 students. Back then, area schools were identified as districts, and Arlington had not yet come into existence as a unified school district.

Mrs. Kathryn Vail Wisseman, born in 1911, grew up in Union Vale on the property that would one day become Vail Farm Elementary School and Union Vale Middle School, attended one of the many one-room schoolhouses in the district, and, upon graduation in 1928, went on to teach in another one-room school house, District #6 in Union Vale. Her salary at the time was \$27.50 per week.

Her classroom covered grades one through eight, and students sat on benches according to their grade level. The classroom itself had no electricity, and hand-pumped well supplied water. The students used an "eight-holer outhouse," and snow days were virtually non-existent, as farmers with sleighs would collect both teacher and students and bring them to school.

As a teacher, Wisseman was responsible for meeting with School Commissioner F. E. Benedict throughout the year to discuss the students' academic progress, the implementation of the new state syllabus, and to review her students' Regents performance. In those days, Regents examinations were given in the seventh grade for arithmetic and spelling, and in the eighth grade the students were required to take Regents examinations for history and English.

While peer tutoring was not a practice she promoted in her classroom, students benefited from being exposed to the work given to the older students, and repetition of material was viewed as a useful reinforcement in the learning experience.

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Wisseman was responsible for heating up the pot-belly stove each day at 7:00am to warm the classroom, organizing hikes, and encouraging participation in community events.

While the notion of interdisciplinary units of study may seem fairly modern, Wisseman was an original innovator of the philosophy, combining the studies of English and history to create projects that reflected the students' proficiency in both disciplines.

Sadly, Mrs. Kathryn Vail Wisseman left us in January of 2004. She lived to be 92 years young. Kathryn Vail Wisseman, student, mother, sister, grandmother, and teacher, was truly the quintessential Arlington pioneer.

*Material courtesy of Andrew Arenson and Jocelynn Banfield
-Joseph Healy, Jr., UVMS*

(Note—The legacy of Wisseman lives on through her granddaughter, AHS math teacher and SYSOP Dawn Orlik, who adds, "I will say we have it pretty easy. Grandma told me that in her job Wednesday was head lice check day and if she found any it was her job to scrub EVERY student's head with lye soap down at the creek. I try to remember that when the copiers are down..."



School Board Candidates Sought

It is vital for the continued excellence of our schools that we elect school board members who keep the best interests of the students and employees in mind while also considering the impact on tax-payers. With the continued decline in enrollment and the ongoing financial difficulties that the district is facing, many important decisions will have to be made in the coming years. Sure, we have to offer the core subjects, but what about art, music, and even library services? When the things that make an Arlington education great are on the line we need school board members who care.

We all know someone who fits that description, whether he or she

is a family member, friend, or neighbor. Often these people don't know how much we need them though. Several current school board members have stated that

Please contact the ATA Office at 845-454-7002 or ataupdate@gmail.com if you know of anyone who would be interested in running for a school board position this year. Completed petitions to run are due to Central Office by April 20.

they only ran when they were asked to. That's where you come in: the ATA is requesting your help to identify possible school board candidates and to talk to them about running.

This year the terms of current Arlington school board members

Chip McLeod, Ed McCormick, and Steve Rossi are up. Please contact the ATA Office at 845-454-7002 or ataupdate@gmail.com if you know of anyone who would be interested

in running for those positions. It is a great opportunity for people who care about their children's future and their community as a whole to make a difference.

To be eligible, candidates must live in the district and not be currently employed by Arlington. In order to be on the ballot in May a petition must be obtained from Central Office and returned there with 100 signatures by April 20. ATA members are available to help with that task.

Questions On New Paycheck Format Are Answered

Arlington employees were presented with a completely new paycheck format earlier this year. While new information was included, some items that had previously been on pay stubs were missing. The final format is still being worked out as different software systems are being integrated. Recently an employee's number of personal and sick days was able to be added back onto the pay stub. We contacted Peggy

Devivo in the payroll department of the business office at Arlington's Central Office with some of your questions. Here are her answers:

Why did the paycheck format change?

The format has changed because we have changed financial software.

Are there plans to put our total sal-

ary on the stub like it used to be?

We are working on a new template version to see if this is possible.

If people have additional questions what is the best way to contact you?

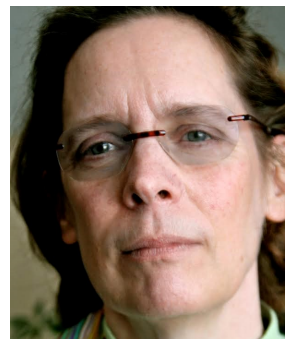
Email is best.

Devivo can be reached at mdevivo@acsdny.org or 845-486-4460 ext. 133.

ATA Member of the Month: Betsy Marshall

"As a teacher, I am an advocate for my students every day. As the Senior Building Representative at West Road Intermediate School and Co-Chair of the ATA's Community Action Committee, I advocate for both my students and my colleagues. I am an active ATA member because, through my union, I am assured the right to have a voice in a very important discussion: a discussion about the future of public education."

-JDWR special education teacher Betsy Marshall, on why she volunteers with the ATA



Certification

- All teaching certificate holders will be required to fill out an application and register with state ed every five years in order to maintain their certification.
- Professional development hours required of professional certificate holders will be reduced from 175 to 100 hours every five years. More rigorous standards will apply to qualifying allowable activities. It is likely that superintendent's conference days will no longer count toward the requirement.

On these pages you will find some of the details of the new education law that are available to date. Many provisions have been left to the State Education Commissioner and the Board of Regents to decide. They have a deadline of June 30. New York does not currently have a sitting education commissioner, only an acting one.

School districts must receive approval for an APPR plan compliant with these new regulations by November 15 in order to receive an increase in state aid.

Tenure

- For all teachers hired after July 1, 2015 the probationary period will be four years (raised from the current three.) A rating of effective or highly effective must be achieved in at least three of those years, including the fourth year.
- Teachers who have previously received tenure in another district will remain in probationary status for three years, so long as they did not receive an ineffective rating in their last year at the prior school.

Due Process

- Previously, if a teacher received two consecutive ineffective ratings a district could choose to initiate termination proceedings, but the district had the burden of proving incompetence. Now, two consecutive ineffective ratings will be *prima facie* evidence of incompetence, rebutted only by clear and convincing evidence.
- It will now be mandated that districts *must* initiate termination proceedings against any teacher who receives three consecutive ineffective ratings.

Evaluations

- Teachers will no longer receive a numerical score, but instead be rated using a matrix approach with two subcomponents: student performance and teacher observations.
- Teachers receiving an ineffective rating on the student performance subcomponent cannot be more than developing overall.
- The student performance subcomponent will be based on student growth scores from state tests or, for non-tested subjects, student learning objectives. The commissioner will dictate the SLO goal-setting process and all scoring bands.
- An optional second, state-developed test may also be used, which can be collectively bargained.
- Non-test based measures of student achievement, such as portfolios and professional growth setting (PGPs) are prohibited.
- Two observations will be conducted: one by a building principal, and one by an independent evaluator. This evaluator can be a trained evaluator from another building in the same district.
- No guidelines have yet been set as to which evaluation rubrics may be used for observations.

APPR Through the Years

2009

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.

2010

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.

2011

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.

2012

January 21 - Governor Cuomo proposes drastic changes to education in his State of the State address. Increases in state aid would be tied to the legislature adopting his reforms. No state aid runs for school districts were released.

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

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

2011

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

2011

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

2012

April 1 - The state budget is passed with a provision that all school districts must have an approved APPR plan in place by January 17 in order to receive an increase in state aid.

2015

April 1 - The state budget is passed with Cuomo's proposals only slightly modified. School districts must have an approved APPR plan in place by November 15 in order to receive an increase in state aid.

2014 — 2015 ATA Officers

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Bob Maier

First Vice-President

Greg Nieman

Second Vice-President

Steve Hertzog

Treasurer

Kathleen Blank Cicala

Chief Negotiator

Donna Doerrier

PR Committee Chair

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Robert McHugh

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ASM — Johanna Pungello

BES — William Mueller

NES — Nicolle McMorris

VFES — Pam Goetz

OPS — Anne Marie Beesmer

Traver — Siouxzanne Harris

JDWR — Betsy Marshall

TIS — Sue Ramsden

LMS — Carmine Anastasio

LMS — Steve Bronzi

UVMS — Jim DeBonis

AHS — John Filor

AHS — Noreen Mills Martin

What's Going On?

"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@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 High School

English teacher Dan Pitt will be participating in SUNY New Paltz's symposium on Shakespeare and the Comic Spirit on April 18. His presentation is entitled "Tear Him For His Bad Verses; An Exploration of Shakespeare's Comedy Throughout the Canon".

English teacher Julie Jee and drama teacher Sarah Combs recently received a grant from the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley for \$1690 to take their students to see the Broadway production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*.

Social studies teacher Krysta Weiss also received a field trip grant. She was able to take her U.S. History students to visit the Tenement House museum in New York City in March.

Arthur S. May School

Kindergarten teacher Anna Leigh received a grant



Photo courtesy of Jim DeBonis

Sparrow's Nest

On March 20 ATA members at all schools (including Union Vale Middle, pictured) wore special shirts in support of Sparrow's Nest. This local organization is a non-profit charity with a mission to prepare and deliver homemade meals to the families of moms with cancer in the Hudson Valley.

from the PTA that has allowed her to start a before-school program for kindergarten students that need a little support. It is for 40 minutes three days a week and goes from March through May. The focus is on reading and writing.

In honor of the popular annual college basketball tournament, physical education teacher Chris Keenan has selected several healthy snacks (celery sticks, apples, carrot sticks, grapes, to name a few) and created a healthy snacks tournament. During the March Madness Healthy Snacks Challenge, students and staff vote for their favorite healthy snack in hopes that it will make it to the championship matchup. Every couple of days,

two healthy snacks are matched up against each other. Students and staff get to vote for their favorite snack. The healthy snack with the most votes moves on to the next round of the tournament.

Overlook Primary

First Grade Teacher Juanita Puchkoff was selected as one of 27 members from across the nation to Scholastic's Teacher Advisory Board. She met with the other members of the Board March 13-15 to share information and suggest the direction Scholastic should take during upcoming year. Her class will be receiving a book box soon as part of her participation in the Advisory Board.

The War Over Education Reform Isn't Over

Continued from Front
mine. She asked how my spring break had been and I told her it had been stressful. She was concerned and wanted to know more. She has high-school aged children, but had only a vague notion of the opt-out movement and no knowledge of the teacher rating system. I found it challenging to explain why I was so upset. That made me more upset. She was sympathetic but offered a "bad teacher" story as a sort of justification of our APPR system. You've all heard one of those; here was hers: "My sons had this ninth grade social studies teacher who would just hand them a worksheet as they walked in the door every day and that was the lesson..."

And herein lies the problem. We can all agree that is no way to be a good teacher, but our new evaluation system would not stop

that. The components of test scores and planned classroom observations do not help in any way to fire those few incompetent teachers that everyone has a story about.

So what do us good teachers

So what do us good teachers do to stay motivated in the face of the hate coming down from Albany and the lack of understanding from the community around us? I don't have an answer. Keep your head down and just keep teaching? I don't think so. It's too late for that.

do to stay motivated in the face of the hate coming down from Albany and the lack of understanding from the community around us? I don't have an answer. Keep your head down and just keep teaching? I don't think so. It's too late for that.

One positive outcome of the battle that took place these last

few months is that it raised awareness within the teaching community. How many of you wrote a letter to a legislator for the first time? How many of you attended a community forum? I know that I had conversations about state politics with colleagues that I had never talked to before. We are stronger because of it.

Yes, a major battle was lost during spring break, but the war isn't over. It is tiring and stressful, but we are all in this together. In the next few months the State Education Department and the Board of Regents will be deciding on many of the details of the new evaluation system. Please be ready to be called to active duty again. And remember that the ATA is there for you. We will make the best of whatever the outcome of this round of evaluation "reforms" is, just like we did last time.

-Sam Falk, Newsletter Editor

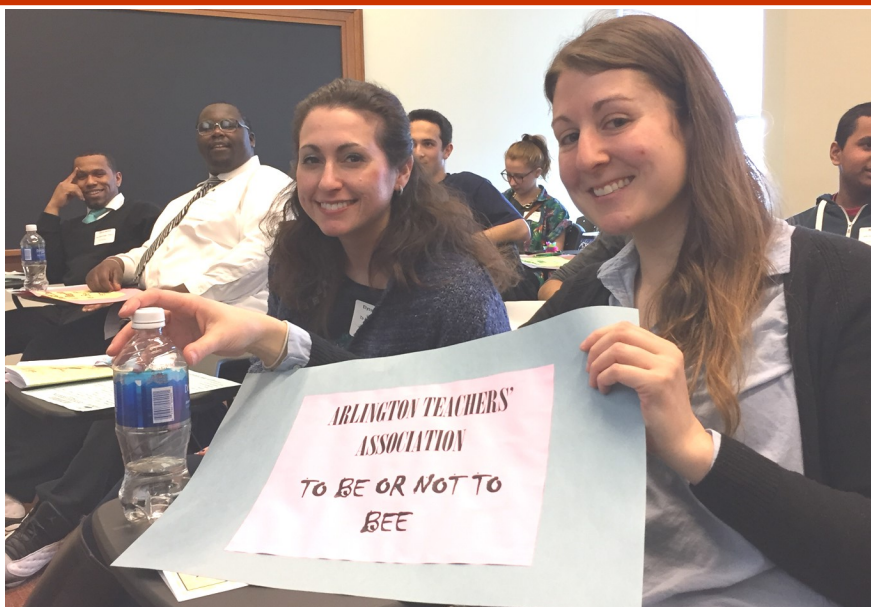


Photo courtesy of Kristine Jackson

LMS teachers Elyssa Napoleon, (left) and Alison Schwartz comprised one of the teams that represented the ATA at the Literacy Connection spelling bee.

Spelling Bee

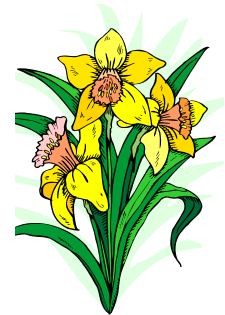
On Wednesday, March 18, 2015, two teams of teachers from the Arlington Teachers' Association competed in the Literacy Connection of the Hudson Valley's 24th annual spelling bee. LMS teachers Elyssa Napoleon and Alison Schwartz's team, *To Be, or Not to Bee*, did quite well in the first round. UVMS teachers Richard Jakob and Jonathan Pickles's team, the *Egregiously Emotive Etymologists*, made it to the final round with their impressive spelling skills. The ATA makes an annual donation to the Literacy Connection as a Bronze donor to help support the good works it does to promote reading and writing skills to anyone in the Hudson Valley.

Dates to Remember



APRIL

- 14th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., CAO
- 18th—District Arts Fair, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., LMS
- 20th—Petitions to Run For School Board Due to CAO
- 21st—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432
- 28th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., BES



MAY

- 12th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432
- Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., NOX
- 19th—**School Budget Vote**
- 25th—Memorial Day, No School
- 26th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., CAO



Announcements

Negotiations Update:

Negotiations are continuing to move forward as we have a meeting scheduled with the district for April 22. This will be the third meeting scheduled with the mediator present. It is our hope that we can come together and agree on a fair and equitable contract. Thank you for your continued support.

-Donna Doerrier, Chief Negotiator

Volunteers are needed to serve dinner at the Lunch Box in Poughkeepsie from 4 - 6 p.m. on May 8 and 11. Contact Colleen Napora at AHS to sign up.

Save the Date! ATA Night at the Renegades will be on Friday, August 7.

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