



THE EDUCATOR

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Election Season Isn't Over Yet

An experienced insider running against an opponent who is new to the system; accusations of unfair voting practices; allegations of candidates not being in touch with their constituents' needs: no, this is not a summary of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election; it is a description of this year's race to determine who will lead NYSUT.

NYSUT holds an election every three years to select a new slate of officers. In the past, this was not very contentious; in fact, from its inception in 1973 until his retirement in 2005, NYSUT had only one president:

Thomas Hobart. Following him, Richard Iannuzzi was then president until 2014, when current president Karen Magee was elected, and things started to get

"Ten years ago, our students wanted to be us, now nobody wants to be a teacher. We have given up too much ground to education reformers."

-NYSUT Presidential Candidate Michael Lillis

thorny.

This year's election will take place at NYSUT's annual Representative Assembly (RA) on April 8 and will feature two slates backed by different

caucuses. Current NYSUT Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta (who also served under Iannuzzi and Magee) is running for president on the Unity slate against physics teacher and president of the Lakeland Federation of Teachers, Michael Lillis. Lillis is one of the founders of the Stronger Together (ST) caucus, which traces its roots to the 2014 NYSUT election. He is the brother is AHS social studies teacher Jim Lillis.

The Educator contacted both candidates to find out more about their views on the NYSUT election, and what See NYSUT on Page 4



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Trivia Challenge

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

Which Arlington school board member has served the longest?

Last month's winner was **Aimee Oxford** from UVMS. She correctly identified **1866** as the date the first animal anticruelty law was passed in the United States. 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 **March 31**. The winner will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.

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 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 they only ran when they were asked to. That's where you

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 17.

come in: the ATA is requesting your help to identify possible school board candidates and to talk to them about running.

This year there are four seats up for election on the school board. The terms of current Arlington school board members Peter Bodnar, Pauline

Herr, and Jennifer Eraca 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 17. ATA members are available to help with that task.

Contract Negotiations Have Begun

After visiting all the schools to update members on the negotiations process and listening to their ideas, we have now begun to meet with the district's representatives. We have met once so far and have several more negotiating sessions scheduled for the coming weeks.

It has come to our attention that a page is missing out of both the

electronic and print versions of our current contract. Page 18 should contain sections about compensation for extra-curricular work, obtaining substitutes (including compensation for class coverage), and reporting unavailability. Any ATA member with questions about these topics should contact the ATA Office. The contract language does exist,

but seems to have inadvertently been left out of the final published version of the contract.

As a reminder, our current contract expires at the end of this school year. Thank you to everyone who attended a meeting at your school or submitted ideas for proposals.

-Robert McHugh,
Chief Negotiator

CAC Chairs Attend Committee of 100

Budget season in New York State is a time when constituents converge on Albany to propose, request, and present supporting arguments to our elected representatives as they participate in ongoing budget negotiations at the State Capitol. On March 7 ATA CAC Co-Chair Brendan Lawler and I traveled to Albany to lobby alongside hundreds of other teachers as part of the annual NY-SUT Committee of 100.

While there was a long list of issues that we touched upon in our meetings with Senator Sue Serino (SD 41) and Assembly members Didi Barrett (AD 106), and Kieran Michael Lalor (AD 105), the bulk of our time was spent discussing issues of state funding for public education and the questionable results of yearly standardized testing and APPR accountability policies that have been mandated at both the state and federal level.

On the issue of funding, AQE (the Alliance for Quality Education) has repeatedly pointed out that NYS still owes public school students \$4.3 in Foundation Aid. While Governor Cuomo would like to continue to ignore the order handed down by the courts under the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) settlement, parents, teachers and students have born witness to the negative impact that cuts in education funding have had on the children in our state, especially the children in poor urban and rural districts. It is evident that schools require a predictable and stable financing mechanism in order to maintain and expand the kinds of educational programs that have been proven to be effective (small class sizes, a vibrant arts program, fully staffed and functioning libraries, sports programs and before- and

after-school clubs and AIS services to name a few.) We asked that the \$4.3 billion currently owed to schools be phased in over a two-year period, and that there be a renewed commitment by the state to follow the Foundation Aid formula as it was agreed to under the CFE settlement.

Because the governor is a proponent for the de-linking of public education funding from local property taxes, it is clear that providing equitable funding for all of the schools across New York State will require the legislature to step up and fill the funding gaps

There were indications that the representatives that we talked to in Albany on March 7 are beginning to see and understand the negative consequences of a top-down system of mandates that micro-manage our local schools and discount the professionalism of teachers and administrators.

that local districts are no longer allowed to raise through their local property tax base.

APPR was the other main focus of our discussion. The Education Transformation Act of 2015 has parts that are under a moratorium for another two years, but we discussed several reasons why it should be repealed. Cuomo's law is in direct conflict with the newest iteration of the ESEA federal education law, now called ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act). ESSA de-links federal funding from student standardized test scores. After years of research and an abundance of data, there is no evidence that standardized test scores are a reliable means for defining the effectiveness of individual teachers. There is however a strong correlation between test scores and the percentage of families in a school whose children receive free and reduced lunch. This fact calls into question the

usefulness of the system of "test and punish" that is currently being used to justify a need for the privatization of our public schools.

Siphoning public tax dollars away from public schools and into the hands of private interests, who then are not required to meet the same standards or follow the same mandate as the public school system, has been a recipe for graft and corruption in too many schools. When privately managed schools are not required to be transparent in how they govern their schools or how they spend the public's money, the public, especially our children, are not well served. Mandates that require yearly standardized testing for every student, every year, have not closed the achievement gap, but they have certainly enriched the testing, tech, and textbook industries.

The fact is that students in wealthy school districts continue to perform better on standardized tests than students in poor and underfunded school districts. Perhaps it is not the teachers who are to blame? The state's APPR mandate certainly needs to be re-evaluated.

There were indications that the representatives that we talked to in Albany on March 7 are beginning to see and understand the negative consequences of a top-down system of mandates that micro-manage our local schools and discount the professionalism of teachers and administrators. It behooves each and every one of us to stay informed and to get involved, as the very idea of a free and public education system in our country is under a renewed and continuous attack.

-Betsy Marshall, CAC Co-Chair

NYSUT Election Looms Large



Photo by Sam Falk

Michael Lillis (right) is running for President of NYSUT. His brother Jim Lillis (left) is a social studies teacher at AHS. They are seen here at an event organized by the Stronger Together Caucus at John Jay High School in East Fishkill on January 28.

Continued from Front
they each hope to accomplish if elected. While Lillis was quick to elaborate on his positions, Pallotta deferred to a surrogate, current NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Martin Messner, who is running for re-election on the Unity slate. Messner explained that since the NYS Legislature is in session, this time of year is extremely busy for Pallotta in his role as coordinator of NYSUT's political mobilization and legislative advocacy. While Messner was able to comment on issues regarding RA attendance and the Unity caucus, he did not speak to Pallotta's personal vision for the campaign.



Since New York is a large and diverse state it can be a challenge for NYSUT to represent the wants and needs of all of its local affiliates. According to Messner, the purpose of the Unity caucus (founded in the 1960s and primarily made up of locals from large cities like New York) is, "to have a venue to work out differences behind the scenes since the RA is open to the public and the press." He acknowledges that there are allegations that being a Unity member is a "blood-oath or something sinister – that is not the case. It is a way to get everyone in the same room to come up with a group opinion."

Lillis believes that, "The Unity caucus served to homogenize our advocacy in a way that magnified the voice of a few large locals, but failed to adequately give voice to the concerns of classroom teachers." Prior to 2014, Unity was the only caucus within NYSUT. Lillis states, "After the last election [in 2014], a group of us across the state said 'enough is enough' - we created the ST Caucus to more effectively advocate for the ideas we believe in." He further explains that, "The NYSUT elections are a perfect example of how our system is rigged to benefit the largest locals. NYSUT elections are held every three years. Each local gets a certain number of voting delegates

based on the number of members. The elections are held at the RA in New York City. This is such an expensive undertaking that only 30% of locals send a delegate to vote. This lack of participation magnifies the voice of the large locals that can always send their delegates. Traveling to and spending a night in NYC is minimally an \$800 poll tax for each vot-

ing delegate. For smaller, rural locals, this is simply too expensive." Since voting is set for 8 a.m. on Saturday morning this year, locals traveling from far away must stay overnight in or near the city in order to get there on time.

Messner counters Lillis' claims with several statistics: "About 50% of NYSUT members fall under 20 locals. This year about 42% of locals are attending the RA and appropriately 89% of NYSUT members will be represented. In comparison, our fellow public unions PEF and CSEA only get 20-30% participation in their elections."

While Lillis thinks that it is a problem that recent NYSUT elections have only been held in Unity-controlled New York City, Messner points to the fact that the RAs held in the city are much more highly attended than those in Rochester or Buffalo (the other locations recent RAs have alternated between.)

He adds that since there are only a few places in the state large enough to host the RA, "Contracts were signed years in advance. The ST folks don't want to highlight this - the ST founding folks were past NYSUT officers who set the schedule for the RA." This is referring to Iannuzzi and other past officers who were not re-elected.

(Pallotta was also one of those past officers who would have been a part of scheduling the RA.) That being said, Messner states that the next NYSUT election in 2020 will

break the cycle of falling to New York City and is tentatively set for Buffalo.

Counter to Messner's view that it was past officers who were to blame for NYSUT's woes, Lillis believes that Pallotta is also responsible, and

that is why completely new leadership is needed. "As Executive Vice President, Andy Pallotta has presided over our legislative office for our most significant legislative defeats. From Tier 5 and 6, to receivership, to 3012-d and the tax cap, we have consistently put forward an ineffective organizational response to these legislative initiatives to prevent them from becoming legislative defeats. As president, I will make defending the teaching profession our top priority," he vows.

Although the prospect of leaving teaching for a state-wide leadership role is daunting, Lillis is driven to try to right the wrongs that have been made to the educational system in New York. "My uncle Mike told me when I was 18 to 'never leave a good time for a better time'," he says. "I believe the profession needs NYSUT to engage now more than ever. We are surrounded by existential threats, not the least of which is the plummeting enrollment in teacher training programs. Ten years ago, our students wanted to be us, now nobody wants to be a teacher. We have given up too much ground to education reformers. I believe we must reclaim the profession by



For More Information About the NYSUT RA:

- See <http://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources-sites/representative-assembly> for details about the event, including the schedule, and election procedures
- Visit <http://unity-today.com> to learn more about the Unity caucus and its slate of candidates
- Visit <http://www.stcaucus.org> to learn more about the Stronger Together caucus and its slate of candidates

protecting the integrity of teachers and the well-being of students." He adds that, no matter which slate is ultimately elected, "I believe we can win by offering members a vision of what NY-

SUT advocacy should look like so that they can demand it of their leaders, regardless of who wins."

-Sam Falk, Editor

2016 — 2017 ATA Officers

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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@acsdcny.org. We can't know what's going on at all of your schools without your help!

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

Arlington High

English teacher Julie Jee had an article entitled "Making Sure Students Feel Safe in Uncertain Times" published in *Education Week* in February.

Arlington Librarians

Librarians Lucy Miller (AHS) and Mindy Grey (OPS, VF) recently teamed up to present at two local conferences. They gave a presentation on newly published history books ("BEST IN CLASS: Integrating Trade

Book History Titles into your ELA and Social Studies Curricula") for the Mid-Hudson Reading Council on February 23, and another presentation entitled "A NOVEL Way to Search: Using New York's Online Virtual Library" at the Hudson Valley Regional NYSCATE conference on March 4.

Arthur S. May School

Second grade teacher Erica Dunn has completed training with Hudson Valley Hospice to be an End of Life Doula. She went thru an interview process and was then invited to train with the founder of the INELDA (International End of Life Doula Association.) They offer doula service to those who have invited hospice into their lives, and work with families to create legacy projects and ease the process by holding vigils and letting the family rest and understand the stages. Anyone interested in this program, either to utilize in their own lives, or to learn more and become trained, can contact

Dunn.

Overlook Primary

Overlook Primary School participated for its 21st consecutive annual Jump Rope for Heart event throughout the month of February and raised \$10,483 for the American Heart Association.

Traver Road Primary

Physical education teachers Elena Fallon and Matt Schmitt (along with school nurse Kim Carlin) led the school's effort to raise \$12,270 for Jump Rope for Heart this year. It started with a school-wide meeting to kick it off with a presentation from the American Heart Association and the kids loved it and were inspired to collect.

Vail Farm Elementary

Physical education teacher Marisa Sutera Strange competed in the 2017 USA Track & Field Cross Country Championships in the Masters division. The event took place on February 4 in Bend, Oregon.



March Madness Basketball Tournament!

All proceeds go to award college scholarships to students who have suffered the loss of a parent or guardian at some point during their academic endeavors.

April 7

Doors Open at 4:30 p.m. Tip Off at 6:30 p.m.

Admission is \$5 or \$3 for anyone wearing HOPE apparel

Never Too Tired To Care For Our Community



Photo by Sam Falk

It's that time of year when we teachers are buckling down and are feeling the "third quarter slip." Our students are becoming restless with the promise of spring right around the corner; we are knee-deep in teaching research skills, complicated math concepts, critical thinking skills, and how to be a good citizen. And we are tired. Bone tired. But, despite giving our all in the classroom on a daily basis, even when we're exhausted and think we have nothing left to give, our

time to the community by cleaning the highway in the fall, and we will do so again on Earth Day (April 22). Volunteers will meet

On April 29, the ATA will be partnering once again with Rebuilding Together Dutchess County, an organization that helps local families make much-needed repairs on their homes. UVMS Technology teacher Doug Dickeson will be leading the ATA's team and will be sending out more details.

at Arlington High School in the parking lot by the auditorium at 8:30am. Supplies (gloves, vests, hats, trash bags) will be provided.

members do give. And give and give.

This year, the ATA has been involved in numerous charitable events and drives. So far this school year we have raised thousands of dollars for the Children's Home of Poughkeepsie. As a membership, we collected several car loads of items to donate to the Dutchess County SPCA in honor of Jackie Higgins. We gave time at the Arlington Street Fair and gave the community a positive face to our school district.

We gave our

Please contact Deborah Pollack at LaGrange Middle School to sign up to help.

Most recently, our dues helped to support a local literacy organization called Literacy Connections, which helps community members learn to read. We also continued our effort to help off-set the overhead costs of the annual HOPE basketball game, by paying for the players' jerseys. This year's game will take place on April 7, with the proceeds going to benefit 35 graduating seniors who have suffered the loss of a parent or guardian during their time in Arlington.

On April 29, the ATA will be partnering once again with Rebuilding Together Dutchess County, an organization that helps local families make much-needed repairs on their homes. Union Vale Middle School Technology teacher Doug Dickeson will be leading the ATA's team and will be sending out more details. Finally, in June, the ATA will be organizing its annual mini-golf outing which supports the Arlington Education Foundation. So many people come together for this event every year to make it a success.

These events and drives, however, are only a percentage of the organizations and charities our members are actively involved in and are supporting through their time, energy, and finances. So, yes, we are tired. But I feel rejuvenated thinking about how proud I am to work with such a generous group of people. I ask and ask, and you always rise to the occasion.

-Kristine Jackson, PR Chair

Dates to Remember



MARCH

16th—Community Budget Forum, 7 p.m., CAO

21st—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432

28th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., OPS

APRIL

1st—District Arts Fair, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., LMS

10-14th—Spring Break

17th—Board of Education Candidate Petitions Due, 5 p.m., CAO

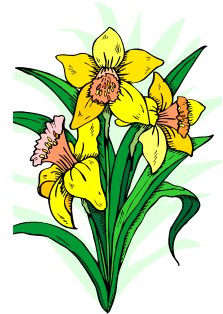
18th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432

Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., TIS

22nd—Spring Highway Cleanup, 8:30 a.m., AHS

25th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., CAO

29th—Rebuilding Together Dutchess County, TBA



MAY

9th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432

Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., BES



Announcements

In the event that Arlington does not use up any more of its allotted snow days, please be aware that the unused snow day will be given back as a day off on Monday April 17.

If more than the allotted snow days are used, the make-up days are:

1st—Friday, May 26

2nd—Monday, April 10

3rd—Tuesday, April 11

Volunteers are needed to serve dinner at the Lunch Box in Poughkeepsie from 4—6 p.m. on April 10 and 14. Contact Colleen Napora at AHS to sign up.

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