



THE EDUCATOR

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Run Vote For Your Life!

Does the headline of this article seem exaggerated to you? Think about it—the issues involved in this year's election include healthcare, gun control, and even APPR. The first two could literally be life-or-death for a person, and the third affects your livelihood, your ability to support yourself and your family. Not so exaggerated, is it?

That may be a bleak way of describing the state of politics, but it is not hopeless. All you have to do is vote on November 6 to have your voice heard. (And, it would help even more if you could make sure to encourage others to vote too.)

On the state level, the New York Senate and Assembly have the power to

change our toxic APPR process. Although a moratorium against using state test scores to rate teachers has helped prevent low ratings for the past few years, that is set to end in 2019. Last spring, the New York State

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Assembly passed a bill aiming to fix the APPR system with no strings attached. It would have ended the link between high-stakes standardized tests and evaluations and restored local control through collective bargaining. The Senate had a matching bill, S.8301, with 87 percent of the senators signing on as co-sponsors., but it never got to the floor

for a vote. The Senate majority had its own bill, S.8992, that would have created more charter schools, which they knew was a deal breaker.

How can we end this stalemate in our state government and advocate for a fix to the current APPR system? On page three of this newsletter you will find the list of candidates that NYSUT has carefully vetted as being pro-public education. Your vote for those candidates can help to fix at least one of the injustices affecting educators—APPR. Most importantly, get educated about all of the election issues that affect you and your family and make sure to get out and vote.

-Sam Falk, editor



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Trivia Challenge

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

What year was the Arlington Education Foundation founded?

Last month's winner was **Vivian LaColla** from Noxon. She correctly identified **Boston** as the city with the oldest public school in America. 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 sfalk@acsdny.org by **November 9**. The winner will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.

Survey Follow-Up Features Focus Groups

At the end of the 2017-18 school year the results of the engagement survey given to all Arlington employees by the K12 Insights company were released. To follow-up on some of the areas that showed a need for improvement, Superintendent Brendan Lyons announced that a series of focus groups would be conducted. This fall Sandy Cokeley of Cokeley Communications (self-described as an independent consulting company with expertise in communications and performance improvement) was hired

to run the focus groups. The hope was for her to help uncover the reasons why some areas of the survey showed negative results.

Arlington's Volunteer Services Coordinator Melissa Erlebacher was tasked with selecting who was to participate in the groups. She began the process by asking all association presidents, principals, and directors for recommenda-

tions, with her stated goal being "to have a mix of employees, including those who have expressed dissatisfaction with their work environment, those who have expressed satisfaction, and those who rarely express an opinion. We also want a balance based on work site, gender, position, race/ethnicity, and longevity."

After receiving those recommendations Erle-

bacher pared down the list to create 10 invitation-only groups of approximately 10 people each, and two groups that were open to anyone who wished to participate. The invitation-only groups were divided by job description, such as transportation, food services, secondary teachers, elementary teachers, teaching assistants, and principals, and the slots in the open

trict. Themes of respect and trust were prevalent and were explored as much as they could be in the time allotted. Once the focus groups were finished, the next step was for Cokeley and Erlebacher to work together to try to summarize the results. Cokely stated that these results would then be given to the superintendent to use as he sees fit.

Erlebacher was also present to help take notes. Questions were posed related to survey areas concerning morale, professional development, and what advice should be given to a new employee of the dis-

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-Sam Falk, editor

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Input On APPR Process Wanted

Although state law controls most of the APPR process, there is some variation as to how the observation portion of the review is implemented. Each year Arlington administrators undergo APPR training to make sure that the process is running smoothly for eve-

ryone involved.

This year's training will be on the November 6 conference day and Deputy Superintendent Jonathan Brown has invited members of the ATA's APPR team to also attend, in the spirit of increasing communication.

We would like to hear

from you. Is there anything about your yearly observation that you think your observer does particularly well? Is there something about the process that you think needs improvement? Please email ataupdate@gmail.com with your questions and comments.

Election 2018 Endorsements

Each year NYSUT endorses candidates for the November elections. The endorsements below, which are non-partisan, are based on the candidates' voting records on educational issues. **Please remember to vote on November 6!**

NY Governor

No Endorsement

NY Attorney General

Letitia James (D)

NY Comptroller

Thomas DiNapoli (D/WE/I)

U.S. Senate

Kirsten Gillibrand (D/W/WE/I)

U.S. House of Representatives

District 18

Sean Patrick Maloney (D/W/WE/I)

District 19

Antonio Delgado (D/W/WE)

NY State Assembly

District 103

Kevin Cahill (D/W)

District 104

Jonathan Jacobson (D)

District 105

No Endorsement

District 106

Didi Barrett (D/W/I)

NY State Senate

District 39

James Scoufis (D/W/WE/RF)

District 40

No Endorsement

District 41

Karen Smythe (D/W/WE)

District 42

Jennifer Metzger (D/W/WE)

District 43

Aaron Gladd (D/W/WE)



New York State Senate candidate Karen Smythe visited the ATA's office on October 5. She is pictured here with the ATA's CAC Co-Chairs Betsy Marshall (left) and Brendan Lawler.

District 41



On October 19 Arthur S. May second grade teacher Erica Dunn (fifth from left) participated in a protest outside Senator Sue Serino's office. The costumes from the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* were meant to evoke a dread of what the future could be like if oppression of women continues.

For more information about the election check out these useful websites:

- <https://www.vote411.org>
- http://ballotpedia.org/New_York

Magical Movie Morning



Even though the weather was blustery and miserable outside, the spirits were high at the Roosevelt theater in Hyde Park during the ATA's first ever Movie Morning on October 27. Over 150 muggles and wizards from across the district either pre-registered or paid at the door to attend a screening of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Local businesses and individuals pledged money to our cause, and our popular raffle table had items donated from several PTAs in the district. The ATA was able to raise over \$2,000 to benefit the Arlington Education Foundation. Over the last 10 years, with thanks to all our dedicated members who always say YES when asked to help out, we have raised over \$25,000 on behalf of the AEF. -Kristine Jackson, ATA PR Chair



Above: LMS children are dressed up as Harry Potter characters. **Top Right:** LMS students and their parents are running the movie morning. **Bottom Right:** Steve Hertzog and his family are supporting the AEF.

Above: Traver Road literacy teacher Barbara Amyotte (second from right) and her daughter (right) volunteered to run the raffle basket table.

Bottom Center: LMS students enjoy the event.

Bottom Right: ATA 2nd Vice President Steve Hertzog and his family came out to support the AEF.

All photos courtesy of Kristine Jackson





ELA teacher Felecia White and her big Harry Potter fans.

MS ELA teacher Kristine Jackson as Harry Potter character Luna Lovegood to the event. She is pictured with her muggle son.



2018 — 2019 ATA Officers

President

Bob Maier

First Vice-President

Greg Nieman

Second Vice-President

Steve Hertzog

Treasurer

Dave Cordella

Chief Negotiator

Robert McHugh

PR Committee Chair

Kristine Jackson

Community Action Chair

Betsy Marshall

Welfare Trust Chair

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BES — William Mueller

NES — Nicolle McMorris

VFES — Gwen Moschetto

OPS — Christene Way

Traver — Diana Judge

JDWR — Betsy Marshall

TIS — Larry Jeannotte

LMS — Kevin Walsh

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

Art teacher Ted Braggins' work was part of the *Landscapes: Near & Far* exhibit at the Tivoli Artists Gallery from September 21 through October 14. The exhibit featured paintings, illustrations and photography that tell a story from the perspective of our surroundings in our community and in other worldly locales.

Music teacher Jon Handman was this year's recipient of the Dutchess County Executive's Arts Award for Arts in Education at a ceremony held on October 4. In addition to teaching at AHS, Handman also conducts the Woodstock chamber orchestra and is co-founder and artistic director of Stringendo, a music school that is committed to furthering the growth and talents of string players in the Hudson Valley.

Arthur S. May School

ASM is proud to announce that it now has an after school Yoga Club, led by Michele Anderson, special education teacher and certified yoga instructor. The goal of the club is to provide students with movement, mindfulness techniques, and

breathing tools to help reduce stress and anxiety as well as improve self-regulation and focus. There has been a tremendous interest in the Yoga Club, with nearly 90 students enrolled. In addition to serving students, the club reserves the last Tuesday of each month for a "staff only" yoga class. Anderson hopes to give staff members an opportunity to manage stress, increase strength, and take time for themselves so they can better serve their students.

Overlook Primary

Kindergarten teacher Karen Maher recently completed her Ph.D dissertation titled "Exploring Kindergartners' Understandings of Gender: Responding to Picture Book Read Alouds With a Focus on Fairy Tales". She will receive her degree in Literacy from the SUNY Albany on December 22. Maher explains that, "My dissertation involved the examination of social (in)justices and (in)equities of gender within the classroom setting. The study was twofold, as I analyzed my own practices as a classroom teacher to see if and when I either upheld or pushed against gender biases through curricula, instructional practices, and language; additionally, I examined the ways in which my students expressed their understandings of gender and then either upheld or pushed against gender biases within both structured and unstructured classroom experiences. So very enlightening and such fun!"

Union Vale Middle

Science teacher Lisa Gizzarelli -Drago was selected as one of New York State's 2018 Master Teachers. She was one of only 18 from the Hudson Valley. She get a \$15,000 stipend over the course of four years to participate in peer mentoring and teacher training.

Vail Farm Elementary

On September 16 physical education teacher Marisa Sutera Strange won the Dutchess County Classic 5K for the 19th consecutive year in a row and the 25th time overall. In doing so, she extended her records to hold the world record for most total wins at one race and most consecutive wins at one race.

James Patterson and Scholastic Book Clubs Giveaway

Third grade teacher Lynn Grainger from Beekman Elementary and second grade teacher Julie Shook from Arthur S. May School were two of the 4,000 teachers recently awarded \$500 and 500 Scholastic Book Clubs bonus points for their classroom libraries. The online contest was run by author James Patterson and the Scholastic Book Club. Grainger plans to use her winnings to replace some of her books that she's had since the 1990's and to secure new titles to support her units. She will use additional bonus points to purchase reading material for children who don't often get new books, in her classroom, her school and at Hudson River Housing.

ASM's Sensory Room Is Born From a Labor of Love

Speech Language Pathologist Allison Cortellini-Whitted noticed two years ago that the student population at her school, Arthur S. May, was changing, and she decided to do something to help the increased number of students with special needs. She describes, "Students needed a place to reset their bodies, do movement, get input into their senses. Sometimes it was a quiet space that was needed, so I spoke to my principal. We had a small room that was just being used for storage so I asked if I could clear it out and make a space there. We had a small space for about a year with just a mat, some yoga poses and manipulatives such as shaving cream, sensory boxes, play-dough, kinetic sand, etc. I asked the staff and PTA to make some donations of shaving cream, beans, and pasta and made some sensory boxes. The children really seemed to like this space, so many would use it as way to calm their bodies before the day started, or after a lengthy assignment in class.

Behaviors began to decrease and it was nice to provide them with a needed outlet."

Last year an additional special needs class was added to the building and Cortellini-Whitted wanted to do more for those students. She was able to obtain a larger space for her sensory room, but she knew that she would need more funding to be able to fill the space. She decided to try DonorsChoose and sent out the link for her funding request to family and colleagues. That small effort resulted in raising approximately \$2500.

The new-and-improved sensory room includes two sensory tables, a light table, a ball pit, and a matted area for yoga. Cortellini-Whitted was also able to stock a bookshelf with bins of portable manipulatives that teachers can bring to their classrooms.

What motivated Cortellini-Whitted to undertake this effort? "The kids and teachers of our building. I see the amazing work they do everyday and if I could



Photo Courtesy of Christine Oberrieth

Two Arthur S. May students enjoy the sensory room created by Speech Language Pathologist Allison Cortellini-Whitted in their building.

help in just a small way I was going for it. My next project is creating a sensory path for our school. Hopefully we will have that up and running by the end of the year!"

Safe Halloween Brings the AHS Community Together

Is AHS social studies teacher Dan Schmitt obsessed with Halloween? Maybe. He is the force behind the annual Safe Halloween event held at the high school, and the administrator of the event's Twitter account, @ahs_halloween, which puts out pumpkin-related memes and information all year around. There is a countdown to Halloween complete with photos of snowy pumpkins in the winter, pumpkins in swimming pools in the summer, and a guide to growing pumpkins in the spring. Schmitt even posted a photo of a pumpkin carved to commemorate the royal wedding last May.

Five years ago this love of Halloween led to Schmitt creating a community event whereby high school clubs and teams decorate classrooms and hand out treats to hundreds of trick-or-treaters that are invited from the local elementary schools and preschools. According to Schmitt, "Its called Safe Halloween because not everyone gets to

experience a safe and fun Halloween. Some children live on dangerous roads with lots of traffic or in dangerous neighborhoods. Others live on steep hills, while some children are far away from their closest neighbors. There was a similar program run at my high school when I was a teenager. I got the idea to bring it to Arlington when I saw children trick-or-treating at the Galleria. I thought that Arlington children needed a safe place to trick-or-treat. I also wanted a way for the high school to reach out and embrace the local community. The event really lets the high school students shine and be positive role models for the young children."

This year's Safe Halloween took place on October 30 with over 35 high school clubs and teams involved. Schmitt coordinates the whole thing, from copying fliers to contacting the building's maintenance department to make sure there are enough garbage cans. His favorite part is seeing the interactions between

the high school students and trick-or-treaters. "Most events at AHS for the community are concerts, plays, games or fundraisers," he explains, "These events are all great but they generally make young children spectators. Safe Halloween allows the little kids to interact with the big kids directly. I think there is something really special about that."

While Schmitt is the force behind Safe Halloween, he credits his colleagues at AHS with making it successful. "The teachers, coaches and administrators who get their clubs involved with the event are a pretty special group of leaders," he explains. "It is amazing how dedicated these educators are. I am always so impressed by the work and leadership they provide for their clubs. Many of them reach out to parents and design elaborate activities. They really do a fabulous job for their kids and for the community. Thank you to those great school leaders."

Dates to Remember



NOVEMBER

6th—**Election Day**

Superintendent's Conference Day

12th—No School—Veterans' Day

13th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., BES

20th—Dress Down Day to benefit the Children's Home of Poughkeepsie

21-23rd—No School—Thanksgiving

27th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS room 1432

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



DECEMBER

6th—Elementary Parent-Teacher Conference Day (Snow Date 12/7)

11th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., VF

13th—Elementary Parent-Teacher Conference Half Day

(Snow Date 12/14)

14th—ATA Children's Holiday Party, 6-8 p.m., OPS



Announcements

Dress Down Day

On Tuesday, November 20, the ATA will be participating in a dress down day to support The Children's Home of Poughkeepsie. TCH provides services for children who age in range from infancy to age 21 with their seven different programs. Their main goal is to reunite children with their families, but they also help with the fostering and adoption process as well. They provide, among many programs, mental health services, family classes, and social casework services. There are students right here at Arlington who are benefiting from the services TCH provides, and this is a wonderful way to support an organization right here in our own community.

Volunteers are needed to serve dinner at the Lunch Box in Poughkeepsie from 4 - 6 p.m. on November 9 and 12 and December 10 and 14. Please contact Liz Crivello-Jordan at BES or Kathleen Vogt at UVMS to sign up.

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