



THE EDUCATOR

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Another Year, Another Step Closer To “Normal”?

As another school year comes to an end we can all look forward to a few months to physically and mentally recharge before starting back up again. The last two years have been the most challenging in recent memory, filled with a longing to get back to “normal”.

The thing is, though, that is not going to happen. Many of the changes caused by the pandemic to both our methods of instruction and the needs of our students are here to stay, for better or for worse.

Think about all that has transpired since that fateful March 13 day in 2020 when we were all told that schools would be shut down for about two

weeks—we learned new ways to broaden our communication when unable to be physically together, and we reached new depths in our compassion for the social and emo-

tionally well-being of our students. We relied on each other as never before, and we made it through that first shut-down, the hybrid year after that, and then, this past school year when we

finally got to take our masks off. One could claim that we’re almost back to “normal” now, but what did that ever mean? I don’t know about you, but the pandemic necessitated that I completely reevaluate how I teach. Conversion to new standards that I had been putting off due to final and Regents exams looming at the end of the year were suddenly made possible when I didn’t have to focus as much on teaching to a test.

New technology led to re-designing lesson plans to be more interactive. A lot of good came out of being forced to change, though I certainly would have not done it all overnight, given

See Normal on page 2

The pandemic made students and teachers alike feel disconnected from their peers and colleagues, and the real normality that we seek is that feeling of belonging to our school and our community, not a return to inflexible standards and grading policies.



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Trivia Challenge

Last month's winner, selected at random from among the correct responses received, was **Amy Kilroy** from AHS. She correctly identified **1784** as the date that the NYS Board of Regents was created. She will be the proud owner of ATA gear.

Be sure to look for the next trivia challenge in September and you could win ATA gear too!

Welfare Trust Updates Unveiled

On June 9, 2022 the Trustees of the Welfare Trust voted to change our benefits as follows:

1. Effective July 1, 2022 the payment to the Dentist for every dental procedure will be increased by 20%.
2. The yearly family

Vision benefit will increase from \$325 to \$375 on October 1, 2022.

3. There will be no change in the \$425 Personal Health benefit per family at this time.

-Ron Higgins,
Welfare Trust Chair

Donations Requested For Scholarship Fund

For over 30 years, the ATA has awarded two graduating seniors each with a \$1000.00 scholarship. One is given to a senior planning a career in education, while the other is given to a senior planning a career in another academic field. The ATA Scholarship Fund has always been funded through donations, mostly from contributions

made by our retirees. In recent years, the amount in the ATA Scholarship Fund has diminished but the ATA is fundraising to replenish this account. If you are able to help by donating, please send checks, made out to the ATA Scholarship Fund, to the ATA office. Any contribution is appreciated.

-Dave Cordella,
ATA Treasurer

Congratulations To the 2022 ATA Retirees!

Jill Abrams-VF
Matthew Backus-AHS
Susan Backus-AHS
Pamela Baldelli-LMS
Freya Bomba-AHS
Douglas Dickeson-UVMS
Linda Dixon-Dziedzic-LMS
Jolie Dunham-AHS
Ester Fallon-AHS
Dallyse Gironda-AHS
Jeanne Gittere-UVMS
Amy Kilroy-AHS
Vivian LaColla-NOX
Noreen Mills Martin-AHS
Dawn Orlik-AHS
Bridgette Pasquarella-VF
Suzann Peterson-LMS
Juanita Puchkoff-OPS
Julie Sanders-LMS
Michael Schratz-ASM
Diane Sizemore-JDWR
Laurie Sorgen-AHS
Lisa Stach-Fraitag- NOX
Marisa Sutera Strange-VF
Maureen VanAckooy-UVMS

Another Step Closer To “Normal”?

Continued from front the choice.

On the other hand, the negative impact of the pandemic on our students' ability to interact with others and be attentive to lessons in the classroom has added new facets to our school day that we could do without.

The pandemic made students and teachers alike feel disconnected from their peers and colleagues, and the real

normality that we seek is that feeling of belonging to our school and our community, not a return to inflexible standards and grading policies. The added components of social and emotional learning that have increased our workloads will not be going away any time soon, and we can only hope that those in charge of the district will recognize the connection between smaller class sizes and the ability of teachers

to spend more time getting to know each student and their individual needs.

No one knows what September will bring, though all indications are that the pandemic is settling more and more into the background. Spend some time this summer taking care of yourself before we all gear up to face another school year together.

-Sam Falk,
ATA Communications Chair

The ATA Bids Farewell To Leslie Battistoni

We are at that point in the year that we celebrate the end of another school year, and bid farewell to many of our colleagues who are retiring from Arlington. I wanted to share with you that the ATA will also be sending well wishes to Leslie Battistoni, our administrative assistant at the ATA office. Leslie joined us to "help us out for a few months" and has stayed with us for more than a decade. She has been an integral part of the running the ATA's day-to-day business with managing the office, maintaining our records, and keeping me on schedule. She was very significant with our transition from Freedom Park to our office at 46 Davis, and has stayed with us for the last 10 years since. We have been so fortunate for her calm and supportive way to greet all that call, and be the point person for the ATA. Most would know her voice even if you have never met her in person. Fact is, Leslie has kept the ATA on a



Photo by Kathleen Vogt

Leslie Battistoni is pictured here with her husband Brian (a retired AHS math teacher) at the 2018 ATA recognition dinner.

focused path, and our association has benefited from her efforts. In true style, she has offered, and we have accepted, that she will help us transition to her replacement as well as remain a resource for us into the future. Thank you Leslie, I

have depended on you for so much for so long. Please join me in wishing Leslie Battistoni a wonderful retirement; she will be missed.

-Bob Maier, ATA President

Don't Forget To Re-Register!

NYS law requires that all teachers re-register every five years in order to maintain their Professional or Permanent certificates, and that time is up.

Make sure to go to <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/teach/> by the end of the month prior to your birth month to re-register.

Summer Hours

The ATA officers are still there for members over the summer. While the office will not be physically open, President Bob Maier checks the ATA's email and voicemail a few times a week in July and August. Messages can be left at 845-454-7002 or ata4547002@aol.com.

Retirees Say Goodbye

The ATA's annual recognition dinner was held on Friday, June 15, at Christos in Poughkeepsie, returning for the first time since 2019. Retirees and tenure recipients from the classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022 were honored. Many more photos of the event can be found at www.arlingtonteachers.com.



All photos by Lara Ivchenko



2021 — 2022 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 Chairs

Brendan Lawlor

Bill Mueller

Welfare Trust Chair

Ron Higgins

Communications Chair

Sam Falk

Senior Building Representatives

ASM — A'Rehema Leach

BES — Adrienne Pisciotta/
Melissa Maiello

Noxon — Nicole McMorris

VFES — Pina Bruno

OPS — Nancy Thomas

Traver — Diana Judge

JDWR — Barbara Mackey

TIS — Joe Sutka

LMS — Patty Bauerlein

UVMS — Jim DeBonis

AHS — John Filor

AHS — Noreen MillsMartin

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 Libraries

Librarians Jaelyn Heaney (AHS), Lucy Miller (AHS), and Kate Sprague-Hicks (UVMS) attended a regional conference called "Collection, Selection, Objection" on May 13 in Plattsburgh. Described as "A day of dialogue around the policies, laws, and professional considerations of supporting a diverse and representative collection," the conference included the unveiling of a new materials policy by Erie 1, which Arlington is likely to adopt. The

policy would update the district's existing policies on library and textbook selections, and procedures to follow if books are challenged.

Union Vale Middle

Impact teacher Miriam Cestero has just earned her second dual master's degree. The degrees are in School Leadership and School Building Leader/District Leader and were earned from Touro College in Manhattan.

Member Spotlight: Kirk Dornton

AHS science teacher Kirk Dornton has been an ATA member since 2005 and started writing his first novel a few years later. As he tells it, "I've been writing intently since 2007. The first ten years were spent learning the craft and discovering my style. I favor literary fiction, but have also written travelogues, short stories, folktales, and poetry (among other pieces). My first 'real' novel was *Beyond the Fjord* self-published in 2020. It chronicles the flagging fortunes of a small fishing hamlet along a remote fjord in Iceland. Amidst this drama, a young couple, brought together by dire circumstances and the consequences of a fateful evening long ago, must decide the course of their future together and whether they can forgive the sins of a past they cannot forget. Just recently I pub-

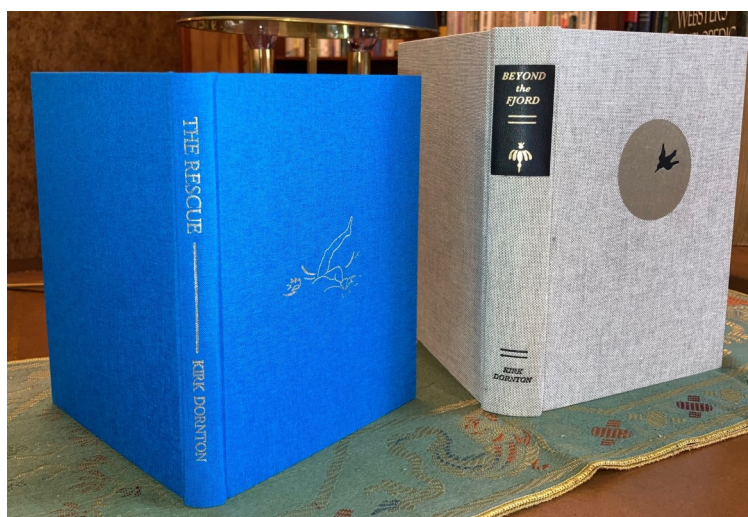


Photo by Kirk Dornton

AHS science teacher Kirk Dornton has written two books during his time as an ATA member.

lished my second novel, *The Rescue*, which is written in the style of an allegory as told by way of a first-person monologue. It strives to relate the various phases of a person's life through art, story, symbolism, and interpretation. As heavy as it sounds, it is presented as a fun, at times funny, others

touching, story about an old man who is paid an unexpected visit by a few 'familiar' acquaintances during a storm. As of right now I am not formally published (if anyone has an 'in' with the publishing business, drop my name!) but I'd be happy to loan copies of my books on request."

School Board Race Shows Community Support

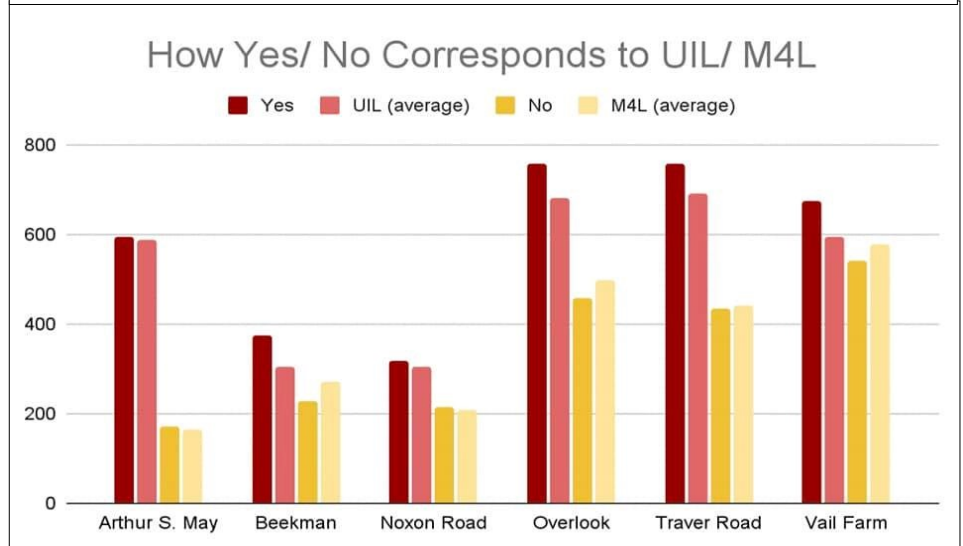
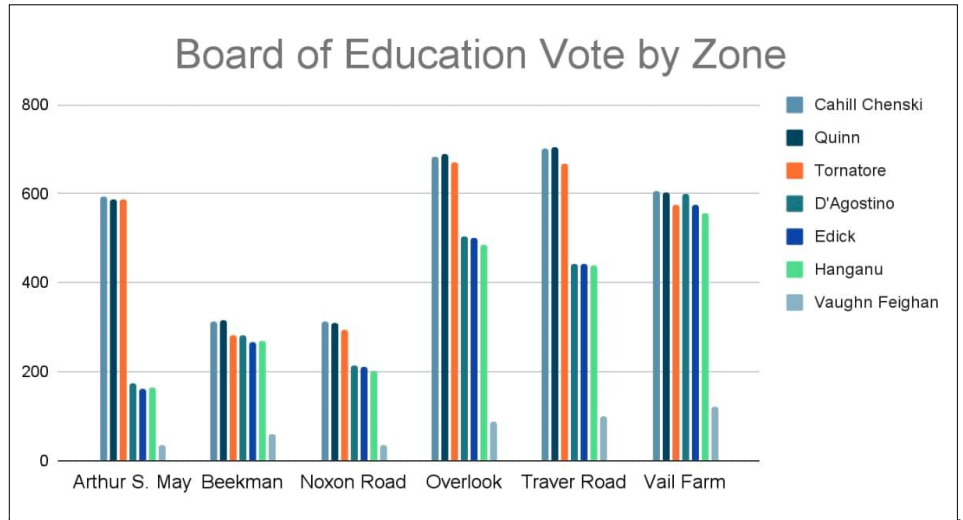
Recent years have seen the increasing polarization of the American population along the lines of conservative versus liberal ideals in matters both national and local.

At the school district level this schism came to a head during the time of COVID over issues such as mask mandates and the importance of vaccines, but did not quiet as the virus began to fade. The conservative groups that had emerged turned their attention to fighting to remove books that they deemed inappropriate from school libraries. School board meetings featured passionate members of the local Moms For Liberty (M4L) group venting their frustrations against the district.

In mid-March some Arlington librarians got together after the book *Gender Queer* had been challenged, and, through word-of-mouth, organized a meeting for those in favor of intellectual freedom and LGBTQ representation. More than 40 people showed up on short notice and the Friends for FREADom group was born.

In April, this group of like-minded community members geared up to support the Arlington district budget, and incumbents Kelly Cahill Chenski, Marion Quinn, and Mark Tornatore in the school board race. They created a subgroup called United In Learning (UIL), and, along with the ATA, got out the vote in whatever way they could. UIL was especially instrumental in designing a website with extensive information about the budget vote and school board race (www.unitedinlearning.com).

In the end, this partnership between community members



and the ATA was victorious, with the budget passing, and the incumbents winning out over the M4L candidates Jonathan D'Agostino, Ron Edick, and Cris Hanganu. As can be seen in the graphs above created by community member Marie Anastasio, Arlington is still a very divided place, with yes and no votes on the budget correlating along party lines. (The full canvas of votes can be found at www.arlingtonschools.org/domain/10807.)

Although the loud voices at school board meetings and on social media had many ATA

members concerned, the vote in May showed that the majority of district voters support educators in defending students' access to the resources they need.

Unfortunately, just like in national politics, it does not seem like the fight between those on the left and right sides of issues pertaining to local education will be over any time soon. The ATA thanks all of the community members who have shown their support for Arlington over these last two difficult years, and look forward to working with them in the future.

Dates to Remember



JUNE

23rd—Last Day of Classes (Half Day), All Elementary and Middle Schools

24th—Last Day of School

25th—High School Graduation, Dutchess Stadium, 10 a.m.

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



2022-2023 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL SCHEDULE

September 20

October 18

November 15

December (no meeting)

January 17

February 21

March 21

April 18

May 9

June 13



All meetings are at 4 p.m. in room 1432 at AHS

Announcements

Thank you to the ATA's Communications Committee for all of their help with *The Educator* this year!

Michelle Chastain—AHS

Julie Shook - ASM

Melissa Pastor - BES

Adrienne Pisciotta—BES

Stephanie Brand - JDWR

Marisa Bettina - LMS

Nicolle McMorris - NOX

Jayne Pugnali- OPS

Chris Shave- TIS

Carol Berliner - TRP

Katherine Falcone - UVMS

Eleni Anemelos - VF

Jennifer D'Antoni - VF

Stay in touch over the summer! Like us on Facebook or Twitter or check out www.arlingtonteachers.com for forms, photos, calendars, and more.