



THE EDUCATOR

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Fighting For Our Union Family

ATA President Bob Maier's 2024 State of the Union Address

As 2024 has begun, we can look back at all that was accomplished this past year, and look forward to successes in the near future. A highlight of 2023 was settling our contract in the fall. Of all my responsibilities as the ATA President, this task brings me the most stress. The negotiations team and I take the suggestions and requests of our members very seriously, and we always work to secure the best outcome for all of us. It is sometimes very difficult as we are

a population of 750 members, but we always do our best for all. This year we also had a special opportunity with the

had been faced with many challenges to make this a reality. The change in administration afforded the easiest transition we could

have ever expected. We are proud to add the OTs and PTs as members in our unit; if you haven't yet, welcome our therapists into our union family.

Speaking of our union family, NYSUT is gearing up a campaign to support tier equity for the newest members in the Teachers' Retirement See Fighting on page 3

Fixing Tier 6 is about solidarity and fairness. It is absolutely unfair that some of our members must work longer and contribute more to earn a significantly reduced pension.

new administration to negotiate to include the occupational and physical therapists in the ATA. In the past we




Thanks to NYSUT advocacy, we've already won some pension improvements. But we need your help. Get involved — It's time to Fix Tier 6!

Learn More and Join the Fix Tier 6 Team: FixTier6.org

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Trivia Challenge

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

Which U.S. president gave the longest state of the union address?

Last month's winner was retiree **Gary Montalto**. He correctly identified **the 1950s** as the decade with peak union membership in the U.S. He 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 **February 9**. The winner will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.

Annual DCSPCA Drive Begins Soon

Once again, the Arlington Teachers' Association will be sponsoring a supplies drive for the Dutchess County SPCA to honor Jackie Higgins, a champion for the teachers here in our district. Jackie was the ATA's administrative assistant for many years. She was the first face people would see when they would visit our offices, and the first voice they would hear on the phone. She was always kind, greeted you with a smile, and made you feel like family. In 2010, the ATA suffered a great loss with her passing.

As a way of ensuring her memory lives on, we are proud to sponsor this cause that was special to Jackie for the 13th year. She loved animals, and the Dutchess County SPCA is always so appreciative of our donations as a district.

Starting February 26 through March 11, 2023, we will be collecting donations for the DCSPCA. **Monetary donations are welcome and appreciated.** Please write checks to DCSPCA or send them to @ata4547002 through Venmo with the memo: DCSPCA. All donations (both monetary and non-monetary) are tax deductible.

Please consider donating these desperately needed items:

- Unopened dog and cat kibble
- Unopened dog and cat canned food
- Towels, flat sheets, and comforters
- Unfrayed blankets with no fringe
- Harnesses and leashes in good condition
- Dog and cat toys without rope or string
- Cat trees in good condition
- Clean crates and carriers
- Unopened cat litter
- Clean, uncovered litter boxes
- Paper towels
- Clean metal or ceramic bowls

What animals don't need:

- Opened bags or cans of food
- Pillows and pillow cases
- Fitted sheets
- Cushions
- Electric blankets
- Knitted or crocheted items
- Mattress pads and covers
- Duvet covers
- Rusted crates and carriers
- Prescription pet food
- Medicines and medical supplies
- Newspapers, can, and bottles
- Plastic pet food bowls

Thank you for your continued support of our fundraising efforts and for helping us to honor the memory of the ATA's friend, Jackie Higgins.

-Kristine Jackson,
ATA PR Chair

Read more about the Dutchess County SPCA at www.dcsPCA.org

Fighting For Our Union Family

Continued from front

System. More information will be coming, but the campaign is on to influence our legislators to change the laws that created Tier 6. For those of us in the profession for a long time, we started in Tier 4 and at that time we had tier envy for the Tier 1 folks. They really did have a very sweet retirement set up, but keep in mind, salaries were not equitable with other professionals in the business world, so their retirement was relative to what they had earned. Today, the cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) have kept them afloat in retirement. It needs to be noted the Tier 1 folks successfully fought for changes for us in Tier 4. This is where I hope you will pay attention.

The different aspects today for our Tier 6 colleagues are significant and should be noted. Tier 4 was required to pay 3% of salary toward our pensions, and that was shortened to a 10-year period through the work of NYSUT, lobbying our lawmakers, VOTE COPE contributions, and the political pressure our members applied. Today Tier 6 members will pay up to 6% of their salary their entire career with the contributions growing as their salary grows. The real issue will be years down the road. For those of us who started early in life, the rule has been 30 years of service at age 55 and you were eligible to retire. With less than 30 years you would have to work until 62 and you could retire without penalty to your pension. The Tier 6 folks will have to work to age 63 with 40 years of service or face heavy

penalties. In real numbers, a Tier 4 member retiring with 30 years of service at age 55 would receive 60% of their final average salary. A Tier 6 member retiring at age 55 with 30 years of service would only receive 26.4% of their final average after paying tens of thousands of dollars more into the system.

Fixing Tier 6 is about solidarity and fairness. It is absolutely unfair that some of our members must work longer and contribute more to earn a

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significantly reduced pension. It is also unreasonable in our society that we would not afford our young members the same dignity in their retirement that older members have all earned and look forward to. Entering in public service we all knew that the work we did was important, and we would never get rich on our salaries. Today we earn a solid income as professionals, but the legislation that created Tier 6 needs to be revisited by our legislature, and we the membership have the votes to make that happen. More information will be coming, but you can enter the conversation by visiting Fixtier6.org. This is a NYSUT website with a wealth of

information to educate yourself about this movement that is growing to support our newest members.

Now in the next few months there will be significant efforts to build a positive future in Arlington. I am sure you are all aware Arlington is starting a search for a new superintendent, again. The ATA hopes to work with the board of education to find a forward-thinking individual who appreciates what makes us Arlington, without trying to

reinvent us in their image.

We will also be asked to support the district's bond referendum to bring renovations and improvements to many of our schools. It is unfortunate, but many of our buildings are in desperate need for upgrades and improvements to provide a more equitable educational experience for our students across the district.

As always, the ATA leadership is poised to engage and work to have the best possible outcomes in these endeavors. There is a lot of work ahead, but we are up for the task. Thank you for the continued support in our efforts. I want to thank you all for the work you do every day that makes Arlington what it is. It is clear—we are Arlington, and as leaders come and go, it is the faculty and staff that carry forward our traditions and culture. Please reach out if you wish to discuss any of these important developments for our future.

-Bob Maier,
ATA President

Summer Opportunities Abound

In February summer may seem far off, but it is not too soon to be thinking about applying for teachers after school ends. Information about numerous educational programs can be found in this list of just some of the great programs that are available at very little or no cost at all to educators.

Program Sponsor	Recommended Grade Level	Subject	Date
National WWII Museum	6-12	Social Studies & ELA —WWII	July 7-10 July 21-24
McDonald Observatory	K-12	Science—Astronomy	Various
Library of Congress	K-12	Using Primary Sources	July 1-3, 10-13
The Thoreau Institute	K-12	Natural History, ELA	July 14-15
National Endowment for the Humanities	K-12	Social Studies, ELA, Architecture, Music, Theater	Various
National Portrait Gallery	K-12	Social Studies, ELA, Visual Arts	July 8-10
Ford's Theater	3-12	Social Studies—Civil War	July 21-23
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office	K-12	Business & STEM	July 21-23
Carnegie Hall	K-12	Music	June 29—July 1
U.S. Naval Academy	6-12	STEM	July 15-17
Elementary Physical Education Workshop	K-8	Physical Education	July 15-17
ASM International	K-12	STEM—Materials Science	Various

g for one of the many professional development opportunities available and on the internet, but many can be very expensive. The following is a list of educators. Many even include room, board, and travel expenses!



s	Location	Application Deadline	Website
13 -27	New Orleans, LA	Jan. 29	tinyurl.com/y7h4nkv9
us	Fort Davis, TX	Feb. 12	mcdonaldobservatory.org/teachers/profdev#hubble
12, 15-17	Washington, D.C.	Feb. 16	tinyurl.com/2ub9ucuj
-19	Walden Pond, MA	March 1	tinyurl.com/yf623sm8
us	Various	March 5	www.neh.gov/divisions/education/summer-programs
11	Washington, D.C.	March 15	npg.si.edu/teacher-workshops/learning-look-summer-teacher-institute
-26	Washington, D.C.	March 29	fords.org/teaching-and-learning/education-programs/set-in-stone/
-26	Alexandria, VA	March 31	www.uspto.gov/learning-and-resources/kids-educators/nsti/faq
July 2	New York, NY	June 10	www.carnegiehall.org/Education/Programs/Music-Educators-Workshop/Summer-Program
-18	Annapolis, MD	Ongoing	usna.edu/STEM/applications.php
-19	Pomona, CA	Ongoing	epew-cp.weebly.com/
us	Various	Ongoing	tinyurl.com/yckv5ks5

2023 — 2024 ATA Officers

President

Bob Maier

Elementary Vice President

Nicolle McMorris

Secondary Vice President

Greg Nieman

Vice President For Membership

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 — Christie Boydston

NOX — Lynette Battle

VFES — Gwen Moschetto

OPS — Nancy Thomas

TRP — Diana Judge

JDWR — Barbara Mackey

TIS — Heather Blatz

LMS — Bill Mueller

UVMS — Jim DeBonis

AHS — John Filor

AHS — Theresa Daleo-Stock

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

Social studies teacher Krysta Weiss and science teacher Sam Falk recently helped to run a holiday silent auction with the Friends of Millbrook Library. The over \$13,000 that was raised that will go toward library programs and special projects.

Retirees

Retirees Karen Siperly (UVMS) and Dave Moss (AHS) are once again running a trivia competition to benefit Red Hook library. The 20th annual contest is taking place on February 4 at Cancun's Restaurant in Red Hook. Each year several Arlington teachers compete in the charity event.



Photo Courtesy of Chris Keenan

Arthur S. May School

P.E. teacher Chris Keenan has been chosen to be the Chairperson for NYS AHPERD's Southeastern Zone Elementary/Middle School Physical Education Awards that will be held at Arlington High School this May. Elementary and middle school teachers from Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester counties nominate students who consistently demonstrate exemplary behavior, positive character traits, and leadership qualities. Selected students should also be respectful, responsible, kind to others, and demonstrate physical fitness through participation in P.E. activities.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Do you know something great that an ATA member has done recently? Perhaps they have done charity work, received an award, attended a conference, or even published a book. Let us know by scanning the QR code or going to this link:

<https://forms.gle/aGLYf3LWHqkP5gaS7>



Tax Season Is Upon Us Once Again

When preparing your taxes, you may be able to deduct the union dues from your taxable income. Check with your tax preparation professional to be sure.

So how much did I pay in Union Dues (ATA+NYSUT/NEA+AFT) in 2023?

New employees (started in September)	\$362.64
Full time employees (worked last year also)	\$900.40
Recent retirees (Dues from last spring)	\$537.76

Are there any exceptions to this? Yes, a few people may have had a leave, or started after Sept. 1, or had some other payroll interruption that would change their deduction. See below to confirm your deduction.

The documentation you can provide to show that you have made these payments is on the "paystub" that was emailed to you on 12/21/23. The line to look at is *DUES ATA*, in the *Cal Year To Date* column. I recommend keeping all of your paystubs, but the last one in each December is particularly handy when tax prep time comes.

Happy New Year!

-Steve Hertzog, ATA Vice President For Membership

Office Beautification Help Needed

If you would like to help out with maintaining the landscaping at the ATA office, please consider joining me on the second Saturday of each month; 2/11, 3/11, 4/8, 5/13, and 6/10. Weather permitting, we will meet at 8 a.m. and work for two hours. Tasks may include weeding, mulching, pruning, and planting. Please dress accordingly and bring gloves. Thank you for your consideration.

-Nancy Thomas (OPS)

Scan to sign up →



Spotlight on the Contract: Outside the Classroom

The Educator *periodically spotlights 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.*

"The private and personal life of a teacher is not within the appropriate concern or attention of the Board or Administration except as it may interfere with the teacher's responsibilities to and relationships with students or the school system or impair his/her ability to fulfill his/her teaching duties."

"Teacher participation or non-participation in voluntary extra-curricular, community, church, club or social activities shall not be considered in evaluating teacher performance."

Explanation: These provisions (Article VI, page 8, and Article XIV, page 19, respectively) together say that what teachers do outside of the classroom is not to be considered during any evaluation process, as long as their activities do not interfere with teaching duties. Teachers should not be discriminated against due to lifestyle choices. In addition, their participation in any community or extra-curricular activities at school cannot be taken in to account by administrators when evaluating a teacher, such as for tenure.

Dates to Remember



FEBRUARY

- 13th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., TRP
- 16th—Professional Development Half Day
- 19-20th—Presidents' Day - No School
- 24th—MST Fair, 8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m., AHS
- 27th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432
Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., CAO

MARCH

- 8th—Superintendent's Conference Day
- 12th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., BES
- 19th—ATA Executive Council Meeting: 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432
- 25th-31st—Spring Break
- 26th—Board of Education Meeting: 7 p.m., CAO



APRIL

- 1st—Spring Break



Announcements

Do you have educator expenses to deduct from your taxes?

Eligible educators can deduct up to \$300 of qualified expenses paid in 2023. Spouses who are eligible educators filing jointly can deduct up to \$600. To be eligible you must have worked at least 900 hours in a school during the school year. Qualified expenses include books, supplies, equipment (including computer equipment, software, and services), and other materials used in the classroom; PD courses; personal protective equipment, disinfectant, and other supplies used for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19. For further information, consult your tax preparer, or www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p17.pdf.

Save the Date!

This year's HOPE basketball game to raise scholarship funds for Arlington graduates who have lost a parent or guardian will be on March 22.

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