



THE EDUCATOR

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

PR Update 2

We raise money for several organizations each year.

Trivia Challenge

Win ATA gear.

Negotiations Update 3

Misconceptions are fact-checked.

Summer Opportunities 4

Learn about the many options available for summer PD at little or no cost to teachers.

What's Going On? 6

Member accomplishments are highlighted.

State of the Union 7

ATA President opines.

Tax Deductions

See the amount you can deduct for dues paid in 2024.

Calendar and Announcements 8



It's a New Day In Arlington

ATA President Bob Maier's 2025 State of the Union Address

As 2024 drew to a close and we begin 2025, there is much to be optimistic about. I have written this article for our newsletter for years now, and each time I try to engage what the last year has brought, and what we can look forward to in the year ahead. This year has definitely been an interesting one with so many changes that have come to Arlington. With the exit of our previous administration we are grateful that the Arlington BOE allowed all of the labor groups to participate in the selection of our new

Superintendent. This marks a significant change over the last few leadership changes, and I believe that it has proven to be a positive.

Today I am more optimistic than I have been in more than a decade that there are brighter days ahead.

With the addition of Dr. Benante, and his new administrative team, we can all see a change in the times. I have reported a change in leadership several times over my tenure here at the ATA. I would be the first to admit, I was

optimistic each time, only to settle into reality and experience a less than desirable impact on the District. This time I believe we have the team we need. With all the winds of change that have drifted in and out, I believe this team is vested here in our community, and are here for the long term.

As Dr. Benante began with the opening of the year, I think it impacted many of us for him to have invited Frank Pepe and Tom Brooks for our program. Clearly Phil was leaning into our strong history as a
See New on page 3



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Trivia Challenge

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

How many school districts are in Dutchess County?

Last month's winner was retiree **Kathleen Nerf**. He correctly identified **Syracuse** the town that made snow illegal in 1992. 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 February 7. The winner will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.

We Care For Our Community

On Tuesday, November 26, 2024, The Arlington Teachers' Association held a district-wide dress down day to raise funds for The Children's Home of Poughkeepsie (TCH). This successful initiative resulted in a generous donation of \$2505 to support the vital work of TCH.

The dress down day, widely participated in by teachers and staff across the Arlington Central School District, provided a fun and easy way for educators to contribute to a worthy cause. The funds raised will directly support TCH's mission: Empowering children and families to achieve optimal health and well-being.

TCH provides a range of essential services to children and families in need, including:

- Mental health counseling: Addressing emotional and behavioral challenges faced by children and adolescents.
- Family support services: Offering guidance and resources to

strengthen family relationships and promote healthy development.

- Outpatient therapy: Providing specialized therapy services for children with specific needs, such as trauma-informed care.
- Community outreach programs: Reaching

raised by ticket sales, local businesses, union leadership, and schools' PTA/PTOs pledged or donated raffle prizes to this event. It truly was a successful day, and we could not have done it without the efforts of our volunteers.

ATA members: thank you for all you do in your classrooms, your buildings, the district,

and your community. As we transition to a new year, be on the lookout for other opportunities you can be a part of, including our largest events in the spring. The annual Jackie Higgins drive will be from February 24 to March 7 this year. In place of

The annual Jackie Higgins drive will be from February 24 to March 7 this year. In place of donating items to the DCSPCA for their animals, we are partnering with another local organization, CARE, which stands for Compassionate Animal Rescue Efforts (of Dutchess County).

out to vulnerable populations and providing support and resources within the community. (from www.childrenshome.us)

Additionally, the ATA hosted a successful Morning Movie screening of *Toy Story* on December 8, 2024 at the Roosevelt Theater in Hyde Park, raising a remarkable \$1997 for the Arlington Education Foundation (AEF). In addition to revenue

donating items to the DCSPCA for their animals, as we have done in the past, we are partnering with another local organization, CARE, which stands for Compassionate Animal Rescue Efforts(of Dutchess County). More information about how and what you can contribute will be emailed soon.

Remember to take care of YOU!

-Kristine Jackson,
ATA PR Chair

Negotiations Update: Misconceptions Addressed

We have received 200 submissions through the Google Form for contract proposals. Although there are many repeated ideas, that's still a lot. Thank you for sharing your ideas. I just wanted to take this opportunity to clear up a couple misconceptions that I noticed in the proposals...

Misconception: Elementary teachers at other districts, for example, New Paltz, are paid more than secondary teachers.

False. This lacks evidence. I read through the New Paltz teacher contract after a few people mentioned this in their submissions and found no language that would support that assertion.

Misconception: Building and/or district coordinators receive longevity pay in addition to their base stipend.

False. There are two types of longevity pay in the contract. The first, which applies to everyone, kicks in at years 23, 26, and 29 and is added to your base salary. The second only applies to coaches and people receiving stipends for extra-curriculars activities. They get a 5% increase after 5 years of service as coach/advisor and a 10% increase after 10 years of service.

Misconception: Members on maternity leave who are using their sick days are not paid.

False. Anytime a member is using a sick day or the sick bank, either for illness or maternity leave, they are paid their normal rate of pay and receive benefits.

Misconception: We work 187 days a year, more than every district around us.

False: While there are 187 work days on the calendar, we work 183 days a year. This is a result of our four emergency days, which end up either as snow days or give-back days. This is in line with what other nearby districts work.

Misconception: The existence of Regents testing days at the high school impacts the number of hours that elementary and middle school teachers are required to work.

False. Regents testing days count toward the required 990-hour state requirement for minimum instructional time and have no impact on the elementary or middle schools.

Please feel free to reach out to Bob or me if you have any questions about contractual language.

-Robert McHugh, ATA Chief Negotiator

Funding Available For Member Engagement



Photo by Sam Falk

Making sure that all of our ATA members know that they are a part of the union family is important. Do you have an idea for a fun activity that will bring the members in your building together? Funding is available! Contact your senior building rep to find out the details.

LOTE teacher Kerri Simeone was inspired to organize a book swap at AHS based on one that had been done previously at LMS. The ATA supplied some candy, and people brought in books to donate, then stopped by during Regents Week to take home some new reading. Shown here are RSP social worker Cayla Cetola (left), and teachers Tracey Rancourt (center) and Jackie Dunn (right) with all of their great finds.

Summer Opportunities About

In February summer may seem far off, but it is not too soon to be thinking about applying for educators 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
Library of Congress	K-12	Using Primary Sources	July 9-11,
McDonald Observatory	K-12	Science—Astronomy	Variou
White House History Teacher Institute	K-12	Social Studies	July 7-11,
Harry S. Truman Library & Museum	K-12	Social Studies	July 14
National Endowment for the Humanities	K-12	Social Studies, ELA, Architecture, Music, Theater	Variou
Ford's Theater	3-12	Social Studies—Civil War	July 20
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office	K-12	Business & STEM	July 20
Carnegie Hall	K-12	Music	June 28—
Wild Heart Teacher	K-12	All	Variou
U.S. Naval Academy	6-12	STEM	July 7-
Elementary Physical Education Workshop	K-8	Physical Education	July 14
ASM International	K-12	STEM—Materials Science	Variou

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



s	Location	Application Deadline	Website
16-18	Washington, D.C.	Jan. 31	tinyurl.com/2ub9ucuj
us	Fort Davis, TX	Feb. 12	mcdonaldobservatory.org/teachers/profdev#hubble
14-18	Washington, D.C.	Feb. 17	tinyurl.com/2s397x5j
-18	Independence, MO	Feb. 28	www.trumanlibrary.gov/teacherconference
us	Various	March 5	www.neh.gov/divisions/education/summer-programs
-25	Washington, D.C.	March 17	fords.org/teaching-and-learning/education-programs/set-in-stone/
-25	Alexandria, VA	March 31	www.uspto.gov/learning-and-resources/kids-educators/nsti/faq
July 1	New York, NY	June 10	www.carnegiehall.org/Education/Programs/Music-Educators-Workshop/Summer-Program
us	Divide, CO	Ongoing	sites.google.com/wildheartteacher.org/wild-heart-teacher/retreats-2025
10	Annapolis, MD	Ongoing	usna.edu/STEM/applications.php
-17	Pomona, CA	Ongoing	epew-cp.weebly.com/
us	Various	Ongoing	tinyurl.com/yckv5ks5

2024 — 2025
ATA Officers

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Nicolle McMorris

Secondary Vice President

Greg Nieman

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Treasurer

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Chief Negotiator

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Kristine Jackson

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Bill Mueller

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BES — Christie Boydston

NOX— Lynette Battle

VFES— Alison Durkin

OPS — Christene Way

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

School psychologist Mary Beth Neils is hosting an interactive talk on "Self Love: opening your heart through mindset and movement" from 6 to 7pm at the East Fishkill Library on February 10. She will incorporate strategies from her book *A New Reflection*, as well as things learned through education and research. Anyone interested in this free talk can register at eflibrary.org to attend.

Beekman Elementary

Music teacher Mary Dalari played the role of Humpty Dumpty in Center Stage Productions' production of *Shrek The Musical* at the Center For Performing Arts in Rhinebeck. The show ran from January 4 through 26.

Noxon Road Elementary

Third grade teacher Katie Grukin is co-author on a paper titled "Stakeholders' Roles in



Photo by Stefanie Rice

National Board

Third grade teacher Dan Longarino (NOX) recently received his National Board certification, and first grade teacher Cynthia Katz (TRP) achieved her National Board Maintenance of Certification. They are pictured above holding certificates they received from the district at the January 22 school board meeting.

AHS special ed teacher Colleen Napora and FACS teacher Stefanie Rice were also recognized at the board meeting for their years of working to help district educators with the National Board certification process. Information about National Board certification, and funding available to offset costs, can be found at www.nbcny.org.

Evolutionizing Education: An Evolutionary-Based Toolkit Surrounding Elementary Education" in *Behavioral Sciences*, an international, peer-reviewed journal. The paper can be read at www.mdpi.com/2076-328X/15/1/92.

Retirees

Retirees Karen Sipperly (UVMS) and Dave Moss (AHS) are once again running a trivia competition to benefit Red Hook library. The 21st annual contest is taking place on

February 2 at Cancun's Restaurant in Red Hook. Each year several Arlington teachers compete in the charity event.

Retiree Angela Calabrese has written her first middle-grade novel, *Year of the Meatball*. More information about the book and how to purchase it can be found at www.angelacalabrese.com. Calabrese also hosted a writing workshop at Beekman Library on January 28 for teens and teens interested in working on their own stories.

Tax Season Is Upon Us Once Again

When preparing your taxes, you may be able to deduct the union dues from your taxable income.

So how much did I pay in Union Dues (ATA+NYSUT/NEA+AFT) in 2024?

New employees (started in September)	\$426.86
Full time employees (worked last year also)	\$970.88
Recent retirees (Dues from last spring)	\$544.02

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 12/26/24. 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

It's a New Day In Arlington

Continued from front

district, and then engaging the future with the wealth of experience the faculty and staff have. Then for him to ask those with 20 years or more of experience to stand, the impact was obvious: we are Arlington, and the success of our district is because of our hard work almost in spite of the past leaders.

Realistically, there are many challenges ahead. It is through our hard work and dedication that our students are thriving. Yes we can make improvements in test scores, and yes we can support stronger equity efforts, to name a few, but it is important to understand that we, the ATA, are the driving force behind the success of our students. Today I am more optimistic than I have been in more than a decade that there are brighter days ahead. It will take serious effort from us all, but we will bring Arlington back to the reputation we had when I started here 30 years ago. I am confident that Dr. Benante is the right leader, and while

we don't always agree, I am encouraged that he has been transparent with his messaging, and collaborative in working toward a positive tomorrow. It has been refreshing that he has employed ATA members and the ATA leadership to hire administrators at CAO, and will

It has been the efforts of the ATA and all of its members that have kept Arlington on a positive course.

do the same in the buildings as it becomes necessary. Please understand how transformative this has been for the District.

Now I know many of you are thinking of our upcoming negotiations. Our team is engaging the suggestions that were shared by members, and we will make every effort to come to an agreement with the District before the current contract expires. We will keep the

membership informed as we work toward a settlement. It is always our goal to come to an agreement that we can be proud of. Of course the financial position of the District will be challenging, as Phil's email shared, but I am confident we will achieve a fair settlement.

At this point I can be nothing but optimistic that our future brings better days in our careers. The past decade has been very difficult for all of us, but the ATA has been the constant in an ever-changing environment. To think it was five years ago this March that we shut down for COVID. Then we reopened the following fall in a hybrid or online model. How we worked through that time still amazes me. It has been the efforts of the ATA and all of its members that have kept Arlington on a positive course. It has been an honor for me that our membership has had the confidence in me to have served through these times. I would like to imagine the best is yet to come!

-Bob Maier, ATA President

Dates to Remember



FEBRUARY

- 11th—Board of Education Meeting & Budget Workshop, 7 p.m., TRP
- 14th—Professional Development Half Day
- 17th—Presidents' Day - No School
- 22nd—MST Fair, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m., AHS
- 25th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432
Board of Education Meeting & Budget Workshop, CAO

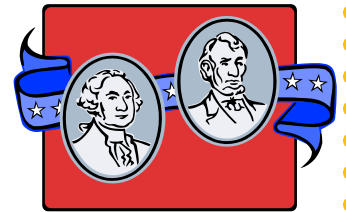
MARCH

- 7th—Superintendent's Conference Day
- 11th—Board of Education Meeting & Budget Workshop, 7 p.m., BES
- 18th—ATA Executive Council Meeting: 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432
- 26th—Board of Education Meeting: 7 p.m., CAO



APRIL

- 8th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432
Board of Education Meeting & Budget Adoption, 7 p.m., OPS
- 14th-21st—Spring Break



Announcements

Have you done the mandated reporter of child abuse training yet?

NYS now requires all certified employees to complete this training by April 1, 2025. Register for the free online course at www.nysmandatedreporter.org/TrainingCourses.aspx.

Do you have educator expenses to deduct from your taxes?

Eligible educators can deduct up to \$300 of qualified expenses paid in 2024. 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/taxtopics/tc458

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