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# The Agenda

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## Wit and Wisdom... A Message from Weingarten, AFT President



Kevin Rustowicz,  
President

In an effort to share with you what Randi Weingarten is suggesting in regards to education reform in an article titled, "A New Path Forward," and without paraphrasing or plagiarism, I have asked our editor to reprint portions of the article for your reading pleasure over the course of the next several months. In this address, Weingarten discusses four basic principals for reform. In this month's editorial, I am specifically including the information on the fourth reform, **PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONSHIP.**

*Shortly after I became president of the AFT, I gave a speech here at the National Press Club in which I said that anyone who advanced any idea that's good for kids and fair to teachers would find a partner in the AFT. Then, as now, I was clear that "no issue should be off the table, with the single exception of vouchers, which drain vital resources from public schools."*

*Some took us up on that offer, and in those places, we're seeing teachers, administrators, parents and elected officials work side by side to help their students reach greater heights.*

*But others have ignored our*

*offer to work in common purpose. They have chosen, instead, to fixate on the supposed silver bullet of doing away with "bad teachers."*

*The problem with the so-called "bad teacher" refrain isn't just that it's too harsh or too unforgiving, or that it obscures the fact that ineffective teachers are far outnumbered by their effective peers. The problem is that it's too limited. It fails to recognize that we have a systems problem.*

*First, I am unveiling a new template for teacher development and evaluation—a constructive, meaningful and ongoing system that incorporates standards and best practices for the teaching profession—and, yes, student outcomes.*

*Second, I'm putting forward a new approach to due process.*

*Third, I'll share my thoughts on what teachers need to help students succeed—the tools, time and trust to do their jobs well.*

*Fourth, I'll discuss changing the labor-management relationship, because that's the foundation we need to make each of these other ideas work.*

### **Public Education and the Labor-Management Relationship**

*A high-quality public education*

*for all students is an important right and is vital to maintaining a strong democracy. The effective delivery of this essential public service is undermined if labor (front-line education personnel) and management (those charged with facilitating their work) do not work in common purpose.*

*Too often, when things get difficult, the labor-management relationship becomes adversarial. Instead of working together to solve problems and create solutions, labor and management often try to weaken each other. That must change. Both parties have a mutual responsibility to help students succeed, and they must have a mutual commitment to work in common purpose toward that goal.*

*Collective bargaining isn't only a vehicle to protect employee rights and ensure workplace fairness—it's a vehicle for both sides to improve teacher quality, ensure school improvement and establish rigorous academic standards.*

*In city after city, we have seen that better relations among adults lead to better results for students.*

*Please take some time to think about these reforms ideas. Look for more of the article and Weingarten's proposed reforms in February's issue.*

*~Rusty*

## From Where I Stand... *Putting on a Show*



*Darla Bubar, Editor*

Great actors fool us. They make us believe in their characters and their stories, often times causing us to lose the real person behind the façade. And really great actors—become so good in their roles and in their skills, we go to see their performances time and time again! We convince ourselves that the person we see on the stage or screen is in some way, shape, or form, a true picture of the actor.

Great teachers really aren't much different than great actors. Students often see us in our teaching persona and fail to recognize we are mere humans. Perhaps we can all think back to a time when we sat in the classrooms as learners ourselves... I still remember seeing a few of my former teachers in "regular" clothes while out somewhere with my parents thinking, "Oh my, Mr. So and So really does have a life outside of school!" Back then, it was hard to see my teachers as any thing other than permanent fixtures in a classroom. And, I'm sure, that it isn't much different when my own students

see me out in the public sector!

We are masters at our jobs. We perfect our delivery, class after class, year after year. Day in and day out, we perform our skits and memorize our lines so that we can deliver unforgettable performances enticing the students to remember our content. We entertain, provide social commentaries, and play our roles so that something that we say or do somewhere along the way has some lasting positive impact on those who watch and learn from us. We put on a show—and most of the time, it's a good one. We reach down deep to pull out those award winning performances to give our students something to believe in because we know it WILL make a difference. We are reminded of when we were somehow impacted by great teachers along the way—those who inspired us, and fooled us if you will, eventually convincing us that teaching is the greatest profession in the world. And to them—I say, "Bravo!" And to each of you, I say, "Keep putting on your show!"

~Darla

## Contract Connection

Here's your chance to win a \$10 gift card to either Tim Horton's, Starbucks, or Dunkin' Donuts...

*Jerry P. Educator wants to apply for her third personal day to attend her daughter's wedding out of town. She has not used any of her personal days so far this year.*



*Jerry plans on using THREE consecutive personal days to be there for her daughter's big day.*

*Can Jerry apply for three days at once? If so, what does Jerry need to do to apply for ALL three personal days consecutively so that she can attend the wedding?*

Site the article, page number, your name, building, and card preference along with your entry to [dbubar@nwcsd.org](mailto:dbubar@nwcsd.org).

All correct entries will be entered into a drawing to win a gift card. **One winner per contest.** All members in good standing are eligible to enter.

**Congratulations to our previous winners:** Amanda Jasper and Jill Gonzales who all correctly guessed that Patty Q. Teacher must submit a request for tuition reimbursement PRIOR to taking graduate coursework.

See Article 17 for a full explanation!

### IMPORTANT REMINDERS...

#### 2010 Winter Leadership Conference

March 5 & 6, 2010  
Hyatt Hotel, Buffalo

#### NYSUT's 38th Annual Representative Assembly

Thursday, April 29 - Saturday, May 1, 2010  
Marriott Wardman Park, Washington, DC

#### Retirement Workshop

May 8, 2010  
Samuel's Grande Manor  
8750 Main Street  
Williamsville NY 14221

#### 2010 Annual Awards Dinner

June 2, 2010 Samuel's Grande Manor Event begins at 5:30 p.m.

### ADMINISTRATOR MEETINGS

If you are asked to meet with your building administrator, you are allowed to ask for a meeting agenda in advance. If at any time you are made to feel uncomfortable in the meeting, or find that you are being reprimanded, you may ask for the meeting to be stopped and seek union representation immediately. The meeting can then be rescheduled.

If you are asked to meet with the Superintendent, you are to bring a union officer along to the meeting.

### COLLEAGUES

Please refrain from speaking about colleagues or fellow union members with the administration. We are strongest when we are united.

## Is it time for a financial tune-up?

Have you ever asked yourself these questions?

- Should I refinance my mortgage?
- Am I saving enough for my children's education?
- What is the best way to reduce my debt?
- Is my 403(b) retirement account invested properly?

If yes, you could benefit by enrolling in the Financial Counseling Program recently endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits Corporation

For an annual fee, you'll get unbiased, objective advice from financial professionals who do not sell any financial products. The Financial Counseling Program is provided by Stacey Braun Associates, Inc., an investment advisory company.

Its certified financial planners and registered investment advisors provide fee-based professional financial counseling; they receive no commissions from mutual funds, brokerage firms, insurance companies or any other third party.

The Full-Service Financial Counseling Program includes several features. You can consult with a planner or advisor toll-free for up to six hours per year. If a planner or advisor is not available when you call, you can schedule a phone consultation at a time convenient for you.

You can request no-cost written summaries and reports on a variety of financial issues. You can receive assistance in choosing a 403(b) retirement savings program provider available



through your employer, as well as assistance on reviewing your 403(b) investment selections.

You'll gain access to Stacey Braun's password-protected Web site, which is chock-full of tips, narratives, market data, quotes, charts, news, calculators, an interactive financial planner, useful Web site links and more. There's even an e-mail helpdesk where you can get answers to basic financial questions within 24 hours.

If Stacey Braun holds an educational workshop in your area, the admission fee will be waived if you wish to attend. Also, you can request an in-person consultation with a Stacey Braun planner at a mutually agreed-upon location. This service is limited to 90 minutes and carries an additional fee.

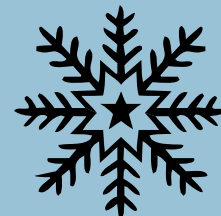
If you only desire advice regarding 403(b) retirement savings programs, the 403(b) Limited Financial Counseling Program is available at a reduced price. This option includes toll-free phone consultations to discuss 403(b) programs only (six-hour limit) and assistance in selecting a 403(b) program provider available through your employer, as well as assistance with investment allocation of 403(b) assets. Web site access, e-mail helpdesk and in-person consultations are not included in the limited plan.

For information on this and other programs, visit [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org), call us at 800-626-8101 weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., or use the Contact feature on our Web site.



The Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. Financial Counseling Program is a NYSUT Member Benefits Corporation (Member Benefits)-endorsed program. Under an agreement with Stacey Braun, Member Benefits has an expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangement of 10% of annual participation fees received plus \$9 per direct bill participant. All such payments to Member Benefits are used solely to defray the costs of administering its various programs and, where appropriate, to enhance them. Member Benefits acts as your advocate, please contact Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 if you experience a problem with any endorsed program.

Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.



The NWTA Board of Directors will meet on the SECOND Thursday of each month.

Meetings start at 3:45 and are held in the ALC at Edward Town Middle School.

All members of the NWTA are allowed to attend BOD meetings.

Board of Directors meetings for the remainder of the school year are as follows:

- February 11, 2010
- March 11, 2010
- April 8, 2010
- May 13, 2010
- June 10, 2010

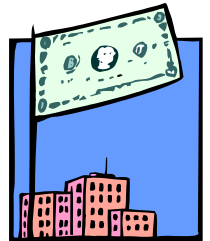


## Calling All Teachers In The Niagara Wheatfield School District...

*The New York State United Teachers Education Learning Trust (ELT) supports you in your professional development endeavors!!*

### Did You Know....

- If you obtain 30 credit hours beyond your master's, you will earn up to an extra \$2800 per year which will significantly effect your retirement benefits?
- Courses taken through ELT sponsored by NYSUT are approved by the New York State Education Department and do apply toward teacher certification requirements?
- The Niagara Wheatfield Central School District gives 100% financial reimbursement for courses taken through ELT?
- A three hour graduate credit course can be accomplished in **just four weeks** versus the traditional college semester?



*If you are interested in finding out more information and taking advantage of this opportunity, please contact me at [Rbrock@nwcsd.org](mailto:Rbrock@nwcsd.org) or call me at ext. 2813 to find out more about the ELT course listed below:*

#### **\*\*\*\*ELT Course: ENY 809 Cyber Bullying**

Please join us for a hands-on interactive course focusing on internet safety, technology use in the classroom, and investigating the concept of cyber bullying in our new age of technology!

Location: Niagara Orleans Teacher Center

Dates: Monday and Wednesday evenings in March 2010!!!

## Guest Editorial... Cell Phone Mania

*This article was reprinted with permission from Joanne Ryder, School Counselor (Sister of Jeanne Zimmerman, ETMS)*

If you look around, it seems as though “everyone” has a cell phone, kids included. Here at school, students no longer need to borrow the school landline to call home; they reach into their pocket or bag and pull out their own cell phone. Formerly seen as extravagant items, cell phones are now *necessities* and in some parents’ eyes, are a *must* for their kids. They say it gives them a sense of security knowing “in the event of an emergency” their kids can get in touch with them. Thankfully, emergencies don’t happen very often. So for the satisfaction of peace of mind, parents are willingly surrendering incredible technology into the hands of highly tech-savvy babes. This statement opposes itself on purpose. You see, kids know more, learn faster, and are much more in-tune to the ins and outs of technology than most people older than them (uh-hmm, that would be you, adults). But due to their age and brain development, they don’t possess the appropriate thinking and decision-making skills that this type of technology demands. This disconnect invites difficult and sometimes dangerous situations.

A few surprising things came to my attention recently that I’d like to share. First, kids who have their own cell phones are very possessive of them. When asked about this, one compared letting someone borrow her cell phone to letting someone borrow her underwear. Their cell phones contain private messages, personal photos and videos along with open access to their social networking pages. So, they only reluctantly hand them over but with great suspicion.

Next, kids tell me they don’t *talk* on their cell phones and are often puzzled when it rings. They mostly use them to text and post comments to social networking sites. One astonished parent reported opening her cell phone bill to discover **30,000** text messages had occurred in one month from her child’s phone. (It was then shut off for awhile). One time I challenged a

student on how “typing” could take the place of interacting with a real human voice, the idea was scoffed at. She stated, why talk to *one* person at a time when you could talk to many! I didn’t have a come back. She was right and certainly opened my eyes to the lure of cyber communication.

I’ve come to understand that kids can get **addicted** to their cell phones. This means that when they get into trouble through texting for example, they will tolerate a great deal of harassment and cyberbullying before they seek help. The fear of their phones being taken away is much greater than the fear of threatening text messages.

Parents need to be aware of the consequences of “sexting.” Many cell phones have video and picture taking capabilities. Usually kids use this feature to capture the silly things they do. But some have been known to take pictures of themselves or friends in bikinis or in suggestive poses. If these picture messages are sent to others, it is considered “sexting.” The price of this can be devastating. Aside from suffering embarrassment or ruining a student’s reputation, it can hurt you as a parent. I recently had a conversation with the local police on this topic. I was warned that transferring pictures of this nature of children who are underage can be viewed as “trafficking child pornography,” a federal offense. They pointed out too that while the child may be the one sending it, the cell phone is issued in the parent’s name, thus making the parent liable.

So what to do... I have few ideas that will help balance the “need” for a child to have a cell phone and the many challenges that come from owning it.

- Keep in mind, it’s YOUR cell phone that YOU allow your child to use. That means you are responsible for it, therefore YOU are entitled to review EVERYTHING that is on it. Let your child know this upfront and make him/her aware that you will be checking it daily.
- Set up rules for appropriate use and

expectations before handing it over. Discuss things such as proper language. Talk about cyberbullying and what to do if your child receives a threatening text. Give your child permission to tell you without the fear of losing his/her phone privileges.

- Give the cell phone a “bed time.” Establish a time and place such as the kitchen counter where it will be plugged in to charge each night. A cell phone “bed time” forces your child to take a break and stops them from texting all night long. It will also discourage friends from calling in the middle of the night. While the cell phone is “in bed,” this is a great time to peruse it. Should you find something that doesn’t sit well with you, take this opportunity to talk to your child about it and reiterate your rules and expectations.
- Know who your child is communicating with. Their definition of “friend” is very different from that of generations past. Now, “friend” can be anyone who has contacted your child through cyberspace. They will say they “know” the person but not in the typical sense. They are naïve to the fact that many people misrepresent themselves online.
- Talk to them about “chain texts.” Kids this age still believe in magical-thinking. So, if a text says “forward to 10 people or your head will explode!” they forward it on as quickly as they can. Some parents view these chain texts as harassment, so please warn your child.
- Talk to your service provider about *parent control* options. Many companies allow you to disable a phone at a certain time each night and give you the ability to block numbers. Some even have features that act as a GPS and are able to locate your child’s exact location. Having these controls can come in very handy!

*You are cordially invited to attend  
the biennial*

**NWTA Retirement Dinner**

*at*

*Suzanne's Fine Dining*

*Friday, March 26, 2010*

*5:00 PM*

*Cash Bar*

*Dinner Buffet*

*\$25.00 per person (includes tax and gratuity)*

Honoring the careers of the following:

**NWTA Class of 2008**

Valarie Anker—WS

Kathleen Banzhaf—ETMS

Mark Rivard—ETMS

Janice Sparling—SHS

Bruce Strassburg—SHS

Margaret "Peggy" Zambito—ETMS

**NWTA Class of 2009**

Susan Hahn—SHS

Judith Hastings—CV

Sherryl Rimer—ER

Martha "Marty" Small—ER

Please detach and send RSVP along with a \$25.00 check payable to NWTA no later than March 12, 2010 to:

Darla Bubar

c/o ETMS

2292 Saunders Settlement Road

Sanborn, NY 14132

Name(s) attending \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

## The Lighter Side



The staff at ETMS really got into the holiday spirit last month with a holiday sweater contest! Pictured from left to right Row 1: Annie Wachob, Kelly Sir-ianni, Amanda Jasper, Autumn Carini, Sandy Wallace, and Julie Braun. Row 2: Megan Gotowko, Darla Bubar, Rose-anne Lynch, Lydia Simmington, Jeanne Zimmerman, Maria Ze-linski, Ashley Wood, Jennifer Idziak, Becky Werth, Ruth Guerin, and Lynn Jones.

**Can you guess who the con-test winners were?**

*If you have an interesting photo you'd like to submit, please contact Editor, Darla Bubar!*

## Certification Videoconference Schedule Reminder

**Information on Initial & Profes-sional Certification [Block B] - The New Requirements for Teach-ers:** This session will provide infor-mation on the new certification re-quirements in place Feb. 2004. Anyone applying for a certificate in a new subject area after this date will be held to these requirements.

**Information on Teaching Assis-**

**tant Certification [Block C]** - This session will provide an overview of the certification process for teaching as-sistants under the old as well as the new requirements.

Workshops will be approximately 45 minutes long with opportunities for Q&A. All workshops begin at 4:30PM.

**Workshop Dates:**

**2010: Thursday, February 2**

**Tuesday, march 16**

**Wednesday, April 14**

**Tuesday, May 18**

*To register for any of these ses-sions, please call the Western New York Regional Office at 634-7132.*

*If you had a name change or address change over the break, please contact our membership Roster Chairperson, **Andy Zwelling**, via email ASAP... it is important that we keep our rosters as current as possible to eliminate overpayment of dues and duplication of enrollment.*

## Official Newsletter of the Niagara Wheatfield Teachers Association

NWTA  
2292 Saunders Settlement Road  
Sanborn, New York 14132

*If you'd like to contribute an article, photo, or ad, please contact Darla Bubar at [dbubar@nwcsd.org](mailto:dbubar@nwcsd.org).*

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WE'RE ON THE WEB  
[WWW.NWTA-UNION.ORG](http://WWW.NWTA-UNION.ORG)

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**We are pleased that our history dates back to 1971 when the New York State Teachers Association certified our union. Today we are proudly affiliated with the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and The American Federation of Teachers (AFT).**

**We are also honored to be a part of The American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).**

*We stand united... we stand for education*

## What's Good on the Bookshelves

The Mission Song by John LeCarre

This is about the machinations of the rich and "civilized" nations conspiring to rob and control the weaker emerging nations of Africa. Interesting characters and a suitably pessimistic view of the joint efforts of government and corporations to control events in order to enhance their profits and their power. Add another to a long list of great stories by LeCarre.

The Unlikely Disciple by Kevin Roose

A nineteen-year-old Brown University student, (a liberal Quaker) decides to go undercover for a book

he wishes to write. He spends a semester at Liberty College. Beginning with the obvious pre-conceptions and stereotypes concerning Jerry Falwell and his followers, Roose has quite an experience. This is a must read if only to reinforce the fact that there is great complexity in people, beliefs and political agenda. In other words, there are some interesting surprises here.

Charlie Donner  
Edward Town Middle School



*Any views expressed in editorials or in opinion-type articles of this newsletter are solely the viewpoints of the individuals themselves and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the NWTA at large.*