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# The Agenda

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



Kevin Rustowicz,  
President

As a continuation of last month's segment, my February editorial continues Randi Weingarten's education reform article titled, "A New Path Forward." In this segment, Weingarten discusses first reform, **CONSTRUCTIVE EVALUATION**.

*As president of a labor union, it is my job to represent my members. They make it easy because of their extraordinary commitment to providing their students with the best education possible. Last summer, we asked our members the following question: When your union deals with issues affecting both teaching quality and teachers' rights, which of these should be the higher priority—working for professional teaching standards and good teaching, or defending the job rights of teachers who face disciplinary action? By a margin of 4 to 1 (69 percent to 16 percent), AFT members chose working for professional standards and good teaching as the higher priority.*

*Surprising to some in this room, I'm sure. Not to me. I know my members. They want to do what's best for their students, and they want to be treated as professionals. No teacher—myself included—wants ineffective teachers in the classroom.*

*Schools are communities where we build on each other's work. When a teacher is floundering, there are not only repercussions for the students, but also for the teachers down the hall. When it comes to those teachers who shouldn't be in the classroom, it is other teachers who are the first to speak up. They—and the AFT—want a fair, transparent and expedient process to identify and deal with ineffective teachers. But they know we won't have that if we don't have an evaluation system that is comprehensive and robust, and really tells us who is or is not an effective teacher. That is essential for a fair and efficient due process system. One won't work without the other. And that is why we will continue to oppose those who believe that simply subjectively removing teachers is a replacement for a true teacher development and evaluation system.*

*This brings me to my first proposal, for constructive and robust teacher evaluation: the creation of a system that would inform tenure, employment decisions and due process proceedings. Our system of evaluating teachers has never been adequate. For too long and too often, teacher evaluation—in both design and implementation—has failed to achieve what must be our goal: continuously improving and informing*

*teaching so as to better educate all students. Right now, this is how teachers are commonly evaluated: An administrator sits in the back of the classroom for a few minutes, a few times in the first few years of teaching. The teacher then receives a "rating" at the end of the school year. That's like a football team watching game tape once the season is over.*

*Let's think about that game tape for a minute. Coaches and players view it throughout the season and in preparation for every game. Why? To deconstruct and understand what's working and what isn't—so that necessary changes can be made. The goal is constant improvement and, of course, winning. We need to put the same time and effort into developing and evaluating teachers. And we need to ensure that the women and men who teach our children are participants in every stage of the process. That's what we mean when we say do these things "with us, not to us." Some suggest we simply evaluate teachers based on a single piece of data. But how does that improve student learning if that is all we do? Yes, we must use good and meaningful data—but the real value of data is to show us what is working and should be replicated, as well as what isn't working and needs to be abandoned.*

Cont'd page 4

# News from NYSUT

## Union presses its early retirement proposal in Legislature

Fire up your members now on this key issue! Contact your representatives to advocate for the Early Retirement Option to help avert layoffs and help districts save money .

NYSUT is pressing lawmakers to move forward with NYSUT's 55/25 early retirement option legislation (S.6274 by Sen. Savino). Immediate enactment is necessary for our members to make informed decisions regarding retirement options and for districts to reflect anticipated salary cost savings in upcoming school budget proposals. Many districts have a window for retirement incentives and NYSUT is pressing to get this bill done as soon as possible so no one misses the opportunity. This initiative is being called an "option" rather than an "incentive" because it would be an opportunity to retire earlier without penalty; it is not a sweetened retirement package. Unlike past retirement incentives that left participation up to districts, this ERO would be offered through all districts.



## Lobbying intensifies for higher

## ed and health care

NYSUT Executive Vice President Andy Pallotta and Legislative Director Steve Allinger stressed the urgent situation facing higher ed at a joint Professional Staff Congress and United University Professions lobby day and a UUP rally where union members protested the more than \$234 million in proposed higher ed cuts to SUNY, CUNY and community colleges. UUP has created a new Web site to press its legislative issues available at [SaveSUNY.org](http://SaveSUNY.org).

In testimony last week, Pallotta urged lawmakers to reject pre-K-12 cuts that would reverse progress the state has made in ending

the achievement gap.

In the week ahead NYSUT leaders will submit testimony on the governor's proposed health budget -- more than \$1 billion is on the chopping block, putting patients, nurses and other health care professionals at risk.

The 21-day amendments to the governor's budget, due out Tuesday, are expected to be more bad news. Your help is essential to lobby in districts

and in Albany, and to share with your members how urgent this budget battle is. The state budget campaign lays the groundwork for what could be the most challenging school budget-voting season in years; now is the time for locals to make sure plans are in place for local voting.

## NYSUT combats proposed budget cuts on multiple fronts

The statewide union is pulling out all the stops to lobby against the governor's \$2.7 billion in proposed cuts to education and health care. NYSUT is producing a multi-media campaign with ads specific to both pre-K-12 and higher education, with the ad launch strategically timed to peak as the Legislature returns. The first wave of mid-February ads will blanket legislators in their districts, and the volume will ramp up with a major Capital Region media buy as they convene in Albany. Television and Web spots will be reinforced with a print component in the Legislative Gazette and e-blasts to generate legislative letters. You will be able to preview the ads on the NYSUT Leader Access site as soon as they are completed, and the ads will go live on [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org) the day before our media campaign begins.

***It's TAX SEASON... When you prepare to file this year, remember to claim your union dues!***

***There is a slight increase in dues this year from \$610 to \$630. This difference covers increases in NWTA, NYSUT and AFT dues.***



## From Where I Stand... *Hungry, Hungry Hypocrites*



*Darla Bubar, Editor*

Recently, I read a short article about the idea of hypocrisy. I thought it was well-written and made an excellent point.

“Watching a ravenous teenager consume a meal can be hilarious. The quantity of food that growing bodies are capable of eating is amazing. Pity the parent whose weekly grocery bill suddenly balloons in the course of an adolescent summer, bringing with it a budget winter.

Filled with empty calories, the meal of hypocrites is equally large. Those who feast on others with judgmental lips are satisfied only by their self-righteousness. Hypocrites are constantly asking for another helping of pride and conceit. Sadly, the very fork of purity with which they poke others stab themselves as well. The very teeth that tear into others rips at the hypocrite too.

Honestly, the problem is not being judgmental. The problem is being judgmental without first judging ourselves. Hypocrites direct judgment outward, toward

others.” (CPH, January 2010)

It is so easy to judge others, to continually place blame on others, to find fault with others—but, unfortunately, this only accomplishes dissension, ill feelings, and hurt.

We must not be hypocrites. We are facing some tough economic times. The papers report of serious cuts and losses in state aide. Our district has reported a looming budget crisis. We have to stay strong. We must be the very change we wish to see in those around us. We must accept the jobs we are tasked to do, regardless of how easy it may be to place blame or cast the failure onto someone or something else. We must turn our judgment inward and look to our own abilities to make differences.

We must build those around us up instead of tearing them down. We must not become complacent or divided. We cannot spread rumors, or talk about our colleagues behind their backs. We must remain steadfast in our solidarity. We are strongest when we stand united.

## Contract Connection

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

*Phil M. Schools teachers at the Senior High. He is the lowest on the seniority list in his department. Due to budget cuts and attrition, he is being involuntarily transferred to the Middle School to fill a vacancy. The District notified Phil in writing that the change would be effective starting next school year. Phil is very concerned and wants to know if there is anything he can do.*

*Does the District have the right to involuntarily transfer Phil?*

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. All members in good standing are eligible to enter.



**Congratulations to our previous winner:** Jill Gonzales who correctly guessed that Jerry P. Educator can take three days in a row, but must submit a written request for her third personal day to the Superintendent and get his approval.

See Article 14.08 (e) page 15 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.

# School Spirit Contest 2010

The Edward Town Middle School students recently won the **Kiss 98.5 School Spirit Contest** by raising over \$16,000 for Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo. In the coming month, pop sensation Justin Beiber will be performing a free contest to honor the students for their efforts.

This activity was spearheaded by two enthusiastic members of our local, Ashley Wood (Math 8) and Angela Gramza (Grade 6). The two agreed to share some of their thoughts about the victory through an interview.

DB: When did you first hear about the contest?

AG: The kids came in and talked about it after Kissmas Bash

DB: Why did you decide to enter our school in the contest?

AG: The Spirit Club kids came running and begging, I thought it would be fun to see how much we could raise and how much fun our kids could have with the project.

AW: We decided the day after Kissmas Bash (Dec 7) to start collecting pennies for the contest.

DB: How many hours did you spend on the contest?

AG: MANY

AW: I cannot tell you how many hours....many!!! Every free period, studyhall and after school!

DB: Exactly how many pennies did the school

collect?

AG: Over one million six hundred thousand pennies (I don't know the exact amount and its not posted on the website)

AW: So that would be 1,600,000 pennies!

DB: Did you ever think we would win?

AG: I did for the first few weeks, but when we heard that another school showed up with an armored vehicle and they dropped us to 8th place, I thought we had lost first place

AW: In the beginning I did not think we were going to win. After we were number one and seeing all of the pennies we dropped off, I began thinking that we were really going to win!

DB: What was your reaction when you heard the news?

AG: I was so proud that we had raised as much as we did for Children's, and happy that all of the kids' efforts paid off

AW: When I heard the news I was in my car because I was out to dinner and I screamed really loud. I was a little teary eyed.

DB: Anything else you'd like to add?

AG: I'm hoping that the contest is open to middle schools again next year!

AW: I am very proud of all of the kids. They worked extremely hard. They set a goal to help women's and children's hospital and they raised \$16,000. They showed western NY what Edward Town is all about- team-work, school spirit and helping others.



**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:**

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



To the left: Dr. Palka, Angela Gramza, and Ashley Wood talk to the students at a pep assembly. Above: students fill the high school auditorium to hear the official word from Kiss 98.5 that our school has won the 2010 School Spirit Contest.

# Weingarten

*We propose rigorous reviews by trained expert and peer evaluators and principals, based on professional teaching standards, best practices and student achievement. The goal is to lift whole schools and systems: to help promising teachers improve, to enable good teachers to become great, and to identify those teachers who shouldn't be in the classroom at all.*

*This will allow for informed evaluations, rather than simply offering a snapshot from a brief classroom visit or one standardized test score.*

*Our framework has been developed by union leaders from around the country, with input from some of America's top teacher evaluation experts—researchers like Charlotte Danielson, Susan Moore Johnson and Thomas Kane.*

*This work is already under way in places like Pittsburgh, Pa., and Hillsborough County, Fla. AFT unions—4 including recipients of the AFT Innovation Grants—are partnering with school districts to transform teacher evaluation from a perfunctory waste of time into a powerful catalyst for student achievement.*

*Our evaluation proposal includes the*

*following key components:*

## *Professional Standards*

*First, every state should adopt basic professional teaching standards that districts can augment to meet specific community needs. Standards should spell out what teachers should know and be able to do. How else can we determine whether a teacher is performing as she should?*

## *Standards for Assessing Teacher Practice*

*Second, to assess how well teachers meet these standards, multiple means of evaluation should be used, because teaching requires multiple skills and involves several kinds of work. Classroom observations, self-evaluations, portfolio reviews, appraisal of lesson plans, and all the other tools we use to measure student learning—written work, performances, presentations and projects—should also be considered in these evaluations. Student test scores based on valid and reliable assessments should ALSO be considered—NOT by comparing the scores of last year's students with the scores of this year's students, but by assessing whether a teacher's students show real*

*growth while in his classroom.*

## *Implementation Benchmarks*

*Next, implementation benchmarks must be established, because even the best ideas do little more than gather dust if we don't put them into action. Take California. It has long-standing but little-used professional standards. At the very least, principals and superintendents charged with implementing this new evaluation system need to take responsibility—and be held responsible—for making it work.*

## *Systems of Support*

*Finally, because evaluation should help teachers improve throughout their careers, not just at the beginning, every district should have ways to support and nurture teacher growth. This includes solid induction, mentoring, ongoing professional development, and career opportunities that keep great teachers in the classroom.*

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

*~Rusty*

**GIVE THE EARTH AN HOUR**

On Saturday, March 27, at 8:30 p.m. local time, the AFT and the World Wildlife Fund are asking you to turn off your lights for **ONE HOUR**.

Join millions of people around the world to fight climate change and send a message that **the time to act is now**.

Sign up at [www.EarthHour.org](http://www.EarthHour.org) for free lesson plans for grades K-12 and fun activities related to **EARTH HOUR**.

**60**  
**EARTH**  
**HOUR**

The American Federation of Teachers is a national sponsor of Earth Hour

*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 \_\_\_\_\_

# Certification Videoconference Schedule Reminder

**Information on Initial & Professional Certification [Block B] - The New Requirements for Teachers:** This session will provide information on the new certification requirements 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 assistants 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: Tuesday, march 16  
Wednesday, April 14  
Tuesday, May 18**

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

***If you had a name change or address change , 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.***

## The Lighter Side



**Happy Groundhog Day!**



## 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.*

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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

### **Under The Dome**, by Stephen King

How do the people behave when a small town finds itself cut off and trapped? There are plenty of interesting characters and interesting reactions to the strange situation. Given that these are humans, there is no need for much more disturbing circumstances than that. Through the mind of King, this becomes creepy enough. Of course, it is King so there is a small extra aspect to this. This is a long read but it holds your attention once you get into it. I would recommend it.

### **Breathless**, by Dean Koontz

Of late, some of the Koontz books have focused less on the macabre and scary and more on dogs and the kinder side of people.

But you will not be disappointed. He still tells a good story. It seems there is always room for a few references to the shady side of humanity. This story is more filled with "wonderment" than his usual devices of imminent danger and building scary tension. This story is unusual, interesting and enjoyable.

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.*