



RH TEACHER

Rush-Henrietta
Employees' Association
Teachers' Chapter
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PRESIDENTS CORNER

Hi All, much has happened since our last newsletter. I would like to begin with the school calendar for the 12-13 year. The Kick-Off celebration will be on August 29th (the Wednesday before Labor Day) and the students will arrive Tuesday September 4th. The summer workday has been eliminated and your work year has been reduced from 188 days down to 187 days. In addition, Parent-Teacher Conferences will now be held Monday November 19th and Tuesday November 20th with Wednesday November 21st being a vacation day (along with Thanksgiving and Friday 11/23). The Christmas recess will be from 12/22-01/01/13, while February recess will be the week of 2/18-2/22/13. Other changes have to do with the April recess. Due to state testing, the April break will most likely follow Easter and allow the students one week back before the state exams. This year's April recess will be from 3/29-4/05/13. Graduation will be on Friday 1/21/13 and the Teacher last workday will be Tuesday 6/25/13.

APPR has been in the news recently and NYSUT has reached an agreement with SED. Here is the latest update from NYSUT:

"President Dick Iannuzzi explained how this agreement incorporates significant safeguards against abuse, safeguards that are unmatched in any other state. It requires the specifics of 80 percent of evaluations to be collectively bargained and limits the use of state standardized tests to 20 percent, rather than the 50 percent the state had been seeking.

Iannuzzi made it clear that NYSUT will vigorously oppose any efforts to release evaluation scores or use them to publicly target teachers.

He also pledged NYSUT will be "extremely" vigilant: holding the State Education Department accountable for its areas of responsibility; challenging ratings based on a flawed measure or lack of support; and providing the guidance and support needed for locals to negotiate fair evaluation processes and develop state-required Student Learning Objectives.

"We understand the pressure you face," said Iannuzzi. "NYSUT is diligently monitoring every step, and we will push it right back at SED if it is not being done right. If major flaws develop, we will hold SED accountable. We have no trouble calling out the commissioner."

NYSUT Vice President Maria Neira notes that union staff is gearing up to provide regional training on [Student Learning Objectives](#) to bring expertise to the field. (SLOs are what SED will require districts to use for teacher evaluations to measure student growth in non-tested subject areas.)

NYSUT is also developing a clearinghouse of guidance and model language for locals to use in concert with their Labor Relations Specialists in negotiating evaluation processes and selecting appropriate local measures. The union is pressing SED for a process to incorporate student attendance into any measure of student achievement."

RHEA and the District will meet again on March 20th to continue with our APPR negotiations. Plus, on March 12th, our NYSUT Labor Relations Specialists, Dave Calogero, will be presenting an APPR update to all Building Reps. at our meeting for March. Last, our contract negotiations continue to move forward and the Team is hopeful that we will reach an agreement at our March 16th session with the District. We hope to have a General Assembly meeting in April to discuss and vote on a new collective bargaining agreement.

**Professionally and in unity,
Brad Crooks
President, RHEA Teachers' Chapter**

NYSUT members: Are your pets protected?

As all animal lovers know, unexpected pet care expenses can quickly become overwhelming. Our favorite four-legged friends (along with exotic pets) are famous for devouring socks, coins and other “treats” that can make for expensive vet visits.

While it’s difficult to anticipate accidents and illnesses, it is important to be prepared for them. It’s also helpful to have some assistance when it comes to routine care for your pet.

NYSUT Member Benefits is here to once again help you save some hard-earned money through our new endorsed pet insurance program.

This Member Benefits Corporation-endorsed program offered by VPI Pet Insurance offers a variety of coverage options for dogs, cats, birds, and exotic pets.

The “scoop” on VPI

VPI – part of the Nationwide Insurance family – has served as the largest and most recommended pet insurance plan in the U.S. since 1982. VPI currently has nearly 500,000 policies in place and occupies 61% of the pet insurance market.

Pets under the age of 10 are eligible for coverage, and medical plans provide benefits for accidents and illnesses – ranging from ear infections to cancer. Optional CareGuard plans provide benefits for preventive care.

It pays to be a member

NYSUT members receive a 5% group discount on the base medical plan and up to a 15% discount if multiple pets in a household are enrolled. There

are a variety of payment options available, including direct bill through your checking account or credit card; payroll and pension deduction will be offered down the line.

Easy submission process

VPI offers an easy, three-step claim submission process with a prompt turnaround for the majority of reimbursements.

- Simply pay for your pet’s medical treatment at the time of service.
- Send the one-page claim form along with your receipts to VPI.
- After meeting your policy’s deductible,

your eligible expenses will be reimbursed.

Policyholders can quickly process claims online, via email or fax, and easily keep track of their policies and download pre-printed claim forms through a helpful website.

VPI has an average turnaround time of 12-14 business days for a claim. The best part is that you will know up front exactly what is covered

with your plan and how much you are eligible to be reimbursed thanks to the VPI published benefit schedule.

What to do first

To get started, please contact VPI toll-free at 866-838-3461 (this is a dedicated number for NYSUT members) or visit memberbenefits.nysut.org and click on “Discounts & Travel – Members” and then “VPI Pet Insurance.” There, you’ll find a link to a NYSUT member-specific VPI website. You can also contact Member Benefits at **800-626-8101** with any questions.



VPI Pet Insurance is a NYSUT Member Benefits Corporation (Member Benefits)-endorsed program. Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement of 5% of adjusted gross premium for this program. 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.

SAVE THE DATES!!!!

Red Wings Game! – RHEA is sponsoring a family day at Red Wing Stadium on **Sunday afternoon, June 10**. Ticket price (TBD) will include admission to the game and picnic food. We will have our own pavilion. Watch for more information!

Retirement and Milestones Banquet. May 18, 2012 at Pomodoro's Pittsford.

Know the pitfalls of Facebook and other social media

By Matthew E. Bergeron, Associate Counsel and Laura R. Hallar, Legal Fellow - NYSUT United - January 27, 2012

Facebook and other forms of social media have become the "norm" in terms of connecting with friends and family. However, it has also become common for public employers to use information found on their employees' social media pages as bases for discipline.

The law in this area is still developing. Therefore, members are cautioned that their use of social media may have a negative impact on their employment.

No such thing as "private" !!!!

What you do on social media sites is not "private." Despite Facebook's assurances that you can change your settings so only "friends" can see what you post, don't be fooled. Those friends are free to share what you post — in both the virtual and the real world. Also, hackers have no compunction about invading your privacy.

Courts also have little trouble finding that your constitutionally guaranteed right to privacy does not apply to what you put on the Internet; once you publish something to one or 100 people, any reasonable expectation of privacy disappears.

Courts have also permitted parties in civil litigation to force one another to produce both public and private portions of their social networking pages. In a recent personal injury case, one court granted a defendant access to all of the plaintiff's Facebook postings, holding that they were not shielded from discovery laws simply because the plaintiff had "used the service's privacy settings to restrict access." Undoubtedly, the Facebook postings were harmful to the plaintiff's case.

So, disabuse yourself of the notion that what you put on Facebook is "private." Rather, recognize that it may as well be on a billboard for all to see. That said, if you want to connect with friends, families and colleagues, you should feel generally comfortable doing so, as long as you use the utmost discretion in choosing what you post.

This is part of an article written for NYSUT. To view the rest of this article go to NYSUT.org or read the latest issue of United Teacher.

Grievance Committee

By Jon DeVecchio

From where I'm sitting, you're all having a great school year.

Didn't Nostradamus predict Armageddon in 2012? So far, signs here at Rush-Henrietta indicate he might have missed the mark. In my nine-year involvement with the Grievance Committee, I would describe this school year as having unprecedented harmony between the RHEA and district. As committee chairperson, potential grievances filter through building representatives to me. It is my responsibility to investigate and address these issues in a timely manner. In past years I've always had a steady stream of emails and phone calls from members looking for assistance. Some years have been downright relentless.

This school year has been my quietest ever. Some issues have popped up, but they have been generally minor and easily resolved—like it should be. This tells me that we are in sync with the district. In this current situation we all win: administrators, teachers, and most importantly, our students.

To you hardnosed unionists thinking I'm going a little soft, I'm not confirming that things are universally perfect here at RH. But from my desk view things look pretty good. We should always have and protect our contract. It has immeasurable value to our profession.

Only time will tell if Nostradamus was right. But if things keep going in the current direction 2012 is going to turn out fantastic.

POLITICAL ACTION

By Marissa Privitere

We are encouraging people to become involved in what NYSUT is doing to save education funding in New York State. Please go to nysut.org to sign a petition to restore funding. This website will also give you information on who to write or call to stop Tier 6! Make sure your voice is heard.

In what other profession...

August 27th, 2010 by David Reber

I'm going to step out of my usual third-person writing voice for a moment. As a parent I received a letter last week from the Kansas State Board of Education, informing me that my children's school district had been placed on "improvement" status for failing to meet "adequate yearly progress" under the No Child Left Behind law.

I thought it ironic that our schools were judged inadequate by people who haven't set foot in them, so I wrote a letter to my local newspaper. Predictably, my letter elicited a deluge of comments in the paper's online forum. Many remarks came from armchair educators and anti-teacher, anti-public school evangelists quick to discredit anything I had to say under the rationale of "he's a teacher." What could a teacher possibly know about education?

Countless arguments used to denigrate public school teachers begin with the phrase "in what other profession...." and conclude with practically anything the anti-teacher pundits find offensive about public education. Due process and collective bargaining are favorite targets, as are the erroneous but tightly held beliefs that teachers are under-worked, over-paid (earning million-dollar pensions), and not accountable for anything.

In what other profession, indeed.

In what other profession are the licensed professionals considered the LEAST knowledgeable about the job? You seldom if ever hear "that guy couldn't possibly know a thing about law enforcement – he's a police officer", or "she can't be trusted talking about fire safety – she's a firefighter."

In what other profession is experience viewed as a liability rather than an asset? You won't find a contractor advertising "choose me – I've never done this before", and your doctor won't recommend a surgeon on the basis of her "having very little experience with the procedure".

In what other profession is the desire for competitive salary viewed as proof of callous indifference towards the job? You won't hear many say "that lawyer charges a lot of money, she obviously doesn't care about her clients", or "that coach earns millions – clearly he doesn't care about the team."

But look around. You'll find droves of armchair educators who summarily dismiss any statement about education when it comes from a teacher. Likewise, it's easy to find politicians, pundits, and profiteers who refer to our veteran teachers as ineffective, overpriced "dead wood". Only the rookies could possibly be any good, or worth the food-stamp-eligible starting salaries we pay them.

And if teachers dare ask for a raise, this is taken by many as clear evidence that teachers don't give a porcupine's posterior about kids. In fact, some say if teachers really cared about their students they would insist on earning LESS money.

If that entire attitude weren't bad enough, what other profession is legally held to PERFECTION by 2014? Are police required to eliminate all crime? Are firefighters required to eliminate all fires? Are doctors required to cure all patients? Are lawyers required to win all cases? Are coaches required to win all games? Of course they aren't.

For no other profession do so many outsiders refuse to accept the realities of an imperfect world. Crime happens. Fire happens. Illness happens. As for lawyers and coaches, where there's a winner there must also be a loser. People accept all these realities, until they apply to public education.

If a poverty-stricken, drug-addled meth-cooker burns down his house, suffers third degree burns, and then goes to jail; we don't blame the police, fire department, doctors, and defense attorneys for his predicament. But if that kid doesn't graduate high school, it's clearly the teacher's fault.

And if someone – anyone - tries to tell you otherwise; don't listen. He or she must be a teacher.

The Human Rights and Social Responsibility Committee (HRSRC)

By Lea Theuer

Focusing on Human Rights...

As we emerge from our diverse celebrations of religious and secular winter holidays, Martin Luther King Day and Black History Month, it is a good time to focus on the “human rights” part of our RHEA commitment.

As a community of educational professionals, RHEA celebrates the passage in New York State of two important pieces of legislation- the Dignity for All Students Act and the Marriage Equality Act!! The Dignity for All Students Act marks the first time that protections on gender identity and expression will be included in our state law. We look forward to this taking effect in July 2012. The ACLU shares the following description of this legislation:

The Dignity Act is intended to give students in public schools an educational environment free from discrimination and harassment. It protects against all forms of harassment, particularly those based on a student’s actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex. The Dignity Act will prohibit activities that create a hostile environment at school and school-sponsored events. These activities can include aggressive conduct, threats, intimidation or abuse that unreasonably and substantially interferes with another student’s educational performance. The Dignity Act also creates a framework for promoting a more positive school culture through sensitivity training and classroom curricula on diversity.

The Marriage Equality Act means our LGBT colleagues no longer need to go outside of New York State in order to legally marry their partners. We celebrate the reality that all of our colleagues now have access to the same basic human and civil rights of married couples, including access to spousal employee benefits.

At the Senior High School and Ninth Grade Academy, we have a group of students who have committed themselves to standing up for the rights of their friends and family who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or inter-sexed. The students of the RH Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) are both bold and brave. They meet weekly and plan advocacy and education activities for their peers and teachers. In January, the GSA promoted “Ally Week”, an opportunity for straight allies to show their support for all their peers. If you identify as LGBT and have recently celebrated the birth of a child, an adoption, or a marriage, can you share that joy of claiming your basic right to family with our students? The GSA would like to celebrate your joy! Let our LGBT students know that they too can look forward to a future where they can have a life-long commitment, which is legally recognized, and that they, too, can build a family. What is going on in your school in the “human rights” arena? Have you done or are you planning to do special projects to further your students’ understandings of human rights and each person’s role in promoting the respect of basic human rights for all? Notes and announcements can be sent to RH GSA c/o Lea Theuer.

TEACHER CENTER UPDATES

By John Prouty and Joanne Fusare

We have been busy setting into our Teacher Center Roles. Pam Favro, former secretary for the Teacher Center, has graciously agreed to provide some coverage of the teacher center so that teachers may once again begin to use the resources housed there. Teachers are always able to go to the teacher center until 3:15 by signing in upstairs, but in addition to that the Teacher Center will now be open Tuesdays from 3:45- 6:15. Pam is accepting jobs (electronically) for the poster maker or laminator, so please email her for questions. If you have something that is not electronic, please stop by during extended hours on Tuesdays, or stop over anytime to the teacher center and leave it there with a note.

The Teacher Center Policy Board met on January 30th and approved an action plan that initially planned for 24 Teacher Leaders to be trained in “Evidence-Based Methodology” and “Peer Assisted Review”. It is clear that Rush-Henrietta teachers are ready and willing to lead the charge in this kind of work together, as we had 53 applicants!

We are happy to report that we have selected 31 teacher-leaders for this round of training! We funded 2 additional spots by reallocating some teacher center money, Dina Wilson was very excited to see us embarking on this kind of training and committed to fund 2 more, and RHEA funded 3 more positions for us. It is wonderful to receive this collaboration between the district and RHEA in support of what we are doing!

This training will partially parallel the evidence-based training that R-H administrators have been undergoing this year, but with more emphasis on how to use what we see and hear in classrooms to provide specific feedback and coaching. Our hope is that this group of teacher-leaders will be available to provide a peer assistance model under whatever gets negotiated regarding the new APPR process. We also hope that they will be a possible group from which the APPR appeals team might be obtained.

The recruiting and training has been our main focus, but in addition to that we also have a few other projects happening. We are working on re-cataloging our teacher center resources to more closely align with NYS standards and we are also working on creating a Moodle (a kind of virtual learning environment with lots of opportunity for professional dialogue, etc.) to support the evidence-based training that is occurring.

We have also been involved with new teacher and collegial coaches meetings. More on these other projects later as they get underway!

Communications Report

By: Adam Huck

In this report, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of some great updates to the RHEA website. If you have not yet bookmarked our site, you can find it by going to ny.aft.org/rhea and adding it to your favorites list. Many new articles and resources are posted, so check back often. Here are some new features that you can now find on our site:

- *AFT articles* – Since our site uses AFT software, AFT periodically puts articles on our site that are useful to our members.
- *RHEA Constitution* – By clicking on the About Us feature you can now find the RHEA Constitution in pdf format. This document details the roles and responsibilities of your union and is an important read!
- *New Teacher Information* – You can now find the New Teacher Survival guide on our site. This is a great resource for newer teachers as to what the union can do for you. You can also find information on federal loan forgiveness programs.
- *Political Action* – NYSUT and AFT have created legislative action centers for members. On this page of our site you can find links to both as well as their e-Activist sign-up pages. Both sites are great for contacting your elected representative with pre-written letters on topics important to education. All you do is type in your address and hit send!

We are continuing to add followers on Facebook ([facebook.com/rheateachers](https://www.facebook.com/rheateachers)) and Twitter (twitter.com/rheateachers) so if you have not checked out those sites, make sure you do!

Know Your Contract

By: Jon DelVecchio

Here at the high school we have Article 11, Sections 1, 2, and 4 printed on the back of the Leave Request Form. This provides members a quick way to specify why the day is being taken off and to easily verify its legitimacy.

However, Appendix D was added to our last agreement specifying eight more reasons and exclusions. That information is not reproduced along with Article 11 on the back of the form.

So, pull out your contract and open to page 57. Read the list of additional reasons teachers can and cannot use personal leave for. It's good to know what you're entitled to. Questions about personal leave? Contact a building rep.

Contract Scavenger Hunt!

What Article number and section in the agreement (contract) specifies that *“Any material relating to the employee’s job performance or complaint filed which is to be placed in the employee’s official personnel file shall first be forwarded to the teacher.”*

Send your answer to speltzer@rhnet.org. Last newsletter winner was: Jennifer Dreywood – Winslow School

RH Teacher

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<http://ny.aft.org/rhea>

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TEACHER NEWS:

Babies, Babies, Babies: Rachael Reagan – Sherman, Megan Ingram – Sherman, Marcie Rush – Sherman, Wendy Molyneux – Sherman, Kristen Mancari-Koppers – Sherman, Adam Huck (Connor Morgan, August 11) – Winslow, Mike Pincelli – High School, Lindsey Williams – High School, Jeff Paradis – High School, Christy Snitchler – High School, Noel & Tiffany Zimny (Reese Aurelia, Jan 1st) – Winslow.

Best wishes to Marie Manna – Winslow.