

THE

PENDULUM

The Official In-House Publication of the Newburgh Teachers' Association



NTA

VOL. 50 NO.1
NOVEMBER 2019

NTA EASING STRESS FOR SUBSTITUTES, NEW EDUCATORS

BY DARRELL KUHN

Anxiety. Sleepless nights. Second guesses. Am I doing a good job? Can I do a good job? Please do not eat me alive, kids. Substitute teachers and new full-time, permanent educators deal with this on-the-job stress at school and at home every day. Then there is the anxiety associated with New York State's educator evaluation law on top of that daily grind. The Newburgh Teachers' Association now has programs in place to help alleviate some of this stress. The Substitute Greeter and the Welcome Wagon Programs kicked off during the 2018-19 school year. NTA President Stacy Moran said

one of the only public school educator unions who have organized their substitutes. This year, we have a greeter in every building." Suzana Valois, an NTA member and science teacher, is a substitute greeter at South Middle School. Valois explained that her job in this role is to offer information on the importance of NTA membership and the many benefits of having union representation, such as with contract negotiations. Many times, Valois said, their conversations go beyond what the NTA offers, such as what the substitute's expectations are and how the NTA would represent them if needed. "Substitutes seem eager to learn what we have to say," Valois said.

Jo-Ann Romanik, a substitute greeter at the New Windsor School, said that she gives substitute teachers membership forms to read and fill out to join the NTA. Before handing the substitute teachers the forms to fill out, Romanik explains to them the benefits of joining the NTA, the cost of becoming a member, and the reason why people like her are approaching them or recruiting them. She said that she has gotten approximately 80% of these forms she gave to the substitutes back. Romanik said that if there is not at least 51% of the substitute teachers enrolled, their chapter of the NTA will have to close. "I think that

NTA PRESIDENT STACY MORAN SAID THAT THE SUBSTITUTE GREETER PROGRAM CAME ABOUT BECAUSE SHE WAS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT THE BEST WAY TO COMMUNICATE WITH A GROUP OF POTENTIAL NTA MEMBERS WHO ARE DIFFICULT TO REACH BECAUSE THEY DO NOT WORK IN THE SAME NEWBURGH ENLARGED CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT ACADEMIC BUILDING EVERY DAY.

building every day. "I knew as a group that reaching out to the per diem substitutes would be difficult because of the logistics, so I came up with the idea of having a greeter in every (NECSD) school building who would welcome the substitute, and through a one-to-one conversation, show the substitute the advantages of joining the NTA," said Moran. "He or she would also educate the potential new member about our Per Diem Substitute Chapter. We are

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even if we did not need to update their forms (for NTA membership), the subs should still be greeted and welcomed to the schools," said Romanik, who is also an NTA member and math specialist.

Moran said another reason the Substitute Greeter Program began is because of the U.S. Supreme Court decision for the Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal

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NTA EASING STRESS FOR SUBSTITUTES, NEW EDUCATORS

FROM COVER

Employees case in June of 2018, which made it legal for workers to stop paying union dues but still receive union benefits and services. The entire country became a "Right-to-Work" nation. As a result, educating potential members about the union is vital. If union membership falls below 51%, collectively bargained contracts would be in jeopardy.

The NTA's Welcome Wagon Program is geared toward educating new full-time, permanent educators about union membership. Moran said the NTA needed a way to reach out to potential members as soon as they were hired. "The NECSD hires in the summer and throughout the school year, so I wanted a greeter in place to welcome them," Moran explained. "We had a Welcome Wagon Greeter for every school building last year, and they all returned this year." Conchetta Carbone, an NTA member and sixth grade teacher, is a Welcome Wagon greeter at South Middle School. Carbone said that the program provides an opportunity for union members to support each other. The Welcome Wagon Program, Carbone explained, is another contact point for new NTA members to have during the transition into the



NECSD schools. "It's nice to get to know the new members, reach out, and let them know they are part of a community," Carbone said. "It can be very overwhelming starting to work in a new school in a district this large. It's easy to feel lost in the shuffle. This program is about letting new NTA members know what resources are available through our union, and the strength and support it provides to both us and our students." Carbone believes the Welcome Wagon Program has been effective. This process, she said, has been well-received by new members and has been a positive experience for her. "As educators, we are surrounded by people all the time, but it can get lonely, especially if you are new," explained Carbone.

Emilia Suarez-Riggs, a first grade teacher and Welcome Wagon greeter at the Temple Hill Academy School, said the program is effective because new educators may not fully understand the NTA's value and may be too scared to ask.

"Even if the educators come from a different school district, they may not have had the same support system in place that we do here in Newburgh," Suarez-Riggs said.

THE NTA HAS PROGRAMS FOR NEW EDUCATORS

BY CAMILLE ALAIMO


The Newburgh Teachers' Association sponsors several programs to support new educators through the first milestones of their careers. While all educators expect to plan and implement instruction and manage student behavior, there are instances when meticulous planning can go awry. Educators have little power over state mandates, Newburgh Enlarged City School District policies, and aging school buildings. Other un-

expected incidences include broken copy machines, fledgling electronics, and student absenteeism. The NTA is determined to help its new colleagues navigate through this tenuous process.

The NTA has worked diligently to create the Mentor Program, which pairs new educators with a seasoned counterpart. Through the program, new educators are able to build professionalism and fellowship with peers. Together they spend more than 50 hours per year to exchange best-practices, visit each other's classrooms, share resources, attend lectures, take in-service courses, explore Promethean boards, and delve into the lesser known apps of Launchpad.





"Starting Out on the Right Track" is an in-service course that meets monthly to help new educators navigate through the Annual Professional Performance Review process. At its October of 2019 meeting, Zoe Matthews, a 22-year veteran teacher, spoke about the intricacies of observations and the Danielson rubric. Attendance was at an all-time high for this crucial topic. In addition, The Newburgh Teacher Center, under the supervision of Nick Carnevezos, hosts a wide variety of courses to fulfill mandates for Tier 5 and Tier 6 educators. Be sure to check out this season's offerings.



NEWBURGH TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The Newburgh Teachers' Association Official Publication
New York State United Teachers
American Federation of Teachers
Local 2867, AFL-CIO
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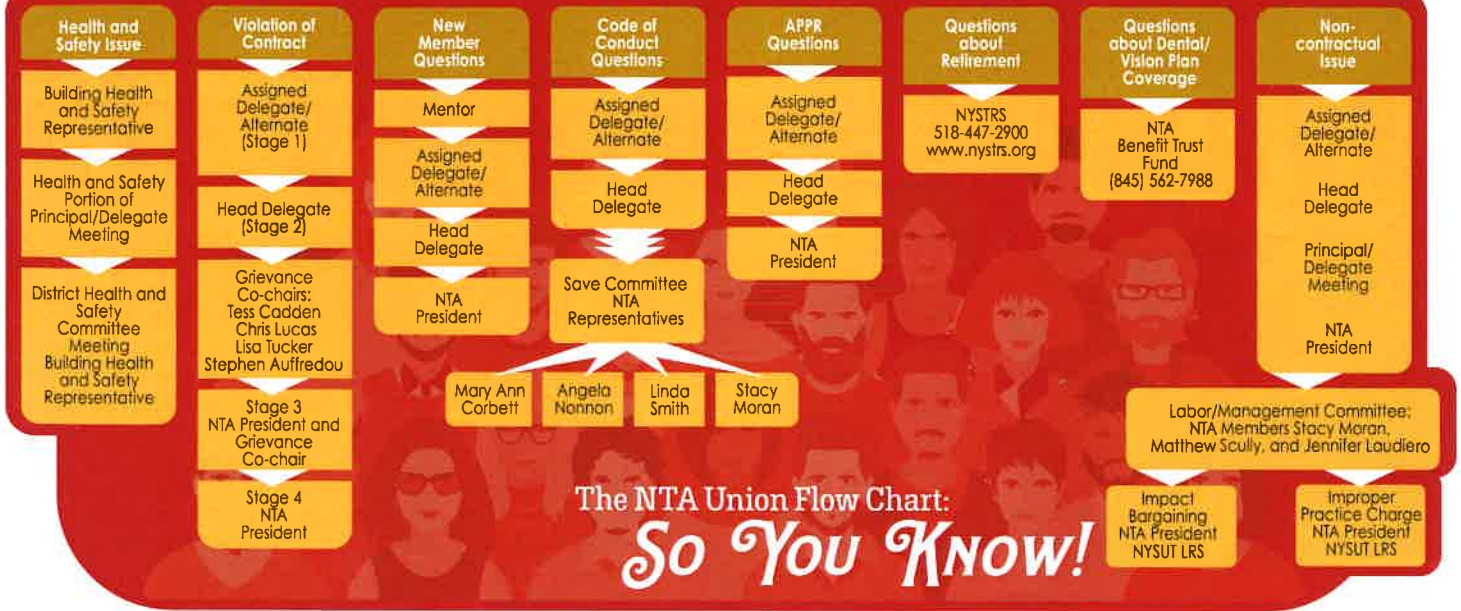



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WHO TO TALK TO WHEN ON-THE-JOB ISSUES ARISE FOR NTA MEMBERS!



COME ON IN!



THE NTA SUBSTITUTE GREETERS (LEFT) AND WELCOME WAGON COMMITTEE (RIGHT) ARE ENCOURAGING UNION MEMBERSHIP. (PHOTO PROVIDED)

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 FRI 7am-2:15pm





NTA SPOTLIGHT

BY CAMILLE ALAIMO

MEGAN McCANN

Union involvement has been a hallmark of Megan McCann's career. Megan began teaching in a private Catholic school seven years prior to her arrival at South Middle School in 1997 as a reading teacher. New to the public school system, Megan was inspired by the strength and the leadership of our union.

When South Middle School was downsized, Megan was transferred to the Meadow Hill School, where she will happily continue to serve until her retirement at the end of this school year after 23 years of service.

Early in her career, Megan took an in-service class called "The History of Our Union." It showed the struggles of public school educators before contracts and how the strike of 1973 changed working conditions to include fair wages, health benefits, and sick days. The course served to strengthen and inform educators about the hard-won victories that emerged as a result of union negotiation. After a long period of active membership, however, union involvement began to wane. As a result, The Newburgh Teacher Center closed, union publications ceased, and health benefits were on the verge of being eliminated.

Fortunately, current NTA President Stacy Moran stepped in. Newburgh Enlarged City School District

educators then received one of the best contracts since the history of its inception. In addition, The Newburgh Teacher Center was funded once again and *The Pendulum* was reinstated.

"The union was taken for granted by much of its membership and I noticed a lack of participation from my colleagues," Megan said. "That's when I became interested in joining the LAP team."

The LAP, or Local Action Program, was a three-year endeavor with an open invitation to all NTA members. There were five goals for this team. One goal was to bolster member involvement. The team created events which include the Family Movie Day, the Welcome Wagon, and the Book Giveaway. Although LAP funding has ended, these programs have become a permanent addition to our union agenda and will continue to benefit our students and their families in the future.

In addition, Megan has served on the NTA Policy Board, whose mission is to provide professional development to union members. The

Policy Board meets once a month and includes educators, parents, and outside business members. Its goal is to ensure that student and educator needs are being met. The district suggests topics they would like to cover, for example co-teaching. Then the Policy Board sends out questionnaires, and based on responses, builds courses. The Policy Board ensures that the Newburgh Teacher Center runs efficiently with access for all educators in terms of hours and resources, including course proposals and funding.

UNION INVOLVEMENT HAS BEEN A HALLMARK OF MEGAN McCANN'S CAREER.

Megan designed and currently facilitates a 15-hour in-service course on the Danielson domains. Danielson is a rating system largely centered on student engagement; which proves to be unfair to some educators.

"We must talk about

the Annual Professional Performance Review because we don't have a choice in it, as unappealing as it may be," said Megan. "Luckily, we have so many safeguards in our contract. We have the ability to appeal timelines. If you know it well, you can own it, and you won't be frightened by it."

Although most appeals have been won due to our union protections, there are still challenges.

"Educators are asked by the district to complete a task, and then we are not able to, because of a malfunction," Megan said. "Programs come, and they're great and we do them - and then we don't because we can't. You, as an educator, are expected to do, to comply, to use certain materials, get training - after you all that, nothing works. Resources are missing, groups are larger, and rosters don't match. Nothing lines up. Our careers are a daily challenge."

Megan reflects on her experiences, "I grew up in a tiny town," she said. "I came here and learned everything I needed to know through the support of wonderful educators. However, it was already a challenge to do the job I wanted to do as a reading teacher. So it's helpful not to have to worry about other things, like having too many classes or being told you have to do this, and this and this. The union took care of that part. You don't have to worry about having to do extra things because you knew the union was there and you can focus instead on helping the students."



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