At the Head of the Class:

Leadership Conference a Success!

This year’s NTA Leadership Conference saw nearly fifty NTA Delegates, Alternates and Researcher Linkers hear from six different experts. The topics ranged from grades 3-8 assessments, certification, teacher evaluation, health and safety, our new building bond, teachers’ delegate skills and the NYS Teacher Retirement System.

NTSU’s new Second-vice President, Maria Neira, kicked off the event with a key note speech. She spoke extremely fondly of Newburgh and pledged to support our efforts. She explained to the crowd that part of her many responsibilities was to meet regularly with the Commissioner of Education and Board of Regents to champion teacher causes for our state union.

Tom Beaudoin went through a laundry list of new regulations teachers are facing. They included certification, APPR, Initial Certificates, Portfolio Assessments, TIPS, Mentoring, NCLB, and Professional Development Plans.

Wendy Hord asked compelling Health and Safety questions. She offered to come to Newburgh to help train the newly constituted building level health and safety committees.

Labor Relations Specialist Wally Fults used concrete examples and contract language to help newer delegates realize their responsibilities in representing teachers. His overriding theme was to stick together and to keep the union strong.

Terry Damon, with the help of Educational Planning Committee member and former President, Jeff Benton, took us through the last half year of meetings which have given rise to the February Bond vote. After this workshop, there was no doubt in anyone’s mind that this bond must pass.

Shelia Salenger, a 12 year teacher member of the Teacher Retirement System, had heads spinning with the newly proposed retirement laws and the need to stay on top of your own benefit profile. This January and February, it is incumbent upon every member to review their portfolio for accuracy. Because of all the information relayed, a strong suggestion was for the NTA to hold an in-district retirement workshop for members locally.

Pilot Groups focus on Teacher Evaluations

Since the school year began, how teachers are evaluated has been the topic of meetings, workshops, and faculty room discussions. Recently, the faculties of Gardnertown School, Heritage JHS, NTA Academy, the Fine and Performing Arts and English Departments have viewed power point presentations, heard lectures, and have had an opportunity to ask questions about the plan. NTA President Phil Cordella and NTA Executive Counsel, Frank Colone, have represented the Union at these meetings.

The questions have included, “What are examples of acceptable goals?” How are benchmarks determined? For tenured teachers who have opted for a project in lieu of a formal classroom observation, what are acceptable assessment models? Must a conversation take place between the administrator and educator in order for it to be collaborative? How should teachers describe how they will obtain their goals?; and, How will administrators evaluate a teacher when a goal is obtained and how will they use that information to give input into the other seven criteria in the evaluation rubric?”

The Director and the NTA continually meet to address these concerns and others and plan to distribute an APPR survey to the pilot group in the spring.

Newburgh Teachers’ Association

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Since the law requires that every teacher and teaching assistant be evaluated once a year and non-tenured teachers twice, the new APPR is an opportunity for our members to have input into what that evaluation will focus on and how we’ll be assessed. A major tenant of the plan is mutually collaborative goal setting and planning. The overall objective of the new APPR, however, is that all observations and evaluations “improve the teaching standard of the Newburgh Enlarged City School District.”

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District Braces for Historic Bond Vote in February

NTA Seeks full Membership support

In September of this year, the NTA outlined a number of challenges facing our teachers, our profession, and union. Having experienced the recent local, state, and national elections, we now know that in order to have an impact on educational policies and protect past gains, we must be organized and united.

Our next challenge is clear. We must all work together for the passage of the February 15, 2005 fifty million dollar building repair and construction bond. “This goal can surely be met if we double our efforts from the last campaign and increase our intensity over the next two months. Clear your calendar, “cause we will be calling on every member in every school, whether you live in the District or not, to make a contribution of time and effort to get the job done,” commented NTA President Phil Cordella.

The reasons outlined by the NTA in support of the bond are:

• Needed repairs to every building will finally take place.
• Two schools will be adding a total of 18 classrooms, getting us closer to the agreed upon goal of no more than 20 students in every class, in every school, on every level.
• New joint district health and safety guidelines have been instituted to insure the protection of staff and students during construction.
• The tax impact has been identified at approximately $6 per month per $100,000 dollars of assessed property value.
• The process to secure a Project Labor Agreement guaranteeing local union labor has begun.
• Teachers, appointed by the NTA, were equal partners every step of the way in the formulation of the scope of the bond and the vision for the district: From forty years from now. The bond is the first phase of a larger, well-thought-out plan, which makes sense for teachers and students alike.
• The NTA has been assured that the rights of our members will be protected every step of the way.
• If you have never volunteered to work for your union, this is the ideal time. Political Action Committee volunteers in every building will be asking for assistance. Please give us any time you have. Our future depends on it.
Executive Counsel Frank Colone. Also participating in the meetings to hash out the details were CSEA Secretary Gail Rosenzweig, and Assistant Superintendent for School Operations, Dr. Kate Farrell.

The District's Health and Safety Committee will be taking on a new look for the ’04 - ’05 school year. Still intact is a District-wide Central Committee and Building Committees, but their composition has changed.

The new configuration is an attempt to monitor properly any new construction and repairs which are anticipated when and if, the Feb-ruary Building and Repair Bond passes. As a result of legal language between the District and the Union, the District was also required to reach an agreement with the NTA to re-establish the treasurer.

NTA President Phil Cordella commented on the changes, “We really appreciated working with the District and the various stakeholders. I know what we will build on in the past and make the new groups even more efficient and responsive.” The new make-up of each group was a direct result of discussions which were held between Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Annette Saturnelli, NTA President Phil Cordella and NTA Executive Counsel Frank Colone. Also participating in the meetings to hash out the details were CSEA Secretary Gail Rosenzweig, and Assistant Superintendent for School Operations, Dr. Kate Farrell.

The District-wide Health and Safety Central Committee will be comprised of four appointees of the NTA and one representative each from the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), the Newburgh Supervisors and Administrators’ Association, Central Office, and the Board of Educa-tion. The NTA representatives to the committee are: Judy Leroy (CAMS), Stacey Eustance (South J.H.), Jeanne Daley, (NTA at Stewart), and Frank Colone, Executive Counsel.

Each building is also required to have a four member Health and Safety Committee. These committees will consist of the building principal, a CSEA representative, a parent, and the Head Delegate or their designee.

The District and the Union have promised ongoing training and support to assure that our students and staff work and learn in a safe, secure, and healthy environment.

2.1.2

Treasurer Change at the NTA

The NTA’s transition continues as the NTA’s Board of Directors named New Windsor School Head Delegate, Angela Sartori, as its new treas-urer. Angela replaces Nikolas Karnavezos as Trea-surer. In her letter of interest, Ms. Sartori indicated she is “strongly committed to the Union, and has the time and desire to do the job for which the position calls.”

Under former NTA Treasurer Karnavezos, the membership has enjoyed his steady and upfront style. Karnavezos would often find himself explain-ing to the Delegates and Alternates the eb and flow of the NTA’s finances. The NTA, because of its obligation to send a portion of the dues col-lected to its national affiliate, the American Fed-eration of Teachers (AFT) and its statewide union, the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) fre-quently saw its finances rise and fall monthly as dues came in and out. To manage its activities, for further information, please consult the Plan Administration, Newburgh Teachers’ Association Benefit Trust Fund, 52 Pierces Road, Newburgh, N.Y. 12550. Call (845) 562-7988 or Fax (845) 562-7960.

Your Benefit Trust Fund is entirely separate from your District Health insurances. Official notices pertaining to the Benefit Trust Fund will be printed in The Pendulum, the official publication of Newburgh Teachers’ Association, and in the Benefit Trust Fund News. It is the members responsibility to read both publications for Fund news and updates. In addition, rules for filing claims are printed on the claim form. For other information, please consult the Plan Administration, Newburgh Teachers’ Association Benefit Trust Fund, 52 Pierces Road, Newburgh, N.Y. 12550. Call (845) 562-7988 or Fax (845) 562-7960.

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