Administrative Survey Pilot Begun

In October 2005, the NTA’s Delegate Assembly approved a motion that the NTA’s Administrative Survey be implemented during the 2005-2006 school year. This January, the NTA implemented its Administrative Survey pilot. The building Head Delegates distributed the color coded surveys, provided a location for their return, and signed affidavits guaranteeing the results would be kept confidential. The survey, limited to building administrators, consists of 26 questions on leadership, management style, school safety, and professionalism. District directors and central office administrators were not included at this time.

NTA President Phil Cordella noted, “It was the Head Delegates’ finest hour. They conducted the Pilot Project in the most professional and positive manner possible. This initiative surely raises the bar between NTA and building administrator relations. It is based on a solid mission statement and the belief that building administrators will welcome a conversation regarding the staff’s perceptions on how policies and programs are being implemented.”

Results were tabulated by the NTA and building delegates, who will then initiate conversations with individual administrators about issues particular to their school.

2005 NBPTS Recipients Recognized

At the December NTA Delegate Assembly holiday gathering, the NTA recognized the 2005 National Board Certified Teachers. Board Certified Teachers in attendance were, top row, from left to right: Karriem Bunce, Tom Nopp, Phil Cordella, Nick Kavanezov, Eric Katz, Rich Durbin, and John Eitel, Jr. Bottom row: Yvette Lewis and Danielle Clarino-Cotton. Newly Certified Teachers not pictured were: Anne-Marie Healy and Danielle DuMortier-Nelson.

School Absence Phone-In Guidelines Set

When you are absent from school, you must call the District provided absence reporting number for elementary teachers, secondary teachers, or teaching assistants. Through a series of Labor Management Committee (LMC) meetings, the NTA and the District have agreed that the second courtesy call to your school location should be left on a designated voice mail number. All staff should have received the designated number with specific instructions. NTA members should make calls reporting absences anytime after school, the day before absence, or within forty-five minutes prior to student arrival, the day of absence. If there are problems with this process in your school, please contact the NTA immediately. “We are very pleased that we were able to work this out with the District,” noted LMC member Nancy Sporacio. “This is something members have requested for years.”

Incumbent NTA Officers and Teaching Assistant Counterparts Reelected, Unopposed

Incumbent NTA President Phil Cordella noted, “It was the Head Delegates’ finest hour. They conducted the Pilot Project in the most professional and positive manner possible. This initiative surely raises the bar between NTA and building administrator relations. It is based on a solid mission statement and the belief that building administrators will welcome a conversation regarding the staff’s perceptions on how policies and programs are being implemented.”

Results were tabulated by the NTA and building delegates, who will then initiate conversations with individual administrators about issues particular to their school.

Newburgh Teachers’ Association

The official in-house publication of the Newburgh Teachers’ Association

The benefit year for prescription co-pay reimbursement runs from February 1, 2006 through June 30, 2009.

At the January 2006 meeting of the NTA Benefit Trust Fund, Trustees unanimously approved doubling the prescription co-pay benefit effective February 1, 2006. In-service Benefit Trust Fund members will be able to claim $200 per year. Retiree Benefit Trust Fund members will be able to claim $100 per year.

Prescription Co-Pay Doubles for Retirees and In-Service Members

At the January 2006 meeting of the NTA Benefit Trust Fund, Trustees unanimously approved doubling the prescription co-pay benefit effective February 1, 2006. In-service Benefit Trust Fund members will be able to claim $200 per year. Retiree Benefit Trust Fund members will be able to claim $100 per year.

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Unionism Award Goes to Vote Planners

The NTA Nomination and Election Committee (NEC) is this year’s recipient of the William G. Riley Profile in Unionism award. Chaired by elementary art teacher Donna Liebman (HOH), the award-winning committee also consists of third grade teacher Maureen Neppl (Fostertown) and Thomas Neppl (NFA), social studies chairperson and a National Board Certified Teacher. The NTA Board of Directors recognizes the outstanding dedication to unionism which the committee demonstrated by establishing standardized election and voting procedures that will benefit the NTA for years to come.

Accomplishments:
- Enacted the district-wide secret ballot contract vote
- Established guidelines for building delegate elections
- Organized the Board of Directors’ Candidate Night
- Conducted the elementary Directors’ election
- Created the NEC’s voting guidelines and procedures for the February 14, 2006 NTA officers’ election and the Spring election of NYSUT and AFT positions.

“By stepping up to the plate, Donna, Maureen, and Tom have done a job worthy dedication to unionism which the committee demonstrated by establishing standardized election and voting procedures that will benefit the NTA for years to come.” commented President Cordella. "They make everyone feel he or her vote matters.”

Leadership Conference

Over 65 NTA members participated in the NTA Leadership Conference held this past fall. Organized by NTA Secretary and Events Coordinator Patricia VanDuer, participants received valuable information on contract updates, health insurance predictions, as well as economic facts and figures of the Newburgh District. This year, the Conference was open to teacher assistants, alternates, committee members, and research linkers. The keynote was given by well-known motivational speaker Dr. John J. Pelsza.

Mentoring Program Continues to Assist Newer Members

Now in its fourth year, the NTA Mentoring Program, facilitated by Newburgh Teacher Center Coordinator John Elkel. Jr., is pleased to announce that nearly 100 mentors and interns have been successfully paired this year. Since new teachers must participate in a Mentoring program in order to achieve permanent certification, the NTA encourages all tenured teachers to help newer teachers by becoming a mentor. A three-credit course must be completed in order to become a mentor. Teachers who mentor new teachers receive a one-time stipend in the year they are mentoring. After successfully completing the mentor program, interns receive 3 credits towards salary advancement. In addition, new teachers who successfully complete the mentor program will receive, starting in their fourth year in the District, an additional $1,000 added into their salary (similar to the $500 they receive for their master’s degree). For more information on the Mentoring program, see your head delegate or Appendix VI of your Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Feedback Requested on Mid-Year Teacher Evaluations

Non-tenured teachers working in one of the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) pilot schools or departments (Fostertown, Garnhertown, Heritage HJS, Career and Tech Education, Fine and Performing Arts K-12, Eng, Lib 7-12, NFA-at-Stewart, and Guidance) should have received a mid-year evaluation. Under the contract, non-tenured teachers must be evaluated three times a year and tenured teachers once. Upon receiving an APPR evaluation, the NTA encourages all teachers to visit www.newburgh.sg.org to provide necessary feedback. Since the evaluation is still in the pilot phase, constructive criticism will shape the final evaluation form. The NTA reminds all members to focus on the individual APPR goal established in September when providing comments. Input received from the NTA will be kept confidential and be used to further the professional performance review process. Your voice matters.

When Political Clout Is Necessary, VOTE/COPE is There

NTA VOTE/COPE broke all records in 2005 by raising over $38,000. In addition, nearly $7,000 was raised with retirees’ contributions. Under the leadership of Kim DeFilippo, the VOTE/COPE committee utilized the phone banks to make it happen. VOTE/COPE protects teacher tenure, secures state aid for school districts, fights for retirement benefits, and provides aid to local teacher unions, whether they are working to pass school budgets or building bonds or to elect school board members. Special thanks go to NTA members Jeff Benton and Nick Karnavezos, NFA President Vicky Pittman, NFA Assistant Director Melissa Segell, and John Rivera, a retired Newburgh Teacher and current coordinator of NFA’s Youth Construction Initiative Program.

Joint Visit to Vocational Academy

NFA Principal Peter Copletti and NTA President Phil Cordella, along with members of the union, NFA teaching staff, and administration, visited the New England Laborers/Cranston Public Schools Construction Career Academy in Rhode Island, to review the program and to determine its relevancy to Newburgh students and teachers. President Cordella indicated that the Cranston model of smaller learning communities linked to specific career objectives has many appealing aspects that could be adapted in order to meet our needs. NFA does not participate in BOCES but rather uses state funding to provide its own Occupational Education program. Although still in the discussion phase, planning and implementing a new program blending occupational education, vocational education, and career and work explorations may be on the horizon. Cranston school officials noted however, that to do this well, a project of this scope can take anywhere from eight months to two years to complete.

On a related note, an apprentice trainer from Laborers’ Local 17 has been hired to work in NFA Occupational Education classrooms this semester. Assessing our true needs is something we should never shy away from. If these discussions help in that regard I think we’re on the right track,” NTA President Cordella stated.

Joining the group in Cranston were NTA Vice President Vicky Pittman, NFA teacher Chris Cotton, Assistant Principal Melissa Segell, and John Rivera, a retired Newburgh Teacher and current coordinator of NFA’s Youth Construction Initiative Program.

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