Education Nation Summit

The Education Nation Summit was held at Rockefeller Plaza on September 27th and 28th. During the Summit, policymakers, educators, members of the business community, and engaged citizens came together for a series of panel sessions regarding the challenges facing America’s education system, the success stories, and the solutions.

The Teacher Town Hall was broadcast live on Sunday, September 26th, under a large tent where the skating rink is constructed every year. It was moderated by NBC’s Brian Williams and included thousands of teachers from across the country, both in person and on-line. Through a special invite from NYSUT, who had a half dozen representatives present, the Newburgh Teachers’ Association was represented by our president, Patricia Van Duser and David Brown, a NYSUT delegate and member of our Board of Directors.

“Our public schools face a myriad of complex challenges, both educational and societal. There is no ‘silver-bullet’ solution. We seek reform through open dialog with all stakeholders,” said Van Duser. “It was both an honor and a privilege to represent Newburgh in Education Nation.”

The topics discussed ranged from struggles in the classroom, our slipping world wide standing in math and science scores, the benefits and challenges of charter school, and tenure. Though at times different participants strongly disagreed over certain issues, like the growing number of charter schools and the need for tenure, there was one topic that most everyone agreed upon: the need for reform.

Both our national union, AFT, and state union, NYSUT, continue to be active participants in the conversations concerning education reform and accountability. Although we are strongly represented on both the national and state levels, it is equally important that local members educate themselves on important current issues to be prepared to vote in November.

Teachers are Superman and Superwoman!

“Waiting for Superman” by Guggenheim is a documentary examining education in a simplistic way, blaming teachers and lauding charter schools. We know teachers are doing extraordinary work with students on a daily basis.

The most effective solutions didn’t make it into the film: developing and supporting great teachers; implementing valid and comprehensive evaluation systems that inform teaching and learning; creating great curriculum and the conditions that promote learning for all kids; and insisting on shared responsibility and mutual accountability that hold everyone, not just teachers, responsible for ensuring that all our children receive a great education.

Teachers acknowledge our responsibility to find real and lasting solutions to improve education in spite of many societal problems that work against us. Teachers are who our students look up to. Teachers are Superman and Superwoman!
**VOTE/COPE**

"You Can Complete The Puzzle!" Campaign Begins!

The future of your job, your retirement and your health care hinges on decisions made in Albany and in Washington, D.C. A donation to VOTE/COPE, your union's political action fund, helps ensure your voice will be heard on issues, large and small, that affect your life.

Political action can be confusing, and sometimes it seems there are so many parts that you can't imagine how they all fit together. Now, more than ever, is the time when the donations you make to VOTE/COPE can help complete the puzzle.

Your contribution is an essential part of the big picture, guaranteed to produce results and protect your interest in Albany and Washington, D.C. VOTE/COPE rebates from your contributions also help us advocate for our school budget, rally community support and get our message out to our local leaders.

We are asking all NTA members to make a donation of $10 per paycheck. Simply fill out and return the VOTE/COPE Deduction Form. If you need more information, please see your Head Delegate or email Nick Karnavezos or Mike Olsen. Forms are available at newburghhta.org.

---

**Parent-Teacher Conferences: Tips for Teachers**

**Before the Conference:**
- Send home personal letters to notify parents of conference dates. Outline an agenda that will interest them and emphasize the importance of the conference to their children's education.
- Telephone parents who do not respond and encourage them to attend.
- Send home reminders one week before the conferences.
- Have chairs available outside the classroom for waiting parents.

**During the Conference:**
- Greet parents warmly as they enter your room. Remember, they may be more nervous than you.
- Display student work for parents to see.
- Start the meeting by showing you care and know something positive about their child.
- Use student work to show progress or need for improvement.
- Review assessments given, including assessment tools and student performance.
- Listen attentively to what parents say. Before responding, rephrase, what you heard.
- Engage parents in planning the best ways to help their child.
- Give the parents something to take home with them, such as a handout on the curriculum.

**After the Conference:**
- Outline what has been done to help the child with special issues, and then recommend assistance available at the school or in the community.
- Let the parents know how they can help at home.
- Thank parents for coming and let them know you're available to work with them through phone calls, e-mail or further meetings.
- Keep parents updated on the status of the agreed-upon action plan.
- Take a few minutes to jot down some notes for yourself about the conference and any plans that were made with families.
Buying Local Boosts the Economy!

As the holidays approach, it’s a good time to reflect on the value of buying locally. There is a profound effect keeping money in our community and keeping people employed. When we buy locally, money stays in the community. It keeps our community going. When our money goes to big business, it flows out of the area causing it to weaken. Local merchants contribute significantly more money to the local economy than do retail chains. A Chicago study by Civic Economics found “for every $100 spent in 10 locally owned shops studied there, $73 stayed in Chicago’s economy. For every $100 spent in a chain with comparable products, $43 appeared to stay.” It went on to add, “money spent in local stores stayed local because employees were paid more, owners used more local goods and services for their businesses and contributed more to local charities.”

Reasons to Buy Local
1. Keep the money in the area
2. Embrace what makes the Hudson Valley special
3. Help out the small business people
4. Help out the environment
5. Invest in the community
6. Put your taxes to good work
7. Support community groups
8. Show we believe in the Hudson Valley!

K-12 Tenure Survival Guide: What Every New Member Should Know

New York state has had a tenure law since 1917, but it wasn’t until 1980 that all public school teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) were included under its protections. Over the years, legislation sponsored by NYSUT has strengthened the law and broadened its coverage. During the 1970s for example, NYSUT fought for and won amendments which reduced the pre-tenure probationary period from five to three years, and to two years for teachers/TAs who had acquired tenure in another district or tenure area, and made teachers/TAs in school districts employing fewer than eight teachers/TAs eligible for tenure.

What does tenure do?

Generally, new teachers/TAs are “on probation” for the first three years of their careers. During that period, they may be dismissed at any time. At or before the expiration of the probationary period, the district must either deny or grant tenure. Tenure is granted by the board of education on recommendation of the superintendent, following observation and review of the probationary teacher/TA. Without the superintendent’s recommendation, tenure cannot be granted.

Once granted tenure, a teacher/TA is guaranteed a system of due process, but is not guaranteed a job for life. The tenure law protects teachers/TAs from arbitrary or capricious dismissal. For example, it prevents a school district from firing a competent teacher/TA so that it can hire someone else who may have better personal or political connections.

Tenure is not transferable from one school district to another. However, a teacher/TA who has acquired tenure in one district within the state and moves to another need only serve a two-year probationary period, rather than three, before being eligible for tenure in the new district. If the transfer is the result of a BOCES takeover of services or a district takeover of BOCES services, teachers retain their tenure rights.

Grounds for Dismissal

Once a teacher/TA is granted tenure, a school district can fire the teacher/TA only for just cause based on general reasons recognized under the Education Law. Some examples of these reasons are:

- Insubordination
- Conduct unbecoming a teacher
- Insufficiency
- Incompetence
- Physical or mental disability
- Neglect of duty
- Failure to maintain certification
- Immoral character
- The 3020-a Hearing

If a school district brings charges against a tenured teacher/TA, those charges must be made in writing. The teacher/TA has the right, under Section 3020-a of State Education Law, to an impartial hearing and to legal representation. NYSUT provides representation from its staff of attorneys. In 1994, NYSUT supported legislation that improved the tenure law by shortening the hearing process and strengthening teachers’ due process rights.

(Courtesy NYSUT.org)
This year's Welcome Back Bash was a great success! NTA members donations totaling $1000 was given to Food Bank of the Hudson Valley. Photos show a group of happy members and Patricia Van Duser presenting the check to Jessica Bell, Special Events Coordinator of the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley.

**Strides Walk**

Newburgh Teachers' Association

Hudson Valley Region, New York
October 17, 2010

nta

52 Pierces Road
Newburgh, New York 12550