



Pequannock Township Education Association



CHALKBOARD

April 2011

~President's Message~

It's April, and as you will read elsewhere in this issue, the focus is on passing school budgets. Your Association encourages all members to vote "Yes" for their local school budget to support public education.

The political climate throughout the country is in constant flux: even as I write this, labor history is being made in various states. Rest assured that your Association receives the most up-to-date information regarding all the political issues that affect labor, and in particular, those issues that will impact your basic rights, benefits, pensions and salaries. The Association has assembled a Legislative Team to insure that our members are informed on issues and legislation as soon as we get information. The Team consists of members in the High School (David Claeyes), the Middle School (Lillian Keating), and the Elementaries (Diane Wolfe).

Finally, I would like to congratulate the Association Representatives from each building who will begin their terms at our April 28th Representative Council Training Meeting:

PTHS

Sue Berardinelli
David Claeyes
Pat Dean
Laura Higley
Helene Zablocki

PV

Janelle Heise
Lillian Keating
Erin Postman
Dale Schoenig

HV

Donna Derricks
Alice Galliano
Sharon Martinez

NB

Jamie Dean
Diane Wolfe

SJG

Sally Belmont
Michele Mazzola
Amanda Schlesinger

Lee Ann Brensinger

~Negotiations~

Helene Zablocki (PTHS)

On Saturday, March 26th, the Negotiations Team met for three hours to review the Board's counterproposal and prepare our response. Later that day, the PTEA sent its proposal to the Board president electronically and we are waiting for a response. Please check the PTEA website for up to date information.

~Legislative~

Lillian Keating (PV)

Vote!

Whether you live in Pequannock or another district, your vote in this year's school board and budget elections will make a difference. Scheduling yet one more activity into a busy Wednesday workday can be challenging, but I offer you a solution... vote by mail. It's very easy! If you live in Morris County, go to <http://www.morriselections.org/> and click on "Vote by Mail Application". This will take you to a page with instructions and a link to a printable application. This is an application for the mail ballot only. Print, fill out, and send it to the address given and then you will get your special mail in ballot by mail which you can send in. If you don't live in Morris County, just Google the name of your county and the words "vote by mail" to get to the website you need. Your vote counts and this is so easy!

~PRIDE~

Jamie Dean (NB) and Karen Schiffel (SJG)

OUR PRIDE IS SHOWING

As we wave good-bye to winter, in hopes of seeing signs of Spring soon, there is one sign you should especially be on the look out for. The PTEA has taken on a sponsorship with Pequannock Township Little League. We will have a sign displayed at Washington Park and be listed on more than 800 practice t-shirts! More information will be forthcoming. Be sure to watch the PTEA website which has again been paid for through PRIDE funding.

Did you curl up with a good book during the Read Across America celebration? Our three elementary schools enjoyed Dr. Seuss related activities and added books to their libraries.

SJG and more than 30 of their friends from Hearle Village enjoyed a 2nd Annual Senior Tea. It was a wonderful afternoon. The residents of Hearle Village sipped tea and munched on light refreshments provided by the SJG-HSA and the PTEA through PRIDE. Each grade level wowed the group with some very special entertainment. The 1st grades, traditionally, closed out the program by singing "What a Wonderful World." It was a TEA-rrific day!



Sipping tea not your cup of tea? How about a bowl of CHILI? Congratulations to HOPE and SADD for their first annual Chili Cook-Off. Maureen Montalbetti shared that the event raised more than \$200.00 for our food pantry with people already asking about next year's cook-off. Keith Brady was the winner of the Chili Fest!



Pictured left to right:
 Janet Drashinsky (NB), Ann Marie Finnen (SJG), Jamie Dean (NB), Eileen Ciaverella (PTHS),
 Valerie Munro (HV) and Lee Ann Bresinger (PTHS)

The first time displaying our students' work at the Rockaway Mall Project was a huge success. We had a great variety of work. Hope all enjoyed seeing the pictures Lee Ann sent out. Thank you to Lee Ann Bresinger (PTHS), Janet Drashinsky (NB), Ann Marie Finnen (SJG), and Valerie Munro (HV) for the help in setting up the displays. An extra special thank you goes out to Eileen Ciaverella (PTHS) (and to her husband and daughter) for helping to set up and take down.

Remember, if you have a project or event that you would like to have considered for the 2011-2012 PRIDE PROPOSAL all information must be received by May 1st.

~MCCEA~

Diane Wolfe (NB) and Bill Vivino (HV)

- ❖ The next TPAF (Teacher's Pension and Annuity Fund) meeting will be held on October 22, 2011. Delegates to this important pension conference are needed from Morris County.
- ❖ NJEA has encouraged us again to be diligent in attempting to have all members and their households register to vote and to exercise that privilege. Please keep in mind that the school budget election will be held on Wednesday, April 27. When encouraging people to vote, please remember to focus on groups or persons who are known to be positive toward education.
- ❖ May 3rd is the MCCEA Legislative Reception. It is being held at the Parsippany Hilton and the cost is \$20 per member.
- ❖ The annual MCCEA ESP Brunch will be held on May 7. This year's training will concern the threat of privatization of our support staff. Please let all educational support professionals in your buildings (aides, custodians, secretaries, bus drivers) know about this meeting.
- ❖ Judge Doyne of the NJ Superior Court has ruled that New Jersey failed to show that Governor Christie's public school aid was sufficient to meet constitutional requirements.

- ❖ The next county IPD workshop will take place on Thursday, May 12 at 4:30 at the Zeris Inn. The topic will be the Titanic.
- ❖ The Morris County Historical Society has a WWII Exhibit – Stories of service men. Possible field trip for students.
- ❖ For all workshops please RSVP to the MCCEA office @ 973-366-0202 or at MCCEA@optonline.net

~Grievance~

Ann Marie Finnen (SJG)

- Your Grievance Chair and a member recently met with Dr. Trusheim and other administrators concerning a Corrective Action Plan, which the Association contended was incorrectly implemented. The Superintendent agreed to pull the plan from the member’s file.
- Members should be familiar with the language of their contract, and refer to it often; especially if you believe filing a grievance may be in order. Our current contract is available on line at www.pteweb.org, by clicking on the Negotiations tab. Please take note of the following clauses included in the agreement between the PTEA and the BOE.

ARTICLE 25

SUPERVISION OF STUDENT TEACHERS

- A. Supervision by a teacher of a student teacher shall be voluntary.*
- B. No teacher shall have a student teacher under his/her supervision unless said teacher has had at least three years of teaching experience, with the most recent year in his present position except in unusual circumstances as determined by the Superintendent.*
- C. Each prospective cooperating teacher must accept or reject any student teacher proposed by the Administration within 48 hours of the initial interview by so informing the Principal of the school to which he is assigned.*

ARTICLE 33

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

- A. Any complaints regarding an employee made to any member of the administration by any parent or student which does influence evaluation of a teacher shall be processed according to the procedure outlined below.*
- B. The Principal or immediate superior shall meet with the employee to apprise the employee of the full nature of the complaint and they shall attempt to resolve the matter informally.*

- In addition, **ARTICLE 8** deals with teaching hours, teaching load, length of day, holidays and work year specifications pertaining to all members of the Association. Your work day is spelled out here, and each member should be familiar with the paragraphs that deal with their position.
- As always, if you have any questions or concerns, your PTEA is always available to help. Contact your AR or a member of the Grievance Committee - Ann Marie Finnen (SJG) or Pat Dean (PTHS).

~Important Information~

Food Drive

Our March Food Drive, benefiting the Pequannock Food Pantry was a huge success thanks to our members at all five schools who made generous donations. Special thanks to the many PTEA members and their families who showed up at Friendship Hall on Friday, March 11, while areas of our town were being battered by flooding, in order to sort and package the contributions. This allowed the donations to be quickly distributed to families in need. If you have an idea on how we can support our community, or would like to get involved in one of our PTEA initiatives, please contact your AR or a member of the Executive Board.



Look for the signs!

Many homes in Pompton Plains and Pequannock are currently displaying signs that declare “This Family proudly supports Pequannock Township Public Schools.” We appreciate the many staff members, parents, board of education members and home and school officers who have one of our signs hanging in their windows. If any PTEA member would like a sign for their home or knows a family that would like one, please contact your PTEA Vice President Ann Marie Finnen (SJG). We are also continuing to ask local businesses to display signs indicating their support for our great public schools. We need the help of our members in this initiative. Again, please contact Ann Marie if you would like to help.

The following is an article that appeared in the Record. It was written by our own Dave Claeys who is a member of the PTEA Legislative Team.

I'm writing in response to Bob Ingle's column ("Top teachers could mentor their peers," @issue, March 20), where Ingle touches on pretty much every other possible issue he can about his problem with teachers. He starts by recounting how acting Education Commissioner Chris Cerf told a failing charter school to either get their act together or face closure. Ingle then talks about this being what should happen in public schools where "failure can go on for generations."

First, let's get a couple of things straight about public schools. Public schools in New Jersey provide the best public education in the country. Our students are among the highest-scoring in math and English. We have among the highest Advanced Placement test scores and we are one of the only states where the gap is shrinking between inner-city student test scores and their counterparts in the suburbs. These are facts our governor refuses to talk about. In fact, the only schools that are really failing in the state of New

Jersey are those located in inner cities such as Newark and Camden. By the way, these are the same schools that were taken over and have been run by the state of New Jersey for the past 15 years.

The problems with inner-city schools are not problems with education. Poor student performance is due to broken homes, one-parent families, drugs, alcohol, crime, missing parents, and all of the social and economic problems that go with it. It is unrealistic to think that a teacher spending an hour a day with a student is going to overcome all of the burdens these students show up with. It is not public education that is failing these students. It is their communities. If we are going to fix public education, let's make sure we are fixing it only in those places where it is broken.

Ingle goes on to say that New Jersey spends twice as much per student on education as some states, but doesn't get twice the results. Guess what, Bob, New Jersey spends twice as much as some states on newspaper columnists, too, and doesn't get twice as much, either. Everything costs more in New Jersey because it's prime real estate that is populated by an educated workforce and is a bedroom community to New York City. Education costs more because everything costs more. We teachers have to live here, too. By the way, access to a quality education is one of the main reasons that people move to New Jersey.

To hear Ingle talk about teacher tenure, you would think that our schools are overflowing with ineffective, nonproductive and unmotivated has-beens who are protected by a self-serving tenure system. How far from the truth. New Jersey has the best public schools and the best teachers in the nation, as evidenced by most all measurements of performance.

The tenure system doesn't protect low-achievers. It is in place to protect good teachers from political and economic dismissals. When that happens, it is bad for students. Tenure only is earned after three years of performance reviews and evaluations by school administrators, and is then awarded at the discretion of the board of education. Granted, once earned, the review process to remove a tenured teacher is expensive and time-consuming and, often, that is a detriment to removing a bad teacher. That is why the NJEA has put forth a recommendation that would streamline this process and reduce the cost, thus making it easier to remove a teacher for a truly tenurable offense.

Ingle finally addresses the point included in the title of his article in his second to last paragraph. He says that outstanding teachers can be "role models and mentors to lesser-skilled educators in each district." This already is done in most districts, whether formally or informally. Good teachers collaborate with each other. In schools where this doesn't occur, I agree that it needs to be implemented. It would be foolish, however, to think that this would provide the remedy to inner-city problems. The sooner we focus on what really needs to be fixed, the better. By the way, Bob, I'm sure you can find a great job in Sioux City, Iowa, for about half of what you're making here.