Dissension and feelings of uneasiness could be felt as RA 2014 began on Friday, April 4th. A quick glance around the halls demonstrated that it was not going to be business as usual.

For the first time, since the days of Albert Shanker, NYSUT was fractured into two groups. The newly formed “Revive NYSUT” cadre was distributing flyers, buttons, and megaphones to convey their message to those gathered for the Representative Assembly (RA) 2014.

The incumbent “Stronger Together” contingent was missing the megaphones, but there was plenty of paper to be seen. The division seems to have been brought about by controversial educational reforms that include APPR. The “Revive” slate was represented by Karen Magee, Andrew Pallotta (Iannuzzi’s second-in-command), Catalina R. Forino, Paul Pecorale and Martin Messner; the “Stronger” slate was represented by the sitting board: Richard Iannuzzi, Andrew Pallotta, Maria Neira, Kathleen M. Donahue, and Lee Cutler.

This was a busier than usual two days for your WCT delegates. Friday went on well into Saturday morning with the UNITY Caucus meeting. Civility was lacking; confusion and argumentative rhetoric reigned. Approximately, 40% (200,000) of NYSUT members belong to the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), which represents NYC teachers and professional staff and is led by Michael Mulgrew. He is also a NYSUT executive board member and an American Federation of Teachers (AFT) vice-president.

Understanding the union hierarchy is important for WCT members as 42% of our dues goes to NYSUT, 25% goes to the AFT and the WCT keeps the remaining 33% (Nearly $50,000 a month is sent to NYSUT and the AFT combined). Randi Weingarten, AFT president, supported the “Revive NYSUT” slate; furthermore, the rumor and speculation was that Mulgrew handpicked and backed the “Revive” designees.

On Saturday evening, 3,000 delegates representing 1,200 local unions voted. We awoke Sunday morning to the news that the “Revive” slate won chiefly supported by the big cities, which included NYC, Yonkers, and Albany. Shortly after the election, Karen Magee rebuffed rumors that she is Mulgrew’s puppet (lohud.com/ “NYSUTs Magee: We are Going to Become Strong Again”). She vowed to take on the state’s educational reforms including the teacher evaluation system, stating that the Iannuzzi response was “weak.”

Continued page 5, NYSUT
On Tuesday April 22, 2014 the school board kept extra late hours as it debated and finally voted on the $211.9 million proposed budget for 2014-15.

The Superintendent’s adopted budget is just under the tax cap by $453. In order to accomplish this the budget calls for the dissolution of Orchard View (OV), currently housed at the District Office’s site.

Superintendent Marco Pochintesta suggests one of three new homes for the displaced students: the high school of origin or BOCES, which could receive less than 15 students. The plan suggests hiring an additional assistant principal for each high school in order to support the needs of the students. According to the numbers, this will save $290,000 from the OV bottom line of $910,000.

The origin plan Pochintesta proposed called for OV to close the end of this year, but certain board members, including President Ved Shravah, did not have enough information to agree to the idea. The close will occur at the end of next school year.

Parents and one student spoke in support of keeping the alternative high school open, which teaches 50 full time and 20 part time students. The following responses are reactions from Union Members on the subject.

Please respond with your own reactions to: commentator@optimum.net

One anonymous teacher responded hours after the decision:

To close Orchard View because the school is struggling and feeling growing pains is both short-sighted, and in the long run, poor financial planning. The board manipulated and outright misrepresented a number of the costs of the program, including printing, and sharing with the public incorrect salary information for teachers and falsely inflated numbers. The cost of an OV student is $10,000; the cost of sending a student to BOCES BETA is $26,000 per student. BETA also limits the spots available to Wappingers students, whereas OV has far more flexibility for admission. Each student who came to OV, came because he/she is at risk, at risk of being a drop out and at risk of failure. They failed at the large schools, and a committee of educated professionals relocated them, believing they could not be successful.

Now, as their success begins to bloom and their path becomes clear, the district has ripped the path out from under them. Orchard View students aren't saying they "don't want" to go back; to them, it is not a choice. They believe they have to be here and that being here is their only shot at success. To segregate them within the larger buildings has not worked in the past, so how can we assume it will work now? The bottom line is: if we, the educators, do not rally behind our at risk students and support them, then they will always be at risk. No one will pick fight this battle if we don't.
A Precious Resource: Steven Birnbaum

By Shahna Allen

One of the most valuable commodities is time. In addition to teaching Chemistry and AP Environmental Science at John Jay, Steven Birnbaum is the advisor for Interact, and he speaks about the importance of time the first meeting of the year. In fact, this humble and kind man may surprise everyone when he tells new and returning members: “If you’re not going to help out, give up your seat – don’t waste our time.”

Birnbaum recently shared how he keeps his troops motivated in a world that absorbs so much of this precious commodity. He emphasizes that the kids need to get involved in school through bake sales and blood drives, and activities outside of school including food drives, visiting senior citizen homes and volunteering at child and animal shelters. “We ask for help,” he says, and in the meantime offers what he can to others.

He explains further that Interact at the high school level is an affiliation of the community service club, Rotary International, which teaches service before self. “Students are giving back and paying it forward at the same time,” he carefully points out. This concept, reiterated by the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Benjamin Franklin, to name a few, highlights that one cannot pay back the benefit of a good deed to the one who performed that deed. Instead, the benefits received must be paid in full to someone else, a third party, and possibly unsuspecting, beneficiary.

Commenting on his own background and personal motivation, Birnbaum highlights his 26-year membership with the Rotary International Foundation while in private practice. This began at an early age when he got involved with food and clothing drives.

As a child the Birnbaum household delivered turkey dinners on Thanksgiving and Christmas day. As a family they enjoyed the outdoors while camping, hiking, bike riding or a day at the beach. He was taught by his family to always leave a place better than he had found it. At home the family also made recycling a habit.

In a world that seems to be perpetually spilling and melting in all the wrong places, I asked Birnbaum how he could stay positive about affecting and helping the environment. “The more I learn about global climate change and human practices that damage the environment, the more I want to educate and do my share.”

Birnbaum is not being blissful and ignorant in staying optimistic; he clearly understands the damaging effects of modern industrialized agriculture, dangerous mining practices like smelting and over fishing. He mentions how the production of palm oil is leading to vast deforestation and the release of carbon in places like Indonesia. He highlights instead the benefit of Community Supported Agriculture that uses organic farming and its use of composting versus damaging pesticides.

Smelting is a technique that produces a base metal, such as silver or copper, from its ore by applying heat and a chemical reducing agent that decomposes the ore and leaves the metal. In short, these gaseous emissions and fine particulate matter contaminate the atmosphere and many unsuspecting respiratory systems.

Continued next page
On Saturday April 5th, Interact held a food drive at Shop Rite to benefit The Fishkill Food Pantry. Our students collected over 400 items of non-perishable food, and cash donations totaling $141.00.

The trophy won by our Interact Volleyball Team, which helped raise $4000.00 for a local charity, along with three other high schools here in the Hudson Valley is on display in the main office.

**BIRNBAUM Continued from page 3**

Instead, Birnbaum focuses on stewardship, namely the managing of our resources for his children and his grandchildren. And while he acknowledges that only governments and large corporations have the money and power for major changes, as an individual he wants to do his part. By example he shows the student members of Interact that we, “can’t control others, so try not to let them control your thoughts and feelings.” He maintains his perspective by feeling good doing what he can.

Birnbaum will continue to teach and reach students and world citizens through Interact club and the Science Olympiad. Instead of aiming bigger – he wants to be smaller, in regard to his carbon footprint and lifestyle.
Why is this important to you as a member of the WCT? Currently, **80% of our teacher evaluation system** was negotiated at the local level, meeting the needs of our teachers. However, the buzz is that the Magee is looking for a **one size fits all model** that will represent the concerns of their biggest backers – the large NYSUT cities.

As your **WCT** delegate, I was a participant of the **Educational Issues I Proposed Resolutions and Reaffirmations** committee. These committees vote on whether to adopt, adopt as amended, table, defeat, or refer to the NYSUT Board of Directors. Various locals as well as the Board of Directors submit resolutions that they would inevitably like to see turned into legislation.

Sometimes one local submits a resolution as in Newburgh’s submission of the **NYSED ELA and Math Modules Should Not Be Used as Curriculum** resolution. Other times, locals band together in their submissions as in the **Analyze the Common Core** resolution with over 20 locals. The discussion that inevitably evolves from each resolution is thought provoking and insightful making the world much bigger than the WCSD for this delegate. We adopted the following resolutions:

- **Opposition of the Implementation and Interpretation of Common Core (CC) Standards**, which includes a 3-year moratorium on using state, tests against students, teachers, and principals and an opposition against privatization and corporatization of public schools. This resolution called for the removal of Commissioner John King by the Board of Regents that was widely publicized by the media.
- **Truth about Modules**, which includes an investigation through a task force to uncover the cost of writing the modules and domains and the training of Network Teams. Furthermore, it includes SED investing in quality professional development around the CC and teacher professional judgment in the incorporation of CC.
- **Support the Opt Out Movement.**
- **Analyze the CC and the Exams to be Constructed** with a core team of regional representation.
- **NYSED ELA and Math Modules Should Not Be Used as Curriculum.** One member stated that his district had made “5 million copies for 800 students” as of December 2013. He queried, “Isn’t there a better way to spend money?”
- **Stop the Implementation of the CC.**

As I mull over my experience at the RA, the words of Socrates reverberate, “The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.” That appears to have been the “Revive NYSUT” goal and now to be NYSUT President Magee’s mission. But I must wonder - was the root of the opposition all about communication?

*Business News Daily* reports that the lack of it is “the most common management mistake.” If communication is a two-way vehicle, it is more than merely the dissemination of information. It is also the response provided by our leaders after hearing what a large portion of the constituency desires. In the end, it appears that the NYSUT electorate desired a more aggressive **NYSUT Board** and voted as such.

---

**After the Election: Message from Lee Cutler, former NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer**

FROM THE WCT WELFARE TRUST FUND

An attorney and a financial planner will be in the WCT office on the following dates:
May 28, 2014
June 18, 2014

DIRECTIONS TO WCT OFFICE

2537 ROUTE 52, SUITE 15
HOPEWELL JUNCTION, NY 12533

- Heritage Square complex east of Rt 376 and 52 and west of the Taconic Enter parking lot and make second right
- Use front entrance
- Go to 2nd floor, door at the end Suite 15

A PUBLICATION OF THE WAPPINGERS CONGRESS OF TEACHERS
2537 ROUTE 52, SUITE 15
HOPEWELL JUNCTION, NY 12533
PHONE: 845-227-5065
FAX: 845-227-1977
E-MAIL: wct@frontiernet.net

SUBMIT ADVERTISEMENTS
BOTH NONCOMMERCIAL, MEMBER ADS (NO CHARGE/TWO ISSUES) AND
COMMERCIAL ADS ($5/ISSUE), THROUGH WCT OFFICE:
commentator@wtteachers.org.
Checks payable and mailed to WCT
The Taylor Law and the Triborough Amendment Explained
By Shahna Allen

The Taylor Law, named after labor researcher and professor George W. Taylor, is also known as Public Employees Fair Employment Act, Article 14 of the New York State Civil Service Law. The law was enacted in 1967 as a way to negotiate contracts in the public sector. It outlines the rights and limitations of labor unions for public employees in New York.

This law provides mediation by means of a governor appointed, three-member State Public Employment Relations Board that resolves contract disputes for public employees, and in so doing, suspends the employees’ option to strike. Anything resembling a work stoppage is subject to a fine and jail time, according to section 210 of the law. The fine demands one additional day of pay for each day of strike, equaling two total days of missed pay.

In 1982 the Triborough Amendment to the Taylor law prohibits a public employer from altering any provision of an expired labor agreement until a new agreement is reached. The amendment, supported by unions, requires automatic pay increases where a salary step schedule exists. So, even though labor negotiations have stalled, the employer's salary cost increases and the employees follow the salary increase based on the previous contract, though expired.

The Triborough Amendment can stalemate and lengthen the collective bargaining process since the unions are not compelled to offer concessions since they are protected under the previous contract as long as no agreement is reached.

Good news: Unions have the most recently agreed-upon contract in place with its salary step schedule and benefits while negotiations continue and even linger.

Bad news: Unions contend that the Taylor law removes the employer's incentive to negotiate contracts quickly since there is no threat of a strike or work stoppage.

Political Issue: Repeal of the Taylor Law
WCT vs Assemblyman Lalor
By Diane D. DiChiara

On Friday, April 25, members of the WCT Executive Board (Delli Carpini, Gertler, Mahusky, Nostrand, and DiChiara) met with Assemblyman Kieran Lalor (Dutchess County). The assemblyman recently began advocating for legislation that would repeal the Triborough Amendment (1982). The amendment prohibits a public employer from altering any provision of an expired labor agreement until a new agreement is reached. In 1982 the amendment was added to the Taylor Law (1967), which prohibits NYS public employees from striking (fine for striking: two days loss, for each strike day).

The amendment is the reason that WCT members have received step increases each year although the contract is expired. Pasquale began the discussion by giving background information to demonstrate the need for the Triborough Amendment. Lalor stated that his advocacy for the repeal of the amendment was not specific to teachers as it applies to all municipal employees and only had five co-sponsors at this time.

He further argued that the Triborough Amendment does not provide incentive for labor unions to settle a contract and comes at a great economic cost to the community. He is advocating for the repeal as a means to improve the economic climate in Dutchess County and cited the movement of newly graduated college students to Austin, Texas, South Carolina and Florida for employment.

Continued page 9,
Wappingers Congress of Teachers
Recognition Dinner

Honoring 2014 Retirees, 
Members with 25 Years of Service, 
Members Granted Tenure, 
& National Board Certified Teachers.

Friday, June 6th, 2014
6:00 P.M.-11:00 P.M.

Cocktail Hour with Carving Station
Top Shelf Open Bar
Dinner Choice:  Chicken Marsala, Prime Rib, 
Salmon 
Cake & Coffee

Price: $44.00 per person- Free for 2014 retirees
RSVP to the WCT Office by Friday, May 30, 2014

Please return this lower portion of the invitation with your payment. Checks are to be made out to “WCT”. Reservation accepted until Friday, May 30, 2014.

Name: _______________________________________________________________________

Number attending: __________ Building: ____________________________

Dinner Entrée Choice:
Chicken Marsala: ________ Prime Rib: ________ Salmon: ________
Wendy Heuman, Social Worker at John Jay and Orchard View, answered the Editor’s questions:

**Do the students from OV have the potential for success (or a degree of success) in a mainstream environment? Why or why not?**

Many of the students at Orchard View attend here as a second chance at success. There is a general misconception about the students that attend our alternative high school. Generally, acting out behaviors are not the presenting problem. Some of the students that attend Orchard View have Anxiety Disorders, ADHD, Bi-Polar, Mood Disorders, Depression and undiagnosed disorders, the symptoms of which are often exacerbated by trying to function in very large schools. Most of these students are doing very well here. They have high grades, go to class and do what is expected. Occasionally there are setbacks but, after all, they are still teenagers. The behaviors that many of the other students presented when they were in 2,000+ student high school settings have stabilized. The students in our former behavior management program now attend their classes and do not create issues in the hallways. The problems that they had getting along with other groups of students are virtually gone.

But to be true to the question it’s important to discuss why students act out or have other issues in the classroom. Often times these behaviors are linked to poor academic functioning. Many of our students have not been academically successful for a very long time, some as far back as elementary school. Although our academic classes follow the same curriculum the smaller class size allows our students more individualized attention and I to I time with the teachers. As they start to gain confidence in their abilities and meet success in the classroom they are able to move ahead academically, emotionally and become more self-assured and competent, on the road to independence and adulthood. Some students can return to their “home schools” but others will experience great difficulty transitioning back and will probably lose the gains they have made. I often equate some of our students learning styles and the district’s attempt to educate them as trying to put square pegs into round holes. They simply learn differently which is not a bad thing just different.

**Do you think it sends an unrealistic message to “troubled” students to have their own school when life after high school will not be special or separate?**

I’ve always viewed Orchard View as a stepping stone for our students, a place where they can learn how to socialize, become academically successful and figure out their place in the world. That does not mean that our students are not challenged by our school or the curriculum but as those of us that work with kids know, some students take longer than others to grow up, mature and take those first steps towards independence. Orchard View allows students the time and space they need to find themselves and sets them up for opportunities in which to be successful. There is a work-study program right in our building offered through Abilities First, a special education school for young children, and our students often volunteer there working with the teachers and children. They gain work experience, learn about accepting people that are different than themselves and become compassionate towards the special needs of others. They also have the opportunity to attend BOCES if they choose to focus on obtaining vocational training. But most of all, the Orchard View setting is much smaller in size and it allows students to come to school and feel safe and not intimidated by large groups of students, some of whom have been problematic towards them in the past. The students and teachers bond due to the comfort level in the classroom and relationships are forged. The students learn socially appropriate behaviors and, once they leave us, their potential to become successful, functioning members of society is strengthened with a motivation that has been cultivated over time. I think what is unrealistic is the assumption that all the students in our school district will learn what they need to be successful in life in all the same ways. We try to help all our students to become individuals in their own right, to think for themselves and take their knowledge and experiences out into the world as they make their way towards adulthood but if we lose them before this process is complete than we have failed them as educators, as a school district and as a society.  

Cont page 12, ORCHARD
The process to achieve certification as a National Board teacher has been changed for the 2014-2015 school year.

Key changes:

- The entire process costs less ($475.00 per component)
- Retake fee for Components 2, 3 and 4 is $475.00 per component
- Retake fee for Component 1 is $175.00 per assessment
- No longer a one year process
  - Teachers can apply for 1 component at a time
  - Entire process must be attempted during a 3 year period
  - Teachers will have 5 years total for retake submissions
- No longer submit 4 written entries (2 video entries)
  - Submit 3 written components (1 video)
- Assessment Center is now considered a component.
  - The exercises are no longer broken down into 6 parts
  - Three constructed response exercises and approximately 45 selected response items to demonstrate content knowledge

At this time only 2 components are ready for roll out. They are Component 1 Content Knowledge (assessment center) and Component 2 Differentiation in Instruction. A phone call to National Board revealed that the directions for Component 2 would not be available until the fall 2014; however, teachers can begin the application process. Component 3 Teaching Practice and Learning Environment (video) will be rolled out 2015-2016 and Component 4 Effective and Reflective Practitioner will be rolled out 2016-2017.

As of this date, it is not known how the Shanker and Candidate Subsidy Grants will be disbursed. In the past, these grants paid for all but $65.00 of the fee.

Also, at this time, it is not known how these major changes will impact NYSUT’s ELT course, which supports the National Board process. I have been in contact with Susan Lafond (ELT) as well as Annette Romano and Colleen Napor (NBPTS NYS) in regards as to how best deliver the professional development needed to support the upcoming NB candidates. Discussion has included running 15-hour inservice courses to support each component.
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
Information Session
By Diane D. DiChiara

Have you completed three full years of teaching or school counseling? Do you have a bachelor’s degree? Do you possess a valid NYS teaching license? Are you certified? If you answered yes to these three questions then you are eligible for National Board Certification.

John Jay Senior High School will be the site for a NBPTS information session. The meeting will take place on Thursday, May 15th, at 4:15 pm in room 105. Topics to be presented include: the NB process, WCT negotiated stipend, NYSUT ELT lab class, sign-up, Shanker grant, new WCT NB grant, and an NB summer workshop (location to be determined) sponsored by the WCT.


The information session is being sponsored by the Wappingers Congress of Teachers. To register, please call Ronnie at the WCT office by May 9th at 227-5065.

LALOR continued

Lalor felt strongly that at this time, “The balance of power is in the union’s hands, not the tax payers...” Opponents to Lalor, would argue that Triborough ensures stability and consistency that allows for both sides to negotiate in good faith knowing that public services will continue despite an expired contract. To Lalor’s credit when Flip Gertler pointed out that there is a relationship between the Tax Cap and the Triborough Amendment repeal that would negatively impact contract negotiations, Lalor stated that he would research the matter further.

View Lalor advocate for the repeal of the Triborough Amendment at https://twitter.com/KieranLalor/status/428942978929807361

“Things like step increases, things like pensions, things like very, very absolute job security that exist in the public sector do not exist in the private sector and the private sector is bearing all this burden without any of the benefit.” ~ Assemblyman Lalor

The Wappingers Congress of Teachers is again running a food drive in all Wappingers Central School District buildings from May 19th until May 23rd. This is the sixth year of our food drive. Last year we collected more than 100 boxes of food and I challenge all of you to beat our total from last year!

The food we collect from May 19th-23rd will go to the Zion Food Pantry, which is located in a converted garage at the Zion Episcopal Church. They are 100% non-denominational in regard to the people that they serve. Jack Devine, member of the Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers, is an active volunteer at the Zion Food Pantry. He told me that the pantry serves 65-70 families on average per week and that they would be in serious trouble if they did not receive help from the community and organizations such as the WCT. During a typical week they are able to give each of their 70 clients:

- 1 box of cereal
- 2 cans of tuna fish
- 2 cans of fruit
- 2 cans of vegetables
- 2 cans of soup
- 2 boxes of macaroni and cheese
- 1 jar of peanut butter
- 1 jar of jelly
- 1 jar/can of spaghetti sauce
- 1 box of pasta
- 1 can of stew

The WCT is calling upon every member to bring in a non-perishable food item and place it in the box in your building during this important food drive. Parents, students, and other community members are also welcome to bring in food and donate it.

**ORCHARD continued**

Questions from Editor answered by an anonymous teacher

**What does OV do every day that cannot be done in the high school setting?**

At OV we have a number of students who have come from smaller districts, have endured severe bullying at RCK or JJ, have experienced abuse outside of school, or suffer from extreme anxiety. As it is these issues often cause our students to have extended absences either due to anxiety or hospitalization. In school every teacher knows every student. We get to understand their specific needs and we can communicate quickly throughout the building to address issues and triggers often before they become a larger issue.

**What changes have you witnessed upon entering the program until now?**

We currently have a student who was often belligerent, insubordinate and in ISR, last year she came over to OV, she is now in our student government, top of her class and enlisting after completing school. The student herself credits being at OV for the change in her demeanor.

*Completed on next page*
We have another student whose mother credits OV with saving her son's life. Upon entering OV he was extremely anxious was coming to us from BETA and was worried about personal issues that would have plagued him in his other schools. The students of OV have whole heartedly accepted this kid and although he is still extremely anxious and worrisome, he finally fits in somewhere. This is a student that we do not feel would be able to successfully transition back to RCK and he already tried BETA.

This year the Project SEA program was merged with OV. Teachers from both OV and the teachers who came over from JJ were worried about how this transition would go as many of these students have histories of emotional issues and some are prone to outbursts. Numerous times it has been stated that the kids transitioned much easier than it was thought they would and that the school year has flowed much smoother, behaviorally speaking. I have to assume that the improvement in behavior has to have something to do with the fact that these kids are in a smaller school with fewer opportunities to get into trouble and perhaps less interactive stimuli.

Many of the Project SEA kids were reluctant to come to OV. The students and their parents were talked into OV as the best viable option for their students. Now they are being told that this option will be taken away at the end of next year, requiring students to once again experience a transition to another school and/or program.

**What do you predict will be the repercussions of closing OV?**

We have students who when back in the situation they left will likely slip back into old routines. Many students have noted the temptation of their friends and the ability to easily disappear is a contributing factor to why they needed to come to OV. Our smaller environment makes it so the kids are more accountable as to their whereabouts. Some will feel as though they don't fit in because their social group has been split between the 2 schools.

We haven already been discussing students that we are concerned with if they were to go back to RCK or JJ due to their various issues and/or past. These kids don't understand why the district is targeting them. No one from the board or the district offices speaks to them about their program. They see their success and are afraid of losing that. In addition I think it is important to know that they may have a different gauge of success. ANY improvement in grades, attendance, behavior or social acceptance counts as an improvement to them. I think it would be a terrible disservice to these students to take away such a positive and empowering program.

These students are afraid that by losing OV they are going to lose any chance that they may have at finishing high school; and I am afraid that it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

**The Teacher ultimately adds:**

There have been so many false assumptions about our school, the class sizes and various other features that I am afraid that we will lose a great program because of misinformation. I can't speak for my coworkers but I know I would welcome any opportunity to justify/clarify/explain/save our program.