First Visit to WCT by NYSUT President

For the first time since the WCT’s inception, a NYSUT president has dropped in on our union. President Richard Iannuzzi, while driving back to Latham, stopped by for breakfast on January 27, 2006, to relay in person how education situations are fairing throughout the state, and to hear about our local. He did have some disheartening news to report about the State’s education budget, but his visit was light-hearted and encouraging.

President Iannuzzi was a teacher for 34 years, the president of his local down on Long Island, and 2nd Vice President of NYSUT for many years. After spending two hours with the Executive Board, President Iannuzzi was able to visit Fishkill Plains and Van Wyck Junior High before driving back north.

(NYSUT President, Richard Iannuzzi, takes a picture with WCT President Pasquale Delli Carpini and the WCT Executive Board)

(NYSUT President Richard Iannuzzi poses for a picture with WCT President Pasquale Delli Carpini and Secondary At Large, Bonnie Keifer, on her last day before retirement)
Thanks to Fishkill Plains Teachers

Dear Steven (Schwartz):

Thank you for your donation to the NYSUT Relief Fund. Your generosity will assist countless and working families who have suffered greatly as a result of this devastating natural disaster.

Your contribution and those of your sisters and brothers from around the State will be added to those of the American Federation of Teachers and sent to assist in rebuilding schools and getting supplies in order that young people can resume their education.

I thank you for caring about those most in need. Your donation reinforces what I have said time and time again; NYSUT members are caring and generous individuals who do whatever is necessary to aid people in need.

On behalf of President Iannuzzi, President McElroy and the NYSUT and AFT officers, thank you and your locals.

In Solidarity,
Thomas Y. Hobart, Jr.
President Emeritus

Editor's Note: An article appeared in the January 27th issue of the COMMENTATOR detailing how the Fishkill Plains teachers raised $170 from September to December for the relief fund.

RCK Students Volunteer to Spread Holiday Cheer

by Maryalice Goodall
RCK Business Education

The Roy C. Ketcham H.S. DECA and FBLA Clubs, along with the Adaptive Classes and Basic Health Class, spent December 22, 2005 with the Dutchess County ARC, a non-profit agency serving individuals with developmental disabilities. The students provided, assistance at the residents holiday party, enjoyed crafts, dancing, balloon making with Bee Bee the Clown, and served a holiday dinner.

Marie Fitzmaurice, the Associate Executive Director of the ARC, said the students assisting at the party, “represented themselves and their school in a most high spirited and honorable way.” Mrs. Goodall arranged the trip, and the following Ketcham teachers and advisors accompanied the students: Kathleen Conroy, Karen Noye, Natalie Rice, Rachel Lafreniere, and Donna Canzio.
Hurry home from school today and settle in to watch the opening ceremonies of the 2006 Winter Olympics from Torino, Italy, where the celebration of winter sports introduces us to the finest athletes in the world. Watching the entrance is a perfect geography lesson! And for the fashionistas, it is time to evaluate the team outfits.

Sportscasters tend to compare the top athletes to each other and comment on everything from training practices, the sacrifice of parents, and overcoming dramatic injuries. When comparing two figure skaters, there are common factors by which one is able to calculate which performer is better before he or she goes on the ice. However, what would happen if a sportscaster tried to compare a figure skater to a speed skater, or a cross-country skier to a snowboarder, or a luger to a bobsledder? It would be like comparing pomegranates with mangos.

While watching this year, consider how our public education system is routinely compared to other countries. Educators always hear how Japan is educationally superior to the United States, or how, compared to other countries of the world, the public school system of America falls below average.

The “Powers That Be” on the Federal and State levels seem to have the game plan of testing our students more to catch up with other countries. This school year, between State and District testing, our 4th graders are taking 19 tests. These 8- and 9-year olds are taking 19 tests containing information for which students may not be cognitively ready. This also intrudes upon precious teaching time.

What the “Powers That Be” seem to forget is that they are comparing pomegranates to the entire gamut of known fruit in the world! Our culture, society, values, goals, and objectives are different - not better or worse, but different - from Japan, Norway, Singapore, or any other country that is considered educationally superior to the United States. But for tonight, put up your feet and enjoy! Go, USA!

In solidarity,

*Meredith Inkeles*

**COMMENTATOR Editor**

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**Good News!**


Congratulations to *Erin Mulligan* (RCK) and her husband, *Jeffrey*, on the birth of their baby, *Owen*. Owen was born on December 8, 2005.
Keeping School Pensions Safe


In a nutshell

• The retirement security of New York’s public school employees rests on a “three-legged stool,” in a metaphor from Sheila Salenger, a teacher-member on the New York State Teachers’ Retirement System board. The front leg, which supports most of the weight of retirement, is the pension system; two back legs, with supporting roles, are Social Security and private savings, such as 401(k) and 403(b) plans. The stability of this proven retirement strategy is under attack, Salenger notes.

Pensions

• The threat: Critics have urged replacing pensions for public school employees with private savings plans, eliminating employer contributions, as a cost-cutting move.
• The defense: New York’s pension plans are in great financial shape, administrators say, making such a move needless and dangerous to teacher recruitment. New York also has a constitutional protection against reducing pensions for public employees.

Social Security

• The threat: President Bush and other conservatives have advocated changing the nation’s Social Security plan so that it operates more like a 401(k), which means individuals could suffer losses in their retirement funds.
• The defense: For the time being, this effort has been beaten back. Organized labor helped educate the public on the risks, and it is now a back-burner legislative issue.

401(k), 403(b) Plans

• The threat: These private savings plans, designed as retirement income supplements, are now being pushed as potential replacements for pensions.
• The defense: 401(k) and 403(b) plans can suffer losses in the stock market and do not provide guaranteed security.

Many Thanks to the WCRT

By: Kelly Evert, Michelle Murphy, Jane Petrone & Krissy Werba

The teachers at Kinry Road Elementary School were reminded of how wonderful our WCT retirees are on January 26, 2006. There had been a death in the family of a very dear teacher at Kinry Road. Some of the teachers in the building wanted to attend the funeral, which was during the school day. Without hesitation, WCRT President, Alice Baker, and Ruth Ehlers graciously volunteered to find retired teachers available to substitute at Kinry. They found three wonderful retired teachers to cover our classes, thus allowing Kinry teachers to attend the funeral. Those three retirees were Jack Devine, Sue Roger, and Ruth Ehlers. Gail Buckle had also volunteered.

There are many other retirees who have volunteered to do this in the past, and the current WCT members cannot thank them enough. It is refreshing that after many years, we can still count on these wonderful individuals to support us in our time of need. Many of these retired teachers still have very busy schedules, yet they sacrifice their time for us. Thank you again for your constant support!

WCSD Factoid:

• At the January 23, 2006, Board of Education meeting, the Board resolved that the BOE rescind the December 19, 2005 award of the District Copier Service RFP #060071 to Toshiba Business Solutions, Inc.; and it was further resolved that the BOE advertise a copier lease and service agreement in accordance with Section 103 of the General Municipal Law and Section 1725 of the Education Law.
Photo Contest

Can you name the following members of the Executive Board numbered in the photo? If so, email your answer to wctink@hotmail.com by February 21, 2006. If your answer is correct, your name will be placed in a raffle to win a $25 gift certificate from Borders.

![Photo of Executive Board members]

Answers:
1. __________
2. __________
3. __________
4. __________
5. __________

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WCT Tax Factoid:

WCT Membership 2005 Dues

January – June
12 x 29.80 = $357.60

September – December
8 x $30.80 = $246.40

Total Dues $604.00

Dates to Know:

February 16 - Prof. Dev. Day
February 17-20 - Presidents’ Day Recess
April 10-17 - Spring Recess
May 19 - Retiree Dinner
Positive Words from a Former Student

By Ed Murphy
JJHS Retiree “03”

Below is a letter received from a former JJHS student, Michael George. Michael was a member of Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), which I advised for 25 years. He competed at both the state and national (Chicago, IL) levels as a member of FBLA at JJHS.

Although I have remained in contact with several of my former students, since my retirement in 2003, Michael’s comments reminded me that I had truly touched his life in a positive way. I know that there are many fine teachers in the WCSD who have touched many lives, as I hope I have, so I thought that I would share Michael’s letter with everyone.

Henry Adams said, “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.” How right he was! I had the opportunity to meet Michael and his European girlfriend for breakfast over the holidays. I don’t know which one of us enjoyed the encounter more. PS: The FBLG that Michael refers to would be Future Business Leaders of Germany.

Dear Mr. Murphy,

November 23, 2005

I am not sure if you will remember me. You taught me how to type in 1997 and then we had various adventures in FBLA until I graduated in 2000. After that I went to Boston College and worked at a grocery store. College was interesting. I studied economics and philosophy, where I learned some German. In 2004 when graduation day came about, I hadn’t found a job, so I bought a one way plane ticket to Germany where one of my friends was working and he lined me up an internship with Intel the CPU manufacturer. I was barely keeping my head above water at the beginning, eating pasta every day…etc. Interns don’t make much, and München is expensive. But working in Intel Marketing department lead me to various opportunities, until one day I met the boss of a small German computer company up in the north who was looking for a new product manager.

Well enough of the biographical tid-bits; the point of this letter is to thank you. You truly influenced my life in a positive way. First, through your coaching at FBLA I learned to be confident speaking in front of large groups and in stressful situations. Secondly, and probably most importantly, what you taught me about computers has made my career: “Surfing for Seniors.” Lots of guys know more about computers and their new technologies than I do; but most of the time I can explain it better. I cannot even count how many times I have called back on that experience you gave me teaching senior citizens about the internet and computers. In an industry that is constantly changing, it is not easy to keep up, but when I try to understand concepts and I format my presentations, in a way that suits a senior….in a way my grandma would understand. It gives me a leg up.

I wish you the best Mr. Murphy. I don’t know where this road goes or how long I am going to be here. But I thought you would be proud to know that you trained not just FBLA, but also an FBLG.

Michael George

Michael George
FYI, Retirees

For the retirees who are enrolled in the Enhanced Plus Plan through the Welfare Trust Fund, there will be an attorney in the office on Wednesday, February 22nd, from 2 to 6 p.m. Please call for an appointment.

Pataki School Aid Package

Governor Pataki has proposed a $634 million school aid program which would force districts to raise taxes to maintain current programs. On January 19, 2006, an article appeared on the NYSUT website about the governor’s proposal (http://nysut.org/media/releases/20060119budget.html).

In the article, NYSUT President Iannuzzi said, “His budget threatens the progress that school districts have made toward higher standards, while at the same time leaves homeowners with large property tax increases. Back-loaded tax cuts for the wealthy may play well in Iowa and New Hampshire, but middle-class New Yorkers want lower property taxes and a stronger state investment in their public schools. New York has an ever-widening achievement gap, and the governor’s budget would drive that gap even wider.”

While looking at this article, take a peek at our district’s proposed funding data. Click on the link for “School Aid,” or type in the following address: http://www.nysed.gov/stateaid/dist/a132101.HTML.

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(Continued on page 8)
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