The following letter was written by Diane Ravitch for Bridging Differences, an Internet blog for Education Week. Ms. Ravitch, is a Research Professor of Education at New York University and a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education under Presidents Clinton and Bush. She also has a website (http://dianeravitch.net) which is “a site to discuss better education for all.”

**Why Are Teachers So Upset?**
By Diane Ravitch on March 13, 2012 11:32 AM

Dear Deborah,

By now, you have seen the latest Metlife Survey of the American Teacher. It shows that teachers' satisfaction with their job has plummeted since 2009, from 59 percent to 44 percent. It is the lowest it has been in 20 years. The percentage of teachers who are likely to leave the profession has grown from 17 percent to 29 percent since 2009.

The reasons are obvious: The most satisfied teachers feel their jobs are secure, and they are treated as professionals by the community. Compared with dissatisfied teachers, they are more likely to have opportunities for professional development, time to collaborate with other teachers, and greater parental involvement in their schools. These are teachers working in an atmosphere of professionalism and collaboration.

The teachers who are most dissatisfied are in schools that have been hard hit by budget cuts, layoffs, larger classes, fewer resources, and a loss of time for or outright elimination of the arts, foreign languages, or physical education. At the same time that funding has been cut, there has been an upsurge in students' need for health and support services, which are less available to them. Teachers are feeling the impact of state budget cuts, for sure. But they are also feeling the chill wind stirred up by Arne Duncan's Race to the Top, which demands that teachers must be evaluated in some degree by the test scores of their students. In many states, those evaluations are as much as 50 percent, and that 50 percent trumps the other 50 percent. Teachers know, almost instinctively, that this is misguided, and Linda Darling-Hammond's recent Commentary in Education Week shows that this is a flawed idea with no support in research. The debacle in New York City, where teachers were ranked according to their value-added rating, showed what a misleading and pernicious tool this is, and how many teachers will be wrongly labeled and publicly humiliated.

It cannot be accidental that the sharp drop in teacher morale coincides with the efforts of people such as Michelle Rhee and organizations such as Education Reform Now and Stand for Children to end teacher tenure and seniority. Millions have been spent to end what is called "LIFO" (last in, first out) and to make the case that teachers should not have job security. Many states led by very conservative governors have responded to this campaign by wiping out any job security.

(continues on page 2)
Why Are Teachers So Upset? (cont’d)

for teachers. So, if teachers feel less secure in their jobs, they are reacting quite legitimately to the legislation that is now sweeping the country to remove any and all job protections. Their futures will depend on their students' test scores (thanks to Arne Duncan), even though there is no experience from any district or state in which this strategy has actually improved education. Its main effect, as we see in the survey, is to demoralize teachers and make them feel less professional and less respected. Yes, there will be more teaching to the test: Both NCLB and the Race to the Top demand it. And yes, there will be teachers who are wrongly fired. And yes, teachers will leave for other lines of work that are less stressful.

As the fight against job security for teachers continues to gather steam, I turned to historian Jeffrey Mirel of the University of Michigan for advice. Jeff has been writing about the teaching profession for many years. He is a wise and deeply knowledgeable expert. I understand, as Jeff does, that tenure is mis described these days. University professors have a lifetime guarantee of employment when they win tenure. It is not the same in K-12 education, even though critics confuse the public by saying so. Teachers in K-12 schools do not have a lifetime guarantee; what they have is a guarantee of due process if someone wants to fire them. The right to a hearing, the right to be presented with evidence against them. When did that become un-American?

I asked Jeff Mirel to describe the argument for tenure for K-12 teachers, and this was his reply:
"I think the traditional reasons for tenure (i.e., to keep public schools as free as possible from becoming stages for political manipulation and to enable high-quality, career-minded teachers to stay in the classroom for as long as possible) are still good. What has changed is the context these positions must be argued in.

For example, in the first case— politicization of curriculum—it is impossible to imagine a time when tenure protection is more vital than now. The country is so divided that on any given school day teachers can be denounced, "tried," and fired over an amazingly wide range of issues (e.g., discussing the age of the earth, accuracy of the theory of evolution, the appropriateness of reading *Huck Finn*, what the Founders meant by the separation of church and state, the effectiveness of the New Deal, or what Shakes-
The Results Are In on The Commentator Survey

By Diane D. DiChiara
Secondary-at-Large

In June, the Executive Board sent an online survey to members about The Commentator. With the emergence and embracement of social media in our world much discussion had ensued about the relevance and necessity of The Commentator as an informational source for our members. In all, 110 members responded to the brief survey.

- 96% of our responding members read The Commentator (“Having a newsletter promotes collegiality and fosters a sense of membership in our local association.”)
- 44% of our responding members prefer a hard copy rather than the electronic version (”I used to read the hard copy front to back and would often refer back to it, when we used to get them in our mailbox. Now I browse through it quickly and then delete it.” “I do think we have lost something by not giving out hard copies. We used to read it in our office and we would all discuss what we had read. No one even mentions it anymore; I don’t know how frequently it is read. When I see hard copies up in our main office, I bring one down and leave it on our office table so other teachers will see it. Perhaps I am a dinosaur and may be one of a handful of people who feel this way. I hope the survey assists you in determining that!”)
- 83.8% of our responding members felt The Commentator is still necessary despite social media (Face Book, e-mail, web page).

The results indicate that we enjoy reading about each other and celebrating not only our school-related accomplishments and projects but also the milestones in our lives (marriages, babies, retirements, new teachers, etc.).

Our members offered some excellent suggestions on what they would like to see in The Commentator.

- A Teachers’ Share Page for Classroom Ideas and/or Projects, Books, Websites,
- APPR
- State Education Issues
- NYSUT Benefits
- Updates on changing laws and regulations

Negotiation Updates
Question/Answer Column where issues can be addressed anonymously
Pedagogical Articles

Our members also suggested that the following be improved

Ads are difficult to read on the online version of The Commentator
Mac users do not always see the pictures that accompany the articles; the issues need to be “browser-tested.”
The Commentator should not be a repeat of what is on Face Book, the WCT web page and in e-mail. It needs to have its own purpose.

To read the entire survey results please access the Wappingers Congress of Teachers web page under the Happenings/Things to Know tab at http://www.wcteachers.org/Happenings-Things-to-Know.php

Some of the suggestions are easy to incorporate, for example, extra hard copies of The Commentator will be delivered to each building. The senior building reps will see that they are delivered to the secondary schools’ department offices and the elementary schools’ faculty rooms.

Every building has a Public Relations union representative. Please forward the good news in our lives and classrooms to the rep in your building (a PR rep list will be published in a future issue). The rep will see that it is published in the newsletter. Don’t forget to include pictures!

The technical online issues will be addressed.

A Teachers’ Share column will be instituted with this issue of The Commentator. Please send your tips to the Editor-in-Chief (see below).

The editor-in-chief of The Commentator needs our assistance. She needs copy to print. Send articles, teaching tips, classroom ideas and projects, websites, educational books, questions and more to her at commentator@wcteachers.org. Furthermore, contact any of the WCT Executive Board members with your questions, concerns and ideas.
Meet the WCT’s Newest Executive Board Member:

Ann Liebergot (VW)
Secondary-at-Large
Special Education Teacher: 18 years

Ann has been appointed to replace Jane Stockslager who retired in June. Ann has both elementary and secondary experience and is currently teaching in the 8th grade Language Based Self-contained classes at VW. She has also taught grades 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 in the district. Ann became involved in union work and stared as a building representative because “I firmly believe in the strength of a union.” She feels, “I have the common sense and understanding that could benefit the WCT. I am not afraid to speak up.” Welcome aboard Ann!

Meet the Wappingers Congress of Teachers Executive Board

Executive Board Members (For more information about the rest of the Executive Board please refer to last year’s September 12th Back to School issue of The Commentator on the website at http://ww.wcteachers.org/11---12.php)

Pasquale Delli Carpini (JJ)
President
Italian Teacher: 31 years

Donna Kart (VW)
Treasurer
Math Teacher: 12 Years
Michelle Ross (Gayhead)
Elementary-at-Large
School Psychologist: 16 years

Paul Nostrand (WJHS)
Secondary-at-Large
Guidance Counselor: 20 years

Kim Mahuskey (Fishkill)
VP Internal Communications
Elementary Teacher: 18 Years

Mary Ann Moran (Myers)
VP External Communications
Elementary Teacher: 27 years
Michael Lyons (Sheafe Road)  
VP Elementary  
Elementary Teacher: 27 years

Dawn Sala (Myers)  
Elementary-at-Large  
School Psychologist: 13 years

Flip Gertler (Fishkill)  
VP Political Action  
Elementary Teacher: 13 years

Martha Bilsback (Myers)  
Secretary  
Elementary Teacher: 26 years
Diane Dichiara (JJ)
Secondary-at-Large
Special Education Teacher: 18 years

Ray Koretsky (RCK)
VP Secondary
Math Teacher: 13 years

Theresa Stowell (Fishkill Plains)
Elementary-at-Large
Elementary Teacher: 19 years
Meet our Event Planners!

Rena Finsmith (JJHS)

is beginning her 7th year as a Special Education Teacher at John Jay High School. She works with Alyson McCarroll (JJ) on planning events for WCT such as the WCT Recognition Dinner, Community Day (Wappingers/E. Fishkill), WCT Night at Dutchess Stadium, etc. Rena says, “It is our goal that more members will begin to get involved in these events and if they have any other suggestions to please let us know.”

Alyson McCarroll (JJHS)

Has spend her summer days floating in the pool and traveling. She is beginning her 13th year at JJ. Her goal is to try and get all of our 900+ members involved. She says, “We are such a big district” and through her union work she would like to make the district a little smaller as we get to know each other better. She works with Rena Finsmith on events planning, and this year would also like to “raise money for various organizations and do other night out activities.” Why not send your ideas to Rena and/or Alyson?

Meet our WCT Communicators ….

Ellen Mead (WJHS) Webmaster

I maintain and update the WCT webpage that was originally created by Meredith Inkeles. Updates include information on benefits, dates to know, BOE meetings, changes in district procedures and much more. I am also responsible for uploading the Commentator and Postscript (for retirees) to our webpage and forwarding the link to be distributed via email.
Commentator Editor (TBD) - As editor of the WCT Commentator I collect articles, columns, and other information to be placed into the template for our Newsletter. After inserting, editing for content, finding additional content online, formatting, and proofreading, I send the newsletter to the WCT Office for printing and to the Webmaster for uploading to the WCT website. Articles and content are always welcome and needed, so please send any information to me at commentator@wcteachers.org.

Meet Our Membership Chairperson: Tad Herman (JJHS)

My main responsibility is to keep the database of union members’ statistics up to date. What keeps me busy? Entering info on new teachers, ne names, new home school locations. When do you see my work? When you sign your name at a union meeting or during a union election … I make sure your name is on the right school list. I also set up the Defensive Driving classes for the union. I am keeping this job description boring so nobody wants to take my job. On occasion, Pasquale will tap into my nerdy number crunching side to generate updated salary tables nad such. Also, I will act as a liaison for WCT members who need some NYSUT questions answered… The scariest part of all of this is that I enjoy it!

New Teachers!

Look for upcoming informational workshops for new teachers. A new teacher is defined from novice to three years. New teacher support is being organized by Theresa Stowell (Elementary-at-Large, Fishkill Plains) and Diane D. DiChiara (Secondary-at-Large, JJHS).
Committed to Union Work

Volunteering to represent the Wappingers Congress of Teachers at East Fishkill’s Community Day: one easy and fun way to change the media image of teachers within our own community.

Think About It:

If every WCT member dedicated 2 hours throughout the school year to union work the impact would be an additional 1800 hours of union power. Find the time to advocate for public education. Answer, “yes” when called upon by your WCT colleagues.
Twenty Six Easy Ways to be an Active WCT Participant

1. Attend Board meetings
2. Attend building meetings
3. Attend General Membership meetings
4. Contribute an hour of your time during Board of Education elections and budget
5. Contribute information/article to the *Commentator*
6. Read the *Commentator*
7. Write a “Letter to the Editor” on an article you read in the *Commentator*
8. Join the WCT Facebook page
9. Attend a local labor rally
10. Participate in writing campaigns by e-mailing, faxing and writing letters to lawmakers about pertinent issues
11. Buy a WCT shirt
12. Wear a WCT shirt each Friday
13. Attend WCT function: End of Year Recognition Dinner
14. During elections work the phone banks
15. During elections stuff envelopes
16. Contribute to Vote Cope
17. Donate non-perishables to annual food drive
18. Submit positive articles to the Poughkeepsie Journal ad the Southern Dutchess News about your work as a teacher
19. Assist with the building RA elections
20. Become a building representative
21. Speak positively about your co-workers
22. Mentor new members about the WCT, offer support and advice
23. Ask your senior building rep what you can do to help
24. Pass out WCT information
25. Join your school’s PTA or PTSA
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When a WCT member has a union concern, what should the member do?

Why is it important to follow this procedure?

So issues, concerns, and/or contract/language violation could be addressed in a more expedient manner. Using this process will also keep all parties informed with no break in communication in chain of command. It will also serve as an education in problem solving situations.
**WCT Summer Reading Recommendations**

**Martha Bilsback:**
I listen to audio books as I do my daily 5-mile walk. I just finished listening to *Catherine the Great* by Robert Massie. It was 24 hours long! Many, many years ago I loved his other book on the Romanoff dynasty – *Nicholas and Alexandra*, so I was delighted when this latest work was published. I have always dreamed of an adventure in St. Petersburg and hopefully in a few years that will come to pass.

**Mary Ann Moran:**
*Just Cate* by Noelle Alix and Angela Martin. The co-authors tell a dual tale of the angst and joys of raising a child with a disability, of Cate's funny and poignant early years, and the special bond between true friends. Both Noelle and Angela grew up in Wappingers Falls and attended RCK.

**Flip Gertler:**
I am not a big reader – I will read for information, but it is not something that I do for enjoyment; *however*, this spring I ran into an old friend from my days of teaching at Our Lady of Lourdes HS. He was in the lobby of my school registering his child for kindergarten. I hadn’t seen him in 12 years, ever since my last day at OLL. I had run into some mutual friends who kept me up to date on what he was doing. I knew he had quit teaching, joined the US Marine Corp, served in Iraq, and completed law school. After catching up for a few minutes in the lobby, we parted ways. When I went back to check my mail in the afternoon, our secretary said that he had left something for me. It was a signed copy of the book he had written about his experience in the Marine Corp. I felt implored to read it. Believe it or not I couldn’t put it down and even took it on a weekend getaway. (That is something that would be unconscionable.)

*This Recruit* is a “first hand account of Marine Corps Boot Camp written while knee deep in the mayhem of Parris Island” by Kieran Michael Lalor. You may recognize the last name from the political signs in the area. I would recommend this book for students who are intending or contemplating entering the US Marine Corp. It is a quick read and is written in diary format. It brought a tear to my eye to see the dedication of a man and the love for his country.
Rena Finsmith:
I finally was able to sit down and read *The Hunger Games*. I thought I should check out what friends, students, and family members were talking about. I wanted to read the books first before seeing the movie. I didn’t do this with the *Harry Potter* series and felt somewhat cheated. I am glad that I read *The Hunger Games* before seeing the movie. I would recommend this book to others because it unleashes your creative/imaginary side, allows you to discuss these books with students, and makes you ask yourself what you would/wouldn’t do for family, friends, and love.

Ellen Mead:
If you enjoy Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* and history set in Italy you might consider reading this book. The story involves present day Giulietta and her Romeo as they try to find a treasure left to her by her mother. The story contains a blood feud between families, intrigue, love and legacy as Giulietta discovers her fate is tied to her ancestor *Juliet* by Anne Fortier.

Kim Mahusky:
My reading material has varied this summer. As far as books, I read book two in the *50 Shades of Grey* series (*50 Shades Darker*). I am currently working on Book 3 (*50 Shades Freed*). Part of my summer reading has also included researching small SUV's. After looking at several write-ups, including *Consumer Reports*, I found that the Honda CRV is the safest small SUV and the best for your money. I was also researching washers and dryers but have not come to a conclusion yet.

Beth Rizzi:
*Winter Garden* by Kristin Hannah

A beautifully written story of how one individual's history can have an effect on the relationships within an entire extended family, the relationship between two very different sisters, and how their relationship with their parents have had a huge impact on their relationships with men. Once you get into it, it's difficult to put it down!
Diane D. Di Chiara:

I suggest and did suggest to anyone I met this summer, the suspenseful novel Gone Girl by Gillian Flynn if you enjoy a page turning, can’t put the book down read. This is Flynn’s third novel and I was so intrigued by her female character – a young wife who disappears on her fifth wedding anniversary – a woman so unlike any I have encountered in past reading experiences and a husband who makes a critical decision that had me in days of mind-boggling torment over his choice - that I then read Flynn’s second novel Dark Places and am on the library waiting list for her first novel, Sharp Objects.

Ann Liebergot:

Defending Jacob ~ I found the book interesting because it evoked conflicting feelings as you read it...Was he guilty or innocent? Would I react like the father or the mother? Was the mother escaping or saving the world?

Tad Herman:

I spent three weeks reading the various landscapes of New Zealand. You can read 1000 words of it in my photo!

Educator’s Voice: Using Formative Assessment to Improve Instruction

The complete journal – written by teachers – can be downloaded at

http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/educatorsvoice_17844.htm
### Acronyms to Know

**APPR** = Annual Professional Performance Review  

**PARCC** = Partnership for the Assessments of Readiness for College and Careers  
a common set of K-12 assessments in English and math anchored in what it takes to be ready for college and careers  
Read more about it at [http://www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org)

**CC** = Common Core  
The rigorous skills and knowledge in English Language Arts and Mathematics that need to be effectively taught and learned for students to be ready to succeed academically in credit-bearing, college-entry courses and in workforce training programs. They are researched and evidence-based.  
Read more about it at [http://www.corestandards.org/](http://www.corestandards.org/)  

**SLOs** = Student Learning Objectives  
-one option for measuring student achievement when there isn’t a state assessments  
-carefully planned academic goals for what a student will learn over a given time period  
-represent the most important learning for the year (or semester or quarter where applicable)  
-directly link a teacher’s classroom instruction to specific measures of student achievement or growth in the relative content area  
-the process leads to objectives that can be reliably measured for student growth  
=Responsibility: School District/BOCES  
[http://www.nysut.org/research_17892.htm](http://www.nysut.org/research_17892.htm)
Teachers’ Share Corner

This issue’s tip from Diane D. Di Chiara.

Check out The Teaching Channel at https://www.teachingchannel.org/

I discovered it prior to last year and incorporated several tips into my teaching repertoire. What I like best about this site is that the instructional videos are brief and to the point with real teachers in real classrooms and address all grades and levels of students.

My favorite: 1-minute video Attention Getting Signals: One Spot

All grades, subjects, directions

https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/student-attention-getting-tip

I incorporated this device at the beginning of last year with a loveable, but rambunctious class of 11th grade special education ELA students. It worked like a charm and as I walked to my “one spot” (which I allowed the students to select for me) they policed themselves getting everyone to attention. Mentors, this is a great tool for new teachers.

Got a tip? Send to the editor at commentator@wcteachers.org

Union Organization Acronyms

NYSUT – New York State United Teachers

AFT – American Federation of Teachers

NEA – National Education Association

UFT – United Federation of Teachers

WCT – Wappingers Congress of Teachers

Useful FACEBOOK links for teachers

NYSUT United (formerly known as NY Teacher) --- http://www.facebook.com/NYSUTUnited

AFT – (American Federation of Teachers) http://www.facebook.com/AFTunion

NEA – (National Education Association) http://www.facebook.com/NEA.ORG

Other useful links for teachers

AFT (American Federation of Teachers) - http://www.aft.org/

NYSUT United (New York State United Teachers) – http://www.nysut.org

Speak Up for Education and Kids (National Education Association) - http://www.educationvotes.nea.org/

We Are One (AFL-CIO) - http://www.aflcio.org/issues/states/
PARCC: Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers

Background: On June 2, 2010, the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics (CCSS) were released. Building on the strength of current state standards, the CCSS are designed to be focused, coherent, clear and rigorous; internationally benchmarked; anchored in college and career readiness; and evidence and research based. For more information see www.corestandards.org.

What is it?
A consortium of 23 states (10 out of 12 Race to the Top winners) plus the U.S. Virgin Islands working to develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English and math anchored in what it takes to be ready for college and careers.

How is PARCC connected to Common Core?
PARCC assessments will be tightly aligned to the Common Core State Standards and grounded in the key shifts at the heart of the Common Core State Standards. There are three shifts in mathematics and three in English language arts (ELA)/literacy. These are shifts the Standards require of teachers and students – and they will be reflected in the PARCC assessments as well. This will help ensure that the assessments mirror the expectations of the classroom.

Common Core Shifts for ELA/Literacy
- Complexity: The standards require regular practice with complex text and its academic language
- Evidence: The standards emphasize reading and writing grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational
- Knowledge: The standards require building knowledge through content rich non-fiction

Common Core Shifts for Mathematics
- Focus: The standards focus in on the key content, skills and practices at each grade level
- Coherence: Content in the standards builds across the grades, and major topics are linked within grades
- Rigor: In major topics, the standards highlight conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and application

What will the ELA/Literacy assessments include?
Texts worth reading: The assessments will use authentic texts worthy of study instead of artificially produced or commissioned passages.
Questions worth answering: Sequences of questions that draw students into deeper encounters with texts, rather than sets of random questions of varying quality.

What will the mathematics assessments include?
Problems worth doing: Multi-step problems, conceptual questions, applications, and substantial procedures will be common.
Focus: Instead of randomly sampling a mile-wide array of topics, PARCC assessments will have a strong focus where the standards focus. This will reinforce the concept of “going deep” rather than simply "covering topics."

Find out more about PARCC @ www.parcconline.org
**WCT COMMENTATOR Policy**

The content of the *WCT COMMENTATOR* shall reflect the official positions and policies of the WCT, with the following three exceptions:

1. The President of the WCT should present his/her views in a message to the members from time to time, but not less than bimonthly.

2. Signed Letters to the Editor (of responsible length) containing personal views from members and subscribers shall be published subject to laws of libel.

3. Members of the WCT may place articles adhering to the Canons of Journalism concerned with WCT positions, policies, and issues of interest to teachers in the Commentary Section. (For both Letters to the Editor and the Commentary Section, the writer’s name and WCT affiliation shall be attached, and an editor’s note shall accompany these sections indicating that “The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the official views and policies of the WCT.”)

Reprints of articles from the *WCT COMMENTATOR* are allowable only with the permission of the WCT President.

**WCT COMMENTATOR Advertising Policy**

The *WCT COMMENTATOR* advertising policy as adopted by the Executive Board is as follows:

Noncommercial (Personal) ads for WCT MEMBERS only will be run for two issues at no charge.

Commercial (Business) ads for WCT MEMBERS only: guaranteed placement for half of the school year, **$35.00 per half year payable Sept. 15th and Feb. 1st or $5.00 per issue.**

For prompt placement of advertisements and articles in upcoming issues of the *WCT COMMENTATOR*, e-mail the information to **commentator@wcteachers.org**. Information can also be sent to the editor at the WCT Office. Do not send articles or ads through the GroupWise e-mail system!