I AM A TEACHER. LET ME TEACH.
Reprinted from Diane Ravitch’s Blog
http://dianeravitch.net/2012/10/14/i-am-a-teacher-let-me-teach/

Matthew Swope has been teaching physics for ten years. He is a STEM teacher, the kind that every district wants. Before becoming a teacher, he was a Marine, then a police officer. He took a big pay cut to become a teacher. He loves teaching.

Read his words of wisdom:

I am a teacher. Year 10. High school physics. I am a professional educator in a field that demands professional credentials, continuing education, skill and knowledge based licensing exams and background checks including fingerprints so I am deemed responsible enough and safe enough to work with children. I’m a mandated reporter of physical abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse.

There, now I’ve established my bona fides and authority to speak knowledgeably on the subject.

Oh, wait, I have to knock out the ones who claim I’ve only ever taught. I served in and was honorably discharged from the United States Marine Corps. I then spent six years carrying a badge and a gun and worked a beat as a police officer in a city of 180+ thousand people. I’ve done other things than teach.

When I was a cop, if crime went up on my beat they didn’t blame me for not working hard enough. They brought in additional officers to beef up the presence and manpower. They did dispassionate studies of data to identify problems, communicated the results to me, and let me help decide how to address them. They swarmed identified problems with social assistance and community programs, assigned undercover officers to work from the inside, provided more funding for Women’s Protective Services and Children’s Protective Services, brought in the narcotics and gang task forces to assist, assigned volunteers from the DA’s office and City Council to spend weeks riding around with me as observers so they could see what I was up against, and provided me with medical aid and psychological care (mandated after certain stressful incidents like shootings) and never, ever, accused me of not

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OAK GROVE’S NO BULLY ZONE GETS A RECYCLED LOOK!
By Jennifer Segal – Oak Grove PR

When fifth graders Shea Mastrantuono and Alexis Hartley approached art teacher Martha Jones with an idea about using empty milk cartons to create an art piece, who would have imagined the end result.

Both Shea and Alexis are peer mediators at Oak Grove Elementary. They actively coach other students on how to work through problems in a respectful and productive way. A frequent problem is bullying. Shea and Alexis wanted to create a bulletin board that would use recycled materials to convey this message. They both collected empty milk cartons from their fellow classmates in the cafeteria and washed them out. With the help of a recycled smart board box, old marker caps and hot glue, the 3-D, “No Bully Zone” bulletin board was born. You can’t miss the message. The letters are all neatly spelled out using milk cartons hot glued to card board.

These two fifth graders have successfully combined their passion for art, creativity for recycling and determination to make a difference to create a beautiful bulletin board design. Great work Shea and Alexis!

OAK GROVE ELEMENTARY AND KINRY ROAD ELEMENTARY - TEN DAY WALKING CHALLENGE
By Jennifer Segal – Oak Grove PR

Kinry Road School and Oak Grove School are in the process of hosting their 3rd annual Ten Day Walking Challenge during the week of October 16-25, 2012. The goal is to motivate students to increase their level of physical activity outside of physical education class. Physical Education teachers, Anne Seymour (Kinry Road) and Dawn Turpin-Orgetas (Oak Grove) coordinated the NYS Healthy Steps Program in their schools over the past several years.

Mmes. Turpin-O. and Seymour collaborated to develop a competition between their schools. Together they challenged students, staff members, and their families to compete in a contest to see which school could do the most walking over the ten day period from October 16 to October 25. The school that wins will receive a large trophy with their team mascot in the center of the trophy.

Oak Grove Elementary kicked off the program with a walk over the Scenic Hudson Walkway after school on Tuesday, October 16, 2012. Oak Grove had over 50 participants afterschool.

Students will be participating in special activities during P.E. class and recess to increase the number of steps students take. Students will be learning about healthy nutritional choices, the benefits of walking, measuring heart rates, and leading a healthy, physically active lifestyle. The P.E. teachers expect this energizing event to bring families together to achieve a common goal of fitness and health. Parents and family members who walk with a Kinry or Oak student will be able to include their steps toward the school total as well.
THE PARCC ASSESSMENT

http://www.parcconline.org/

PARCC is a 23-state consortium working to develop K-12 assessments in ELA and Math. New York is a governing state in this consortium. The assessments created by this group will be available for implementation during the 2014-2015 school year.

Items are just being added now and more will be added in the future. Educators can look at sample End of Year Assessments, Evidence-Based Selected Response samples, Technology-Enhanced Selected Response items, Technology-Enhanced Constructed Response items, and draft ELA/Literacy rubrics.

It is important for educators to take the time to visit this web site, specifically the section on Item and Task Prototypes—http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes. The site is not easy to navigate, but it is important to take the time to get an idea of what students will be responsible for in the very near future!

GRANTS AND AWARDS FOR EDUCATORS FROM COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS OF THE HUDSON VALLEY

If you are looking for a grant, go to http://www.cfhvny.org/page30019.cfm. There is online application information for a number of different grants. Listed below are just a few available:

- For high school social studies teachers—an award for Excellence in Teaching Global Studies and World Affairs. Nominations should be postmarked by April 1st.
- For grade 7-12 science teachers—the Taconic IPA Science Education Grants Program. Applications should be postmarked by February 15th.
- For classroom teachers, preK–12—Fund for Excellence in Education Teacher Grants. The application deadline is February 15, 2013.
- For students in grades 9-12—The Claudia Ann Seaman Awards for Young Writers and The CAS Hudson Valley Poetry Award. Entries must be received by April 15, 2013. For guidelines specifically for this grant please visit www.polyphonyhs.com/guidelines.
TEACHERS’ SHARE CORNER

YouTube for School—http://www.youtube.com/schools

- YouTube for Schools provides schools access to hundreds of thousands of free educational videos from YouTube EDU.
- School admins and teachers can log in and watch any video, but students cannot log in and can only watch YouTube EDU videos plus videos their school has added.
- You can customize the content available in your school.
- YouTube.com/Teachers has hundreds of playlists of videos that align with common educational standards, organized by subject and grade. These playlists were created by teachers for teachers so you can spend more time teaching and less time searching.

FIRE SAFETY AT FISHKILL ELEMENTARY

By: Kim Mahusky, 5th Grade Teacher

On Thursday, October 11th members of the Protection Engine Company visited Fishkill Elementary School to participate in discussions and activities with the students. The day began with an assembly for grades 1-3, followed by individual classroom visits to answer any questions the children may have had. After each classroom visit, the firemen led the children outside to the fire safety trailer where they discussed “stay low and go” as the trailer filled with “smoke”. The children were then asked to crawl to the exit, which was a window in the back of the trailer.

For our students in grades 4 and 5, the firemen brought in a car to use for an auto extrication demonstration. They explained the various tools that are used and showed the children how they are operated. Once the car was taken apart, the fireman demonstrated how a person would be removed from the vehicle. This was followed by a question and answer session, where the children had many great questions.

Many thanks go out to the fireman from the Protection Engine Company in Fishkill for their time and effort in putting together a great day for our students. We would also like to acknowledge the Rombout Fire Department for allowing us to use their fire safety trailer.
Change in the Baltimore City Public School System began in 1997, with a new city/state partnership, the adoption of a master plan for improving the system, increased state funding and labor management teamwork.

Maryland state officials believed that a district governance change would be a first step toward addressing the fundamental problems within the system, at the forefront of which was its dismal student performance record. The Maryland State Legislature adopted a law creating a "partnership" between the state, city and district, resulting in a new board of commissioners to run the district. The board chose a CEO and also worked with the union to create a five-year master plan for the district, which is revised annually.

The School Improvement Plan

In consultation with the union, the board of commissioners adopted for the 1998-1999 school year the Open Court reading program for early elementary grades and the Houghton-Mifflin program for upper elementary grades. All elementary school teachers were trained in the new programs before the school year began; this training was mandatory, and teachers were paid to attend.

The district’s plan directed attention toward the lowest-performing schools that had shown the greatest need of assistance. In 1998, the district removed its 33 lowest-performing elementary and K-8 schools from their reporting areas, asking each of them to adopt a model reform program in consultation with faculty. Eighteen schools adopted the Direct Instruction program, thirteen schools adopted Achievement First and two chose Success for All.

Labor-Management Partnership that Supports School Improvement

In 2000, the board hired a new superintendent who routinely included the union in key decisions about reform and teacher needs in the district. As a result, the union was able to work out specific contract adjustments regarding training, work rules and transfer policies necessary for effective reform.

The district proactively identified ten low-performing schools, pulling them out of their regular geographic reporting areas, and formed the CEO District. The union negotiated an agreement whereby teachers in these schools would receive compensation for working extended school days and an extended school year, transfer and employment rights, and access to additional professional development activities. The agreement also called for the district to hire certified teachers in these schools before filling vacancies in other schools. One unique feature of this contract agreement was a performance bonus for teachers and paraprofessionals in these ten schools that formed the CEO District.

Evaluating Progress

Mean test scores increased across the system. For the first time in two decades, the majority of second and third graders scored above the national average on standardized tests, including the California Test of Basic Skills. Also, it was the only district in the state that posted improvements across the board on the Maryland state assessment. Moreover, two Baltimore City Public Schools were removed from the reconstitution eligible list. In addition, the CEO District schools increased their median percentile rankings on the TerraNova in three years, moving from the 28th percentile to the 36th percentile in reading and from the 23rd percentile to the 38th percentile in math.
NYSUT DISASTER RELIEF AND SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The devastation and loss resulting from Superstorm Sandy reminds us of one of the tenets of organized labor: We must look out for one another.

With that in mind, NYSUT members, their friends, family and supporters are strongly encouraged to give generously to the union's Disaster Relief Fund. NYSUT members have a long history of coming through for others in times of need, and Superstorm Sandy caused a great deal of need in New York state.

Thank you for your generosity.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You may donate online at http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/members_6990.htm, or make your check payable to:

"NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund"

NYSUT Headquarters
Attn: Jeff Lockwood, Accounting Department,
800 Troy-Schenectady Road
Latham, New York 12110

APPLY FOR RELIEF

Your union is committed to helping members in times of need through its Disaster Relief and Scholarship Fund. For more information visit http://www.nysut.org/files/NYSUTDisasterRelief.pdf.

STORM CLEANUP: BEWARE OF HIDDEN DANGERS

With power still not fully restored in New York City and Long Island, and months of cleanup ahead in hard hit areas, union members need to be aware of the hidden risks that can accompany recovery work. Visit this site (http://www.nysut.org/files/HurricaneSandyCleanupHazards.pdf) for more details on how to be safe. NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue, who oversees NYSUT's health and safety services, cautions members to be vigilant about hidden dangers ranging from shorted-out electric wires to mold spores that rapidly reproduce in the wake of flooding. "As we learned from recovery work for Hurricane Irene, commonsense precautions are the best defense," said Donahue, noting that the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health offers tips geared to coping with the storm's aftermath, along with a list of flood cleanup resources.
HELP AFT MEMBERS AFFECTED BY HURRICANE SANDY

Tens of thousands of AFT members—especially in New York and New Jersey, but also up and down the East Coast—are among those struggling to recover from the devastation of Hurricane Sandy. Every time a disaster affects our union brothers and sisters across the country, the AFT family rallies together to help in the recovery effort. This hurricane is no exception and we are seeking your donations to the AFT Disaster Relief Fund to help those in need.

Whether they’re educators on Staten Island, nurses in New Jersey, college faculty in Pennsylvania, state employees in Connecticut or countless others, your donations can help our members and their families get back on their feet. The AFT is contributing $100,000 to the fund, and we hope you will join us. The money we collect will be distributed to AFT affiliates to help our members most in need. A donation of any amount can help.

Another proud AFT tradition following any disaster is the direct involvement of our members, along with scores of other union members and public employees, in relief efforts. In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, nurses in New York and New Jersey, for example, have been working around the clock to help victims, even as their own homes and workplaces have been damaged. Members of the New York Public Employees Federation, who work throughout the state, have been on emergency duty dealing with the aftermath since the storm hit, as have their colleagues in Connecticut and Maryland. Teachers in New York City are caring for students in shelters. And the list of those working above and beyond could go on.

Donate today to the AFT Disaster Relief Fund by mailing your check to:

AFT Disaster Relief Fund
American Federation of Teachers, 12th floor
555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20001

I’m happy to say that, as promised, you can now make a secure online donation via credit card as well as by check.

Thank you for your generosity in helping your fellow AFT members begin to recover and move forward after Hurricane Sandy.

In unity,
Randi Weingarten

http://www.aft.org/getinvolved/hurricanerelief/index.cfm
When I became Superintendent of Schools in 2006, there were many things that kept me up at night. Among my top concerns was that our organization needed to become more focused on students’ needs and less focused on everything else. Addressing this concern has not been an easy task given the constraints imposed by the economic downturn, the need to collectively bargain, and the long list of well-intentioned (but often misguided) State mandates. By most measures, however, we have been successful over the past six years. We have constrained our expenditure budget, settled contracts, maintained most programming and our students lead the region on a variety of achievement measures.

It might come as a surprise then that I am losing sleep again. This time it is over the new, politically popular, teacher evaluation system. In its current form, the new system represents the biggest danger to our organizational culture since I became Superintendent. There is every reason to believe that the rush to measure teacher effectiveness using pseudo-scientific measures and public ratings will both distract from students’ needs and ultimately weaken all public schools by driving out intrinsic motivation and narrowing instruction.

I start with the belief that most teachers, by their very nature, are intrinsically motivated and have a strong desire to comply with what is required of them. Like most professionals, they want to be viewed by their supervisors as highly effective in their work. In the past, the professional judgments made by building principals have been the key to developing an agile, responsive and effective learning community.

The new mandated evaluation system significantly curtails professional judgments in favor of a list of research-based actions. On the surface this appears to be a reasonable approach until one considers the likely reaction of teachers who eagerly want to comply and receive the highest public rating. It is very possible (I would argue likely) that many teachers begin to focus less on students’ needs and more on completing a list of activities that would justify a highly effective rating for themselves.

One should not assume that completing a preordained list of activities will equate with better instruction and increased student achievement.

Instructional effectiveness is just as much an art as it is a science. It would be like assuming that someone who does not have experience conducting an orchestra can make beautiful music by following a set of written directions. The sound might be tolerable, but it will never be exceptional. Anyone who has tried to teacher groups of children understands exactly what I am talking about.

Underlying the new evaluation system is also a belief about what motivates people to do their best. It is clear from research that using rewards and punishments (e.g., high stakes public ratings) can be effective over the shorter term for routine jobs that involve a single path to one conclusion. Teaching is not a routine task. There is no standardized set of procedures that will guarantee a particular result. Teachers have to experiment with instructional possibilities and devise novel approaches to meet each child’s individual needs. Teaching is informed by research, but inherently creative in its application. From this perspective, using a high stakes public rating scale based on a preordained set of activities is simply inappropriate. The system will only serve to narrow teaching (i.e., teaching to the test), expose students to needless assessments meant to assess teacher performance and damper the intrinsic motivation of both teachers and students. This is not what any of us want for our students, out teachers, and our learning community.

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Please don’t misunderstand my intent in writing this opinion piece. I am in favor of a rigorous evaluation system that broadens instructional approaches, reduces student exposure to needless pseudo-scientific assessments and enhances intrinsic motivation throughout the organization. My intention is to say that our learning community must guard against elected officials who pander to popular misconceptions by mandating evaluation systems that reveal their lack of understanding.

Teaching is among the most complex and joyful endeavors. Judgments about instructional effectiveness should account for the science of teaching and the art of teaching. And, by no means, should we embrace job threatening public ratings without our eyes completely open to the detrimental effects on classroom instruction and motivation.

If you want to become more knowledgeable about these issues, I encourage you to read Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us by Daniel Pink, the research and reflections of Diane Ravitch (www.dianeravitch.com), and/or information found at www.newyork principals.org.
TELL IT LIKE IT IS

Here is your chance to Tell It Like It Is. NYSUT is organizing concerns from around the state with regards to testing, APPR, student learning and common core. Now is your opportunity to tell the State Education Commissioner and Board of Regents in your own words what the current teaching and learning conditions are and the impact it is having on both students and teachers.

NYSUT has made this very easy.

Go to www.nysut.org.
Click on Tell It Like It Is.
Fill in your zip code.
Follow the directions in red.
Fill in the required information at the bottom.
Click “send your message.”
It doesn’t get easier than that!

All letters will find their way directly to the State Education Commissioner and Board of Regents.

Instead of continuing to complain about the current conditions in education, here is an avenue in which your voice can be heard. Don’t hesitate to let friends, family, and parents know that they can also send a letter with their thoughts, concerns, and frustrations.
GOOD NEWS

- We are pleased to announce the birth of another John Jay Guidance baby! Karrie and Matthew Brenner welcomed a son, Derek Matthew, on June 20, 2012, weighing in at 7 lbs! Grandparents are retired district employees Tom Knickerbocker and Ed and Chris Zwinscher.

- Corie Kirsch, her husband Eric, and big sisters Victoria and Samantha, welcomed a little girl into the world. Olivia Grace was born on June 9, 2012, weighing 8 lbs, 12 oz. and measured 20.5 inches. Congratulations to the Kirsch Family!

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

Nov 19 – Gayhead, Fishkill Plains, Fishkill
Dec 3 – JJ, Vassar, Kinry
Dec 17 – RCK, Orchard View, Van Wyck
Jan 14 - Myers, Evans, Oak Grove
Jan 28 - Brinckerhoff, Sheafe, Wappingers Jr.
Feb 11 - Gayhead, Fishkill Plains, Fishkill
Feb 25 - JJ, Vassar, Kinry
March 11 - RCK, Orchard View, Van Wyck
March 25 - Myers, Evans, Oak Grove
April 8 - Brinckerhoff, Sheafe, Wappingers Jr.
April 22 (Tues) - Gayhead, Fishkill Plains, Fishkill
May 7 (Tues) - JJ, Vassar, Kinry
May 20 (District Offices) - RCK, Orchard View, Van Wyck
June 3 (District Offices) – Myers, Evans, Oak Grove
June 17 (RCK cafeteria) – All buildings for the Retiree Recognition

NEW TEACHER SEMINARS

The Wappingers Congress of Teachers Presents New Teacher Seminars:

(A new teacher is defined as a teacher with one to three years experience.)

January 15, 2013 — Discipline Strategies
March 7, 2013 — Understanding English Language Learners
May 14, 2013 — Achieving Tenure: What You Need to Know

All workshops will take place at John Jay High School from 4:15-6:15

Comments? Contact Elementary-at-Large, Theresa Stowell or Secondary-at-Large, Diane D. DiChiara

FOR SALE: New iPad 2. 16 GB WiFi. One year extended/Apple Care warranty, life-time screen saver, portfolio case. $325 OBO. Call 845-494-2174.

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As one of the Hudson Valley’s top DJ and area entertainment companies, Enriquez Entertainment has performed at numerous WCT Weddings, retirements, Sweet 16’s, Bar/Bat mitzvahs, Dances/Proms, Holiday Parties & more! Contact us today for your next event!
FROM THE WCT

WELFARE TRUST FUND

A financial planner from Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. will be at the WCT office on the following dates:
- **December 12, 2012**
- **January 30, 2013**

Appointments are one-hour blocks available between 2:00-6:00 pm on a first-come first-served basis. Appointments are available at no cost to you; this is a benefit through the Welfare Trust Fund.

When you call the office to schedule an appointment, we will forward a questionnaire to you. Please complete it and bring it to the meeting.

The planner can advise you on any financial topic in an objective fashion since sales are prohibited under this program.

Since these slots fill up very quickly, call as soon as possible! If the above dates are not convenient for you, call Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. directly and other arrangements may be possible.

Stacey Braun has no affiliations with any 403(b) providers.

DIRECTIONS TO THE WCT OFFICE

⇒ The WCT Office is in the Heritage Square Complex at 2537 Route 52 in Hopewell Junction.
⇒ Heritage Square is a short distance east of the intersection of Routes 376 and 52 and west of the Taconic State Parkway.
⇒ Enter the lot and make the second right into the parking area.
⇒ Enter the main entrance of the building. The sign over the entrance reads “PRUDENTIAL.”
⇒ Take the stairs or elevator to the 2nd floor.
⇒ Go right all the way to the end.
⇒ Look for the “Wappingers Congress of Teachers” sign posted on the Suite 15 door.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE WCT WELFARE TRUST FUND

Trustees:
- Christine Romano..... .....Chairperson
- Kim Mahusky..... .....Treasurer
- Erin Mulligan..... .....Secretary
- Flip Gertler..... .....Trustee
- Pasquale Delli Carpini..... .....Trustee
- Ronnie Dwyer..... .....Administrator

- You must let the WTF know of any changes in your personal information ASAP.
- Student verification forms must be sent to Daniel H. Cook every semester.
- Dental & prescription reimbursement forms are on-line at the WTF website at WCTeachers.org
- Please direct all questions & concerns to the WCT office or directly to Daniel H. Cook.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Daniel H. Cook  
(1-800) 342-6651

Davis Vision  
(1-800) 999-5431

Health Advocate  
(1-866) 695-8622

Mirkin & Gordon (attorneys)  
(914) 997-1576

Stacey Braun Associates (fin. consultant)  
(1-888) 949-1925

WCT Office  
(845) 227-5065
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 email system.