New webmaster named

www.wcteachers.org

Nancy Beiner spent 13 years in business before embarking on her second career as a John Jay High School Spanish teacher. She holds a Master's Degree in Technology and an Advanced Certificate in Technology with WCSD.

In her presentation to Susan Roger, WCRT President, Bill Dourdis, WCRT PostScript newsletter editor, and the WCT executive board, Nancy stated the website is all inclusive, not à la carte. She’s excited because it puts the member first. Nancy added, “What I’d like to see is that it also takes retirees into account.”

The previous website was not updated regularly or supported by its host, and the WCT wanted it more professional. It now boasts video and picture uploads; it can conduct surveys, and it offers many specific categories of information. All information of interest to WCT members is organized by categories and easy to find. The website also sports a website Search tool where a member can enter a keyword of the information they are looking for and the Search tool will find it.

Nancy noted that member resources and info are private, like the health plan. Members must sign in, and a separate section offers public information.

The website went live over Labor Day weekend so it was “up and running” when presented to the WCT at the general meeting prior to the opening day of school. Members are encouraged to visit the website and click the link to Register in order to have full access to all of the information. After submitting the Registration form, the WCT will verify your membership status before it approves your Registration.

Once approved, members will receive an automatic email advising them that they have been approved and that their website account is ready to use. They will receive subscription notifications to set up a password as part of registration. Verification is for active and retired teachers. Retirees will receive postal notification to set up their account. Retirees need not wait to receive an invitation before registering.

webmaster@wcteachers.org

In This Issue:

- President’s Letter
- Officers and Directors
- Distribution, publish dates, misc.
- Save These Dates
- Political Action Column
- Directions to WCT/WCRT
- Address/status changes
- FCU, Yacht Club donate to MOW
- Protect your membership(s)
- Constitution, by-laws reviewed
- Financial Report available
- East Fishkill Library events
- More e-mail subscribers sign up
- Representative Assembly
- Welfare Trust explained
- Fall Luncheon photo montage
- News Since Last Issue
- WCT logo, website updated
- Schwenker writes children’s book
- First do no harm (Educ. editorial)
- In Memoriam
- NYSUT Member Benefits ad

POLITICAL ACTION COLUMN

Fall Luncheon photo montage

Website updated for new year
From The President

Dear WCRT Members,

As I was sending the thank you note from Grinnell Library to Bill Dourdis, PostScript editor, I realized that many of you might not be aware of the contributions we make to local organizations.

In the fall we send a donation to the Grinnell Library, Blodgett Library, East Fishkill Library and The Literacy Connection. We also make a donation to the New Hamburg Yacht Club for its golf outing. All proceeds from this event go to the Wappingers Meals on Wheels.

In the winter we donate to the WCSD Science Fair.

In the spring we donate to the three Ralph and Janet Capasso scholarships and the two Leslie and Bernie Leventhal scholarships. We are also considering starting our own WCRT scholarship.

Another donation, which is dear to my heart, is to the Miles of Hope Breast Cancer Foundation in memory of our retiree, Rhoda Post. I had the pleasure of teaching with Rhoda for many years, and this is quite a tribute to her.

If you ever have an idea for our board of directors to consider, please call me or send a note to the WCT office.

Enjoy what's left of fall. Winter will be here before we know it! Don’t forget to vote on November 4!

Susan Roger

PostScript

WCT & WCRT publication dates for academic year 2014-2015:

Commentator and PostScript mailing dates:
- Oct. 15* Mar. 16
- Nov. 14 Apr. 15*
- Dec. 15* May 15
- Jan. 16 June 15*
- Feb. 13*
- and one sometime in August*.

Several retirees have almost had their NYSUT benefits cancelled because they neglected to pay their WCT dues. Calls to the office and checks sent in a panic have mitigated the problem. Make checks payable to WCT and mail to WCT.

Renewal notices have been sent out. Dues for 2014-2015 are:
- $ 20.00 Yearly;
- $200.00 Individual Lifetime;
- $325.00 Couples Lifetime.

Pay Lifetime and alleviate the yearly task of renewing.

send your comments to johnrogerjr@yahoo.com or call (845) 227-5065

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION PROCESS, RENEWALS, DUES INFO

Some WCRT members who want to receive the Commentator and PostScript by email have not received them. Contact www.wcteachers.org or Ronnie Dwyer at the WCT office wct@frontiernet.net if the problem continues.

Retirees give the WCRT their email address. The WCT maintains the email list for publication. Prohibitive U.S. Mail costs may soon force us to cancel postal mailings, so please consider going green to save money.

The Commentator and PostScript may be viewed at www.wcteachers.org.

SAVE THESE DATES

(future details coming soon)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 9</td>
<td>RC#13 Regional Conference, Wiltwyck CC, Kingston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 2</td>
<td>Executive Board mtg. 10:00a.m.-12:00p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 6</td>
<td>Executive Board mtg. 10:00a.m.-12:00p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 28</td>
<td>Executive Board mtg. 10:00a.m.-12:00p.m.</td>
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PostScript

The WCT PostScript is published in Oct., Dec., Feb., Apr., June, and Aug. during the school year.

Editor: Bill Dourdis
wdourdis@verizon.net (845) 473-1796

The WCT PostScript is a 2014 NYSUT United Communications Competition Winner with 5 awards: 1st, Best Article About a Social Justice Issue, by Brian Connolly; *AD, Best Photo, by Brian Connolly; 1st, Best Column/Blog, by Cliff Foley; *AD, Best Creative Writing, by Jack Devine; *AD, Catchiest Headline/Title, by Saranne Ratner. (*AD = Award of Distinction; & 1st=1st Place).
The Education Race in New York State

CLIFF FOLEY
Political Action Chairperson

Over the course of the last few years, there has been a race going on in education in New York State. On the one side is the Albany bureaucracy and on the other side are NYSUT, the teachers, the parents, and the children.

It all started when Washington, DC dangled some cash in front of the state and the Race to the Top began. Unfortunately, in order to enter the race, you needed to surrender many of your past practices and embrace new dictates financially backed by big money from people like Melinda and Bill Gates.

The new standards, titled Common Core, defied years of research and study known to anyone who has worked with children in a classroom. They purported that all children are identical and learn at a uniform pace. They would all be given the same test and would be expected to score equally. In the future they would all be ready to go to college. Finally, should students be able to meet the standards. In addition, teacher evaluations could be based on the new standardized tests.

In addition to the Common Core standards, the method for evaluating teachers, based partly on these defective new tests, was also a contested part of the Race to the Top. Under the plan, 20% of a teacher’s evaluation would be based on student standardized test scores. If the children did poorly and the educator received unsatisfactory grades for two years, he or she could be fired. This was viewed as a back-door way to destroy tenure. In the October 5, 2014 Poughkeepsie Journal, the front-page lead article was a call by a group of school superintendents to scrap the new teacher evaluation system. They stated, “This is not something that can be fixed; the State Education Department needs to start over.”

Most recently, NYSUT has had to sue the State Education Department over another attack on educators. A Poughkeepsie Journal article on October 9, 2014, stated that teachers’ rights under the First Amendment were being violated because they were restricted from, “…discussing their concerns about specific questions on the standardized test. Under state law and policy, discussing the material on the exams is a punishable offense.”

NYSUT President Karen Magee stated, “If teachers believe test questions are unfair or inappropriate, they should be able to say so without fear of dismissal or losing their teaching license.”

As retirees, we need to make our voices heard. Together we have a vast collective expertise in the area of child development and the individual differences of students. We can contribute and help education win the race.

Notify these groups of an address change or death of a member:

- WCRT, Heritage Square, 2537 Route 52, Suite 15
  Hopewell Jct, N.Y. 12533
  (845) 227-5065
  wct@frontiernet.net
- WCT, same as above
- NYSUT, 800-342-9810
  800 Troy-Schenectady Rd.
  Latham, NY 12110-2455
  www.nysut.org
- NYSTRS, www.nystrs.org
  800-348-7298 x 6250
  10 Corporate Woods Drive
  Albany, NY 12211-2395
- WCSD, Human Resources
  167 Myers Corners Rd. Suite 200
  Wapp. Falls, NY 12590
  845-298-5000 x 115

NYSUT Retiree Council 13 website:
http://ny.aft.org/rc13/

Directions to 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 parking lot and make the second right turn into parking.
- Enter main entrance of building.
- The sign over the main entrance is “Berkshire Hathaway Real Estate.”
- Take stairs or elevator to 2nd floor.
- Go right, all the way to the end.
- “Wappingers Congress of Teachers” sign posted on Suite 15 door.

WCSD Board of Ed. e-mail address:
WCSD.Board@Wappingerschools.org

NOTE:
If you are aware of a member’s illness, or the need to send a condolence card, please contact Ruth Ehlers at 831-6390.

send your comments to cgfoley@optonline.net
Credit union donation to yacht club benefits Meals on Wheels

TEG Federal Credit Union donated $1,000 to the New Hamburg Yacht Club through its annual Day of Golf to benefit Meals on Wheels of Wappingers Falls. A check was presented by TEG’s chairman of the board, Walter V. Behrman Jr.; and President and CEO Ronald A. Flaherty at the future site of TEG’s new branch location at 1145 Route 9 in Wappingers Falls to yacht club Golf Committee members Skip Rottkamp, Jack Devine, Charlie Powers and Joe Corrigan; and Millie Milkovich and Chris Contelmo of Meals on Wheels. “We are grateful to TEG for this donation,” Rottkamp said in a news release, “In the past 10 years, the New Hamburg Yacht Club has raised over $62,000 for Meals on Wheels of Wappingers Falls and other community organizations through our Day of Golf, and this donation will go a long way in helping us to make another sizable donation this year.”

The New Hamburg Yacht Club’s 11th annual day of golf was held on Sept. 12 at the Beekman Golf Club in Hopewell Junction. A donation is made to Meals on Wheels of Wappingers Falls, a charity that provides hot, nutritious meals to individuals in Wappingers Falls who are unable to cook themselves because of age, illness or disability. Meals are freshly prepared each weekday by professionally trained cooks and delivered before noon by volunteers.

“The New Hamburg Yacht Club has done a wonderful job over the years raising funds for Meals on Wheels and other community organizations, and we’re proud to be able to support them in this endeavor,” Flaherty said in a news release. “We hope that our donation will help Meals on Wheels continue to provide a vital service to our community.”


Protect your WCRT, NYSUT membership

WCRT by the numbers:

- 610 retirees
- 595 WCRT members
- 183 yearly members
- 9 yearly members not renewed
- 359 lifetime members
- 43 complimentary lifetime members
- 15 complimentary members
- 71 retirees don’t belong to WCRT & not entitled to NYSUT benefits
- 24 not paid this year & soon deleted
- 367 members email subscribers
- 235 members postal subscribers

Please consider email subscription. It saves us considerable spending on postage.

Checks MUST be made out to WCT, not WCRT. We cannot accept checks made out to WCRT. Our chapter charter is with the WCT.

You MUST belong to the WCT to be eligible for NYSUT benefits. One retiree, just last month, had her NYSUT insurance cancelled due to lack of dues payment. She subsequently paid and was re-instated. Lifetime is the best deal. Pay once and forget about it!

JANE STOCKSLAGER
WCRT Constitution, By-Laws

The WCRT Constitution and By-Laws is up for review for 2015.

The Executive Board will review and add in any previous amendments made in the past 10 years.

If you have any questions or concerns, please address these to sundancewf@aol.com

Financial Report available

As a service to any interested WCRT member, our union’s financial report is always available upon request.

Address your questions or concerns to tderito@optonline.net and we’ll make arrangements to satisfy your numerical curiosity.

Membership dues checks MUST be made out to WCT, not WCRT.

Otherwise, they will be returned to you and you will need to issue a new check.

J.W.C. Federal Credit Union donated $1,000 to the New Hamburg Yacht Club through its annual Day of Golf to benefit Meals on Wheels of Wappingers Falls. A check was presented by TEG’s chairman of the board, Walter V. Behrman Jr.; and President and CEO Ronald A. Flaherty at the future site of TEG’s new branch location at 1145 Route 9 in Wappingers Falls to yacht club Golf Committee members Skip Rottkamp, Jack Devine, Charlie Powers and Joe Corrigan; and Millie Milkovich and Chris Contelmo of Meals on Wheels. “We are grateful to TEG for this donation,” Rottkamp said in a news release, “In the past 10 years, the New Hamburg Yacht Club has raised over $62,000 for Meals on Wheels of Wappingers Falls and other community organizations through our Day of Golf, and this donation will go a long way in helping us to make another sizable donation this year.”

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ANTIQUE APPRAISAL DAY
11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sat., Oct. 18
Ronald A. DeSilva, appraiser
$10 for one appraised item
$25 for three items

Caterer: “Parties by Tomáš”
Wine, Music, Hors D’oeuvres

Suggested Donation:
$25/p/p in advance at Library
$30/p/p at the Door

Artisans Craft Fair
Sat., Nov. 15, 2014
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Contact Carol Wall
845-226-7240
E-mail subscribers sign up slowly

To mail all 595 newsletters would cost $291.55. It costs us $112.70 to mail 230 every other month.

WCRT officers want to cut that cost to half the current number. Officers think 20%-25% is a reasonable goal to strive for since this initiative started in October 2013. Members wishing to go green can e-mail your name, address, city, state, zip, phone number, and e-mail address to wdourdis@verizon.net or the WCRT office at (845) 227-5065.

Firstst RA Meeting for 2014-2015
September 30, 2014

It felt good to get back to the business of education and see some familiar faces. Many RAs are new and some have returned after a break. The mood was tired. Everyone seemed overwhelmed with work, new procedures, no time. On a good note, without negotiations taking up his time, Pasquale will be able to visit the buildings, as he used to, and get to know the faculty he leads.

A committee to revise the WCT Constitution completed their work this summer. Language, job descriptions, elections, and communications have changed in recent years, making it necessary.

All buildings were advised to continue to have an EDC and should have someone from the RA as a member. Everyone was encouraged to work out building issues using the EDC. They were also encouraged to remind members to avoid collegial issues. These are not union issues and can affect the APPR score as part of Domain 4.

Buildings will still be assigned dates to attend BOE meetings, even though we now have a contract. Involvement is still important for other issues.

Some issues are still unresolved. TIPs (Teacher Improvement Plan) is one. This affects Special Education teachers. Pasquale reassured everyone that although it’s a sensitive issue, it does not mean they will lose their jobs. You can have the rating “developing teacher” for your entire career. You must have an ineffective rating for two years for serious consequences. This would be after numerous interventions. Right now there is a two-year moratorium in place. Also, some elementary people reminded everyone that scores were not delivered on time. Administrators are not happy with the procedure and trying to look at the data again. New legislation is being discussed, specifically targeting helping Special Education teachers.

Although you would think it unnecessary, again everyone was asked to remind their faculty about using social media.

Another year is underway with some old and some new issues. We are still going through the process of finding a new Superintendent. Hopefully the BOE will find one we can all work with to make Wappingers the best district it can be for our community.

Happy to be back.
Ellen Korz

Help WCRT officers cut mail costs in half

NEW FIGURES SINCE LAST ISSUE: With 595 members, WCRT now prints and mails newsletters to 227 postal members, while sending 373 e-mails. It takes 6-7 new subscribers to lower the total by one percentage point. We’ve had six people added in October, six in December, four in February, two in May, one in July, and three in August. We now have 38%, down 20%-25% from last month. We NEED MANY MORE!

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Sign up for WCRT’s bi-monthly e-mail PostScript newsletter, produced in color—you’ll do yourself and WCRT a big favor. It saves us money and time—two critical factors for non-profit organizations.

Members may opt to receive the newsletter in color by e-mail or black and white by “snail mail.” Fonts and pictures can be enlarged on your computer as a PDF. WCRT newsletters have become magazine quality!

Newsletters arrive sooner by e-mail than postal mail. More importantly, the WCRT can have immediate contact with the membership via e-mail at no cost.

Your reply is appreciated and saves the WCRT money in mailings. It saves on printing, folding, paper, envelopes, mailing labels, and stamps. The volunteer crew would also thank you for cutting down on their time spent in preparation for the distribution process.

Look at our new, brand-new website: www.wcteachers.org. Support the website and the WCRT by attending luncheons and tours, maintaining your membership, contributing to VOTE-COPE, and communicating with officers.

Editor’s note: Over 41 words were highlighted in four different colors. E-mail readers saw it. Hard copy readers had to be told. They only saw black and white. Subscribe by e-mail to enjoy the benefits listed above. (Not to mention full-color pictures and graphics in this issue—but I did mention it!!!)

Enjoy some of what NYC has to offer.
Sign up to receive the monthly Plum Benefits Guide.
Send an e-mail to jtkorz@optonline.net to be added to our list.

Ellen Korz

Welfare Trust explained

Welfare Trust benefits include three different plans. Staff must sign up at the time of retirement. Registration is a one-time opportunity. You cannot sign up after retirement.

Plans available:
Basic: hearing aids, dental, vision, and health advocate.
Enhanced: All of the above plus a $200 prescription reimbursement on copays.
Enhanced Plus: All of the above plus legal and financial.

For more information, contact Ronnie Dwyer, Welfare Trust Fund Administrator, at the WCT office, 845-227-5065.

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Turning over a new leaf

New contract, new health plan, new website, & new school year

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY--Fifty-five Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers met at Christos Restaurant on September 16 for a fall luncheon.

Susan Rogers, WCRT president, led a quick business meeting and emphasized registering for the new website at www.wcteachers.org.

Guest speaker Pasquale Delli Carpini, WCT president, added accolades about the website and our new webmaster, Nancy Beiner.

On a more serious note, highlights from his remarks follow:

Over 1600 people re-enrolled in the new health insurance transition. Over 600 of those were retirees.

NYS Constitutional Convention is set for 2017 at a cost of approx. $45M-$50million. Article 5, Section 7 guarantees pensions, a law from the Civil War, which says a state can’t lower benefits. “I serve as Vice Chair of the NYSUT Pension Committee.”

Attacks on teacher tenure: The Triborough Amendment is a wonderful thing. It protects benefits on an expired contract. If removed, the District doesn’t need to negotiate. New York State Assembly member Kieran Lalor is against teachers. Despite his willingness to scrap Common Core, he’s pushing legislation to repeal Triborough. Pasquale met with him and explained the severity of the situation, but Lalor will not budge.

Right-to-work states number 26 that are at the mercy of their employers. In September, a teacher could face a 30% pay cut and pay 50% of insurance. “There is no better state than New York as a teacher with a pension.”

Billionaires are funding Super PACs like Students First, Students First New York, Students Matters, and Partnership for Educational Justice and Parents Transparency Project. Who controls them? The Waltons, the Koches, and the same people are on multiple boards of directors. Meanwhile, over 600,000 NYSUT members raised $8.8M for VOTE-COPE to finance political action against these groups.

Pasquale urged members to support American Legislative Exchange Conference (ALEC) as public policy.

The District is considering three candidates from within for superintendent: Jose’ Carrion, Interim Superintendent; Dr. Dwight Bonk, JJHS principal; and Dr. Steve Shuchat, VWJH principal.

Pasquale concluded with more remarks about attacks on tenure: He cited court cases in California, New York, and some now before the Supreme Court. He reminded retirees about their struggles for tenure, wages, working conditions, picketing, and strikes. “Stories and action bring people together. New members don’t have the same skin in the game.”

Officers present gave abbreviated reports before adjourning the meeting and proceeding to the buffet luncheon.
Jack Ericson, music teacher, and Alice Baker, WCRT Past President. Jack traveled two hours from Roxbury, NY, near Bellaire Ski Area, to come to the luncheon and have a blast!

Frank Mears says, “I’ve got two words more important than APPR and Common Core: Semper Fi!”

Marsha May, Vicki Kulich, and Ro Henebery.

Laurel Becker, Mary Jane Klokow, Barbara Donaldson, and Barbara Webster.

Trish D’Angelo and Marilyn Walsh.

Joan and Tom Derito with Steve Ciaccio.

Marge Barton and Geri Allen.

YOUNG AND YOUNGER. Marsha May, newly retired and a first timer at a WCRT luncheon, and Val Brown, who retired in 2001. As a new retiree, Marsha says, “I’m trying to find my way.” She volunteers reading with pre-schoolers in Beacon. She’s also moving into a new town house after 40 years. Val has run a senior center three times a week since 2005. “I’m 81, and I enjoy the challenge.”

WCT President Pasquale Delli Carpini and 2nd VP Roger Higgins award Ro Henebery her winning the 50/50 raffle.

...This was not everybody, but where were you seated?
News since last issue
As teachers and students returned to the classrooms, and retirees pack for their fall excursions, it seems that not too much has changed. However, upon closer examination, WCT and WCRT members can find a big change – we have a new logo, and a new web-site!

WWW.WCTEACHERS.ORG is the place to go to check out all of the changes completed on our web site over the summer. Actually, change doesn’t even come close to describing the new “Go-To” site for WCT members and retirees alike. WCT member Nancy Beiner gets credit for much of the work, and the WCT Executive Board was given a sneak preview of Nancy’s plan in late August and magically, the new site is up and running!

WCT members must register to use the site. It’s quick and easy and will give retirees access to everything that’s available on the site. Simply go to WWW.WCTEACHERS.ORG, follow the registration instructions, and in a day or two you’ll receive authorization to enter the site.

Why register? Only registered members will have access to the various forms and confidential information that’s available. Contract information, constitution and by-laws information, an event calendar, blogs, election endorsements, even online shopping information is available. But remember, you must register to gain access.

What’s new? Too much to list here, but here’s a little preview: there’s a public access site, and a members-only section; there’s an Executive Board section with minutes and goals; members will even have the ability (should they choose) to communicate with each other and with building reps and officers.

It is anticipated, and hoped, that the new website will be a place for members and retirees to go for answers to questions about the WCT/WCRT. It will be your first point of reference, it will keep members informed, and it will provide us with up-to-date information.

Finally, the best way to learn more about what’s changed, what’s new, and what’s available is to explore the new site yourself. Just go to WWW.WCTEACHERS.ORG and explore, play, and learn.

Local Authors

A hot-air balloon trip, through a child’s eyes

Author Faith Schwenker and her husband started flying their hot-air balloon in 1973. During their travels, which spanned a course of 25 years, they experienced many noteworthy events, such as flying over the 1980 Olympics, flying over the French countryside and flying over the Long Island Sound.

Schwenker’s book takes readers to the skies, as her 4-year-old grandson, Jackson, narrates a hot-air balloon journey. Throughout the book, Schwenker uses Jackson’s language to describe the parts of a hot-air balloon and includes photos of her balloons in many interesting locations. Jackson soon learns there’s much more to piloting a hot-air balloon than just getting off the ground.

Schwenker and her husband, Rudy, flew in many exciting places in their hot-air balloon, Friendship, from 1973 to 1998. In that time, she heard many questions about her craft, such as, “how do you inflate a hot-air balloon?” “How do you steer?” “How do you land?” “Where do you land?” Keeping children in mind, Schwenker answers those questions and more.

Schwenker is a retired elementary school teacher with 33 years of experience, 25 of those years in the Wappingers Falls School District. She and her husband live in Fishkill. They have two married daughters.

“Jackson and the Hot-Air Balloon” by Faith Schwenker; Archway Publishing; paperback; 36 pages.

Source: Poughkeepsie Journal
Poor Elijah’s almanac: First do no harm

Source: This article appeared in the Eagle Times on Sept. 30, 2014. The Eagle Times is a daily newspaper based in Claremont, NH, serving the twin states of New Hampshire and Vermont. Bob Ruopp, WCRT Class of 1998 who lives in Sunapepe, NH submitted this article from their Education columnist.

Every movie posts a notice that no animals were harmed during its production. American children enjoy no such protection. Any expert with a grant, special interest with an agenda, administrator with a desk, or corporation with a bottom line gets easy entrée into our schools and classrooms. From whole language to the endless parade of “new” maths, from canned discipline methods that don’t discipline to anti-bullying programs that rely on the charitable inclinations of bullies, from recycled 1970s notions that have already failed at least once to mushrooming, untested standardized tests, American students are treated more cavalierly than lab rats.

Every so often your school is closed for a teacher in-service day. Policymakers assure us these professional development sessions are essential for improving public education.

Sometimes, despite their insistence that we need even more “PD” days, administrators neglect to plan anything until somebody suddenly recalls, “Hey, we have an in-jargon next week.” The result is usually a bouquet of workshops on whatever jargon topics are currently in fashion. Other times your tax dollars pay for a traveling expert, who typically isn’t a teacher, to teach your school’s teachers the latest patented teaching method. Please check the website for software, CD, and book prices.

Occasionally, an invited speaker actually says something that makes sense, which local officials promptly ignore. Last spring we were treated to one such guest who articulately detailed the disadvantages of centralizing control of local schools, following which the official who invited him confirmed his plan to continue centralizing control of our local schools.

Now a report in Educational Researcher substantiates why many teachers think most PD is a waste of time. Several studies recently concluded that teacher professional development typically has “minimal to no effects on boosting student achievement,” even when it involves “a lot of hours of training and follow-up.”

Instead of deciding whether a PD program is any good after it’s been implemented in schools, insightful researchers now suggest “evidence-based” evaluations “at the early stages of program development.”

I have an alternate, single criterion for judging any proposed professional development: Will missing that day of school benefit students more than having their teacher there with them in class. If it would, cancel school for the day. If it wouldn’t, cancel the in-service training.

In the 30 years I’ve been teaching, my students wouldn’t have missed many days.

Speaking of school administration, the Brookings Institution recently investigated whether or not “superintendents improve outcomes for students.” According to the report, “School Superintendents: Vital or Irrelevant,” the answer is “not.” Achievement doesn’t improve when superintendents remain in their positions or when they leave and their district hires a new superintendent. Consider this finding as more districts, including maybe yours, transfer power from teachers and principals to superintendents and their central office minions.

Standardized assessments continue to reproduce exponentially, even as they demonstrate their embarrassing inability to assess anything. This year is the deadline for No Child Left Behind’s impossible requirement that every student be proficient in reading and math. Since predictably every student isn’t proficient, almost every school in the country is now assessed a “failure.” Even schools where the vast majority of students are proficient. This “failure” subjects schools to “corrective action” administered by distant bureaucrats who don’t deal with real students and classrooms but who do generate reams of paperwork that distract teachers and principals from dealing with those real students and classrooms.

“Common Core aligned” assessments continue to be judged “ambiguous,” “confusing, developmentally inappropriate, and not well-aligned with the Common Core.” Owing to current education fashions, the influence of technology-oriented Common Core boosters like Bill Gates, and the profit motives of software publishers, these tests are typically administered via computer.

This appears to be causing problems for elementary students. Even those with regular access to home and school comput-
POUGHKEEPSIE - William H. Brooks, Jr., a resident of Poughkeepsie, entered into rest Saturday, March 22, 2014 at Vassar Brothers Medical Center in Poughkeepsie. He was 85.

Son of the late William H. and Marion Harrell Brooks, Sr., he was born September 27, 1928 in Port Chester, New York. Bill graduated from Port Chester High School, SUNY Cortland and SUNY New Paltz.

After graduating high school, he spent three years in the United States Air Force.

He married the former Marjorie L. Goodrich on March 18, 1972. Mrs. Brooks survives at home in Poughkeepsie.

Bill spent many years working in the recreation field in Syracuse, White Plains and Poughkeepsie. He was also a state certified Hunter Safety Instructor. He was a man of many talents and interests. In addition to teaching hunting safety, he was an avid hunter and proud of his several trophies, whether it be buffalo, elk or boar.

Bill was involved in the arts; drawing and especially music. He participated in marching band, dance band, local opera productions, Cappella Festiva Chorus, as well as Zion Episcopal Church choir; where he was a devoted member. For several years he sang with the Kartuli Group who sing the music of the Republic of Georgia. On two occasions, he had the opportunity to travel there.

He believed in a healthy body. He was involved in track and field and had the opportunity to participate in Olympic trials. He was interested in body building and spent many hours in the gym preparing for contests. He received numerous awards in his various interests.

Most importantly, Bill will be remembered for his love of God, his family and his life. He will be missed terribly by all who knew and loved him.

He is survived by his wife, Marjorie Brooks at home in Poughkeepsie; his sister, Lorraine Brooks of Mount Vernon and East Harwich, Massachusetts; his sisters-in-law, Donna Goodrich, Joan Goodrich and Barbara Brooks; his nephew, Michael Goodrich of Edgewater, Florida; and his nieces, DeLora Brooks of Millerton and Kate Goodrich-Arling of Elkins, West Virginia. In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by his daughter, Denise Anne Brooks; and his brothers, Eugene and Norman Brooks.

A funeral service will be held at 11 a.m. on Thursday, March 27, 2014 at Zion Episcopal Church, 12 Satterlee Place, Wappingers Falls with Mother Deborah Magdalene officiating.

Interment will be in the spring in Walton Cemetery, 55 Fancher Avenue, Walton, New York. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in Bill’s name may be made to Zion Episcopal Church, 12 Satterlee Place, Wappingers Falls, NY 12590.

Arrangements are under the direction of Straub, Catalano & Halvey Funeral Home, 55 East Main Street, Wappingers Falls.

To send the family a personal condolence or for directions, please visit our website at www.StraubCatalanoHalvey.com.

[Bill taught at Evans and retired from Kinry Rd. in 1991 after 25 years in the WCSD.]

POUGHKEEPSIE - Emilie George passed away on May 16, 2014.

She retired from John Jay High School Foreign Language Department in 1985 after 22 years of service to the Wappingers Central School District.

She was 84 years old.
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