RC 13 Conference preps retirees for issues, actions

KINGSTON, NY--The 14th annual NY-SUT Regional Conference for Retiree Council 13 captivated 75 retirees from the five-county area on October 9, at the Wiltwyck Golf Club.

Below highlights over five hours of valuable information about behind-the-scenes preparations for dealing with many current issues, and what to look for and work for in the months and years ahead.

Featured speaker Martin Messner, NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer, gave an update from headquarters. Last April, the Supreme Court case Harris vs. Quinn challenged agency fee pay. If you’re not in the union, you pay an agency fee to provide basic services without the political stuff.

He added that the Supreme Court wants to make changes to the rule so New York State voters can’t. This only affects 20,000 home-care unions. The statute is out of date, needs to be revisited, and is a bad case. Also, watch for the Fredricks case—another challenge to Agency Fees in the next three years.

NYSUT has obligations to its employees’ pensions promised 42 years ago. If the union can’t do it, public pensions won’t. We are currently 80% funded.

Preparation: We are working with Member Benefits on a new plan. NYSUT members save money on insurance for car, home, and life insurance. We give better rates than competition. It’s a big enough package to pay for local, NYSUT, and AFT rates than competition. It’s a big enough package to pay for local, NYSUT, and AFT

Communications: We will rely on YouTube videos because it’s less expensive than television commercials.

POLITICAL ACTION COLUMN

No agency fees means it’s optional—freeloaders who don’t pay for benefits.

Messner touched on Wisconsin, the birthplace of unions, and the Scott Walker fight from earlier this year. They were once 100% union, but not 38%.

Elizabeth Jacks, Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, fascinated the audience with her PowerPoint presentation. “The whole organization is staffed by retired teachers.” Thomas Cole has paintings in museums worldwide, like the Louvre in Paris, and they were made in Catskill, NY. Cole’s purpose was to paint, “the way God designed it and nobody messed it up.”

He painted to exalt the imagination through nature scenery.

The Hudson River was wild yet accessible as America’s first vacationland. Cole painted the first train in America. He wrote about the ravages of the ax on the destruction of nature. “We live in Eden. This is an oasis,” was the theme of his paintings. He had a big spot in his heart for nature and the enjoyment of rural nature.

The site sits on 100 acres two miles from Olana across the Rip Van Winkle Bridge and open from May 1 through Nov. 2.

Visit www.hudsonriverschool.org or 518-943-7465.

Jeff Zuckerman, from NYSUT VOTE-COPE, spoke about needing people and their monetary support to stop the Constitutional Convention in 2017.

POLITICAL ACTION COLUMN

Baseball centerfold feature

Website updated for new year

www.wctteachers.org
Dear WCRT Members,

“Baby, it’s cold outside” to our members in the northeast, and a “lucky you” to our southern members.

This is the time of year when I would like to thank all the volunteers on our executive board: Roger Higgins, 1st VP; in charge of our part of the website; Leslie Leventhal, 2nd VP, in charge of trips and luncheons; Flo Mondanaro, recording secretary; Barbara Stuck, corresponding secretary and membership; Tom DeRito, treasurer; Ellen Korz, WCT RA rep; and Alice Baker, past president.

Thank you also to our directors: Alice Heusinger and Peg Nikola, who with a volunteer committee, handle all the mailing; Jack Devine, our rep to the WCT negotiating team; Ruth Ehlers, our sunshine person; Jane Stockslager, in charge of constitution and bylaws.

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a healthy 2015.

Susan Roger

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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 wct@frontiernet.net or www.wcteachers.org.

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

**Commentator and PostScript** mailing dates:
- Oct. 15
- Nov. 14
- Dec. 15
- Jan. 16
- 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 WCRT.

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.

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SAVE THESE DATES (future details coming soon)
- Dec. 2 Executive Board mtg. 10:00a.m.-12:00p.m. Deadline for December, 2014 PostScript
- Feb. 10 Executive Board mtg. 10:00a.m.-12:00p.m. Deadline for February, 2015 PostScript
- Apr. 28 Executive Board mtg. 10:00a.m.-12:00p.m.
- May 14 Spring Luncheon, Christos, 11:30a.m., $23,
THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS AND WASHINGTON

CLIFF FOLEY
Political Action Chairperson

J ust about everyone you spoke to was happy the November elections were over. That was because it meant the phone would stop ringing with robo calls from candidates and all kinds of people from the governor of the state to the President of the United States. Also, now there is no need for a hand truck to haul out all the campaign flyers that crammed the mailbox.

With that said, we need to step back and try to figure out what the November 4 results mean. Both Houses of Congress now being controlled by the Republicans is a continuation of the “Second Term Midterm Presidential Curse” according to Jonathan Hobratsch of the Huff Post Politics Blog of November 30, 2014. All two-term Presidents, beginning with Eisenhower, including Reagan, Clinton, Bush and now Obama, have seen their party experience losses in Congress. This was not just a phenomenon experienced by the current President.

One irony of this election is that a number of states including Arkansas, Alaska, South Dakota and Nebraska voted Republicans into office but also passed by wide margins more Democratic supported state minimum wage increases. It is clear that individual voters want to increase their benefits but at the same time express displeasure with the President. The negative attacks against Obama even resulted in some people in his own party distancing themselves from him.

Columnist Leonard Pitts in the November 17, 2014, issue of the Poughkeepsie Journal sarcastically challenges the new Congress to impeach the President if they are not happy with him. He points to the animosity that has been expressed toward Obama. He states, “This is personal. You don’t like him. Your reasons for this antipathy have never been definitively defined – at least, not by you – but its existence can no longer be denied, not after all you’ve done to make it plain.” This dislike, and even mistrust, may be part of the explanation for the election outcome.

The Affordable Care Act has generated a great deal of controversy that may have impacted the way people voted. There is an irony here also in that many low-income people who could not otherwise afford coverage could lose it if those elected attempt to dismantle it. Polls show that many of those less fortunate people do not show up at the voting booth to make their voices heard.

A number of polls taken after the election show that many senior citizens do not want to see changes to Social Security and Medicare yet they supported candidates who are looking to make just the kinds of changes they oppose. In her November 16, 2014 column in the Poughkeepsie Journal, Froma Harrop points out a possible impact that we could see in two years. “This disconnect poses a problem for Republicans with presidential ambitions. On the way to the nomination, they must please an older conservative base unalterably hostile to a government-run health plan – except the one covering them.” There are proposals to reduce Medicare to vouchers as well as privatize Social Security. In addition there are some who plan to gut federal agencies that protect health and safety of ordinary citizens and preservation of clean water and air. Seniors, as well as younger people, may not be happy with these plans being proposed in Washington.

You certainly do wonder what motivates people to vote the way they do. We can only guess what the next two years will bring. Will we be happier, healthier, or richer because of the election of 2014? Only time will tell. In 2016 the American people will have another opportunity to vote in a national election and select a new chief executive for the United States. It will be interesting to watch what forces will be at play, what pressure will be exerted by the media, and how much money will be spent by lobbyists. We will most likely see more ironies in the outcome of that election. Stay tuned!

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.
October 10, 2014

Dear Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers:

Thank you for your generous donation of $100.00. The library is very appreciative of this donation. We will, indeed, use it for educational purposes as you ask. We thank you for your ongoing support of our work.

Sincerely,

Julie Spann
Director I
Blodgett Memorial Library

How’d you spend your Thanksgiving?

Kids in Florida trick or treating

Source: received via Email.

Two lines of volunteers serve meals at the annual Eileen Hickey Thanksgiving Dinner on Thursday in the City of Poughkeepsie. At right is Ro Henebery of the Town of Wappinger. [Ro is WCRT Class of 2007.] DARRYL BAUTISTA/POUGHKEEPSIE JOURNAL

Protect your WCRT, NYSUT membership

WCRT by the numbers:

WCRT membership as of Sept. 11, 2014:

- 602 retirees
- 595 WCRT members
- 168 yearly members
- 10 yearly members not renewed
- 369 Lifetime members
- 44 Complimentary Lifetime members
- 11 Complimentary members
- 79 retirees don’t belong to WCRT & not entitled to NYSUT benefits
- 24 not paid this year & soon deleted
- 370 members email subscribers
- 232 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

TOM DERITO

WCRT Treasurer

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.
Help WCRT officers cut mail costs in half

NEW FIGURES SINCE LAST ISSUE: With 595 members, WCRT now prints and mails newsletters to 232 postal members, while sending 370 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, three in August, none in October, and three in December. We now have 38%, down from 40% reading hardcopies! (Same % last month.)

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.

WE NEED MANY MORE!

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.

Sign up for WCRT’s bi-monthly 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 43 full-color pictures and graphics in this issue—but I did mention it!!)

RA Meeting October 28, 2014

When I first came to work in Wappingers, I thought it was such a fun place to work. Although there were so many teachers in so many buildings, there were activities to keep us together. I actually knew the other members of my department, even though we worked in different buildings. Buildings had their own social events so we could feel connected. Somehow, that seemed to have ceased. Well, as part of the agenda at this meeting, the RA was asked to help to organize activities in which the members would participate. There was a list of family activities and a list of adult activities and each building was to report back to the Executive Board their findings in their buildings. Hopefully if the members come together, they can rekindle the ties to the WCT and start enjoying their profession again.

After some discussion about the number of RAs that should represent each building, the revised Constitution was adopted. Hopefully you are all signing on to the new WCT website. 92 retirees have and fewer than 500 active members have. At some point, this will be the only way we will be able to get information we need. It is very easy to navigate, so make sure you sign on soon. The home page will help you find information about the RA meetings, prescription Mail Order Delivery, and all forms.

Though this doesn’t directly affect retirees, the buildings are having a very difficult time getting substitutes. They have been using faculty to cover classes saying it is an emergency situation, causing some teachers to work more periods than stated in the contract. They have been told to bring this problem to the EDC, but it may become a grievance. Data will be collected from each building to see how often this is occurring and if it increases.

If you haven’t switched to mail order delivery of prescriptions, everyone is encouraged to do so now that the co-pays have increased. Go to the website, www.wcteachers.org click benefits, then health-care. It saves money and is safe and secure. They send reminders and can arrange the time frame so you won’t have to worry about your scripts coming on time.

Lastly, the Constitutional Convention is coming up in the near future, 2017. Think of that and protecting our pension system. I hope you voted on November 4th. Stay informed and get involved.

Ellen Korz

jtkorz@optonline.net or www.nysut.org or wct@frontiernet.net

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ELLEN KORZ
WCRT Rep. to WCT RA

Representative Assembly

Ellen Korz
We’re Panik-stricken!

Batter Up!

World-class World Series featured District, County athlete

BILL GREEN
Feature Writer
Class of ‘99

Congrats to our World Series champ Joe Panik

After being inundated for months with repetitive campaign mailings, continuous political phone surveys and constant candidate thrashing television ads, election season is coming to an end, and congratulations are now in order to one of the most deserving and successful individuals from Dutchess County this fall — Joe Panik.

Joe, who didn’t run for office, is a Hopewell Junction resident who played baseball in the East Fishkill Little League and starred at John Jay High School. Last month he helped lead the San Francisco Giants to the 2014 World Series championship.

From the time he was brought up to the major leagues in June to his final game in the World Series last week, Joe has distinguished himself not only as a tremendous baseball success and continued for a long time I will never forget this moment… I proclaim Joe Panik Day in Dutchess County.”

From East Fishkill Little League to major league stardom!

WICCOPEE, NY—Joe Panik’s 2008 yearbook Senior Superlative read, “Most likely to become an Olympic Medalist.” Winning a Major League Baseball World Series ring in his rookie year will have to suffice.

“Joe Panik Celebration Night,” by invitation only, was held at John Jay High School on December 10, in conjunction with the Town of East Fishkill and the Dutchess County Government, and the Wappingers Central School District.

Here are highlights of the logistics and planning for this hero’s welcome attended by about 500 fans.

We featured a baseball game line-up as the format for the ceremony.

Cy Kaufman, 84-years old, an umpire for 50 years and former New York State Umpire of the Year, threw out the first pitch to Joe’s older brother Paul, a catcher.

Cable Channel 22 television coverage and on YouTube.

Talented musician and Ketcham High School alumnus Johnny Dell sang the Star Spangled Banner to begin and God Bless America during the 7th-inning stretch.

Batting First was Dr. Dwight Bonk, JJHS Principal, who reviewed Joe’s academic achievements as in the top 6% of his class of 460, and National Honor Society. “Once a [JJ] Patriot, always a Patriot.”

Batting Second was Marc Molinaro, DC Executive. “October brought electric, positive vibes. Baseball spans generations who huddled around a tv or Ipad to watch. They saw their role model. Kids here will never forget this moment… I proclaim Thursday, December 11, 2014 Joe Panik Day in Dutchess County.”

Batting Third, John Hickman, my boss, who presented a plaque dedicating Field 5 at EF Rec to Joe Panik.

Batting Clean-up, Rob Seipp, Math teacher and coach for soccer, tennis, and bowling, represented the JJHS teaching staff and compiled a list of accolades and memories about his hard work, respect, humility, maturity, dedication, and not an ounce of arrogance.

The County Sheriff’s Dept. presented Joe with a Challenge Coin, which read, “Treat people the way you want to be treated.”

San Francisco Giants second baseman Joe Panik flips the ball to Brandon Crawford for a key double play on a grounder by Eric Hosmer of the Kansas City Royals during the third inning of Game 7 of the World Series on Wednesday. CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/AP (Source: Poughkeepsie Journal, Sat. Nov. 1, 2014, page 8A.)

Batting Fifth was Bill Green, (me) EF Rec Commissioner. I thanked Dutchess County Legislature personnel, East Fishkill Recreation Advisory Board and helpers, Wappingers Central School District administrators, former principals, coaches, and teachers, Town Hall volunteers, EF Police Department, and others who helped with flyers and phone calls.

Batting Sixth, Tom O’Hare, Joe’s JJ varsity baseball coach, said, “I’m glad he played for us, because not much coaching was needed.” O’Hare noted achievements, motivation, talent, smoothness, dominance, and dedication. Teacher/coach Daryl Sullivan coined a key phrase, “Yeah, good luck, pal” about any ball hit up the middle, which came as no surprise to any JJ fan in Game 7 after the “famous flip.” Joe’s varsity jersey, #13, will be retired.

Player of the Game, Joe Panik, took the microphone wearing a Columbia Blue suit, his alma mater’s color. A few stories about his meteoric rise to the major league, then lots of humble thank you’s “to supporters such as coaches, teachers, neighbors, friends, teammates, and everybody.” Special thanks to his family, who “raised me to be a man, not a ballplayer.”
Take me out to their ball games

On deck

by Al and Jane Stewart
WCRT Class of 1999

FISHKILL, NY—Al and I have coordinated housing with the help of Barb O’Connor and MaryAnn Rode and housed, hosted, and hooted for Hudson Valley Renegades ball players for 20 years. It started because other season ticket holders and house parents thought two high school teachers would love it! They were right.

Craig McLendon, now a happily married teacher in Georgia, and Ryan Dempster, who just retired from MLB after making a lot of money, were our first “sons of summer.” Along the way, we have had the good fortune of housing Josh Hamilton, Evan Longoria, Toby Hall, Matt Diaz, Wade Davis, Jordan Shields, Joe Kennedy, Doug Waechter, Logan Ondrusek, and Curt Casali either in NY or FL. A majority of those who made the majors still keep in touch, which is very rewarding.

A lot of our fun over the years has been with those guys (well over 100) who did not make the majors. As professional players they have the time of their lives and so do we as they live their experiences with us while attempting to achieve their ultimate goal. There is life after baseball as most end baseball with a sad release day, then get real jobs and have successful careers, marriages, and families. We have been to 23 weddings, with four more on the docket between now and August 2015. A couple of years ago we even made the CBS news http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/minor-leaguers-playing-for-peanuts/.

During the NY season, guys are with us for three months (which is a 76-game schedule), and FL could be up to six months if you count early spring training, real spring training, and the Florida State League (which is a 142-game season). Some stay even longer if they need rehabbing. Many while in FL become part of the neighborhood family playing cards, horseshoes, fishing expeditions and dinner parties. Just ask Bob & Jane Stockslager, retired Wappingers teachers who have basically adopted Casali and Garvin, two of our latest players.

Al taught primarily electronics and computer-related courses at RCK and advised stage lighting and sound for 15 years along with lighting for school-held proms and dances. He was RCK’s computer consultant and technology department teacher-in-charge.

Jane was in the business department at RCK, teaching mostly keyboard, shorthand, and coordinating co-op. She also coached for a number of years and advised the Junior class and yearbook with Pete Phillips and Roger Higgins.

Once we informed everyone of our decision to stop housing in NY after 20 years, Barb O’Connor, a former RCK teacher still very involved with RCK sports programs, organized a phenomenal surprise for us. She arranged for Derek Andersen, (our “son” from 1999) to fly in from Tampa and suit up as the ceremonial catcher. Under duress Jane threw out the first pitch with Rick Zolzer and an unidentified front-office intern look on.

The other ballplayer hosts surprised us by flying up Derek Andersen, our 1999 player from Florida who is like family, for our final Host Appreciation Night and unknowingly to us posing him as the team’s first-pitch catcher for the night with Jane throwing the first pitch. Announcer Rick Zolzer and an unidentified front-office intern look on.

Al watching from the first base line, never realizing Derek was behind the plate. What a shock! Barb and the other house parents certainly made Jane speechless, which for those of you who know her, is an extraordi-nary feat. It was a fantastic ending to a great 20-year stint.

Our bucket list: To use our time-share weeks, RV to places we have and have not been, continue our streak of weddings, enjoy our home on the water, and go on last-minute cruises as we did last week. Living in FL certainly makes last-minute cruising available since no airfare is required. Al booked a balcony on Allure of the Seas (largest cruise ship in the world) on a Friday night and we left on Sunday for a price of under $500.

Yep, Al is still bargain hunting as is Jane when she hits the island jewelry stores.
News since last issue

Source: Poughkeepsie Journal
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!

WCRT 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.

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Willy Wonders, “How Come?” New school year vs. new calendar year

Reading this in the December 2014 PostScript puts you between the first day of school and the first day of the year. Times have changed as we retirees remember back to our active teaching days and our active celebration days. Let’s look back together.

**New calendar year:**

New Year’s Eve is about partying to bring in the new year.

New Year’s Day is about implementing New Year’s resolutions, hangovers, and which channel has the best college football game.

Are the right number of players on the field?

When’s half time so I can go to the bathroom?

First and 10 starts every series of downs.

When you don’t make 10 yards, you can punt.

Who becomes the designated driver?

Everybody gets a party hat.

Everybody gets a noise maker.

Alcohol, soda, or punch are the beverages of choice.

Standing outside in Times Square fulfills a dream.

**New school year:**

First day of school eve is worrying about your introductory class lesson.

First day of school is about making sure your classroom is ready, attending useless faculty meetings, headaches and which channel your kids are tuned to.

Are the right number of students in each class?

When’s my free period so I can go to the bathroom?

First (period) and 32 (students) makes it hard to gain educational yardage.

When your forward progress is stopped, you have to give them another assessment and to keep the ball rolling.

Which student(s) can you depend on to to set a positive example for the rest of the class?

Do you allow baseball caps in class?

Every class has 30+ noisemakers.

Five-hour Energy, Red Bull, and Dunkin’ Donuts coffee ar the beverages of choice.

Standing in the parking lot during a fire drill is a nightmare.

Got any ideas for future comparisons or connections? Let me know at …………… and we’ll see what we can come up with together.
Poor Elijah’s almanac: Counting to several

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.

October 28, 2014

My local newspaper recently headlined that students’ scores had marginally declined on Vermont’s statewide science assessment. As with most standardized tests, no matter where you live, scorers use subjective rubrics to decide, for example, whether a student’s answer reflects a “thorough,” “general,” “limited,” or “minimal” understanding. According to officials, scorers can make those precise determinations because a “general” answer, for instance, includes an unspecified number of “errors and omissions,” as opposed to a “limited” response, which includes “several errors and omissions.”

Can you count to “several”? I can’t.

On a four-point scale, an answer with “errors” earns three points, while “several errors” earns two points. That’s a 25 percent score variation based on the difference between “I don’t exactly know how many” and “several.”

Further compromising the “data,” students work on parts of the test in randomly assigned groups. Do you think a student’s individual score might be somewhat influenced by how smart the other students in his group happen to be?

The insignificance of marginal variations aside, if a statewide average markedly declines, or improves, from one year to the next, there exist two alternative explanations. Either the statewide student body got remarkably dumber, or smarter, from one year to the next, which isn’t likely, or despite test promoters’ claims of statistical consistency and precision, the test accidently got harder or easier. Publishers and education officials have had to swallow plenty of that assessment crow over the past two decades of our national testing frenzy.

Welcome to the world of modern assessment.

Don’t misunderstand. When I’m grading an essay, I’m not perfectly scientific either. The difference is I don’t claim to be, and I don’t base a whole year’s grade on one test. Also my grades cost a lot less.

Somehow officials aren’t overly troubled by these repeated assessment fiascos. Critics have instead again focused their wrath on letter grades. Reformers charge that A through F report cards provide “hodgepodge” grades that are “impossible to interpret” and “rarely present a true picture of a student’s proficiency.” Some complain that letter grades inappropriately mingle academic competency, effort, and progress, and that teachers should award a separate grade in each category.

You don’t need a separate grade in “progress” to determine if a student has made any. You just need to track his grades in succeeding quarters and years. As for effort, we gave effort grades in my school for decades until our new computer grading system made awarding them a clerical nightmare. We also awarded checkmarks in areas that contribute to academic success, like homework completion and class participation, until our new computer program eliminated our ability to do that.

I won’t pretend that all the complexities of academic performance can be fully captured in a single alphabet character. Letter grades are shorthand. The question is, are they effective? Do they communicate what parents want and need to know about their children’s school performance?

Any grading system short of a comprehensive narrative, whether it consists of letters or numbers, is shorthand. Teachers’ comments have long provided a brief narrative, when letter grades need further explanation. For example, I commonly add a note when incomplete work and missing assignments have lowered a student’s overall grade. I also add comments about everything from strong effort to exemplary class participation.

I’ve found that for most parents this is enough. Those who want more information can and do call, write, or arrange for a conference. Over the years I’ve talked with many parents, and a face-to-face conversation almost always answers any lingering questions they have.

Reformers’ latest recycled marvel, standards-based grading, rests on the assumption that parents aren’t satisfied with a summary A through F in English, for example, but instead want multiple 4 through 1 grades in specific English categories. I’m skeptical as to the validity of those category grades, especially since so many assignments simultaneously involve and assess a combination of skills. I’m also not sure how many parents actually want separate grades assessing their child’s performance in “narrative” as opposed to “explanatory” writing, just two of the ten new standards-based, English grades each elementary student in my school will begin receiving this year.

Promoters insist these elaborate standards-based changes are a response to parental demands for better communication and reporting. Ironically, as part of the standards-based move to better communicate with parents, my students’ parents now receive three report cards a year instead of four. According to advocates, you can’t really compute meaningful standards-based grades over a nine-week marking period, prompting the shift to 12-week trimesters.

A grading system that can’t produce meaningful results in nine weeks isn’t much of a grading system. Changing how you report what students know doesn’t change how much they know. It’s also hard to reconcile proponents’ claims that standards-based grading isn’t the grassroots idea its boosters claim it is. It didn’t originate with parents. It was born in the fevered imaginations of experts and theorists who are strangers to the real world of kitchen tables and classrooms.

For how long will so few be permitted to visit so much folly and harm on so many?

Peter Berger teaches English at Weathersfield School. Poor Elijah would be pleased to answer letters addressed to him in care of the editor.
In Memoriam
Millicent A. Zaleski

FISHKILL-- Millicent A. Zaleski age 73 of Fishkill died peacefully on November 11, 2014 at home. Millicent was born July 15, 1941 in Southport, NY. She was the daughter of the late Adolph and Martha Guldi. On January 1, 1961 in New Paltz, NY, Millicent married Philip Zaleski.

Millicent was a retired teacher who taught second grade at Fishkill Plains Elementary School in the Wappingers Central School District. She enjoyed all aspects of teaching, especially the children. She often spoke about how fortunate she was to do something she loved so much. She retired July 1, 2001 after teaching for 37 years. She was a graduate of New Paltz College with a bachelor's degree and Western Connecticut State University with a master's degree.

Millicent lived in the Hudson Valley since 1960. She was always active. Throughout her life, she enjoyed playing tennis, being on the beach, canning and making jams, sewing, walking in nature and simply enjoying life.

Millicent is survived by her husband Philip; her son, Christopher Zaleski; and his wife, Rita, of Wappingers Falls; her daughter, Megan Z. Harris of Wappingers Falls and three grandchildren, Zoe, Maxwell and Kazimir Harris. She is also survived by two brothers, James Guldi, Daytona Beach FL, and Thomas Guldi, Southampton, NY and many nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by one brother, Robert Guldi.

There are no calling hours. Arrangements are under the direction of Robert H. Auchmoody Funeral Home, 1028 Main Street, Fishkill, New York. Millicent's final wishes will be carried out lovingly by her immediate family.

Memorial donations may be made to Hudson Valley Hospice which beautifully took care of Millicent in her final days.

For Millicent's guestbook or to send a sympathy card please visit www.hudsonvalleyfuneralhomes.com

Louise Schatzle

Louise Schatzle, an elementary Art teacher in the Wappingers Central School District at Oak Grove School during the 1970s, and at Haldane In Cold Spring prior, passed away Monday, November 10, 2014. She was 86.

The wife of Joe Schatzle, the WCSD Phys. Ed. man and track coach, who predeceased her in 2011, Louise was also a roving Art teacher in the District. Then chairman of the Art Department Tony Caccamo hired her during a school year when Draconian budget cuts temporarily reduced Art teaching positions in the WCSD.

Art attracted them. Louise met Joe Schatzle while both were beginning their teaching careers at Haldane in 1956. Louise taught Art and was in charge of Dramatics. They were married in 1957. In 1962, they moved to Wappingers Falls, and into the WCSD.

Born and raised in Derry, New Hampshire, the fourth child of five by Charles Edward Smith, owner of two large New England shoe factories, and Margaret Reid Smith, of Prince Edward Island, Louise graduated from high school in 1946 at Pinkerton Academy in Derry.

Studying art in Boston at Vesper George College for two years, and then at Massachusetts College of Art for four years, Louise obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Art Education from the latter. She was the first member of her family to go to college. She obtained a Masters Degree in Art Education from SUNY New Paltz in 1966.

College life in "The Hub" during the Fifties was unique. Louise dated the Olympic champion skater Dick Button. The department store Jordan Marsh held an annual Art Show and while at Mass Art Louise was a jury show finalist while several of her professors failed to make the cut. In Boston Common one afternoon, carrying her portfolio, late and in a hurry, she bumped into poet Robert Frost and novelist Thornton Wilder, just about bowling over Frost! She dated the baseball player Don Larsen -- who would later pitch the only perfect game in World Series history for the Yankees -- who was then playing for the old St. Louis Browns. From a box seat at Fenway Park behind the visitors dugout, Louise watched the Browns play the Red Sox. During the game, another of the Browns players came up into the stands to sit and chat with Louise for two innings. It was Satchel Paige!

Louise worked in "summer stock" costume and set design during her college years.

"Lulu" and Joe resided 21 years on Oakwood Drive raising their children. Joe took a sabbatical in 1970 to photograph WCSD elementary education. Later, he published 53 photographs in a book titled That They Might Become. He credited Louise for making him a photographer.

During the late 1970s, Louise decided to launch a business. Western printing in Poughkeepsie was then down-sizing and she bought 10,000 Sesame Street books for a nickel apiece; at $3 a piece she sold out the entire lot in one summer at the Aqueduct Flea Market. A lover of gardening, she decided to start her own fresh fruit and produce business, "Lulu the Green Grocer." For six years, she sold weekly at the Senior Center markets in the City of Poughkeepsie, delivering fresh produce to seniors, as well as at regional flea markets.

In 1983, divorced, "Lulu" moved her residence to Cape Cod, first in Wellfleet, then in Orleans. Selling antiques, vintage jewelry, fabrics and vintage ladies clothing, she was a fixture at the Cape's Wellfleet Drive-In Flea Market for 25 years.

She took up painting again. One of her watercolors titled "Below Fort Hill" -- of the spot where "The Great Beach" of the Atlantic meets the inlet of Orleans Cove -- was awarded $1000.00 in a Cape Cod Council on Aging jury show in 2002. Now in the collection of the Town of Orleans, it hangs permanently in the Rock Harbor gallery.

This past summer, the prestigious Cape Cod Art Association listed Louise as a Cape Cod artist. Two of her favorites Edward Hopper and Robert Motherwell are on that list.

Never prodigious as a painter, she worked in many mediums. She made furniture of iron, cement, and mosaic; she worked in ceramics. During the 1990s, she lived two years in Australia with her daughter’s family and taught her grandchildren art.

Louise survived four different cancer surgeries, dealt with Adult Onset Diabetes for about two decades, and suffered from C.O.P.D.

She is survived by four of her five children. All Roy C. Ketcham High graduates: Joe, Chaz, David, and Molly Immerzeel. Her sister Marlene Hogg of Peaceful Meadows in Massachusetts survives her, too. Her grandchildren have all followed in her footsteps: Hannah Schatzle is a Costume Coordinator in Hollywood; Kalvyen-Joy and Brandon Immerzeel are university students studying Industrial Design and Fine Arts, respectively; Oliver Schatzle is a 5th grader in Watertown, MA. Her third son Peter while a student at Oak Grove School was awarded Second Prize in the WCSD Art Show by Tony Caccamo in 1972; Peter predeceased her in 1974 at age 12.
Protecting your family for the future

It's important that your family members are financially protected throughout their lives. Have you stopped to consider what would happen to your spouse and/or children if you were to suddenly pass away?

Would your loved ones be able to continue to live in their home, pay regular bills and maintain a comfortable lifestyle? What about your final medical, burial or funeral expenses?

And it’s not a question of just having a life insurance policy... make sure you have enough coverage to provide for your family. Find a plan that’s right for you and your specific financial situation.

Plans designed specifically for NYSUT members
As NYSUT members, it makes prudent sense to look into the Term Life or Level Term Life Insurance Plans endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits. Both of these plans offer specific terms and rates designed exclusively with NYSUT members and their families in mind.

The Term Life Plan is available for NYSUT members and their spouses/domestic partners under age 85. If you are under age 65, you can apply for coverage from $25,000 up to $1 million at premiums negotiated specifically for NYSUT members.

Meanwhile, the Level Term Life Plan offers terms for 10, 15 or 20-year periods. The premium that you start with is projected to remain the same and the benefit amount will not decrease throughout the term – regardless of your age or health condition.

You can enjoy an additional savings of 15% on published rates if your local association has approved automatic deductions from your paycheck or pension check and you sign up for that benefit.

To learn more about the Member Benefits-endorsed Term Life or Level Term Life Insurance Plans, call 800-626-8101 or visit memberbenefits.nysut.org.

Member Appreciation Month is coming!

NYSUT Member Benefits wants to start the New Year off right with a celebration of the entire NYSUT membership.

It’s the strength of the more than 600,000 NYSUT members that makes it possible for Member Benefits to offer approximately 50 endorsed programs & services designed with you in mind.

This special celebration will be kicking off in January 2015 with the arrival of your new membership cards. This mailing will include a variety of special offers only available to NYSUT members.

These offers will continue into February 2015, which has been designated as Member Appreciation Month!

This will be a month filled with a series of special prize drawings for items donated by our endorsed program providers. To be eligible for these drawings, all you need to do is be a participant in our voluntary MAP Alert email service.

We will announce the winners of these special prize drawings exclusively on the Member Benefits website throughout the month of February.

For more details about this exciting event, visit the Member Benefits website at memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101.