President's Message

America is facing a significant challenge to recruit quality teachers for today’s classrooms, especially in math and science. On National Teacher Day, May 6th, NEA promoted the teaching profession and prepared spotlight commercials encouraging youth and mid-career adults to consider our worthy profession. Wayne Central School District faces the same challenge. Michael Havens has determined that we face two areas of critical need for certification of teachers. This year per contract language, application for reimbursement from our district to unit members seeking master’s certification in home and careers and secondary science can occur. You can get answers to any details of that process from HR. It is an example of our commitment to keep quality teachers in our classrooms at Wayne. Our negotiators and our district should be congratulated on this clause.

Maintaining stability in the professional unit at Wayne Central School District continues to be a goal of our district and of WTA. Turnover rates of new teachers are high. Nationally, one third of new hires leave the classroom within three years. We have been much more fortunate than the national rates. Your representative council is working hard to improve working conditions and job satisfaction. Any effort that you can give to support the improvement of climate and communication in your team will be welcomed. Our administration have been involved in this effort and conversations will continue to resolve issues that are reported.

Remember, it is only through your voice that change can occur.

WTA Reaching Out - Supporting Within

Sometimes we act on the behalf of all of us and the larger cause, as we have for the budget this year, and sometimes we act locally because it’s one of us and we are a community of support.

On behalf of all of us, WTA extends our sympathies to our colleague Gail Johnson and her family as they mourn the loss of their son, Toby. He was only 27 years old and died recently of cancer. Gail has been out on leave to take care of her son.

The Middle School has formed an action committee to organize meal support for the family. Faculty and staff have signed up to take turns making meals to be delivered each week to the family to help support them in their time of need. WTA’s social committee will also be making a donation to the Puts Cancer Center in memory of Toby.

Two other local families have suffered tragic losses this past month as well and our Weisenreider fund committee will be reaching out to them. Larry Zerniak, the father of a 4th grader and kindergartener at Freewill Elementary School died suddenly Easter weekend. He was an active volunteer as well within the Freewill Community.

Wayne Brown died as the result of a tragic motorcycle accident at route 350 and Paddy Lane the last weekend of April. His wife, Linda has been in critical condition in the hospital and will probably remain in the hospital for at least 4 to 6 months. They have two children, a 4th grader at Freewill and a 9th grader at the High School.

WTA extends their condolences to the families and friends. We offer our support, and stand together with them in their time of need.
Health Benefits Fair

- May 19th—23rd
- New 1 x Open Enrollment period from May 19th thru June 19th.
- New health plan options

Rule of Thumb #6
"Know your health plan coverage—be an informed consumer."

WTA Issues acted upon:
- Starting salaries reviewed for compliance with contract (done annually).
- Compensation to be given for K-3 literacy computer training.
- Job Share to be offered again in 2003-04.

Issues under consideration:
- Compensation for curriculum development by unit plan.
- Elementary Special Education committee . . . .

Rule of thumb #7
"If ever you feel that you are being accused of actions inappropriately ask for union representation immediately.”

Super Charge Yourself the NEA Way!

85% of the top 1/5 of the wealthiest people in America send their children to Public Schools! 40,000 people registered for the NY State Education Rally and a record breaking attendance for any rally in Albany was set that day at approximately 50,000 people actually in attendance! NEA New York membership is about 44,000 members strong.

Yet, today only 13% of American workers are unionized as compared with 33% at the height of the unionization movement.

Your educational union makes good sense. We are public education, from pre-K to higher education and our voice is strong. We are out there every day advocating for you and for what you believe in. Our union researches best practices and provides invaluable training and support. But we are only as strong as you make us.

Here is how you can help yourself, your profession, your colleagues. . . . Locally there are several ways to become involved:

- The American Education Committee,
- Communications Committee,
- Teacher Recognition Committee,
- Student Recognition Committee
- Social Committee,
- Weisenreider/Community Outreach Committee,
- Nominations Committee,
- Political Action Committee,
- Scholarship Committee,
- Constitution Committee,
- Board of Education Liaison Committee, and
- Newsletter Committee.

There are several elected positionsin WTA: officers, building level representatives, negotiators, and delegates that represent us at the state level.

Leadership trainings are offered twice per year, the next one is being held August 4th—7th right here in Rochester at RIT. These are great and applicable to any organizing effort from the classroom to large scale efforts. You can learn more about unions, communication, school boards, grievances, bargaining, legal issues, and more. We want you to take advantage of these opportunities.

At the state level we have several committees guiding the position, stance and educational direction here in NY state. These committee usually meet about 2 times per year and membership is open to any NEA member. These committees are:
1. Career and Technical Education Committee,
2. Educational Support Professionals
3. Human Rights
4. Instructional Professional Development
5. Legislative/Political Action Coordinating Council
6. Multicultural Affairs
7. Retirement
8. Special Education
9. Technology
10. Community College

As Greg Nash, our NEA NY current President stated in the April Advocate, "The most interesting thing going on at the national level is bipartisan bashing of America’s schools. . . . It is our responsibility to take action, . . . We have to be the ones to teach them.”

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While the government seems to be walking away from it’s commitment to children, it’s workers, and public education—we can not.

It’s actually very simple to become involved. Talk to your building rep, e-mail one of us officers, make a commitment to yourself to take a stand wherever your passion lies. It’s a great way to reawaken yourself, to mix it up a bit, get to know others in the district or the state.

Feed your passion. Let the difference you make every day become super charged!