President's Message

The annual professional performance review (APPR) has been assessed and modified by a committee of teachers and administrators with consultation from technology and our counseling unit. The goal to evaluate teachers, psychologists and counselors consistently across the district has been addressed and put in an easy to read and use document. The final draft will be available soon.

Training will be provided annually to all probationary teachers during the mandatory summer sessions. Additionally, the tenured staff will be trained yearly at the opening of school. Your copy of the document will be available soon.

Please continue to analyze any concern that is blocking your path to great instruction for our students. Allow your building representative to assist you in the conversations with your principal that will lead to a resolution. We are having great success with this approach with many successful conflict resolutions this month. See your Rep. Rap for details.

Remember that the ability to teach is a gift not all has received!
Pat

Peek- n- Peak ! A Halloween Treat!

Five of our WTA council members attended the annual leadership convention in Peek-n-Peak over the weekend of October 26 and 27th. Kathy Emison, Lori Sensenbach, Ronnie Steele, Georgia LoCicero and Pat Yates attended workshops on ESEA, legal issues, grievance, negotiations and the roles of building representatives.

Over 160 local union leaders attended. It was by far one of the better leadership trainings offered and the turn out was great! Much of the attention given in each workshop was focused on problem solving. Pat stated that, “We hope to use the information gained to better serve you as we create the best possible environment for learning.”

Also in attendance was our own Larry Ruth (with wife Jacque) as he continues to represent Wayne Central at the top level of the NEA leadership.

“...so when you see Larry, make sure that you wish him success as he begins his campaign for secretary/treasurer of NEA/NY. Elections will occur this spring of 2003.

We hope to use the information gained to better serve you as we create the best possible environment for learning.” Pat Yates

Welcome back to Lori Dow from her maternity leave!
Heather Melnick has been awarded the certification to be a Field Band Adjudicator/Judge!

Baby girl—Olivia born to Laurie Gilbert.
Baby boy—Nathan born to Ann Wigent

Welcome to Lori Dow joining our reading specialists’ team.

Congratulations to all those involved in the hosting of the All State Music Festival especially our esteemed music staff!

Pat Yates, President
Lori Sensenbach, Internal Vice President
Elizabeth Peters, External Vice President
Lisa Twitchell, Treasurer
Martha Hanley, Secretary
Kathy Emison, Retirement Delegate
While these classes may be doable at the primary levels, the disparity among cognitive abilities widens and is apparent to all among middle school and high school students and their teachers.

Unfortunately, “tracking” by cognitive ability has become a dirty word in education. Five years ago, I agreed to try blending my group of special class students into a math class, which would be team-taught by a regular education teacher and myself, with a teacher aid also present in the classroom to assist.

While we worked on solving two-step equations with the group, there were students who had difficulty counting money, telling time, and taking basic measurements and who had no grasp whatsoever of basic math facts.

What essentially happened was that we had three or four different lessons going on in the same classroom. For what purpose? It was distracting, it slowed the pace of learning for all learners and was frustrating for student and teacher alike.

I agree that standards need to be raised for all students. I believe all students have the ability and desire to learn. However, the point that this educational philosophy misses is that we need to find the baseline of a student’s ability, diagnose and place that student with students of similar cognitive ability or at least within a reasonable range of ability, and enable each student to grow to his or her maximum potential from this baseline.

A successful student’s self-esteem will flourish, but we have been led to believe that tracking destroys a child’s self-esteem. However, it was heartbreaking to see the tears of the frustrated students who were totally lost and overwhelmed in that math class. No child in that situation gained self-esteem.

Shame on all of us for allowing these situations to occur. This philosophy is not exclusive to one district, but unfortunately is the way that State Education Commissioner, Richard Mills has decided is best for all of us to educate.

We owe all of our students the very best we have to offer. Unfortunately a one room school house philosophy is not it.

Building Character with WTA Characters!

Three characters from Freewill Elementary have taken the Character Education scene by storm (or should I say by star)! Marty Hanley, Tammy Scheuer, and MJ Hoffman have been spotted around town presenting “Reach for the Stars: A Plan for Character Education.” First they headed to the 17th Annual Child Caregivers Workshop Days in Canandaigua on October 26th then they headed back again to the Building Communities of Character conference at the Inn on the Lake in Canandaigua on November 6, 7, and 8th.

They have even been featured in the Wayne County Mail as having a “fresh approach.” “We have to get it out in the community and apply it across the community,” says Marty. “It’s more of a philosophy than a program. . . . We try to infuse character into everything we do from activities to literature.” STARS stands for many things, two of which are: Students That Are Really Special

Sylvia Hungerford, one of our very own special education/reading teachers recently submitted this editorial in which she was featured as a guest essaying in the local Democrat and Chronicle last month on October 29, 2002.

Putting Students of varying abilities in one class works for none of them.

Schools and Standards:

I am a teacher, and I am concerned to the point where I can no longer sit back and watch the very destruction of a profession I have been involved with since 1975.

I have seen the pendulum of educational philosophy swing back and forth many times. Each educational commissioner has wanted to leave his distinctive “mark” on the educational process—some for better and some for worse. My concern is with the philosophical viewpoint that “one size fits all.”

What we currently espouse is basically a one-room schoolhouse. Students, regardless of cognitive ability, are to be “blended/included” into heterogeneously grouped classrooms.