Restoring the Value of Learning

At the recent NEA/NY Delegate Assembly, I had the opportunity to hear Jonathan Kozol, author of *The Shame of the Nation* and *Death at an Early Age*, speak. He is an amazingly dynamic, impassioned educator whose topic was the state of apartheid that exists in thousands of our inner-city schools. He spoke of the appalling discrepancy in funding, the dismal and decaying buildings that serve as schools, and the rigid formulas for curricula which “teach to the tests.”

Listening to Kozol, I found myself remembering what it was to feel impassioned about education and learning. All too often lately, I have attended training days and heard presentations that are based on education as a business. The charts and graphs and data may be necessary for planning and accountability, but they seem cold and removed from what actually happens in the classroom.

I recently had a conversation with a gentleman who teaches in a New Jersey prison. He emigrated from India a number of years ago so that his sons could attend college here in the U.S. It was interesting to hear him use the same statistics regarding the number of engineers being graduated in the U.S., China, and India that are cited in *The World is Flat*. However, Mr. Gopol used the numbers to point out how education, not engineers, is valued in the different countries.

I worry that, as a society, we have become complacent. We accept the fact that teachers are portrayed in the media as bumbling and incompetent. We pay hundred of dollars for cable, concerts, and sporting events but grumble about our school taxes. Our politicians pass mandates but neglect to “put their money where their mouths are.” We pretend that what is happening in our city schools does not matter because it’s not us.

I view the recent merger of NEA/NY and NY-SUT as a positive step for many reasons. It will take a larger association, many voices, and considerable effort to restore the value of learning to its rightful priority in the U.S.

Sincerely,
Lori Sensenbach

WTA Scholar-ship Commit-tee... raised $130 for scholarships during the HS boys basketball season with the 3-point shooting contest at half-time. Way to go contestants!

Welcome aboard to our new officers for the 2006-07 school year! You have elected:

**Jason Carter** - President
**Lori Sensenbach** - Internal VP
**Julie Diffenderfer** - External VP
**Kathy Emison, Brad Labarge & Nancy Domm** - At-Large Negotiators
**Beth Peters & Jenny Wing** - NEA/NY Delegates

WTA is sponsoring a raffle to benefit the Weisenreder/Community Outreach fund. Last year over 35 families received assistance. Tickets are $1.00 each, 6 for $5.00, or 13 for $10.00. If your building does not have a basket, please purchase tickets for the Freewill basket valued at about $150! The winner will be pulled Friday, June 2nd. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!
Did you miss 3rd Thursday? That’s okay We’re sending donuts this week—May 25th!

Topic: Elections and Bylaw Amendment Vote!

Issues currently being explored:

♦ Monitoring transfer concerns and process.
♦ Monitoring posting of job openings.
♦ Monitoring MS scheduling.

Issues acted upon/resolved:

♦ Passed proposal regarding Negotiator’s pay
♦ Certification area concerns resolved.
♦ Sick day returned to member.

Don’t forget to:

• VOTE for WTA building reps and the WTA Bylaws amendment on Thursday, May 25th.
• Go to the LAST WTA sponsored DISTRICT WIDE TGIF Friday, June 9th, at Ontario Golf Club.
• Buy a raffle ticket for one of the garden baskets before June 2nd!

Rule of thumb #31: "Words are not for hurting. Words are for helping!" Remember professionals use professional language.

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From the State Office

United we stand! NEA-NY and NYSUT delegates both voted in favor of merger this past month! So as of September 1st, 2006 we will be a single state union known as “NYSUT NEA-AFT” NEA-NY has about 35,000 members, while NYSUT has about 525,000. Together we will be 560,000 strong! NEA-NY President Robin Rapaport states, "We will have a stronger more united voice on education issues in Albany and our members will have access to new resources and programs available through NYSUT."

For our 12 retiring teachers some good news: NYSUT has more that 140,000 members across the state and even a Florida regional council for NY state! Please watch for your next edition of the NEA-NY Advocate for information pertaining to new retirees. There is a window of opportunity for life time membership for $100 through August 31st!

Regarding dues, the state and national portion of our dues will be frozen at a new level for the next 5 years until the completion of the articulated transition period between NEA-NY and NYSUT.

Mike Kramer’s last official visits for this school year are as follows:
High School Mon. May 22nd
Middle School Tues. May 23rd
Freewill Thurs. May 25th
O. E. Wed. May 31st
O. P. Thurs. June 1st

Mike is our registered representative for the Legend Group and can be reached at (585)272-8470. His office is located at 1425 Jefferson Road, Rochester, NY 14623 (in case you are in need of a good cookie over the summer!)

NYSTRS has announced its series of statewide pre-retirement planning seminars for the summer 2006. These daylong seminars features presentations and discussions on your NYSTRS benefits and other retirement - related topics.

ROCHESTER dates are:
Tues. July 25 and August 22 from 8:30am - 3:00pm @ the Radisson Hotel 175 Jefferson Road , Henrietta.

For further details please visit nystrs.org or call 800-356-3128 ext 6180 to register.
This is must "go to" if you are planning to retire in the next couple of years. Take advantage of free information to help plan your future!!!

AXA’s Men in Black (Dan and Dave) are giving away money! Not only do they look great and help set up retirement, they serve their communities and give back to the kids! Two WCSD students are winners of AXA scholarships! Blair Germain and Laura Olds have received $2,000. Each!

Dan and Dave will be in the buildings one more time this year. Their last scheduled visits are on Wednesdays as follows:
High School May 3rd
O.P. May10th
F.E. May 17th
O.E. May 24t

They may be reached over the summer at 175 Corporate Woods, Suite 250 in Rochester. Dan’s telephone number is (585) 475-8421 and Dave’s is (585) 475-8446.