Dear Union Members,

Welcome to 2015! I hope you each had an enjoyable holiday season and found time to rest and rejuvenate. Each year the new year brings change and this year is no different. Our district once again finds itself in the midst of change. It is my hope that WTA may have a role in process of finding a new district superintendent.

The BOE has hired search agent to assist them in the process. The search agents have put out a survey for all stakeholders to complete. As your executive council completed the survey, we found ourselves wondering what our members are seek from its leadership.

To that end, we have put together a short survey for you to complete. This survey will allow union leadership to gain a better understanding of your needs and current perceptions of the district. A summary of the responses will be shared with our Union Leaders. Please be looking for the survey in the upcoming weeks.

As your reps have mentioned, we would prefer to send these surveys via your personal email, so if you haven’t already done so please give your personal email to representative or send it to myself. WTA will ONLY use your email on occasion for important union communication.

I encourage each one of you to complete the survey and share openly and honestly. Additionally, responses may be shared with your negotiators, if we find the information will help them in their upcoming negotiation meetings with the district.

Speaking of negotiations, the team will commence formal negotiations with the district in early February. As a reminder, what happens at the table during negotiations is confidential. Your negotiators will not be able to give specific details until we have come to an agreement. Please refrain from asking them for specifics.

On a broader note, New York public education system and educators are under attack. I cannot remember a fight like this one. Please read the letter on page 3 from a fellow teacher.

We must prepare now as the battle has begun in New York. If you are similar to my beliefs, you don’t seek the limelight or confrontation, as you want to focus on your students.

However, you must understand that there are people who seek conflict and relish a fight. They think they can bully their beliefs and way of thinking on us. They use their deep pockets and pay others to do their dirty work to blame teachers and the public school system.

Have you heard “public schools are a monopoly,” stated our own Governor Cuomo. It is time for us to unite, and speak the truth loudly for all to hear.

ONLY we can change this situation as we are the ones who understand what it is like to be at ground zero! NYSUT is putting a million dollars into an ad campaign. They can not fight this battle alone. We need to stand up for the next generation of students, educators and for the rights we have earned.

NY teachers must confidently stand tall; else accept the fate of educators who have fallen before us, look what happened in Wisconsin.

A battle is raging right now in Buffalo and public education, teachers and students are fighting as best they can.

What can you do? Contribute to VOTECOPE to strengthen NYSUT’s efforts as they continue to fight for us.

Speak the truth and advocate for our students because we know what is right and what works for them.

Get involved and become knowledgeable, so you can speak confidently to our family, friends and community members about the issues. It means standing tall, confident and sending a message that we demand RESPECT and are not going to be bullied anymore. (cont. p2)
WE must change public perception now! We must unite and start today. What is one educational issue that is important enough to motivate you into action? You need to somehow find the motivation to support this cause or don’t complain when the sweeping changes and reforms come.

It is January, time to set our New Year’s resolutions, I ask that one of your resolutions is to become a change agent. You can begin to change public perceptions, just by speaking to your family and friends about the issues that face us. Share all that we do as teachers, explain to why we have pensions, tenure and seniority.

Pensions are deferred compensation for our level of training, education and service to remain in the public sector. Tenure is our means to be able to speak up for our students, for what's right, to advocate loudly if necessary for their wellbeing. Once a teacher is granted tenure the teacher is only guaranteed a system of due process, NOT a job for life. Seniority provides teachers with assurances that older teachers who tend to earn more money cannot be let go. Seniority is based on length of service in a specific tenure area. If a school district abolishes teaching positions, then seniority is the sole criterion in determining which teachers are laid off. Seniority is the reason a teacher is recalled should a vacancy in the teacher’s tenure area occur within seven years.

Together we can make a difference for each other, our students and the generations to come.

May 2015 be filled with abundant knowledge, joy, friendship and laughter.

In Solidarity,
Michele

DISTRICT OFFERS UPDATED TEACHER SUBSTITUTE PAY RATES—

Effective January 5, 2015 the rates for substitute teachers was increased to become competitive with neighboring districts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Rate Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-certificated</td>
<td>$75 - $82/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificated</td>
<td>$85 - $92/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment &gt;15 days</td>
<td>$95 - $100/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificated Retiree</td>
<td>$110 - $115/day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Karen and Esteemed Colleagues,

"But we have teachers that have been found guilty of sexually abusing students who we can't get out of the classroom." ~Andrew Cuomo

"Albany has been too concerned with protecting the pension rights of teachers and not enough with the future of students." ~Andrew Cuomo

Enough.

That first quote is a perfect example of linguistic framing. It's surgical and very, very effective. With one sentence he has associated this union and every public school teacher in the state with the protection of child molesters. Who does that? A politician out for blood.

I can't imagine this statement can be in any way true, so it needs to be countered just as effectively. (Exactly how well is child protective services doing under this governor? Food for thought, Karen...)

And now he's coming after our pensions. There is no reason to believe otherwise. That second quote is an introduction to what will be called "pension reform." Bet on it. There is no doubt that this governor won't be satisfied until NYSUT has been reduced to, at best, the eviscerated organizations we see in Indiana, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Florida and elsewhere. He and Tisch want to see one out of every ten of our colleagues rated ineffective based on very problematic CC aligned assessments. He wants more charter schools. We know all of this.

This is our moment of truth. Recently I blogged the following:

1) Incompetent implementation of so-called education reforms. Check.
2) Implement teacher evaluation process using student assessments as percentage of overall teacher performance. Check
3) Artificial manipulation of cut scores of Common Core aligned assessments to guarantee a high failure rate. Check.
4) Shift assessments used to evaluate teachers to Common Core aligned tests. If number four occurs it is check and mate.

It is time for the locals to mobilize. We can no longer allow the majority of our colleagues to sit passively while a few act on their behalf. The governor is controlling the public narrative. This is not a negotiation.

This is an execution. We are either sheep or a union founded on activism. We need to take control of the narrative and we have to do it quickly and effectively. Every local needs to call an emergency meeting this coming week. We need to take action now and we need to be relentless. Those on Twitter need to be relentless. Bloggers need to be relentless. We need a relentless flood of letters to every local paper. We need a relentless public presence at every state event.

It worked for the anti-fracking activists. It can work for us.

But we need to acknowledge this blatant war Cuomo has declared on us, and the children of New York State who he is USING to achieve his political ends and satisfy his hedge fund managing cronies and we need to do it now.

Michael Lambert
English Department
Gloversville High School
Congratulations to Amber Whitney, (HS) on the birth of her new daughter. Olivia Grace Whitney was born on Saturday November 15th @1:05 am. She is 7lb 14 oz, 19.5 in long! from Amber and her family. Everyone is so excited about their newest addition!

Congratulations to Miles Lewis (MS) for becoming a grandparent. Teresa, welcomed Jake Michael Sanna into the world early this morning. 7lbs 7oz and everyone is doing well other than those of us who didn’t get enough sleep last night. Brian and Teresa, are both working as special education teachers in Fairport.

Congratulations to Ashley Fralick (OP) on the birth of her son Camden John born on 11/11/14 He is 8lbs 13oz and 21 inches long. Mom baby and family are all doing well!

Retirement News from Liz Waring Retirement Delegate

A new set of NYSTRS Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP) seminars has been released for the winter and spring. Take a moment to consider attending a PREP seminar by reviewing the upcoming winter/spring seminar dates:
http://www.nystrs.org/main/retirement-planning/preplan-seminars.htm

Additionally, a NYSTRS representative will be making a presentation, specifically aimed at newer teachers on Tuesday, February 10th in the HS Library from 3:30 – 4:30. Please bring your EmplId, which is found on your paycheck. I will also be there to assist staff who would like assistance registering for MyNYSTRS which provides electronic access to your benefit profile.

And, just as a reminder, Article VI of our contract states that a WTA member who meets all of the criteria for retirement must provide “a firm letter of resignation, specifying the effective retirement date at least 150 days before the effective date.”
Subject Area Committees gather in Albany for intensive union work

More than 140 members gathered in Albany to launch a new term on NYSUT's Subject Area Committees. The 12 committees serve as a sounding board on everything from authentic assessments to lesson plan peer review.

"This is about practitioners from all parts of the state learning about each other and sharing common concerns," said NYSUT Vice President Catalina Fortino. "It's about giving practitioners voice and building teacher leadership and unionism."

The 12 subject area committees include Arts: Music, Dance, Theater & Visual Arts; Career and Technical Education; Early Childhood Education; Educational Technology; English Language Arts; English Language Learners; Health Education, Physical Education and Family & Consumer Sciences; Languages Other Than English; Math, Science & Technology; Social Studies; Special Education; and Teacher Centers.
New membership cards to be mailed soon

Members of NYSUT local unions will receive new NYSUT membership cards by mail at their home address shortly.

These valuable cards come with a new feature this year: a miniature version for a key ring that lets members conveniently access benefits and discounts, as well as streamlined check in to local and statewide union events.

The mailing includes a letter from President Karen Magee explaining the benefits, and responsibilities, of union membership. It also includes a brief guide to "what membership means to you" and details of the broad and growing array of NYSUT Member Benefits.

NYSUT Social Justice All Year Round

What is Social Justice All Year Round?

NYSUT's Social Justice All Year Round initiative draws attention to the many social justice issues our members and their communities face. A specific social justice issue will be highlighted in each issue of NYSUT United, with resources and ideas for the classroom and local action. Upcoming Social Justice All Year Round topics are:

February: Social Justice (World Day of Social Justice, Feb. 20)
March: Women's Rights (Women's History Month; International Women's Day, March 8)
April: Children's Rights (Child Abuse Prevention Month; Global Youth Services Day, April 17-19; Bring your Sons and Daughters to Work Day, April 23)
May: Immigrant Workers' (May Day/International Workers Day, May 1)
June: Environmental Justice (World Environment Day, June 5)

Why is social justice important?

Social justice lies at the heart of unionism. As we fight to protect collective bargaining rights, strike back against education privatization and defend the rights of members, unions demonstrate the power of grassroots action and show how they can be vehicles for change within communities.

The goal of NYSUT's Social Justice All Year Round initiative is to take our social justice mission to the next level — moving beyond simple fundraising to actions that make REAL community change on issues important to members and the communities they live in.

NYSUT subject area committees serve as 'early warning system'

As the only English as a second language teacher in the rural Medina School District, Colleen Moody often feels isolated. But that feeling disappeared over the weekend when she met with her peers as a new member of one of NYSUT's 12 subject area committees. "This was so much more than I expected - totally worth my five-hour drive," said Moody, a 20-year ESL educator from western New York. "So many times you go to professional development and things get presented to you. This was just the opposite." . . . "You realize that whether you're teaching in a big city, a suburb or in a 'department of one' like me, we all have common concerns," Moody said. "I feel connected and energized. I don't feel so alone."

That's exactly the idea behind NYSUT's subject area committees - to create an opportunity for educators in a dozen different disciplines to identify emerging issues and share concerns. . . . "Anybody who (criticizes) unions should have been a fly on the wall in our meeting," said a teacher from the Special Education Committee. "We spent hours and hours talking about kids. That's what it's about." . . .

. . . NYSUT Vice President Catalina Fortino, who chaired and served many years on the ELI Committee, said the newly appointed members would provide the practitioner's perspective on a wide range of current and proposed policies. Committee members will serve as "an early warning system" by communicating issues and concerns from the field directly to NYSUT staff assigned to each committee. During their three-year terms, members will participate in online meetings, serve as peer reviewers for lesson plans developed by members, prepare examples of multiple measures of student achievement, and identify priority areas and communication needs. . . . "It's about giving practitioners voice and building teacher leadership and unionism."

NYSUT Social Justice All Year Round

Source: NYSUT United

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Wayne's World