



TODAY

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This banner greeted special education paraeducators at Barre City Elementary and Middle School, part of a "We Love Our Paras" day.

Special ed teachers in Barre honor their paras

BARRE CITY -- Special education paraeducators throughout Vermont accomplish demanding, important work every day. The students they serve are uniquely challenged, and have complex special needs, along with extreme difficulty

learning. Too often, the patience, skill, and expertise of paraeducators goes unappreciated -- but not at the Barre City Elementary and Middle School. There, special education teachers declared a "We Love Our Paraeducators" day.

They handed each of their 40 paras a personal invitation to a breakfast held in their honor. "The teachers did the cooking," said paraeducator Pam Burt, "and it was wonderful, with lots of awesome home cooking."

Pam says the special day was intended to be a morale booster, and it worked wonders. "It feels very nice to be appreciated," she explained. Besides the breakfast, the paras' special day included banners, chocolates, and a letter to the editor of the local newspaper praising their work. "Our paraeducators are a very talented group of people whom we ask each day to help us teach some of the most challenging students in our school," said the letter signed by Judith Jones for all the teachers. The letter concluded: "They work with a wide variety of students for whom learning is extremely difficult and who are often experiencing emotional or behavioral problems as well. Our paras are skilled and do their jobs well. They come to school each day prepared to patiently and expertly deliver specialized instruction and/or follow complicated educational or behavior plans. We would like to ask the citizens of Barre City to join with us in saying 'thank you' to our dedicated staff." ■



Pam Burt samples the homecooking provided by the special education teachers in her school. The banner on the wall reads: "Thank you for hard work and devotion."

In recognition of your commitment to the better education of the children of this school, the creative and caring work you do, and unwavering job performance in times of stress and strain, February 14, 2003 will be proclaimed as We Love Our Paraeducators Day at Barre City Elementary Middle School. Be it known that without your loyalty and dedication, we could never do our jobs. Gratefully, the special education teachers and staff

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Iraq and Our Schools

By Angelo J. Dorta, President

This is the first time I've ever written a commentary and fervently hoped that my words ultimately would be unnecessary. It's the first time I've preferred that, in the end, there be no audience for my analysis or suggestions.

It's also the first time I've felt compelled to use *Vermont-NEA Today* to write about an international topic not fully and directly related to education. As such, I know that some Association members may consider my action to be a misuse of the monthly column afforded to me.

The topic is Iraq, of course. I'm writing in early March without knowing for sure whether the threat of war actually will be fulfilled. Apparently, the final decision will be made in the next few days following a United Nations Security Council debate on competing resolutions. By the time Vermont-NEA members can read this commentary, all of us probably will be daily witnesses to a controversial war, or else be thankful for the continued absence of overt conflict.

Understandably, the minds and emotions of Vermont educators also have been consumed by the news of war build-up, domestic and international political support and dissent, and the looming realities faced by our family members, friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens in the military services, who are obligated to carry out U.S. foreign policy. The number of American troops stationed in the Middle East and poised for war now nearly equals the maximum force of 250,000 in Vietnam in 1968, after three years of military build-up.

Many of us worry, too, about new miseries that will be added to the civilian populations of Iraq and its Middle East neighbors if hostilities widen and if chemical, biological, and/or radiological weapons are added to the battlefield environment. Also, the likely possibility of Islamic retribution in the form of attempted, stepped-up terrorist attacks on U.S. citizens at home and abroad weighs heavily on our minds.

Obviously, President Bush's policy towards Iraq, related proceedings within the United Nations, and America's relationships with other countries all are politically sensitive issues. And, it is increasingly clear from news accounts that our nation once again will re-visit a level of disagreement and divisiveness over the aims and prosecution of an Iraq war reminiscent of the Vietnam era. Protests at home and overseas regarding U.S. policy towards Iraq, however, have been large and immediate, in contrast to the much slower spread of opposition to the Vietnam War and to the overwhelming 1991 public support for multinational mobilization in Desert Storm, following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

I know that discussions, debates, and studies about the likelihood of war with Iraq and related issues have increased dramatically in recent weeks in Vermont middle schools and high schools. Some very aware and savvy primary and intermediate level children, often stimulated by overheard home conversations and broadcast news programs, also have expressed sentiments and questions to their teachers and classmates.

Our task is to educate our students, not indoctrinate them...

Consequently, public school educators are best advised to ensure that a balance of opinion is represented in classroom discussions, school-wide assemblies, and officially sanctioned school activities. After all, our task is to educate our students, not indoctrinate them. Including varied viewpoints also will help nurture student respect for each other's opinions.

Many education legal experts and national education organizations also recommend that educators not openly side with one point of view in their classrooms during school hours, despite the traditional American rights to hold strong personal beliefs and of self-expression. Such an approach helps to foster fact-based critical thinking and decision-making among students. It also limits teachers' exposure to community critics and possible disciplinary proceedings, justified or not.

Some school districts have policies that govern the discussion of controversial issues. These policies should be explicit and well known, so that educators and their students know in advance the acceptable boundaries and any limitations on classroom activities. Even so, there is no better protection for teachers than the use of sound, professional judgment at all times.

Signs of the growing controversy already are affecting our Vermont public schools and public school educators. On March 5th, two hundred Mount Abraham Union High School students in Bristol marched away from classes to hold a two-hour, mid-day anti-war demonstration on the town green. Meanwhile, two dozen high school students took their protest inside the State House right to Governor Jim Douglas's ceremonial office. To his credit, Gov. Douglas met with the young demonstrators and attempted to answer their many questions.

Student anti-war rallies and walkouts, as well as counter-demonstrations, also were held at the University of Vermont, Middlebury College, and Castleton State. They all were part of the one-day "Books, Not Bombs" national protest that apparently involved tens of thousands of high school and college students on March 5th.

Legally, students' "political speech" is somewhat protected in a school environment, according to a recent article in *Education Week*. "The 1969 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* upheld students' right to wear black armbands in school to protest the United States' involvement in Vietnam. In its decision, the Court noted that such speech was 'quiet and passive.'"

However, disruption of school activities and infringement on other students' rights clearly are not legally protected, the article explains. The more the "speech" occurs in a school setting or school-sponsored activity, the more power school administrators can wield over such events.

Inevitably, civil rights and contentious provisions for increased government power to investigate individual citizens under the new Patriot Act are implicated in the debate over Iraq and terrorism. They can become rich material for social studies instruction and student learning.

For example, a student in Dearborn, Michigan was sent home from high school for wearing a T-shirt with a picture of President Bush and the words "International Terrorist." A man was arrested for trespassing in an Albany, New York privately-owned shopping mall for wearing a shirt with similar sentiments.

Due to protests from several parents and community members, a school in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania shelved its plans to have elementary students assemble hygiene kits of soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, hairbrushes, bandages, and other toiletries for delivery to Iraqi children and refugees through the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization. The items will be donated to a local homeless shelter instead.

The money for my school will be used to bomb theirs...

Perhaps the longer-lasting school impact of actual war in Iraq, however, will be financial. "The money for my school will be used to bomb theirs," read the sign of one high school protestor in Massachusetts. Despite the poor economy and the President's proposal for additional federal tax cuts, more billions of dollars also are slated for military action and nation-building in Iraq, while U.S. school districts everywhere face state budget cuts for textbooks, employees' salaries, and even consider shortening the school year.

"Education is the food that nourishes the nation's soul. When public officials refuse to provide adequate school resources for the young, it's the same as parents refusing to feed their children," said New York Times columnist Bob Herbert recently.

Will public schools starved of needed resources for the foreseeable future also be a legacy of war in Iraq? ■

Mid-Session Legislative Report

School funding issues dominate

By Joel D. Cook

The greatest debate in the Vermont Legislature this session is about money for schools. It is also about the interplay of politics, ideology, economics, and human imperfection. The immediate need is for the State to provide school districts – and their taxpayers – all the money the State collected from them. The failure to do so, yet, provides the key to understanding why projected school tax rates for this next year have jumped so precipitously. And it also has contributed to the momentum to “do something about” Act 60.

So, will Act 60 be “reformed”?

If so, to what purpose and to whose benefit? These same questions dominated the political landscape in Montpelier during the last legislative session. The result then was no “reform,” with a lot of political posturing about who was to blame. This time around, legislators genuinely understand they must “do something,” a sentiment no doubt reinforced at Town Meetings across the state. Once again, however, the questions are to what purpose and to whose benefit.

Is the purpose the improvement of education? Is it to maintain the viability of small rural schools or, conversely, should State policy be to shut some of them down? Is it to increase class size, at least beyond the 3rd grade level, or should the State leave that kind of decision to local districts, responding to local conditions? Should the State manage all special education, and pay for it all, or should the State assist local districts in defending their positions regarding the contents of IEPs?

What about health insurance?

Does the State have an appropriate role in making school employees’ health insurance “more affordable,” or will legislators learn how effectively that particular task has been managed jointly by school boards and this Association over the past decade? All these questions, and more (see the next paragraph), are being discussed.

And, of course, there also is the usual litany of ideologically driven stuff masquerading as “cost containment.” There are always proposals to restrict school employee rights. They don’t always find their way into school funding discussions. Here, for example, are some of the items included, by a subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee, in a list of self-styled “cost control ideas” individual members would like to see examined: public school choice, statewide teacher contract, RIF by seniority (I think that means eliminating seniority-based layoffs), making your negotiations with school boards open to the public, merit pay, eliminate tenure, voter approval of your contracts,

making teacher retirement a defined contribution, rather than a defined benefit, program, and more.

As all this is going on, federal law, with its unceasing and increasing testing requirements, educator qualifications, and mandated “supplemental services,” is fast upon us, with study after study confirming that to meet its requirements states will have to spend more – not less – on their children. And, Governor Douglas, with barely sufficient support from the House, pushed through, at least to the Senate, a reduction in the rate of the statewide property tax for next year in a form that helps higher income households and businesses. And, on top of that, he appears to be holding firm to a plan that would deny schools – and local taxpayers – about \$25 million or so in State funds that current law states should be used to reduce local property tax burdens.

“Common level of appraisal”

The basic factor driving public debate this year is the so-called “common level of appraisal,” or “CLA.” All that refers to is the legal mechanism, dating from well before Act 60 was enacted, that smooths out the differing standards used by local listers: it tends to make appraised property values mirror their actual market value. Because our listers are human beings, they vary from one another in how they apply the same standards in appraising similar properties. Our property taxes are determined by the property’s value and the property tax rate. The statewide property tax rate is fixed: right now it’s \$1.10 for every \$100 of assessed value. If property is assessed locally at below its fair market value, the CLA process brings its stated value up, thereby increasing the tax to be paid on the property. What’s happened this past year in particular is a major increase in property values, as moneyed people have turned to real estate investment in the wake of recent downturns in the stock market.

Under Act 60, as originally conceived, the increases in property values wrought by the CLA would be irrelevant to local taxpayers. That’s because increases in money paid to Montpelier would have resulted in increased money sent from Montpelier to local school districts. Unless the Legislature adheres to the basic concept, local dissatisfaction will inevitably grow. That may suit those who want the law uprooted, and that – in combination with a generally hard time funding government services overall – makes it that much more difficult to get the Legislature to correct the short-term situation.

Approaches to the long-term

Generally, it is the obligation of the House – the Ways and Means

Committee – to initiate any tax measures. That committee is in the midst of developing an approach to the issues. The Senate, on the other hand, having more fully developed its thinking on the issues last year, has already put a full proposal in play. And, for reasons both substantive and political, the full Senate adopted it unani- mously, virtually unheard of in any vote on school funding. Here’s what it would do:

The Senate plan

The State would provide each school district \$7000 for each student and pay for that by increasing the statewide property tax rate to \$1.38. Districts would be free to spend more, or less, than that, and they would do so by setting their tax rate proportionately higher, or lower. No more sharing pool. Those households with incomes below \$75,000 (a significant majority of Vermont households) would remain able to pay their school tax as a % of their income. There are other, smaller features of the plan, but that’s its core: a simplified approach to current law. The House Ways and Means Committee chair has called this plan “dead on arrival” in the House.

The House discussion

The Ways and Means Committee is discussing an approach that, if it finds sufficient support in the House, would affect several moving parts in current law, including:

- All property would be categorized as either residential or nonresidential and a different set of taxes would attach to each category;
- Owners of nonresidential property (businesses and second homes) would pay a uniform property tax rate;
- Residential property owners would pay an income tax, supplemented, if the property is worth above about \$320,000, by a property tax;
- A block grant at \$7114, or 90% of average current total per pupil spending;
- State support for equity for spending below 130% of the block grant; and
- Higher spending districts would pay their own way above that level.

Accomplishing that would require raising about \$100 million more in direct income taxes and between \$100 million and \$150 million in other taxes – such as sales on services, and/ or increasing the sales tax generally.

Representatives were sent home during the break to assess how receptive their constituents would be to this approach.

Summary

In general, the Senate’s long-term approach simplifies current law with-

Continued on page 4...

Professional Notes...

FREE job search site

SchoolSpring is a FREE job search site for educators. You can find it at www.schoolspring.com or by clicking “job openings” on the Vermont-NEA website: www.vtnea.org

Vermont-NEA member Lorrene Palermo is a 1998 graduate of Johnson State and is employed by Fletcher Elementary as a compensatory teacher in reading. She has been there for two years. She used SchoolSpring to find her job, and she’s a real fan. “I love SchoolSpring!” she said, adding: “For a new teacher, it was easy just to click and see what jobs were out there. I found my present job on SchoolSpring and it’s a great job. The site is very user-friendly and much less cumbersome to use than other educational job sites.” ■

Scholars’ Bowl scholars enjoying a great year

Vermont-NEA member David Rome of Burlington High School is president of the Vermont-NEA Scholars’ Bowl. He reports that the high school students participating in the Scholars’ Bowl are enjoying a great year of competition.

Now in its 20th season, the league is divided into seven regions in which all teams play one another throughout the fall. Regional champions this year were from North Country UHS, Colchester HS, Burlington HS, Hanover HS, Montpelier HS, Champlain Valley UHS and Mt. Anthony HS.

The league convened on January 25 at St. Michael’s College for the first round of its play-offs, with 16 teams going on to the next round on March 22. Match details can be found at <http://members.aol.com/kcommo/vtsbowl/index.htm>.

Teams in the league from all over Vermont in every size school are vying for the right to represent Vermont at the Panasonic Academic Challenge as state champion. The semifinal and final matches will take place on at noon on April 5 at St. Michael’s College. “We welcome everyone to watch this exciting, fast paced, competition in which teams play half hour matches against one another covering all academic subjects,” says Dave.

For more information or if you would like to find out how to have your school participate next year, contact Dave Rome at vt davidr@aol.com. ■

Important notice to all Vermont teachers! Start planning now for your Vermont-NEA conference days in October.

Who? All teachers
What? Sign up now for the exciting Vermont Foreign Language Association-sponsored annual conference in Montreal during our Vermont-NEA days!
When? Friday, October 24, 2003, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Cost? Conference: \$35/participant prior to June 1; \$40/participant prior to August 1; \$50 after August 1, 2003.

Hotel: rooms (if desired): \$70 (Canadian, single or double), if reserved at Days Inn, 1005, rue Guy, Montreal before 9/1/2003 (mention *Vermont Foreign Language Association* conference)

The program?

8:00 - 9:00 Breakfast
 9:00 - 10:00 Keynote: noted fiction author on the ethnic diversity of Montreal
 10:00 - 10:30 Coffee Break
 10:30 - 11:45 General Session: **Teacher as Scholar**

Which groups have dominated Montreal during which historical periods? What has been the social, cultural and economical impact on the Montreal scene as a result of these diverse ethnic groups? What are the current political and social issues in Montreal as a result of the ethnic diversity of the city? What does the city offer to your students in terms of experiencing new culture(s) just across the border?
 12:00 - 1:00 Lunch
 1:00 - 5:00 Sign up for specific tours of the city:

Francophone Montreal: The French, the Haitians, the West-Africans, other French-speaking groups

Jewish Montreal: the Holocaust Museum and cultural centers

Hispanic and Italian Montreal English-speaking Montreal: the historic and cultural highlights

To reserve your place at this conference, please send the form below and \$35 to: VFLA Fall Conference, Box 8496, Essex, VT 05451

Name: _____
 Address: _____

 e-mail _____
 Teaching Assignment(s): _____
 School(s): _____

 Desired Afternoon Tour
 First choice: _____

 Second choice: _____

Vermont-NEA presents model "I Can Do It" training

ESSEX JUNCTION -- New teachers and interns have recently participated in Vermont-NEA's *I Can Do It* training. *I Can Do It* provides classroom management and survival skills for new teachers. The program was offered at the Essex Recreational Center for the interns in the Chittenden Central Supervisory Union's unique Teacher Apprenticeship Program (TAP).

"TAP is unique because these folks, who are coming from other careers to teaching, are undergoing several months of classroom observation, are mentored, and slowly begin taking sole classroom responsibility under the supervision of the classroom

teacher," explains Vermont-NEA President Angelo Dorta, adding: "They will eventually stand for peer review to either get license or guidance in areas to get further training or experience."

The upshot is that TAP interns are well prepared for the peer review session, because they are getting much more support and life experience, including, in this case, special *I Can Do It* training from Vermont-NEA.

Chittenden Central TAP Coordinator and Vermont-NEA member Jane Goodman declared the Vermont-NEA presentation a success in a note to presenters Mark Hage, Debra Pelkey, Carol Alfred, Pam Arnold, and

Angelo Dorta. "Your teaching skills, team work and thorough preparation were great models for all of our TAP interns and the new teachers who were present," she said. "We so appreciate the generosity of the Vermont-NEA in sponsoring this workshop for us. The ideas presented and demonstrated, the wonderful binder full of information, and the other goodies all contributed to the success of the day."

Vermont-NEA's *I Can Do It* training premiered at the 2002 Educators' Convention, where some participants had to be turned away for lack of space. Fortunately more trainings are scheduled, including a session at the 2003 Educators' Convention. ■

Legislative Report continued...

out altering its basic mechanics and sources of funding. The approach under discussion in the House alters some of the basic mechanics and sources of funding of current law – offsetting some \$250 million in property taxes with other taxes – without particularly simplifying it. The Senate has signaled interest in considering the House approach if it survives the House. Both bodies would likely set in motion ways to study the costs of our school systems. In the meantime, what Vermonters and schools need right now is to receive from the State for next year the money the law was designed for them to receive.

School systems

There is real interest in, once again, examining the structure of Vermont's school districts. The motivations appear to range from cost savings to better education to ideology to responding to federal law. Both Education Committees have discussed the "governance" of school systems in preliminary ways. The Speaker of the House is reported to be developing his own proposal, one that, again reportedly, would somehow create 16 school districts out of the current 285. We have seen no details.

What we have done is to inform both committees how we believe a formal examination of school governance could actually lead to local acceptance and, maybe, successful change. The Association has not adopted a position on this issue, but in general has suggested that school systems organized as pre-K – 12 systems make the most conceptual sense. To the extent a plan is developed that accomplishes that and leaves in place a major role for local people in the operation of their community school, it may be possible, after internal consideration, to support it. This is obviously not unlike our ongoing approach to have our contract negotiations occur at the supervisory union level, because of the shared community of in-

terest that exists at that level. We also believe the only way to accomplish an acceptable change in the governance of school systems in Vermont is by helping develop interest in doing so locally and not by attempting to impose a structure developed exclusively by "Montpelier." It's a bit early to tell how this particular topic will proceed, but it is not a good sign that the Speaker is reportedly developing a plan, apparently without any involvement in Montpelier itself, let alone any participation by local districts.

School choice

Bills containing just about every variation from school choice supporters have been introduced. They include vouchers for all, vouchers for special education students, tuition tax credits, a reprise of last year's House public school choice plan, charter schools, and some more. It does not appear they will be given serious consideration this year in either the House or the Senate. We don't know if they will reach the radar screen next year.

What dust-up has occurred so far has been mischaracterized by some supporters of ideologically driven proposals. They arranged for several self-styled choice advocates from outside Vermont to be available to testify before either or both Education Committees on a given day in February. But, they did so without telling the Education Committee Chairs in advance. When they finally did make those contacts, each Chair was willing to receive testimony, but only about issues their committees were actually considering. That didn't comport with the interests of those who made the arrangements, and they canceled the testimony. This was mischaracterized most notably in an Op Ed piece appearing in the Burlington Free Press, taking Senate Education Committee Chair Jim Condos to task for "canceling" these people's appearance. That is exactly the opposite of what actu-

ally occurred. So, Chittenden County members, in particular, should take note that their Senator did not refuse to have these people testify. He simply asked that their testimony relate to matters under active consideration. They declined to do so, and they canceled their own appearance.

Other bills

We are following a wide assortment of bills beyond the three major issues of school funding, school governance, and school choice. Should school districts serve only Vermont-produced milk? Should transportation contractors have to submit to the public bidding process as frequently as they now must? Should the State Board of Education appoint the Commissioner, or should the Governor do so? Is it wise for the State to shut down health and safety inspections of Vermont workplaces? Is there a place for a new approach to technical education – and a new technical center – in Chittenden County, and, if so, will the transition adequately protect current tech educators in Burlington and Essex Junction? Should Vermont adopt approaches to arbitration and mediation that are more in line with those of other states? How do we feel about instant runoff balloting in elections for statewide office? What more should the State do to address issues of racial harassment? Where, and to what extent, do we position ourselves in the multitude of proposals affecting health care policy? How can we help advance the importance of early childhood education? And, of course, what successful advocacy can we mount around funding and improving the retirement system?

As always, we welcome your thoughts, comments, and questions, and we rely on your assistance, when circumstances make it particularly timely, in conveying to legislators locally how you feel about the issues. ■ *Joel Cook is Vermont-NEA Executive Director and Chief Lobbyist.*

LETTERS

Vermont-NEA Today welcomes letters to the editor from Vermont-NEA members. Letters must be no more than 200 words in length and may be edited.

Tom Gallagher for VP

This letter is in support of Tom Gallagher for the position of Vice President of Vermont-NEA. Tom is a person combining the rare ability to combine leadership with style and purpose.

Tom understands that in the next few years in education, the issue will not be educational perfection (read mandates without funding, testing, and teacher quality), but the very survival of the American public schools. I have been shocked at how glibly governors are presenting their budgets with millions of dollars in funding cuts. I am equally as shocked at how passive we have been to the cuts. Remember the old bumper sticker: "When is the last time the defense department had a bake sale?"

We as teachers will have to fight to save the public schools from such attacks. Tom will provide this kind of leadership. His years of experience on the Vermont-NEA Board, the years in and out of the classroom, his understanding of and commitment to union principles, and a good sense of humor will lead us to new places.

The next year will be a time of new challenges. Tom will help lead us there. He has my vote.

George Lerrigo
Southwest Vermont EA

I support Angelo Dorta

I am writing in support of Angelo Dorta for re-election as Vermont-NEA President. I have known Angelo for many years. Before his election as President of Vermont-NEA, I worked with him as part of Chittenden County Regional Bargaining Counsel. During his Presidency of Vermont-NEA I have worked with him on several state level committees. He has always been a staunch leader in the areas of teacher professionalism and teacher rights. During his tenure as President he has demonstrated the utmost dedication and competence. I believe he is the energetic, articulate, and experienced leader we need as our state and national associations face a myriad of challenges to teachers and public education. I urge you to support his re-election.

Marilyn Gillis
Milton E&SA

It is time for a new leader

It is time for a new leader for Vermont NEA. Bonnie Tuscany will be a great president for Vermont NEA. She has promised to be a strong presence in our schools. She understands negotiating and will be a strong voice for our needs. She also has a strong professional development background and knows what teachers and support staff are going through day to day.

Vote for Bonnie for president in April.
Anna Lamb
Hartland EA

Bonnie Tuscany will be a positive leader

Bonnie Tuscany, as president of the Vermont NEA, will be a positive and powerful leader. Her experience as a teacher, her knowledge of legislation, and her keen insight into budgets will help lead Vermont teachers in these challenging times.

Bonnie Tuscany and I are fifth grade teachers at Morrystown Elementary School. I have worked with her for the past five years. In that time my admiration and respect for Bonnie have grown as I watch her work with students. Her knowledge and energetic personality make Bonnie a master teacher.

Bonnie is active in the local, state, and

national teachers' Association. I am always impressed that she is able to teach and be well-versed on current and pending legislation. Her insights when looking at budget issues continue to amaze me. She is always ready to lend a hand and share her honest insight.

Bonnie Tuscany is guided by high moral standards. She experiences what educators face on a daily basis. She is quick with understanding facts and figures, and looking at them through different lenses. She is an asset to our school and the Association. Vote for Bonnie Tuscany for president of the Vermont NEA.

Mona Bonin
Morrystown EA

Terri Vest is a vocal advocate

Terri Vest will make an excellent Vice President. Terri is a committed Vermont-NEA member who has worked tirelessly at the local, state and national levels for the rights of educators. She has been president of her local for some time, and is on state level and national level committees. She is a member of the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators.

Terri is a vocal advocate for the rights of educators and the improvement of working conditions. She has been especially active in advocating for paraprofessionals. This is particularly important now that the federal No Child Left Behind legislation has mandated standards for paraprofessionals.

Terri is also very active with the recruitment of new educators into the profession. She was instrumental in the start up of the Governor's Institute in Education for high school students and in reactivating our student teacher groups.

I wholeheartedly support Terri Vest for Vice-President of Vermont-NEA.

Judy Allard
Burlington EA

Bonnie is an educator in the truest sense

Bonnie Tuscany will be a strong leader for the Vermont Teachers Association. I support Bonnie in her run for president of the Vermont-NEA. Her knowledge and integrity will lead us forward. During her 27 years of teaching at Morrystown Elementary School, Bonnie has been active in the Association.

She has served at the local level as building representative, treasurer for two years, chief negotiator for twelve years, vice president for four years, and president for four years. She has also served on the Vermont NEA board since 1991, served on the state executive committee, been a delegate to NEA Representative Assembly on the national level, and been the vice president of the Vermont NEA since 1997.

Bonnie has been active in the Association while teaching. She knows what it is like to be in the classroom. She is an educator in the truest sense. Her teaching experiences have given Bonnie the deepest respect for members.

Bonnie's experience in the NEA, her experience teaching, and her understanding of economic and budget issues make her a strong leader. Join me in supporting Bonnie Tuscany for President of the Vermont-NEA.

James Forde
Stowe TA

Terri Vest is the right person

I believe Terri Vest is the right person to fill the office of vice president. She is truly committed to improving working conditions so that the best teachers and support staff will remain in their jobs.

Terri is also working hard to help paraeducators by presenting workshops throughout the state on developing profes-

sional portfolios as a way of meeting ESEA requirements. She has devoted a great deal of time in this effort.

I also believe that Terri will make every effort to encourage membership growth, especially preservice teachers and support staff. These priorities make Terri Vest the right person for the job.

Johnnye Burt
Twinfield SA

Vote for Terri Vest

I am urging you to vote for Terri Vest for vice president. I have worked here since 1988 and have found Terri to be a major player in improving working conditions at Twinfield. She assisted the staff Association during our last negotiation and helped us obtain a good contract.

If you want to get the support you desire from your Union, then support Terri Vest for Vice President.

Doris Dufresne
Twinfield SA

Angelo is out front defending our profession

I struggle each day to open to the editorial pages of the *Burlington Free Press*, as I know, more often than not, it will contain at least one major attack upon our profession. I am able to look at it only because I know that rebutting this nonsense will follow an eloquent piece to the contrary by Angelo Dorta. My sanity is thus preserved, and I will continue my day, steadfast against the constant battering parroted by the many critics of public education. Angelo is regularly and verbally out front in the defense of our profession and our livelihood! However, besides defending us against Vermont's largest tabloid, Angelo has skillfully guided our union through the minefield which education politics has become. He is proactive and clearly shows the leadership skills and drive, needed to fight, so that educationally, Vermont does not become another Mississippi or even Texas.

For these reasons and more, I would like to endorse Angelo Dorta for re-election to another term as President of Vermont-NEA. He has my vote.

Lee Lichtenstein
Assn. of Westford Educators

Tom Gallagher is the perfect choice

It is with great pleasure that we write this letter on behalf of Tom Gallagher.

Tom, who is running for vice president of Vermont-NEA is the perfect choice. We have had the honor to work with Tom at Lamaille Union High School as paraeducators in his classroom, as well as attending many NEA functions with him.

Tom is the kind of person who is always there and if he does not have the answer you are looking for, he will find it for you. He is a wealth of knowledge and is always willing to share that knowledge with us. Tom is a natural leader and vice president of Vermont-NEA is the perfect position for him. We are very proud to back Tom Gallagher for the office of vice president of Vermont-NEA.

Shelley W. Jones
Darcey Fletcher
Lamoille UHS EA

Proud to back Bonnie Tuscany

It is with great pride that we write this letter on behalf of Bonnie Tuscany.

Bonnie is a natural leader and Vermont-NEA will benefit immensely from her many skills and diplomacy inside as well as outside of the classroom. We have had the pleasure of meeting and discussing many issues with Bonnie through various NEA functions and have been thoroughly impressed with her abundance of knowl-

edge and eagerness to be involved in making whatever changes are needed to improve education conditions.

Bonnie Tuscany as President of Vermont-NEA is a sound and much needed change for the better. She definitely is the right person for the job and will make the right decisions on our behalf. We are proud to back Bonnie Tuscany for President of Vermont-NEA

Rita Graves
Darcey Fletcher
Lamoille UHS EA

Let's send Burnell to Washington!

Jay Burnell, from Bennington, is running for NEA Director in the upcoming Vermont-NEA election. Jay is an active member who has served in every capacity in his local and is on the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors. He was co-president during the SWVEA strike in 1992 and worked hard to represent members to settle that contract. As a long-time educator, he knows the demands we face on a daily basis and will continue the fight to improve our profession.

I am supporting Jay for NEA Director.
Cherrie Torrey
Hartford EA

Gallagher for VP!

I am writing to support Tom Gallagher for Vermont-NEA Vice President. I serve on the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors with Tom. He listens carefully to each issue we face and offers his opinion to move the discussion along. Tom has a variety of experiences in and out of the education field. He is well aware of the challenges we face each day in our schools. Tom will work hard to further our profession. This upcoming election is an important one! I don't remember when we've had three contested races. Please exercise your right as a member and VOTE! I strongly believe that the team of TUSCANY and GALLAGHER will move the Association to the next level!

Cherrie Torrey
Hartford EA

Vote for Angelo Dorta

In April, you will be asked to vote for the next president of Vermont-NEA. That person will only represent your voice if you take the time to open the ballot you receive in the mail, fill it out and return it in a timely fashion.

I urge you to vote for Angelo Dorta. He exemplifies the direction the union should be moving. I believe that his tenure has shown strong leadership in the area of contractual issues. He has also been instrumental in bringing a wide range and high quality of professional development opportunities to our state. This dual agenda has been successful and will be extremely important for us as we continue to grow professionally.

Pamela Krolloff Foust
Green Mountain-NEA

Bonnie instrumental in professional development

I am writing this letter of support for Bonnie Tuscany for Vermont-NEA President. I worked with Bonnie for 25 years and over that time saw her take a vital role in our local organization. Bonnie served as treasurer, vice president, president and chief negotiator. In those roles, Bonnie worked closely with administration to develop an ongoing communication style that allowed issues to be addressed before they became critical and provided an environment that allowed us to successfully develop contracts that brought our professional staff to a competitive wage and benefit package.

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Bonnie has played an instrumental role in professional development in our district, having served on the Lamoille Area Professional Development Committee. In this role Bonnie has advocated for technology, math and science initiatives to better equip classroom teachers in addressing their student needs. She has been a resource in these areas outside of our state as well, traveling to many states throughout the nation to help develop technology programs for students.

These many skills will provide Vermont-NEA the leadership it needs to move forward in the future.

Dot Reeve

Morristown EA-Retired

Tom Gallagher is a hard-working advocate for members

As a long-term member of Vermont-NEA, I would like to express my support for Tom Gallagher for Vice President. I have known Tom for over 10 years and know that he is a hard-working advocate for all members. His work as an elected member of the Board of Directors and delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly has shown his dedication to the improvement of working conditions for our membership, and the improvement of education for our students. He is someone that I feel will listen to my concerns, and will make informed decisions that he feels will best serve the membership.

In order to remain as a strong union, we need the leadership that will continue to make education and its professionals its top priority. I, therefore, will cast my ballot for Tom, and urge others to do the same.

John J. Malcovsky

Winooski EA

Terri Vest understands our needs

I am a paraeducator working at Twinfield Union for five years. I was a negotiator for our union on our present contract. Terry Vest went beyond the "call of duty" in helping us get a good, fair contract. I don't think we could have gotten such a good contract without her help and support. She is always there to help any of us when we need it. I know she will make a great vice president. She understands all our needs and all the issues. I strongly support her as a candidate for vice president of the Vermont-NEA.

Pat Lane

Twinfield SA

Angelo both accessible and knowledgeable

As a National Board Certified teacher, I support Angelo Dorta in his bid for reelection as Vermont-NEA President. Through his actions, Angelo has been an advocate for genuine and improved professional development for all Vermont teachers.

During my certification process, Angelo was both accessible and knowledgeable. Over the last 3 years, I have attended many meetings where Angelo has spoken on behalf of quality teaching. His leadership benefits not only teaching professionals, but the very students they instruct.

Debra Pelkey

Woodstock UHS TO

Give Angelo your vote

Election time is upon us and I urge you to vote for and support Angelo Dorta as our Vermont-NEA President. During Angelo's tenure as our president, he has served his post with passion and energy for teachers, paraeducators, and public education. He is committed to improving working conditions for all Vermont educators and to raising our profession to the highest levels. Angelo knows his job and keeps our vision for Vermont education foremost in every decision

he makes.

In my personal experience with Vermont-NEA, and specifically with Angelo Dorta, I have found Angelo to be highly accessible, knowledgeable and helpful in my National Board Certification process. I have been a Vermont educator for over 30 years, and have never had a Vermont-NEA President that would take the time to keep me aware of professional opportunities that would advance my interests or keep me informed on issues of concern to me.

Angelo has my respect, and the respect of teachers and policymakers in Vermont. He has served Vermont-NEA well. In these tough economic times, it is absolutely necessary to keep President Angelo Dorta on our team. Give Angelo Dorta your vote for Vermont-NEA President and keep Vermont moving forward.

Linda Parker

Windsor Southeast EA

Support Bonnie Tuscany for Vermont-NEA President

I have worked with Bonnie Tuscany for six years at Morrystown Elementary School and have grown to respect her as an educator and leader within our school community. I have seen her demonstrate three qualities that I think are most important in representing the members of the Vermont-NEA.

One, Bonnie isn't afraid to attack issues, while making sure not to attack people. I have seen the passion with which Bonnie goes about her work. I admire how she isn't afraid to ask the tough questions, even if it puts her in the line of fire.

Secondly, Bonnie is in the classroom. Bonnie knows what it is like to be a teacher day in and day out. She is aware of how teaching has changed in the last eight years because she has experienced it first hand.

Lastly, Bonnie is a tireless worker who takes tremendous pride in her profession. I have approached Bonnie with questions involving our Association and Bonnie has always given me an articulate explanation.

In closing, I urge all Vermont-NEA members to support Bonnie Tuscany for President because of her strong leadership skills, experience as an active classroom teacher, and her unyielding commitment to the Vermont-NEA.

Robb Wills

Morrisville EA

Bonnie Tuscany is my choice

I've known Bonnie for many years, personally and professionally. I find her straight forward, hard-working, knowledgeable, trustworthy and deeply committed to the union and all of its members, the students and education. Her goal is to work for the membership. It gives me great pleasure to recommend her. It is quite obvious that she would serve us well as president of Vermont-NEA.

Please make sure you vote. I know that I will cast my ballot for Bonnie. My choice for Vermont-NEA President is Bonnie Tuscany.

John Burroughs

Essex EA

Bonnie offers the kind of leadership we need

As President of Vermont-NEA in 1991, I met Bonnie Tuscany -- a young, professional educator from Morrisville. I encouraged her to run for a seat on the Vermont-NEA Board. She did, she won, and she has been winning ever since.

Bonnie serves her district by talking to the members and really listening to what they have to say. She takes that information back to the Vermont-NEA Board, where she has served for the last 12 years.

Bonnie is an active leader on the local

level, as well; she has served as president and chief negotiator for the last ten years. She, along with her negotiation committee, managed to get a contract in place in a single day! That kind of leadership is what we need at Vermont-NEA.

In 1997 Bonnie was elected Vice President of Vermont-NEA. Her knowledge, skill, and experience on the executive level of our professional organization is unsurpassed. Bonnie's experience is so well recognized by the Vermont-NEA board that two thirds of the Board members are actively and publicly supporting her candidacy for President.

I strongly support Bonnie and respectfully ask that you consider her bid for the presidency of Vermont-NEA when you cast your vote in April.

Marlene R. Burke

Rutland EA-Retired

Support Angelo Dorta for Vermont-NEA President

I urge you to support Angelo Dorta for re-election as President of Vermont-NEA. I have been very impressed over the past few years by the manner in which he has guided our Union, his strong and consistent support for quality education, and the strength of his leadership for all teachers working hard in the classroom.

Mary Chin

Orange East EA

Bonnie's heart is that of a true classroom teacher

I would like to write a letter in support of Bonnie Tuscany for Vermont-NEA President. Bonnie has maintained professional and consistent assistance to NEA members in the southwestern region of our state. She has taken time to listen to our concerns and offered solutions. Her thoughtful answers and suggestions come from the heart of a true classroom teacher, who is concerned with the needs of each individual, each school and each district.

Dianna Ivey

Manchester Teachers EA

Cast your vote for Tom Gallagher

I am asking for Vermont-NEA members to cast their vote for Tom Gallagher for Vice President.

Tom has been a very active member within the structure of Vermont-NEA, both locally and at the state level. Having served on the Board of Directors for several years now, he has made it a point to keep up to date on the issues and to advocate for what is best for Vermont-NEA members. He has been a delegate to the state and national representative assemblies, the NEA Northeast Leadership Conference and to the NEA Men's Issue Conference for a number of years and has represented the Association well, putting what he felt the members would want first.

Tom Gallagher has proven that he can work with ALL the diverse groups within Vermont-NEA and would be our best choice to be our next Vice-President. Please cast your vote for Tom Gallagher.

Jay Burnell

Southwest Vermont EA

Angelo demonstrates warmth and compassion

I strongly endorse the re-election of Angelo Dorta as President of Vermont-NEA. Angelo is involved in so many initiatives, I am truly amazed at how he does it all. He demonstrates warmth and compassion while facing incredible challenges. It is a talent few people possess.

His ability to speak to salaries, benefits, retirement and working conditions, as well as his proactive manner in addressing professional development, mentoring, teacher

recognition, teacher retention, and educator licensing are key to the success of our organization.

Angelo is a listener. As a member of the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators, I have watched him sit quietly during the most critical and even controversial issues. It was evident when he spoke, however, that he truly heard all aspects of the topic and always eloquently articulated an intelligent response, in support of teachers and education support personnel.

I am impressed by Angelo's continued support for our ESP staff. He has promoted the ESP Livable Wage and beyond, participated on the Paraeducator Standards Task Force, and worked diligently on the details of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Our profession depends on Angelo's commitment, integrity, and vision. Please join me in giving him our vote.

Sharon Baack

Barre EA

Angelo helps the profession

Every time I've had occasion to further the professionalism and respect for teachers, Angelo has been there. I'm amazed by how he uses both common sense and passion to help the teaching profession in Vermont. I care about increasing the well being of teachers in Vermont and so I strongly urge my colleagues to support Angelo Dorta for Vermont-NEA president.

Lynn Fisher

Woodstock UHS TO

Support Terri Vest for Vice President

I am asking you to support the candidacy of Terri Vest for Vice President of Vermont NEA. Terri is President of the Twinfield Education Association and a member of the negotiating team for the teacher and ESP contracts. Terri is active in local regional bargaining council, area meetings and attends Vermont-NEA board meetings regularly.

Terri is active as a National Board Certified teacher, a member of the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators, and a member of the Paraeducator Task Force. She works on many fronts for the rights of teachers and ESP members.

Terri also has national experience as a member of the NEA Human and Civil Rights Commission and delegate for the last 6 years to the Representative Assembly.

Terri Vest is a colleague, a mentor and a friend to educators. Please vote Terri Vest for Vice President.

Linda Howard

Twinfield SA

Support Jay Burnell

This letter is to support Jay Burnell for NEA Director in the upcoming election. I have worked with Jay for many years at Mt. Anthony Middle School and have served with him on the negotiations team for our district. Jay has always put his total effort into the students and he has also been a tireless advocate for the rights and needs of the teachers. I am positive he would bring those qualities to the national level. Please vote for Jay.

Charles Webster

Southwest Vermont EA

Bonnie is still close to the "trenches"

Bonnie Tuscany is a great candidate for Vermont-NEA President. She is a tireless worker and has numerous years of experience within the Vermont-NEA community. Her range is diverse as she has chaired many committees in the organization, including the Budget Committee, and has served on the Executive Board for eight

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years. She has a full comprehension of the day-to-day procedures and responsibilities needed to preside over the Vermont-NEA, as she has also served as vice-president for the past six years.

Bonnie is currently teaching 5th grade at Morristown Elementary School, so she is still close to the "trenches." She has served the MEA as building representative, president, and chief negotiator. She is a well-rounded educator as well as a dedicated Vermont-NEA member.

I have served on the Vermont-NEA Political Action Committee (PAC Chair for Washington County) for over ten years, and I am confident that Bonnie will listen to the views of the rank and file when it comes time again to recommend candidates. There will never be total agreement on all issues, but having spoken with Bonnie over the years, I know she values building a collaboration between the Board and members.

Bonnie has my support and my vote.

Maggie Bensen
Barre EA

We need Angelo's skills

I am writing in support of Angelo Dorta's candidacy for our Vermont-NEA President. I have known Angelo for several years, working with him as a colleague, a local association member and negotiator, and now as President of Essex Educators' Association. Angelo exemplifies the leadership skills and qualities that Vermont-NEA needs and deserves.

Angelo's knowledge of the demands of teaching, the needs of children and teachers, and his care for public education are important attributes for our leadership. At a time when there are many changes in Montpelier, we need the continuation of consistency and skills that Angelo has demonstrated.

I fully support Angelo Dorta to continue as our Vermont-NEA President.

Janet Bowker
Essex EA

I support Terri Vest

I am writing to support Terri Vest as our next Vermont-NEA Vice President. I had the privilege of working with Terri two years ago as a new member of the middle school team at Twinfield Union School. I found out right off the bat that Terri was a definite team player and was a strong leader for the group of four core teachers and one special educator. It wasn't long after that that I found out that Terri was the president for the local Twinfield Union School Association.

Terri took me under her wing and guided me through the ins and outs of the school year that year. I guess you could say she took it upon herself to be my unofficial peer mentor. This is just one of the many ways that I found Terri to be of help both to me and to anyone else on the staff.

Terri would make an excellent addition to the Vermont-NEA.

Henry Murray
Orange North-NEA

I endorse Terri Vest for Vice President

I am writing to endorse Terri Vest for Vice President of the Vermont NEA. Terri and I have worked together for several years as classroom teachers and TEA officers. Terri is deeply committed to public education. In her role as President of our Association, Terri works to support her colleagues by constantly improving working conditions for the educators at our school. She is proactive and has an excellent working relationship with our superintendent and administrators. Terri's knowledge of the current issues in education has guided us in our professional development, action

planning and curriculum work. As Vice President, Terri would work for Vermont educators by promoting fair working conditions, by increasing the strength of our union, and by helping local organizations access the information they need to keep up with the changing state and federal requirements. Terri is a strong leader who knows how to get things done.

Joanna Fowler
Twinfield EA

Angelo is a passionate leader

I am writing to lend my enthusiastic support to the reelection of Angelo Dorta as our Vermont-NEA president. Angelo is a passionate leader with boundless energy who leads all in our organization. Angelo works tirelessly to promote professional teacher salaries, improved health care choices and liveable wage pay for all of Vermont's educational staff. Angelo's leadership and commitment to mentoring, formal induction programs and reduced dues shows his concern for beginning professionals. His knowledge, experience and vision will best navigate the waters of ESEA/NCLBE so that all of Vermont's students, educators and schools will benefit. Angelo is a personable, responsible and articulate leader with knowledge of best practice. He tirelessly advocates for Vermont's children at the local, state and national level.

As a teacher of nearly thirty years, I see critical challenges in retaining and attracting teachers to our state, and to the well-being of our profession. Angelo's leadership and vision will continue to serve all of us. I urge you to join me in supporting this wonderful leader!

Maggie Eaton
Union-32 High School Assn.

Please vote for Terri Vest

I request that you support Terri Vest for Vice President of Vermont NEA. Terri is currently President of the Twinfield Education Association and a member of the negotiating team for the teacher and ESP contracts. She is active in the local regional bargaining council, area meetings and attends Vermont-NEA board meetings regularly. Terri is a National Board Certified teacher, a member of the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators, and a member of the Paraeducator Task Force. She works on many fronts for the rights of teachers and ESP members. Terri is a member of the NEA Human and Civil Rights Commission and has been a delegate for the last six years to the Representative Assembly. She is a colleague, a mentor, and a fine example of our profession. Please vote Terri Vest for Vice President.

Dale Newton
Twinfield EA

Angelo has my support

I cannot speak highly enough about Angelo Dorta as the leader of Vermont-NEA. His name stands for quality education. Angelo strives to improve teaching and education on a daily basis. He is concerned about and works for the children of Vermont, as well as the educators. Angelo, while working on the bread and butter issues of union, is also aware of and trying to improve public education in Vermont. Angelo is knowledgeable, caring and in firm control of the issues that Vermont teachers and students face everyday. Angelo has my support and I urge you to reelect him.

Kathy Renfrew
Peacham EA

I support Bonnie Tuscany for Vermont NEA President.

I have worked with Bonnie for the past 13 years as a fourth grade teacher at

Morristown Elementary School. Throughout these years I have felt Bonnie was someone I could completely depend on, whether it be to clarify a contract or legislation question, to help me delicately negotiate and handle issues between staff or parents at school, or to get instant insight when problem solving sticky math situations (she has an amazing mind for numbers!). She even volunteered to do my income taxes during a personally difficult year for me; this I will never forget.

Education has seen many changes in the past few years, and teaching feels different to me now compared to 13 years ago when I first started as a classroom teacher. Since Bonnie has also been teaching during these changing and challenging times, she knows and understands exactly what educators today face on a daily basis. It is this current experience and understanding that will enable her to be a realistic and constructive voice to all educators, and to be an invaluable Vermont-NEA President. I strongly urge you to give her your vote.

Liz Winn
Morristown EA

Angelo supports ESP

I am writing in support of Angelo Dorta's candidacy for re-election as the President of the Vermont-NEA.

In the seven years I have known Angelo he has been supportive of ESP and the issues that face ESP today. He chaired the Vermont-NEA Dues Study that reduced the dues for ESP members to better reflect the wages we earn.

Angelo has been a trusted leader and will continue to bring ESP issues to the forefront. Please join me in reelecting Angelo Vermont-NEA President.

Loriann Darrell
Springfield SSA

We fully support Angelo Dorta

Angelo Dorta's strong dedication to public education in Vermont and to the Vermont-NEA is apparent by the many accomplishments in his career. His leadership skills have undeniably been outstanding, his passion and energy undying, and his vision for the future for Vermont's educational leaders clear.

Angelo is a supportive leader, offering his personal knowledge and professional experience to our local and all Vermont-NEA organizations. He has willingly provided our local with personal assistance, attending one of our local meetings this fall, which gave us good direction and insight to improve areas we wanted to work on. Angelo did not drop the ball. He was willing to continue the assistance if we requested his help. He also validated the great work we had already accomplished as a small Union. His interpersonal skills are one of his greatest assets. He approaches each issue not only from his own personal experience, but from the perspective of Vermont-NEA.

Going back to the days of the Killington Leadership Weekend, Angelo has always been approachable and authentic in listening to our Union concerns. He always strives to create a win-win solution for the greater whole of Vermont-NEA.

We fully support the reelection of Angelo Dorta.

Cynthia Knowles
Rachel Root
Chester EA

Angelo supports teachers

I support re-electing our current president, Angelo Dorta. If Angelo continues to support Vermont teachers in the manner I was recently supported, you should all vote to re-elect him. What other candidate would seek a way to personally help a teacher who

needed professional support?

I am one of seven teachers in the Northeast Kingdom currently working toward National Board Certification. I teach in a small K-8 elementary school. Two of the ten assessments I have to submit are quality videotapings where most of my students can be heard and seen engaging in a learning activity.

The equipment I used from my district didn't give me the quality I need. Eight poorly taped videos later, I was ready to give up on getting anything better.

I was dismayed, until I received an e-mail from Angelo. He offered to help the Northeast Kingdom teachers with funding so we could rent professional equipment. I couldn't believe that finally I was going to be able to produce quality videotapes for national assessment. He also stopped in to reassure that the support was still there. His support of my predicament deserves my whole-hearted support in return. Vote to reelect Angelo Dorta; he supports teachers.

Deborah March
Northeast Kingdom TA

Angelo is a respected voice

I am writing in support of Angelo Dorta for reelection as Vermont-NEA's President. I have been an educator for the past 20 years, am active in my local association, and I cannot speak highly enough of Angelo's professionalism, his energy and enthusiasm, his vision, and his commitment to the educators and students of Vermont.

Angelo is a strong promoter of fair and competitive teacher salaries and benefits, and he has done much to raise the wages and benefits of our ESPs.

Equally impressive is Angelo's leadership in attracting and retaining a high quality teaching force in Vermont. He was a powerful force in bringing the PATHWISE mentor training to Vermont, and he participated in many of the sessions himself. That, together with the "I Can Do It" program for new teachers, indicates his advocacy for inducting new teachers into the profession and for giving them the support of more experienced colleagues to be successful.

Angelo is an articulate, respected voice across our state and on a number of national education committees. We need his continued leadership as Vermont-NEA President. Please join me in supporting his candidacy.

Nancy Perkins
Blue Mountain EA

Terri is dedicated to teachers

I am writing this letter of support for Terri Vest as a candidate for Vice President of Vermont-NEA. Terri was my mentor in my pursuit of National Board Certification, which I attained last fall. She was instrumental in my success, guiding me through this very rigorous and enriching process. She is one of the most committed and professional people I know.

Terri is a tremendous advocate for the profession of teaching and all who are associated with education. She is dedicated to teachers, paraprofessionals and, of course, her own students, treating each with undeniable respect and devotion. Her commitment to various committees and professional organizations is unparalleled. She is hard working and focused.

She will be a welcomed addition to Vermont NEA leadership. Please vote for Terri Vest.

Meghan O'Donnell
Chittenden South EA

Vermont-NEA lost a friend with the death of Anne Brock

Vermont-NEA lost a friend and important Association leader late in February. Anne Brock, who retired in 1990 after 20 years as a math teacher at Champlain Valley Union High School, died on February 22 in Los Angeles. She was 81 years old.

Many of us remember Anne as the president of her local at CVU in September of 1978 when they became the first Vermont-NEA local ever to strike.

Anne also was highly respected as a math teacher and was president of the Vermont Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1983-85. As a young graduate student in mathematics at Columbia College, Anne worked on the Manhattan Project.

Anne leaves four grandchildren and three daughters, including Frances Brock of the Burlington Education Association. ■

Woodstock's Speakchorus will highlight May 9 "Teachers Who Write" conference

MONTPELIER -- Now in its sixteenth year, Teachers Who Write, a day-long conference on the campus of Vermont College in Montpelier, has become something of spring ritual for Vermont's teachers, offering an array of interactive workshops on writing and teaching writing. This year's conference, scheduled for May 9, 2003, will feature a keynote performance by Woodstock Union High School's Yoh Theatre Players' SPEAKCHORUS, described in Vermont Life Magazine as, "the Woodstock phenomenon that has wowed kindergarteners in Vermont and Kennedy Center audiences in Washington, D.C." Singer-songwriter Jon Gailmor will present a luncheon concert. A \$55 registration fee covers all activities and a simple luncheon. Contact Elizabeth Rand for more information: rand@doe.state.vt.us (802) 828-3150. ■



Informational picket lines went up in Milton, despite the sub-zero temperatures of early March.

Milton teachers build for crisis

MILTON -- The teachers of the Milton Education and Support Association faced a strike vote on March 11, with a last ditch federal mediation the next day, March 12.

MESA rented a headquarters office on Route 7 directly across from the entrance to the high school. Teachers picketed before school on Thursday and Friday the week before the strike vote, and also at the school board meeting.

The major issue in the contract dispute was salary. Milton is well behind other Chittenden County

schools and below neighboring Franklin County and Grand Isle County districts. Health insurance also was an issue, with the board proposing that teachers' co-pay rise from 5 to 15 percent.

Denise White serves as MESA headquarters manager, Sharon Kelly-Larson and Richard Page are crisis committee co-chairs, Noble Francoeur is chief negotiator, and Karen Vallancourt is president. Vermont-NEA UniServ Director David Boulanger advises the local, along with Vermont-NEA organizers Jason Winston and Ellen David Friedman. ■

Vermont-NEA supports Seuss celebrations

GRAND ISLE -- Vermont-NEA supported local efforts to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday in March by supplying Cat-in-the-Hat hats to Association members who made a request accompanied by a plan. Dozens of members responded and hundreds of red-striped hats found their way to schools throughout the state.

Among the members winning hats with a great Seuss celebration plan was Grand Isle School Library Media Specialist Stephanie Taylor. She told us that in honor of Dr. Seuss's birthday, Grand Isle School would celebrate with a week-long schedule of events, including a "dress as your favorite book character day," with parade, "guess that book" contest, door and wall decorations, and drop-everything-and-read times every day.

We sent 15 hats to Stephanie, and she sent us a terrific photo (right) of hats in action. Stephanie says she has replaced and supplemented her collection with all new Dr. Seuss books this year. The kids at Grand Isle School now certainly know there's something pretty special (and fun!) about Dr. Seuss. ■



In March, the staff at Grand Isle School celebrated "dress as your favorite book character" day. Front: Gail Sanford, Judy Duval, Virginia Gregorie, Lindsay Drake, Robin Taylor, Shelley Grant-Farrell Middle: Anza Myers, Tracy Pearson, Stephanie Taylor, Dorothy Toof, Debbie Bedrin, Debbie Provost Back: Alan Gergen, Paul Sacca, Sue Kolk, Alison Perry, Laura O'Brien, Jessica LaRocque and school principal, Richard Taylor