



TODAY

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Success in South Burlington – Teachers avert strike, settle three years

Vermont-NEA Photo by Art Huse

SOUTH BURLINGTON – It took months of tough bargaining and an aggressive crisis buildup, but the 200 teachers of the South Burlington Educators Association won an excellent contract settlement last month. By 2004, South Burlington teachers can earn better than \$70,000.

The three-year deal calls for salary increases of 3.88% this year, 5.5% in 2003-04, and 4.5% in 2004-05. The salaries move from last year's \$29,996 base and \$63,592 maximum to:

year	base	maximum
02-03	\$30,896	\$65,500
03-04	\$32,286	\$68,446
04-05	\$33,739	\$71,527

SBEA agreed to pay 6% of health insurance premium costs starting in February, and 10% in 2003-05.

The Buildup

SBEA members returned to school in January determined to resolve their contract dispute with the school board. Their negotiators had toiled for months without result, and the prospect of continuing work without a contract was not acceptable.

The SBEA plan to get the contract resolved was simple and straightforward: Set a strike date. Reach out to the community. Communicate. Picket. Mediate. It was an organizational success.

But do not underestimate the hard work and courage that the SBEA crisis plan required. It is not easy to set up an informational picket line on the first day back from a holiday break. It takes conviction to demand a better salary when your district pays more than most others. It is brave to face citizens at a community meeting just days before a final mediation. And voting to strike is gut-wrenching.

Still, South Burlington teachers did it all. They came to the brink of a strike and they settled a new three-year contract at 6:30 Thursday morning, January 9. The school board approved the deal on the spot, and teachers ratified the agreement that afternoon.



South Burlington's winning team (L-R) Jeff Taft, Kathy Murphy, Eric Stone (chief negotiator), Anjie Soucy, Rich Wise (vice president) and Kathy Buley (president) negotiated all night long on January 8-9. They reached a tentative three-year agreement at 6:30 a.m.

Keys to Success

Rank and file Association members were key to SBEA's success, according to Chief Negotiator Eric Stone: "I can't say enough about the teachers of South Burlington; they were so professional and so supportive," he explained. "They were 100% behind the bargaining team, and that certainly made it very easy to go in and get a contract."

Vice President Rich Wise also had high praise for his colleagues. "It was very impressive to watch the crisis team come together," he said. "We were able to tap the resources that we have in the district. One of our language arts teachers, Dick Roy did the crisis newsletter. Tim Camoli, national technology teacher of the year, put together a Power Point presentation for us the night we met with the community. Another person whose family is in real estate secured a crisis headquarters for us."

Rich said that, in a strange way,

the crisis left him with a nice feeling. "One of the things that happened as a result of this crisis is a more unified membership," he said. "We had eight or nine new members join; our membership is over 200 teachers. People want to be part of the South Burlington Educators Association."

Eric shared the enthusiasm over membership, pointing out that 95% of teachers belong, including 100% of teachers at the Chamberlain School.

SBEA President Kathy Buley gives the South Burlington community some credit for the contract settlement. "Despite claims of our school board that they had overwhelming support from the community, it was our experience that there were many, many community members that were supportive of teachers, that were supportive of the quality of education in South Burlington, said Kathy, adding, "They gave a clear message to the board that they expected a settlement."

SBEA leaders appreciated the Vermont-NEA staff. "Vermont-NEA provided us with a plan," said Rich. "Ellen David Friedman and Jason Winston attended virtually every crisis meeting. "It was their plan that created the pressure on the board which allowed us to settle."

He added: "I think Dave Boulanger's hard work the night we negotiated was one of the main reasons we settled. He's able to work the numbers this way and that way and think of a variety of different strategies which ultimately resulted in a settlement. I can't imagine that we would have been successful without the staff at Vermont-NEA."

Kathy agreed: "The Vermont-NEA staff was unbelievable."

SBEA negotiators were unbelievable, as well. Congratulations to Eric Stone (chief negotiator), Kathy Buley (president), Rich Wise (vice president), Jeff Taft, Kathy Murphy, and Anjie Soucy. -LBH

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Waving Goodbye to 'Waivers'

Start waving goodbye to teacher license "waivers." They'll soon depart from the Vermont public education landscape, all 800-plus of them. Good riddance, I say.

I'm proud that Vermont-NEA was the *first and lead* voice publicly critical of teacher license waivers. To paraphrase Middlebury Union High School teacher Michele Forman, Vermont's own 2001 National Teacher of the Year, who would willingly choose the surgeon, lawyer, or civil engineer whose license requirement has been waived?

It's a no-brainer. A license is a basic quality assurance credential. Licenses signify occupational skills and are recognized as a valid requirement throughout the U.S. and many other nations.

Waivers, however, only reinforce *quasi*-professional treatment and status. They perpetuate the "Anyone can teach" myth. That myth has plagued teaching throughout a century and a half of public school history. It contributes significantly to the difficulty of achieving fully professional salaries, better working conditions, and appropriate decision-making authority for qualified Vermont teachers in the workplace.

Waivers also represent a big foot-in-the-door for ideologues that view license regulations as too bureaucratic, protectionistic towards the "education establishment," and heavily union-influenced. Such arch-critics often wish to dismantle virtually *all* teacher license regulations. Strangely, the detractors never seem to expand their anti-license rhetoric to include other professions.

Don't celebrate the elimination of waivers just yet, however. They will be replaced by two new categories of sub-standard teacher licenses. One new category — "provisional licenses" — has several meaningful teacher quality safeguards and is likely to be acceptable to educators and citizens as a reasonable acknowledgement of subject matter and geographic spot-shortages of teachers.

Applicants for the provisional license must have completed at least a bachelor's degree. They also must meet at least *one* of four criteria: (a) possess any valid educator license from Vermont or from another state; *or* (b) possess any expired educator license from Vermont or from any other state, as long as the license expired no longer than 10 years ago; *or* (c) have a college major in the content area of the provisional license sought; *or* (d) have successfully completed the PRAXIS content assessment for the provisional license sought.

The individual granted a provisional license would be required to develop a written plan for obtaining a valid Level 1 license and/or the proper

subject area endorsement(s) within two years. The license expires on June 30th of the second school year for which it was granted and cannot be renewed, unless "extenuating circumstances" prevent completion of the approved plan. The provisional license is portable during its two-year period, as long as another superintendent follows the guidelines and proper procedure.

The provisional license would be the property of the individual applicant, a change from the current requirement that the school district superintendent actually be the possessor of the waiver credential. However, the superintendent still must offer a job to the applicant and make a written request to the Vermont Department of Education's Licensing Office on his/her behalf "after making all reasonable efforts" to find an appropriately licensed and endorsed candidate. Consequently, provisional licenses would not be given solely on the request and application of an individual job candidate.

However, a special exemption is proposed regarding the superintendent's responsibility. In the case of a current school district employee seeking the proper academic or grade-level endorsement, not a license, the superintendent does not have to make "all reasonable efforts." Instead, the local district may choose to give the teaching assignment to one of its current teachers who already is licensed and will be eligible for the proper endorsement within two years.

Taken altogether, these proposed guidelines are likely to prevent wholesale misuse of provisional licenses. Requiring a college degree, meeting at least one of four licensure or content-knowledge standards, and fulfillment of a written two-year license plan sets a high enough threshold for a candidate pool from which motivated and effective educators can emerge.

At the same time, there are several concerns. Will "all reasonable [superintendent] efforts" and "extenuating circumstances" be closely scrutinized and consistently judged by the Licensing Office? Is it sensible and fair — not just convenient — The "emergency licenses" proposition, however, deserves to be soundly rejected. These licenses are intended for applicants who do not meet *any* of the four criteria for provisional licenses and who may not even have a college degree. You only must be at least 18 years of age and have a high school diploma, same as substitute teachers (also disgracefully inadequate qualifications). There is no obligation to provide a written plan to achieve a license or the desired endorsement.

Emergency licenses are for one year. They cannot be renewed and are granted to the individual upon written request by the superintendent. The



Vermont-NEA President Angelo J. Dorta

superintendent's unsuccessful search for a licensed and endorsed teacher must meet the all-reasonable-efforts test.

Nancy May, Rutland High School special educator and Rutland City School District Local Standards Board chairperson, summed up widespread disdain for the emergency licenses proposal. "It's insulting," she testified at the public hearing, "a shock. Paraeducators now are required to have higher qualifications than that [under new federal ESEA rules]."

The suggested emergency license provision embodies a shamefully low standard for teacher licensure and thus degrades the entire teaching profession. It repeats past teacher licensure policy mistakes and invites adult career experimentation at the expense of our children's education. A school year can become a very long time when students are forced to spend it with an unskilled, discouraged, or unmotivated teacher-dilettante. One wonders about school district legal liability when the well-being of students is entrusted to plainly unqualified hirelings.

Provisional and emergency licenses and a large number of other proposed changes to teacher licenses and endorsements are the subject of January through March regional public hearings and written testimony from educators and non-educators alike. Vermont-NEA members should inform themselves about the proposals and speak up. Decisions by the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators will depend on the information collected this winter.

Your vocation, your livelihood, and your career all begin with your license to teach. Professional educators should not permit Vermont to lower its teacher standards, to compromise the basic quality assurance function of teacher licensure, and to endanger the overall high quality of its teacher workforce.

Angelo J. Dorta
President

How the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) affects you...

ESEA and Teacher Qualifications

MONTPELIER – Educators in classrooms across Vermont are feeling the effects of the new federal education law – the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 (ESEA). The law mandates student testing, a complex system of accountability to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP), licensing requirements for teachers, quality standards for paraeducators, and sanctions against schools that don't meet the requirements of the new law.

Vermont-NEA, with support from our National Education Association, is working to inform and protect educators. Here, Vermont-NEA Member Benefits Director Mark Hage explains the new standards for teachers required by the law.

Teacher Qualifications

For good reason, a great deal of attention has been focused nationally on the new qualification standards for paraeducators in the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). It is important to note as well that the law requires states to enforce new standards for teachers, too. Toward this end, states must publish an annual report disclosing the professional

qualifications of teachers, the percentage working with emergency or provisional credentials, and the percentage of classes in the state not taught by "highly qualified" teachers.

States are also directed to develop a plan to ensure that all public elementary and secondary school teachers covered by the law are "highly qualified" no later than the end of the 2005-06 school year.

This article outlines the salient provisions of the new qualification standards for teachers under ESEA. Vermont-NEA will address future developments in this area of the law and the state's response to them as they occur, with advice on how to protect the licensing integrity of the teaching profession in Vermont, and on how to advance the professional development needs of teachers and paraprofessionals.

Teacher Qualification Timelines Under ESEA

By the 2002-03 school year:

- Any teacher hired and working in a program supported by Title I funds (both "targeted assistance" and "schoolwide" programs) must meet the new requirements defining a "highly qualified" teacher.
- States and districts must begin

reporting their progress toward ensuring that all teachers are "highly qualified."

By the close of the 2005-06 school year:

- All teachers in core academic subjects must be "highly qualified." Any teacher who has had certification or licensure waived on an emergency, temporary or provisional basis is deemed by the law to be *not* "highly qualified."

The core academic subjects are English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign language, civics and government, economics, arts, history and geography. (At this time, special education teachers who provide instruction in any core subject *must* meet the new quality standards. However, there is still

may consist of passing a state certification or licensure test in each of these subjects), *or*

- Complete for each academic subject in which the teacher instructs (a) an academic major or coursework equivalent to a major, *or* (b) a graduate degree, *or* (c) advanced certification.

Existing elementary, middle, secondary teachers must:

- Have at least a bachelor's degree, *and*
- Meet the requirements for new teachers described above, *or*
- Demonstrate competency in all subjects taught (a uniform state evaluation standard is to be used to judge competency, and the standard must provide objective information about the teachers' knowledge in the sub-

ject taught and may consider, but not use as a primary criterion, time spent teaching the subject. The evaluation standard must be applied uniformly to all teachers in the same subject and grade level throughout the state.)

Teachers pursuing licensure via alternate routes must:

- Complete full certification as prescribed by Vermont within three years,

and

- Receive high-quality professional development that is sustained, intensive, and classroom-instruction focused before and while teaching, *and*
- Participate in a teacher-mentoring program or receive intensive supervision that consists of structured and regular support.

Title I Funds and Professional Development

With nearly 300,000 teachers nationally on waivers or teaching with substandard credentials (approximately 10% of the teaching force in Vermont falls in this category), the task of meeting the new qualification standards is daunting, to say the least.

To pay for it, the law permits school districts in FY 2002 and 2003 to use not less than 5% or not more than 10% of its Title I funds to ensure that its teachers and paraeducators are "highly qualified." For each fiscal year after 2003, school districts are directed to expend not less than 5% of their Title I funds for this purpose. This money will not be adequate, but local Associations should participate in the decision-making process that will determine how these funds will be spent on professional development. ■

States are directed to develop a plan to ensure that all public elementary and secondary school teachers covered by the law are "highly qualified" no later than the end of the 2005-06 school year.

some ambiguity around this issue, and NEA has asked the federal Department of Education for additional guidance.)

Vocational teachers are *not* covered by the new standards, unless they instruct in a core academic subject.

Becoming a "Highly Qualified" Teacher under ESEA

All teachers (including those pursuing alternative licensure) must:

- Be fully licensed or certified by the state of Vermont, *and*
- Not have had any certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary or provisional basis.

New elementary teachers must:

- Have at least a bachelor's degree, *and*
- Pass a state test demonstrating subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas of any basic elementary school curriculum.

New middle or secondary teachers must:

- Have at least a bachelor's degree, *and*
- Demonstrate competency by passing a rigorous state test in *each* of the academic subjects taught (this

Vermont-NEA 3-1(g) plan to achieve ethnic minority representation at the NEA Representative Assembly

1. Vermont-NEA Statement of Commitment: Vermont-NEA supports the policy set forth in NEA Bylaw 3-1(g) and shall take "legally permissible steps" to achieve at least an acceptable level of ethnic minority representation at the NEA Representative Assembly. Our State Association intends to include delegates who also are members of ethnic minority groups and to include them in numbers at least proportionally commensurate with Vermont's total population.

2. Identification and Location of Ethnic Minority members: As part of its annual membership recruitment, Vermont-NEA elected officers and staff shall continue to identify ethnic minority members through its print and electronic membership documents, shall seek to cultivate their interest in the NEA Representative Assembly, and shall provide relevant information and appropriate assistance in their efforts to secure positions as state or local delegates.

3. Minority Involvement Program: The Vermont-NEA President, assisted by other elected Association leaders and staff, will continue to recruit Association members to participate in the annual NEA Northeast Region Minority Leadership Training Seminar and to work with those individuals and others to establish a Vermont-NEA Minority/Multicultural Affairs Committee as a Standing Committee under Article XI of Vermont-NEA's Bylaws. These members will continue to be the first tier of candidates for inclusion in our state delegation and will continue to assist with additional Association outreach efforts to other ethnic minority members.

4. Vermont-NEA Communications: The *Vermont-NEA Today* monthly newspaper, the twice-per-month "Leadership Update" newsletter, and the "Vermont-NEA Monday" electronic newsletter will disseminate the plan and other necessary information targeted to encourage participation of ethnic-minority members at the NEA Representative Assembly and in all Association activities.

First Outlook: The 2003 Legislature

By Joel D. Cook

The first days of the Legislative Session are characterized by both ceremony and nuts and bolts. This year, departing Governor Dean, in a January 8 speech, set a conciliatory tone for the start of Jim Douglas's term as governor, incoming Lieutenant Governor Brian Dubie did the same in the Senate the next day, and new Governor Douglas restated that afternoon a number of the basic themes of his campaign for office.

Behind the scenes, however, is where the real tone-setter for the Session was undertaken: committee assignments in both the House and the Senate.

The selection of the House Speaker

The Speaker of the House has exclusively authority to assign Representatives to committees. As the Legislative Class of 2003 took their seats in the House of Representatives for the first time on January 8, they proceeded immediately to what is, therefore, arguably the most important vote of the entire upcoming 2-year session. In the end, Walter Freed (R. Dorset) was (re-)elected Speaker of the House.

The Speaker has as about as much control of the action in the State House as he wants to. In addition to all committee assignments, including

their chairs, he surrounds himself with the legislative leaders, lieutenants, and lobbyists of his choosing to implement the policy directions he sets. He also exercises a great deal of control over the scheduling of business in the House, including when to bring bills to the floor for debates and votes.

While little noted outside the building, the choice of Speaker, especially when there is real competition for the post, is really as important a decision as legislators are called upon to make.

Going into the vote, the numbers, as indicated by formal party affiliation, made the outcome look virtually dead even between Rep. Freed and Rep. John Tracy, the Democrats' nominee from Burlington. 76 votes were needed, there are 74 Republicans, 69 Democrats, 4 Progressives, and 3 Independents. The vote is one of the very few in the State House taken by secret ballot. The result: Rep. Freed got 82 votes and is the once and current Speaker.

The Lieutenant Governor sets a tone of collaboration and respect

On the morning of Thursday, the 9th, Lieutenant Governor Dubie addressed the Senate for the first time. The Association did not recommend his election, but it has enjoyed a good relationship with him both as a can-

didate and earlier, in his tenure as school board chair in Essex Junction. It is unusual to hear teachers spoken of in a speech of this nature. Here are Lieutenant Governor's words from the Senate podium:

"Vermont's school children also need our help.

William Butler Yeats once said, 'Education is not the filling of a bucket. It is more like the lighting of a fire.

There are 100,000 students in our schools in this state. Day after day, our teachers are lighting those fires. They are dedicated professionals, who need our support. Second only to parents, they hold the keys to our state's future.

General Omar Bradley said, 'Teachers are the real soldiers of Democracy. Others can defend it, but only teachers can make it work.' We must both support our teachers, and encourage parents to become more involved with their child's education.

My sister and brother-in-law...are both public school teachers...Vermont Commissioner of Education Raymond McNulty is also here today as my guest. Together, the Commissioner and I will be visiting schools all over our state in the coming year, to recognize the successes, and to look for innovative ways to improve our schools."

We look forward to working with a public official who sets such a respectful tone for the work of public educators.

The Governor articulates his approach, with a school choice coda

That afternoon, Governor Jim Douglas was inaugurated before half a dozen former Governors and/or their spouses. He spoke clearly, articulately, and calmly about a range of issues familiar from his campaign and he was received, with one exception, by polite, across-the-board applause.

The exception was to his remarks about school choice. He espoused the same view he used in his campaign, that schools will improve if "all parents have the same choice." If we had not heard his perspective before, it would not be all that plain what he seeks. Anyhow, the applause was particularly loud among predominantly Republican members and accompanied by a counterpoint of silence by predominantly Democratic members.

We are told that the House may not seek the type of school choice law it sought last year. That really is not very surprising, since the negative effect on Vermont's rural communities is so obvious and predictable. Nevertheless, we will by no means be surprised to see the issue taken up during the session.

Committees take shape...

The House. The Speaker of the House makes committee assignments. Speaker Freed began his new term by making committee assignments that will set the tone for the full session. In the Senate, with its 19 Democrats and 11 Republicans, the Democrats assured there would be 3 committees chaired by Republicans. In the House, the Speaker appointed Republicans to chair every single committee. He explained he was still being even-handed because he appointed non-Republicans as vice chair of every committee. Effectively, however, it is the chairs who wield virtually all the authority within the committee structure. If they choose to share authority with the vice chair, or anyone else for that matter, they can do so, but ultimately the Speaker generally relies on the chairs both to keep him informed about bills under consideration and to implement his priorities.

The House Education Committee will be chaired once again by Howard Crawford (R. Burke) and his vice chair will be George Cross (D. Winooski). Last time around there were 6 Republicans and 5 Democrats. That remains the case this session, although the majority are new to this committee. They are listed in the box accompanying this article. Vermont-NEA has a good-to-excellent working relationship with both the chair

and his new vice chair and we are hopeful there will be a more measured approach to education issues during this session than last, where we confronted a broad school privatization bill that resolved into an over-broad approach to school choice that was, at least, limited to public schools.

The Ways and Means Committee is where all action on tax matters generally, and Act 60 in particular, takes place first. The Chair remains Richard Marron (R. Stowe) and his vice chair will be Robert Rusten (D. Halifax). All 11 members of that committee either represent districts that have been outspoken against Act 60 or themselves are critics of the law. This committee's membership last time around had two or three members who were able to articulate the "other" perspective on this law. Without a balance of perspectives, it is hard to see, this early anyway, how this committee will be able to craft changes to the law that will garner widespread support.

Other committees are also quite important to educators in their professional roles and their role simply as citizens. We'll have occasion to comment on the make-up of other committees during the session. In particular, the Government Operations Committee deals with all retirement issues, the General Affairs Committee con-

siders workers rights issues, the Appropriations Committee handles the budget, and the Judiciary Committee takes up matters through which Vermonters may bring or be subject to litigation.

The Senate. In the Senate, committee appointments are a shared duty among members of the so-called Committee on Committees, including the Lieutenant Governor, the President Pro-Tem, and another member. Here, those are Brian Dubie, Peter Welch (D. Windsor), and Richard Mazza (D. Grand Isle - and Colchester). There is a 19-11 Democrat majority in the Senate. Despite that sizable difference, in contrast with assignments in the House, 3 committees will have chairs from the minority party, with the balance held by Democrats.

The Senate Education Committee will be chaired by Jim Condos (D. Chittenden). Senator Condos is a long-time civic leader in South Burlington just beginning his second term in the Senate. He has developed really good working relationships with a variety of constituent groups. This is particularly the case with us at Vermont-NEA, and we look forward to working closely in concert with him as he takes on this important responsibility. The other members of the committee are Hull Maynard

(R. Rutland) who will serve as vice chair, Don Collins (D. Franklin), Hinda Miller (D. Chittenden), and Kevin Mullin (R. Rutland). Senator Mullin was recently appointed to fill the seat vacated by John Crowley as he moves into a commissioner's position in the Douglas Administration.

Senate Education Committee

James C. Condos (D) Chittenden County, Chair
Hull P. Maynard (R) Rutland County, Vice-Chair
Donald "Don" E. Collins (D) Franklin County
Hinda Miller (D) Chittenden County
Kevin J. Mullin (R) Rutland County

House Education Committee

Howard T. Crawford (R) Burke, Chair
George C. Cross (D) Winooski, Vice-Chair
William N. Aswad (D) Burlington
Carolyn Whitney Branagan (R) Georgia
Harry L. Chen (D) Mendon
Virginia Duffy (R) Rutland City
Kevin J. Endres (R) Milton
Steve Hingtgen (P) Burlington
Kathy LaBelle LaVoie (R) Swanton
Rosemary "Rozo" McLaughlin (D) Royalton
Ann Seibert (D) Norwich

Some education issues...

This Association – and Vermont educators – have been very fortunate over the years to have helped enact an array of laws that enhance the quality of public education, the security of employees, and the welfare of Vermont’s children. During every legislative session, therefore, we keep one eye peeled for bills that would take from us what we have spent a generation and more building up. With the other eye, we look for ways to enhance what already is in place that makes Vermont a good place for educators and a wonderful place for school kids. Toward that end, we have worked with a variety of other organizations, including education groups, labor groups, and children’s advocacy groups, in developing common approaches to issues.

For example, whatever the anxiety created by some portions of Act 60, its fundamental purpose and provisions assure a both adequate and equitable source of funds with which to sustain and enhance community-based public education in Vermont. This is a system that, for all its “flaws,” is rightly the envy of most of the world. Therefore, in the debate over changes to this law, we are on the lookout for provisions that would undermine these basics even as we try to help address perceived and actual shortcomings in it.

A different example involves the collective bargaining laws for public employees. Enacted more than 30 years ago, laws assuring teachers and support personnel the right to bargain collectively with their employers have worked well for both our communities and their employees. We are always on the lookout, therefore, for any attempts to tinker with these and other laws that would restrict employee rights.

With the advent last year of the federal so-called “No Child Left Behind Act,” we know Vermont, as must every state, will have to examine its laws to make sure they are consistent with federal mandates. We do not know any specifics as yet, but we know the Department of Education has been discussing this with the staff at the Legislature, and we expect to be a major participant in the ongoing discussion very soon.

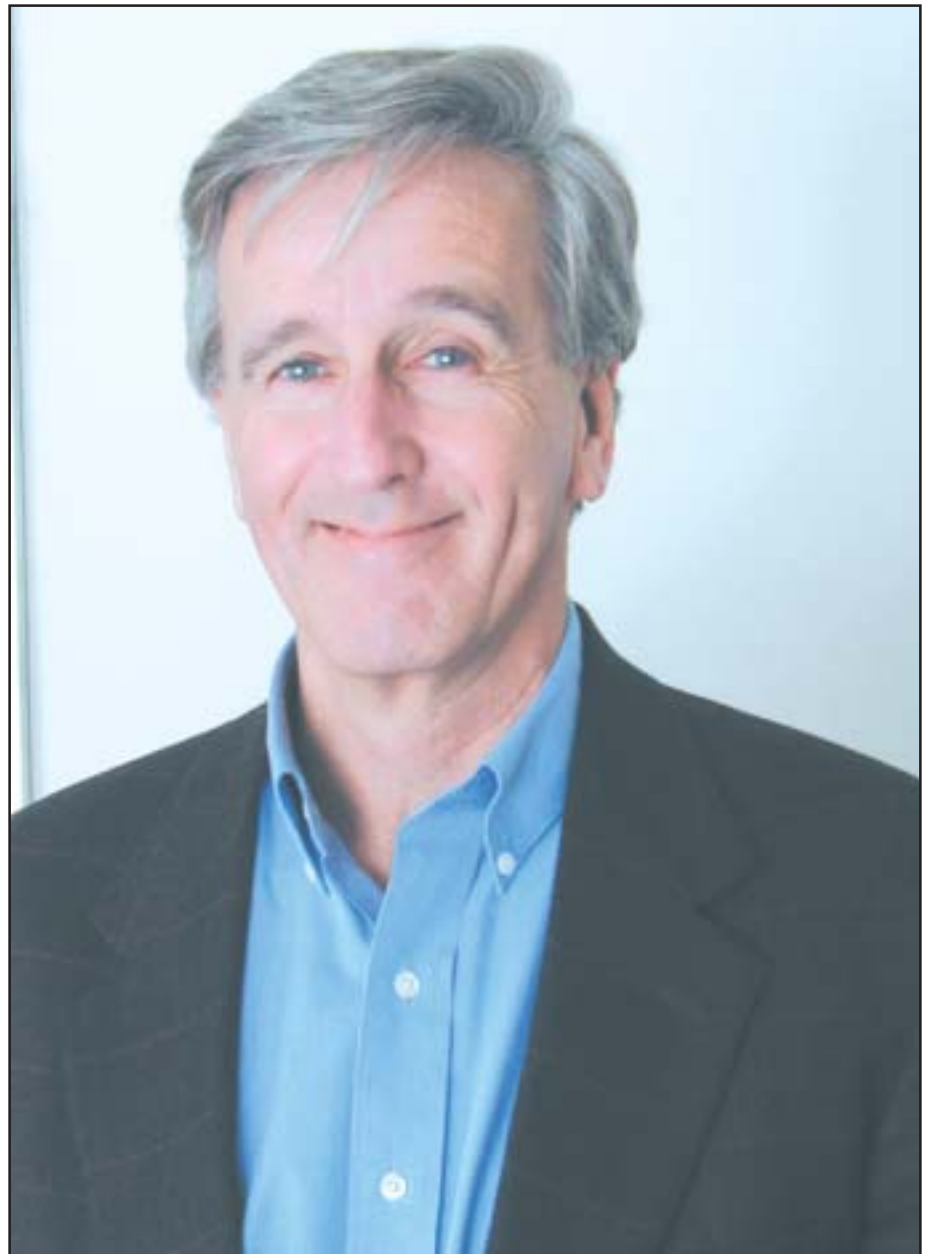
The Department of Education is advocating more public attention be directed to early childhood education, following what is the developing research consensus about the importance of reaching children earlier than traditional school age to assure successful development. We admire and respect the initiative. We must be sure that, in the attempt to refocus public attention in this manner, however, we do not lose focus on the system already in place.

The State Board of Education is considering revisions to its teacher licensing regulations. While not directly a legislative matter, we are actively involved in seeking changes in the proposed regulations and will be prepared, if necessary, to approach the Legislature for assistance in preventing poor provisions from emerging in the final version.

The business and, to some extent, the public education communities in Chittenden County are seeking to develop the Chittenden Technical Academy, an approach to workforce development that would entail creating a new high school with a focus on experiential learning and the like, replacing the existing technical centers in Burlington and Essex Junction. The project enjoys widespread, if local, support and its advocates seek to broaden the effort by obtaining a variety of commitments from the State. The cost would be substantial.

Our essential role in this debate is to protect the employment security of the existing staffs at the present technical centers. Beyond that, however, we need to help address a variety of issues this project presents, among them a way – if there is one – of providing funds without taking funds from other parts of the school system.

The Governor has suggested he be able to appoint the Commissioner of Education directly, rather than through the appointment of State Board of Education members who, in turn, hire the Commissioner. We need to approach this issue strategically. In truth, every Governor thinks he – or she – should have this direct authority. That does not, however, make it wise public policy. We will be examining this idea with a view toward



Executive Director Joel Cook is Vermont-NEA’s Chief Lobbyist.

what is best for public education in Vermont, rather than what might be the most efficient approach to State management.

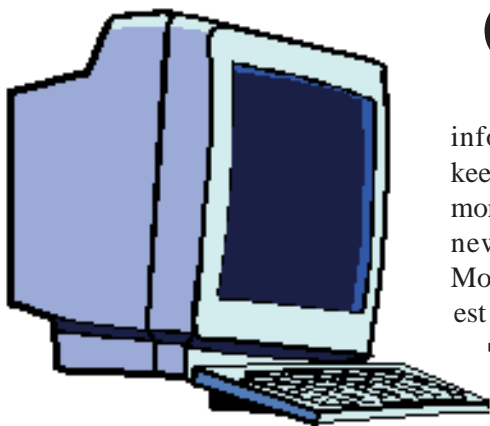
There will also be the annual struggle over funding for the Teachers Retirement System which, although it does not implicate the benefits that individual teachers will receive, does affect the future obligations of taxpayers. Within that context, we expect as well to continue to advocate for enhancing the health benefit in that system and in the Municipal Employees System (affecting some ESP members around the state), and to watch out for any attempt to implement a defined contribution scheme that might supplant the existing program with its defined benefit.

We do not know what, if any, approach to health care policy will emerge this session. The Association knows the good system it has created with VEHI and will protect its members accordingly. Beyond that, how-

ever, it is plain that society overall is going to have to confront the crisis that is America’s health care system sooner or later. We are positioning ourselves to participate in the debate.

And, finally for now, last year’s House Republican-led approach to “public school choice” is expected to receive continued impetus from Governor Douglas. We do not know how this might emerge, but we are steadfast in our commitment to the ongoing viability of rural communities in this state and, therefore, to the continuation of their schools. And, we are steadfast in our commitment to resist the hidden shift of taxes from the state to taxpayers in those communities that would result if, as the saying now goes, “money follows the child.”

We will be communicating with our members throughout the session in a variety of ways regarding issues of the moment and momentous issues. Please let us know of any questions or interests you may have. ■



Good MONDAY morning!

MONTPELIER — How do well-informed Vermont-NEA members keep current? They subscribe to Vermont-NEA’s members-only electronic newsletter, *MONDAY*. Then, on Monday mornings, they get the latest on:

- local contract negotiations and recent settlements
- local organizing efforts

and crisis activity

- state legislative activity and initiatives that affect education
- the accomplishments of colleagues across the state
- stories about Association work in other states
- free stuff available for kids and educators and classrooms
- professional opportunities, work-

shops, seminars, museum exhibits, lectures, and more...

Any Association member may subscribe by sending a request via email to vtnea@together.net.

Local Association leaders are encouraged to subscribe and are welcome to forward *Vermont-NEA MONDAY*, in whole or in part, to other Association members. ■

LETTERS

Why I want to be president

Why do I want to be president of Vermont-NEA? The reason is you. I have the deepest respect for Vermont-NEA members.

As a long-time practicing classroom teacher, I understand the demands that we face every day. In the push for education reform, including ESEA, more and more is asked of teachers and ESP.

Professional development is critical to our profession. As an adjunct professor with graduate education students and as an executive board member of LAPDA (Lamoille Area Professional Development Academy), I understand educators' needs and the needs of those entering the profession.

Our Association means so much to me. I have worked on the local, state and national levels to be informed and involved. During my tenure as chief negotiator, vice president and president of Morristown Educators Association, we worked hard to build trust and to achieve amiable, expedited negotiations. It has been a team effort among board, administration and staff.

I have been on the Vermont-NEA Board since 1991, executive committee, vice president, delegate to state and national Representative Assemblies. Recently, I was a member of an NEA assessment team.

I hope that this illustrates my willingness to give my heart to Vermont-NEA and to you, our members.

Bonnie Tuscany
Morristown EA

Bonnie has the skills

I am writing in support of Bonnie Tuscany's candidacy for President of Vermont-NEA.

In Bonnie we have an educator who has a deep respect for the membership. As President, she would continue her hard work for all members' needs. I have worked with Bonnie in many capacities in Vermont-NEA, and can attest to her wide knowledge of the organization, and to the professionalism that she brings to the office of Vice President. Bonnie has the skills to work with people on a local, state and national level, building upon a foundation of collaboration and trust. In voting for Bonnie, the members of Vermont-NEA can rest assured they have a strong advocate putting their needs first.

Please join me in supporting Bonnie Tuscany for President of Vermont-NEA.

Terri Livak Szymanski
Green Mountain NEA

A strong voice

I would like to express my support of the candidacy of Bonnie Tuscany for the position of Vermont-NEA President.

As a member of Vermont-NEA for 35 years, I have worked with most of the elected leadership during that time. Bonnie has been one of the strongest and most articulate leaders.

She has exhibited unfailing support for the rights and economic well-being of our members, which I believe is the first priority of the Vermont-NEA. I see her continuing to provide a strong voice for our members and for public education, which we all know has been under attack by those who, while giving lip-service to "improving" education, seem to have an agenda which may result in gutting public education.

I would encourage you to vote for Bonnie as Vermont-NEA President.

Jim Kiehle
Windham Southeast EA

Bonnie is the real thing

In eight years on Vermont-NEA's Board of Directors, I have worked closely with Bonnie Tuscany. I have seen her genuine concern for Vermont's children, educators and for Vermont-NEA. This concern has led her to develop her already strong leadership skills.

What makes her unique? Bonnie Tuscany:

- quickly grasps complex issues;
- brings people together around difficult issues;
- understands the budget process;
- understands the economic impact of programs on our dues dollars;
- has an intimate working knowledge of the structure and needs of various locals throughout the state;
- knows what it is to be in the classroom on a daily basis;
- understands the impact of current legislation on Vermont-NEA's members.

Bonnie Tuscany is the real thing: a caring, knowledgeable and effective leader. Please support Bonnie for Vermont-NEA President; she supports us.

Carol Hinchey
Essex Junction EA

Bonnie has the welfare of members at heart

I write in support of Bonnie Tuscany's candidacy for president of Vermont-NEA.

I have worked with Bonnie for eight years, most recently serving with her on the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors. As a director and as vice president, she has been able to develop a strong working knowledge of the goals, objectives, and direction the Association should strive toward in the future.

I have found Bonnie to be a tireless representative/officer who has the welfare of all Vermont-NEA members at heart. In her position as vice president, she has demonstrated the ability to wear many hats:

- She takes an active role in developing the annual budget and then presents it at the Representative Assembly.
- Bonnie serves on and chairs several committees, such as the Executive Committee, the Policy Review Committee, the Executive Director Evaluation Committee, and the Teaching Excellence Award Committee.

▪ She makes the time to travel around the state to attend regional meetings and support members.

▪ Her active participation at the national level has enabled her to build a strong network that will be an asset in helping Vermont-NEA move forward.

Bonnie's dedication, experience, and expertise will benefit all members of Vermont-NEA. I urge you to vote for her.

Lisa Champagne
Windsor

Bonnie will make an excellent president

Bonnie Tuscany will make an excellent president for Vermont-NEA. She has been a member of the Board of Directors since 1991 and has good insight into the workings of the Board and the Association. Her advocacy for Association members has been unwavering during her tenure. Her wisdom, foresight and patience has been a great asset to the Association in these changing times. Not only has she connected with Association members in Vermont but has many ties throughout the NEA nationally. The election of Bonnie Tuscany for president is an important step in the Association's growth.

Jeff Isham
Valley Education Association

Support Bonnie Tuscany

I'm writing this letter supporting Bonnie Tuscany as she is seeking to become the next president of Vermont-NEA. Bonnie became a member of the Board of Directors in 1991 and served in that capacity until 1997 when she became our vice-president. As a practicing classroom teacher, Bonnie is very aware of the many issues that teachers and support personnel face every day. Bonnie is very aware of the many issues here in the state but also nationally. I feel that Bonnie would be a great president and ask that you support her as I do in her candidacy to become Vermont-NEA's President.

Corrie Palmer
Ferrisburgh

Terrific ability

I am writing to support the candidacy of Bonnie Tuscany for Vermont NEA President in the April election. I have worked with Bonnie in her capacity of vice president, for three years on the Vermont NEA Board of Directors. She has a terrific ability to work positively with board members, staff members and members in general. Bonnie understands what every day teachers face as she has been working in the classroom for the past 27 years. Bonnie can organize, understand and explain the Vermont NEA budget, elections and by-laws. She is intelligent, thoughtful and hardworking. She listens to and understands the every day needs of members as she has been working in the classroom and teaching current

and pre-service teachers and attending state, local and national NEA meetings. She is highly respected by the board, and everyone she works with. Bonnie will be a strong, active, sturdy advocate for members and members' needs. Vote Bonnie Tuscany for Vermont-NEA President in April.

Cate Lamb
Green Mountain NEA

Bonnie does not shy away

I have been a member of the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors since Bonnie Tuscany became Vice-President of the organization. It has been my experience that Bonnie has the knowledge of the operations of the organization and has been able to work along with the officers and the Board of Directors. It is also my belief that she has the best interests of the membership as her primary goal and does not shy away from making decisions. I, therefore, gladly support Bonnie in her bid for President of Vermont-NEA.

Thomas J. Gallagher
Lamoille UHS EA

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

Dear Members:

Please note a serious omission and a silly mistake in my "Got Arts?" commentary in January's *Vermont-NEA Today*.

The serious omission was my failure to include teachers of theater arts in my examination of the importance of arts education generally. It was an oversight in my writing, but not in my consciousness or appreciation as a 22-year elementary teacher. My apologies to Vermont theater arts teachers who may have read the commentary.

The silly mistake was my letter jumble of the acronym for the National Assessment for Educational Progress. Of course, it is NAEP, not NAPE.

Thanks for your understanding.

Angelo Dorta
Vermont-NEA President

PATIENCE, PLEASE! Renovations causing missed messages

The Vermont-NEA Headquarters building has been undergoing some necessary renovations to provide more office and meeting space. Unfortunately, the construction has interfered with email, telephone and FAX service. At times, we've been off-line and without service. Some messages have been lost. Please try again if your inquiry has not been answered. Work on the building should be finished in early February. Until then, we appreciate your patience.



New Directors join Vermont-NEA Board

MONTPELIER — Diane Alberts of the Proctor Education Association took her seat on Saturday, January 11, as the newest member of the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors.

Diane now represents Vermont-NEA members in Addison-Rutland District, Area 2: Clarendon, Middletown Springs, Otter Valley,

Left: Diane Alberts

Poultney, Proctor, Rutland, Rutland Northeast, Rutland Town, Shrewsbury, Wallingford, Wells, and West Rutland.

At the January 11 Board meeting, Elections Chair Ann Lavery reported that Cherrie Torrey of Hartford has been elected to represent Upper Valley, Area 1: Hartford, Norwich, Orange East, Rivendell, and Thetford Academy. ■

A New Partner: Odyssey of the Mind

MONTPELIER — Vermont-NEA has approved a new Partner: Vermont Creativity Quest, an all-volunteer, non-profit organization which organizes the *Odyssey of the Mind* program in Vermont.

Perhaps you've heard of *Odyssey of the Mind*, but aren't really sure what it is all about. Often this activity is thought of as a Gifted and Talented program, but in reality all students can participate and benefit, and it can make a useful addition to the Enrichment program at all schools.

The goal of *Odyssey of the Mind* is to encourage young people to think creatively by presenting teams (of 5-7 students) with problems to solve through a process of brainstorming, constructing, and evaluating possible solutions. Throughout the process, divergent thinking and calculated risk-taking are valued. This is accomplished by having teams work on two major types of problems: Long Term

and Spontaneous. Long Term problems come in a variety of general types: vehicle, technical, classical art/literature/music, balsa engineering, and theatrical. New sets of problems are written and released each fall. Teams select the Long Term problem of interest to them, and work to "solve the problem" throughout the winter.

Spontaneous problems are short challenges that need to be solved "on the spot." Teams practice lots of different types of spontaneous problems so they are prepared to give both creative and rapid answers to both hands-on and verbal types of problems.

In the early spring (March), teams come together for the annual Vermont Odyssey of the Mind tournament. All teams attending the tournament and presenting a solution are considered "winners", however teams are judged according to how well and how creatively they meet the problem criteria. Those teams that receive first or

second place, as well as those teams that receive the *Ranatra Fusca* award for creativity, are invited to attend the *Odyssey of the Mind* World Finals tournament held in May, where teams from all over the U.S. and several foreign countries converge for a tournament of creativity.

So what's the best way to learn more? Come to a tournament and watch! The annual Vermont Odyssey of the Mind tournament will be held on March 15, 2003, at the University of Vermont (Patrick Gymnasium area) and is open to the public. If you are thinking about offering this program in your school, a great way to come up to speed quickly is to volunteer as a judge. Training will be held the morning of February 15, at Camels Hump Middle School in Richmond.

More information and training materials are available at <http://vt.odysseyofthemind.org> or by calling 1-800-805-5422. ■

Vermont History Day 2003

MONTPELIER — Get involved in the 2003 Vermont History Day Program! National History Day has selected "Rights and Responsibilities in History" as this year's theme. The Vermont Historical Society will be hosting the Vermont History Day contest on Saturday, April 12, at Spaulding High School in Barre.

History Day is an exciting, multidisciplinary program for students in grades 6 - 12. Based on the year's theme, students select a topic in Vermont, United States, or World History to research. This may be done individually or in groups of 2-5. After examining current information on their topic, they are encouraged to delve into primary source materials in order to form their own conclusions. Students present their findings in the form of a paper, a documentary, an exhibit, or as a performance.

At the Vermont History Day Contest, students present their work to a panel of judges who evaluate it based on historical quality, relation to theme, clarity of presentation, and responses to judges' questioning. Winners may qualify to go to College Park, MD for

the National History Day contest in June.

This year's contest features over \$4,000 in special prizes including a new Apple Computer courtesy of Small Dog Electronics for the school with the most participants in Vermont History Day. Some cash prizes are worth up to \$350. There is also a \$250 teacher's prize sponsored by Vermont-NEA. All students who participate in the program will receive a free Vermont History Day T-shirt from Cargill Animal Nutrition and Barry T. Chouinard, Inc.

To celebrate the 215th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution, President George W. Bush launched the "Our Documents" initiative. This initiative partners National History Day, the National Archives and Records Administration, the Corporation for National and Community Service and the USA Freedom Corps. This program encourages everyone to examine one hundred of the most significant documents in our nation's history. The National Archives will present three documents a week throughout the

school year. After all the documents have been presented, people will be encouraged to "vote" on which they feel are the ten most important documents. Students participating in History Day are encouraged to consider exploring one of these documents as a potential topic. The documents themselves and information about the initiative can be found at www.ourdocuments.gov.

Free Vermont History Day curriculum packets are available through the Vermont Historical Society. These packets include a teacher's guide, rules, suggested topics, lesson plans, resource lists, worksheets to assist students conducting research, a special prize list and information about how History Day meets the standards. Everything in the packet may be reproduced for classroom use and adapted for other lessons or activities.

For more information and a free curriculum packet, please call Eric Peterson at (802) 479-8522 or epeterson@vhs.state.vt.us. Information is also available at www.vermonthistory.org/educate/nhinfo.htm ■

Upcoming Association events...

February 1

Vermont-NEA Board meets in Montpelier.

Deadline for Vermont-NEA/Maida F. Townsend Scholarship Applications.

February 3

Vermont-NEA Committee reports due.

February 3

Deadline for March issue of Vermont-NEA Today.

March 1

Deadline for Vermont-NEA Human & Civil Rights awards.

March 3

Dr. Seuss's birthday observed / Read Across America

March 4

Town Meeting Day

What's new on the Vermont-NEA Website...



www.vtnea.org

How we celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday

For the sixth year, our National Education Association is organizing the nation's largest celebration of reading: *Read Across America*. Educators everywhere are encouraged to make this celebration of reading a year-round effort -- but the Big Day each year is Dr. Seuss's birthday.

Since Dr. Seuss's March 2nd birthday falls on a Sunday this year, many of us will celebrate on Monday, March 3.

In Vermont, Read Across America and Dr. Seuss's birthday are celebrated in nearly all schools. From eating Green Eggs and Ham at Middletown Springs Elementary School, to administering the "Reader's Oath" at Windsor Jr./Sr. High School, young people and educators alike will enjoy paying tribute to Dr. Seuss. Go to...

www.vtnea.org/seuss.htm

to read what Vermont-NEA members throughout Vermont are planning as reading activities in March.

Katherine Wright Knight of Arkansas receives The NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Katherine Wright Knight of Little Rock, Arkansas, was honored December 13 as the 2002 national recipient of *The NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence*. This annual award recognizes, rewards, and promotes excellence in teaching and advocacy for the profession, and honors public education and the dedicated members of the NEA.

Ms. Knight was announced as the awardee at the foundation's Annual *Salute to Excellence in Education* Gala, where she was presented with a personalized commemorative gift and a check for \$25,000.

Ms. Knight is a ninth and tenth grade English teacher at Parkview Arts/Science Magnet High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Nominated by the Arkansas Education Association, she was among five finalists selected earlier this year as recipients of *The Horace Mann-NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence*. The Horace Mann Companies provide funding for these awards, including a cash prize of \$10,000 for each finalist, and financial support for each to attend the gala.

One of the first teachers in the central Arkansas area school district to receive National Board Certification in adolescent/young adult English language arts, Ms. Knight adopted the Slavin Model of cooperative learning in her classroom, and is a certified trainer and statewide consultant. Throughout her career, she has continually examined and refined her teaching practice to better serve both students and colleagues. "I think that we have to recognize that education is not the same as it was 20 years ago. We may want students to read the same book, but we have to find another approach in terms of encouraging them to do it. That's what I try to do. Reading is such an important issue. I'm finding ways to incorporate what students like with what they need, such as integrating television, cartoons, and other media into the classroom setting. This makes teaching a little easier."

Vermont-NEA members honored

Three widely respected Vermont teachers also were recognized at the gala. **Kathryn Grace**, veteran reading teacher and learning specialist at



Katherine Wright Knight of Arkansas won the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence

Founders Memorial School in Essex Town was honored as recipient of *Vermont-NEA's 2002 Award for Teaching Excellence*. Kathi has been teaching for better than 26 years, serving her district as a classroom teacher, remedial reading specialist, assessment specialist, language arts coordinator, and now, after years of broad experience in education, she has chosen work as a learning specialist, where she has daily learning interactions with children.

Colchester teachers **Bradley Blanchette** and **William Rich** won one of the NEA Foundation's Innovation Grants and received the coveted *Don Cameron Award* for their outstanding work in secondary level social studies.

With their spring 2002 Innovation grant, Blanchette and Rich piloted "East/West Studies," an interdisciplinary course for ninth grade students. Students read a variety of literature, examined causes and effects of world events, identified major historical eras, and illustrated relationships between the geography and culture of various societies. The participating students represented a heterogeneous cross-section of the freshman class, allowing the teachers to experiment with and demonstrate the results of instruction in a "de-tracked" environ-

ment. Prior to piloting the course, Blanchette and Rich received intensive training from Carol Tomlinson, a nationally known expert on the techniques of differentiated instruction.

Service to education

In addition to celebrating teaching excellence at the gala, The NEA Foundation also presents *The NEA Foundation Award for Outstanding Service to Public Education* to an individual who has made exceptional contributions to public education. This year's award was presented to LeVar Burton, Host and Co-Executive Producer of *Reading Rainbow* for his outstanding support of children's literacy. ■



Attending the gala - L-R front: NEA Board Director Wayne Nadeau, Vermont-NEA President Angelo Dorta, and Bill Rich L-R back: Brad Blanchette, Kathi Grace, Vermont-NEA Vice President Bonnie Tuscany, and Mr. Grace.

New law gives educators a \$250 tax break

WASHINGTON – The Internal Revenue Service advises educators to save their receipts for purchases of books and classroom supplies. These out-of-pocket expenses may lower their taxes, thanks to a recent change in the law.

The new deduction is available to eligible educators in both public and private elementary and secondary schools. They must work at least 900 hours during a school year as a teacher, instructor, counselor, principal or paraeducator.

Taxpayers may subtract up to \$250 of qualified expenses when figuring their adjusted gross income (AGI). They will not need to itemize deductions to get this benefit. Prior to the change in the law, educators could take such expenses only as miscellaneous itemized deductions, which must be reduced by two percent of AGI.

Details on this and other new tax law changes are in IRS Publication 3991, "Highlights of the Job Creation and Worker Assistance Act of 2002," available on the IRS Web site at: <http://www.irs.gov/> or by calling: 1-800-829-3676.

Canter Ad