



TODAY

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Burlington paras speak out for a livable wage

Photo by Donna Iverson

BURLINGTON — Paraeducators in Burlington are on a campaign to achieve a livable wage in contract negotiations with the Burlington School Board.

Formal negotiations are a year away, but in the meantime, paraeducators have been busy reminding the public about the important work they do and spreading the word about their unacceptably low salaries.

The Livable Wage Campaign for Paraeducators in the Burlington School District has won allies and now is driving home the need for significant salary increases. The paraeducators are writing letters to the editor and have set up informational tables at the schools to distribute livable wage literature and buttons. Each month, paraeducators and their friends are speaking during public forum time at school board meetings.

Paraeducator Donna Iverson is one of the leaders of the livable wage campaign. She says, "Our intention is to appear during the public forum every month during the school year to educate the board on the situation and appeal for livable wages -- something more than the \$9.25 (\$10,000 a year) most of us are making."

When paras address the school board, their colleagues and supporters attend the meeting wearing Livable Wage buttons. It is an impressive demonstration.

"Our efforts are bearing fruit," says Donna Iverson. "We are getting positive feedback on our presentations and many paraeducators are wearing Livable Wage buttons." She says the Burlington paraeducators' goal is to "make 2005 the year we achieve livable wage status in our community."

On January 11, Paraeducator Alison Mott made the presentation, and teachers read statements of support. Here are Alison's powerful words:

I will begin by introducing myself. My name is Alison Mott and I moved to Burlington just this August and began working at Hunt Middle School.

I am a one-to-one assistant for a sixth grade boy who has been identified as having a disorder on the Autistic Spectrum called Asperger's Syndrome.

Like other kids with Asperger's, my student has trouble focusing on things he isn't immediately interested in (in his case anything but Godzilla movies and other related monsters).

In spite of his inability to focus, I know he always intends to listen to what adults are saying to him—I can tell by how upset he gets when he gets in trouble for fidgeting or failing to answer a question correctly when he is called on. He has trouble making connections with abstract concepts like fractions and percentages and he has more trouble than most kids do regulating his energy and his emotions. In fact, he seems to have trouble identifying and understanding emotions in himself, his peers and adults around him. This makes middle school, and the world in general, a difficult maze for him at times.

My job is to make it less confusing, gentler and safer. As much as is possible, I am the filter. I break down his assignments into step-by-step problems and let him know how long he should spend on each step. I try to make learning more fun and more interesting. I remind him when he needs to pay attention and help him organize his papers so he can turn in the homework on which he's worked so hard. I am a cheerleader and a dis-



Paraeducators Linda Smith and Alison Mott and teachers J.P. Gagnon and Laurie Hickey. Alison presented a statement to the Burlington School Board supporting a livable wage for paraeducators.

ciplinarian. And when he is able to be independent, I walk away and help the many other students who need the same help but don't have their own assistant.

When my student is in gym class, where he is supervised by other assistants, I assist in a 6th grade music class where my formal background in music allows me to share much of the teaching.

In order to do my job well, I need to be patient, creative, compassionate, skilled, energetic and highly educated. I enjoy the intensity of teaching and have done similar work in two other schools devoted to special education. At the School for Children with Cerebral Palsy in Philadelphia, I learned how to use music and movement therapy to inspire learning in non-verbal and non-ambulatory children. At the Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts, I worked with Deaf/Blind Adolescents.

I have worked as a nanny, school fundraiser, admissions assistant, tutor, and proofreader. I graduated from Bryn Mawr College with a degree in Cultural Anthropology and a minor in French. In my current work as a para-educator, I find a use for all of my previous experiences and skills.

Despite my extensive experience and the creativity which I bring to my job, I make only \$10,000 a year as a para-educator. I must also take on numerous other jobs. I work an additional 8 hours a week as an after-school homework tutor at Hunt, babysit for local families, teach private guitar lessons and take on other temporary jobs.

As it is, I can barely pay my bills which include rent, heating, electricity and phone bill. I'm frustrated that I cannot make ends meet. Though I love my job, I would be more likely to stay at Hunt another year if I was fairly compensated. ■

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Neglecting Educator Quality

By Angelo J. Dorta, President

Less than three years ago, Vermont's State Board of Education and Department of Education still were energetically creating a policy agenda to highlight and strengthen educator quality. They were assisted and supported by Vermont-NEA. Unfortunately, progress now largely has stopped, and backsliding even is apparent on some educator quality issues.

Their education policy interests were reasonable and timely. Numerous national research studies had affirmed a common sense conclusion: Well-trained, competent, and caring teachers are the most important school ingredient necessary to boost and sustain student academic achievement and proficiency in the arts.

Equally pertinent, U.S. polls showed that parents understood and approved of comprehensive and reliable strategies to develop high quality teaching. Parents' belief in and determination to fund educator quality initiatives and low class sizes far exceeded their commitment to curriculum development, standards-based assessments, alternative instructional groupings, and other types of school improvement initiatives.

The policy work began with pre-service educators. Under Governor Dean and Commissioner David Wolk, would-be teachers in Vermont colleges were required to pass tests of basic reading, writing, and math skills. Prior to graduation, content knowledge exams geared to prospective teaching levels and specialized subjects had to be taken, as well. It was a sensible response to the teacher-testing craze that was causing havoc in Massachusetts and elsewhere.

With encouragement and help from Vermont-NEA, Dean and Wolk also presided over Vermont's partnership with the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), whose seminal 1996 report thrust the vital importance of career-long high standards and qualifications for teachers into the nation's consciousness. Vermont's status as the 19th NCTAF State Partner even was first announced by the Governor and Commissioner at the 2000 Educators' Convention at Essex Junction High School. Vermont-NEA had a seat on the six-person NCTAF State Partner Team.

Soon thereafter, the Vermont Commission on Educator Quality was formed. The Commission's purpose was to advise elected officials and education policymakers on matters of educator quality. It consisted of representatives from K-12 schools, colleges, state education associations, regional professional development collaboratives, the State Board and Department of Education, and House/Senate Education Committees.

The Commission convened several times annually and also divided up its work for additional sub-committee meetings. It examined critical issues regarding teacher preparation, induction

programs and mentoring for new teachers, educator recruitment and retention, and professional development. The Commission's report, "Teaching Matters Most," was completed in September, 2003. It was meant to be the first of several documents intended to build consensus for a broad and systemic five-year action plan, a blueprint that could guide and align state and local district policies to better identify, support, and accomplish educator quality priorities.

Meanwhile, from 2001-2003, Vermont-NEA and partners at UVM, the Champlain Valley Education Consortium, and the Vermont Department of Education worked together to organize and fund first-ever regional trainings around the state for mentors of new teachers and "training-of-trainers" sessions for experienced mentors. Using the PATHWISE Induction Program and Charlotte Danielson's *Framework*, we obtained and funneled nearly \$150,000 in grant money into the large-scale trainings. It remains the most extensive attempt to date to provide Vermont's beginning teachers with a formal induction program and trained mentors.

Teachers seeking rigorous professional development via voluntary, advanced teacher certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards also received tangible assistance during this period and were elevated in prominence. A state-paid stipend of \$2,500 annually was given to candidates who achieved National Board Certification and who agreed to become mentors of beginning teachers or of veteran teachers undergoing the National Board process. Additionally, the Department of Education and federal grant funds subsidized nearly 90% of the \$2,300 National Board candidate fee and employed a full-time coordinator who worked tirelessly to recruit and assist educators during their year or more of National Board candidacy.

Unfortunately, that was then, and this is now.

There has been little progress on educator quality policy development and implementation since 2003. The State Board and Department of Education seem to have lost the urgency and appear to have shifted into neutral for the past two years. Indeed, they even have slipped into reverse in some respects.

The Vermont Commission on Educator Quality was abruptly abandoned in the autumn of 2003 following Commissioner Ray McNulty's sudden departure. Despite two years of work, it was not given a chance to formally submit its final version of the "Teaching Matters Most" Report to the State Board for discussion and possible action. Contrary to the Commission's expectations and wishes, its recommendations were not widely circulated within Vermont's education and policymaking community.

Support for the challenging professional development offered through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards — typically more than

200 hours in one year — was drastically reduced. The full-time state coordinator's position was eliminated, virtually ending an integrated approach to effective candidate recruitment, year-long support activities, and consistently available guidance.

Instead, the Department now primarily offers only minimal paperwork processing and an annual reception for new National Board Certified Teachers and their Vermont peers. Only teachers in the Vermont Accomplished Teaching Collaborative stepped forward to offer needed candidate workshops and finally were given \$5,000 by the Department to construct a bare-bones program.

Furthermore, the annual 10-year stipend for National Board Certified Teachers engaged in mentoring has been reduced sharply from \$2,500 to \$1,000, a 60% cut. It also has been limited to just the first three years of the 10-year national certificate. The fee subsidy for the National Board program has not increased to help counter the rising cost of participation. With the end of integrated candidate recruitment and support by the Department, the significant cuts to the stipend, and the stagnant fee subsidy, it's easy to understand why the number of National Board recruits dropped so steeply in '03-'04 and in '04-'05 from highs of 20 to 30 candidates yearly only two years ago.

Even more astounding, there has been no state investment in fostering induction programs for new teachers since the '02-'03 school year. At that time, Vermont-NEA and its partners received a \$95,000 grant of Eisenhower federal professional development funds passed through Vermont's Education Department for the PATHWISE project.

Meanwhile, states such as Ohio and California have been regularly investing state dollars in induction and mentoring programs as "preventative care" for beginning teachers who often struggle in their new jobs. To date, Vermont only has required mentoring as a result of decisions by the State Board and the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators. There have been no State Board/Department budget proposals and attempts to secure funds from the Legislature.

The State Board and Department of Education have a right and obligation to set their own priorities. Currently, those priorities include expanded school choice, a statewide school calendar, "reform" of school district governance, pre-school education, limiting education expenditures, and several more. There are no substantive and systemic educator quality proposals forthcoming from the State Board and Department at this time or on the horizon.

Policies to strengthen educator quality are too vital for student achievement and school improvement to be neglected. Much more can and needs to be done, if only we can get Vermont officials and policymakers to pay some attention and to invest some resources again. ■

Expect letters to parents about not “highly qualified” status to be sent soon

By Joel D. Cook, Executive Director

Under the so-called “No Child Left Behind” Act, as so many of you know, teachers of “core academic subjects” in Title I schools must be or become “highly qualified” by the start of the 2006-07 school year. A related provision of the law requires school districts to notify parents of children taught for four consecutive weeks by a teacher not yet “highly qualified.”

The State Department of Education concluded its first round of determinations many months ago. It has now set in motion the first round of letters from schools to parents by mid-February.

What to expect

For many of you, this will be confusing and, in most instances, unnecessary so since you have been and remain “highly qualified” and will not be affected by these letters at all. Nevertheless, you will most likely, whether or not you are aware of it, have your credentials examined against your current teaching assignment.

Most – nearly 19 of every 20 – Vermont teachers whose credentials have been measured against the “highly qualified” standard meet it. Others, primarily special and technical educators, have yet to be looked at. For the one in 20 determined not yet to be “highly qualified,” school districts are now expected to send notices to the parents of their teachers’ students. The Department has provided a standard format for those notices.

Some school districts may very well have difficulty figuring out if a teacher determined last year by the Department as not yet “highly qualified” remains not yet “highly qualified.” That is because the standard is a function of both the teacher’s credentials and her actual teaching assignment. If you’re caught in this web, you at least should be able to understand why.

Here’s the why:

The “highly qualified” determination relates only to “core academic” subjects. They are: English (and ESL), reading/language arts, math, science, foreign language, social studies, art, music, elementary education, and early childhood education (grades K-3).

The whole requirement still relates only to Title I schools.

The Department made its original determination last May and into the summer. Those determinations had nothing to do with this (2004-05) year’s teaching assignments. In fact, they were based on teachers’ assignments in 2002-03, as reported then to the Department.

To be considered “highly qualified” now, a teacher must both (1) be

properly licensed and endorsed for the subject(s) and instructional level(s) being taught and (2) have the required content knowledge for the endorsement(s) used in current assignments. That is, the original determination will probably not change unless your teaching assignment has, or unless you were determined to be not “highly qualified” and have taken the steps needed to change that determination.

Your administration now has to look at each teacher of core academic subjects in Title I schools to determine

that she is properly licensed, that she is teaching within her endorsement area or not, that she is teaching the appropriate instructional level (grade or grades) for the endorsement, and that she has met the content knowledge requirements for the endorsement.

If you meet the license, endorsement, instructional level, and content knowledge requirements of the law, you should be considered “highly qualified” and, basically, left alone. If you are missing a piece of those requirements, you will probably be the sub-

ject of a letter to your students’ parents.

That letter should look very similar to the one we reproduce here.

If you find this confusing, that’s OK. The vast majority of teachers are both “highly qualified” and confused about what it means. If you have any questions, though, you should feel free to contact your principal and, if that doesn’t help, contact Anne Bordonaro, Coordinator of Professional Standards at the VT Department of Education: anebordono@education.state.vt.us or 828-0411.

Template for Letter to Parents Notifying Them of Staff Non-HQT Status

Dear _____
(school name) Parent:

The 2001 federal law called the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) requires our school to inform you about the qualifications of your child’s teacher. This law requires that all teachers who teach core subjects meet certain criteria for their position by the start of the 2006-2007 school year. Core subjects are English (including English as a Second Language), reading/language arts, math, science, foreign language, social studies, art, music, elementary education, and early childhood education (grades K-3 only).

With this letter, we’d like to begin sharing our progress toward meeting this goal.

Vermont has always been a leader in setting high standards for the licensing of teachers. However, like other states, Vermont is expected to refine state licensing requirements and rules so that all teachers meet the new federal “highly qualified” requirements. Under NCLBA, educators must 1) be properly licensed and endorsed for the subject(s) and instructional level(s) they are teaching, and 2) have the required content knowledge for the endorsement(s) they are using in the assignment(s), i.e., A teacher may be fully licensed to teach Social Studies in Vermont, but may need some additional coursework in *economics*” (the italicized word can be the particular area)

The law also requires that schools receiving federal Title I funds notify all parents now if their child(ren) is being taught by a teacher who has not yet met the new federal requirements.

Our school works hard to bring qualified, fully licensed teachers into our classrooms. Vermont is fortunate to have some of the most qualified teachers in the nation.

Your child’s teacher, _____,

- Is teaching under an emergency license
- Is fully licensed as an educator in Vermont, but has been assigned to teach outside the subject area(s) of his or her area of licensure
- Is fully licensed as an educator in Vermont, but has been assigned to teach outside the grade levels of his/her area of licensure
- Is fully licensed as an educator in Vermont, but is still in the process of meeting the HQT content knowledge requirements for that area of licensure. He/she is taking whatever remaining coursework or professional development may be necessary.

We are proud of our staff at (school name) and are confident that our teachers are committed to their work. They have the best interests of children in mind when they enter their classrooms to teach each day. We look forward to working with you to make this a successful year for your child.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

(Name of Principal)

NEA Launches Enhanced Web Site for Educators and Community

Our National Education Association launched a greatly enhanced Web site in January with the best professional resources for educators and their communities.

Since 2002, NEA has maintained a public Web site and a member-only, professional resource site. The new site - www.nea.org - combines and expands upon the best features of both sites.

"The National Education Association is creating the number one resource Web site for educators," said NEA President Reg Weaver. "As we continue to develop www.nea.org we will include more tools for education professionals as well as ways to involve parents and community members, the building blocks for ensuring a great public school for every child."

In keeping with NEA's commitment to educators and students, the new site includes resources for teachers and education support professionals, as well as for parents, the press and the public. These resources include:

- Teaching Resources
- Online Professional Development
- The Latest Information on No Child Left Behind
- IDEA Tools
- NEA's Read Across America Updates
- NEA Professional Library
- Job Placement Services

NEA members will be able to take advantage of member-only discounts ranging from online professional development to long distance service discounts and other special offers. Visit www.nea.org and see why the National Education Association is the voice for public education.

Plan now for NEA's Read Across America

Initially created as a one-day event to celebrate reading on Dr. Seuss' birthday, March 2, NEA's Read Across America has grown into a nationwide initiative that promotes reading every day. Go to www.nea.org/readacross for booklists and celebration ideas.

To get a free red-striped cat hat (while they last), post your school's plans to celebrate reading and Dr. Seuss' birthday at www.nea.org/readacross/pledge.html

"Classroom Management Strategies" is hot topic among new teachers

MONTPELIER -- As registrations rolled in last month for Vermont-NEA's first-ever professional issues conference for new teachers, we noticed something very interesting: some 85 percent of new teachers signing up for the conference selected the same topic from among the six that were offered. The session on Classroom Management Strategies attracted the large majority of the people attending the February 4 conference. In fact, an extra class had to be scheduled to meet the demand.

Sherry Gile, Vermont-NEA's Director of Professional Programs, is gratified about the level of interest. "This sort of professional development is Vermont-NEA's newest service to Association members," she points out, "and it is wonderful that our first conference for new teachers has struck a chord. Our mission is to deliver professional programs that our members really want and need."

To find out why new teachers want classroom management strategies, we contacted a few who signed up for the session.

Erin McGraw - "As a first year teacher straight out of a UVM program, I find the instruction piece easy. The question for me is: how do I get my students into the right frame of mind for learning?"

"Even an internship experience does not properly prepare teachers to manage their own classroom."

Gretchen Price: "An effective teacher must possess many qualities in order for teaching/learning to become reciprocal. However, whether you are in your first year of teaching or your 25th year of teaching, staying updated within this profession is a must. Learning or even reviewing various strategies to manage a classroom can only improve all other aspects for providing a successful learning environment for your students and yourself."

Kaarin Goncz - "...there are some students that are disruptive to the classroom and I would like to learn how to manage their behavior so that 1) it doesn't affect the learning for other students and 2) I can keep the 'disruptive' student in class - I don't like kicking students out."

Natasha Chiuchiolo - "This is my third year teaching and every year I feel I am faced with a new challenge in terms of classroom management. Many of the tricks I have, work. But depending on group dynamics, personality, ability level, and numbers, some tricks don't work. I would like to add to my bag of tricks. I think you can never have too many tricks up your sleeve. I also know that the same trick

doesn't work for every student, so I am looking forward to learning ways to reach all my students, not just the majority of them."

Berta Baxter: "...I will soon be a classroom teacher and am interested in finding out strategies to better manage a classroom to allow for more instructional time instead of having to constantly deal with reoccurring issues. Basically... effective classroom management is something I consider to be extremely important..."

Andrew Johnson - "I signed up for the classroom management workshop because I feel that I could use some help controlling the students in my class. The majority of the stress from my job comes from classes that choose not to listen and/or participate in class. While the school has a set discipline policy, I feel that sending students out of the classroom is not the answer... They can't learn while they are out of my classroom in the principle's office."

"Also, everyone has told me that classroom discipline gets better with more experience on the job, and I would like to hurry that process along. I can't help the students learn if I can't help the students pay attention. I am hoping this workshop will help me to use a few new strategies in my everyday classroom." ■

Judges/officials needed for Odyssey of the Mind

By Tim Perkins

Nearly 100 teams are working on the 2004-2005 Odyssey of the Mind problems in Vermont this season. We need your help to make their efforts a good learning experience. Over 125 people are required to make an Odyssey of the Mind tournament happen.

We hope that you'll consider volunteering as an Odyssey of the Mind Judge or Official on March 19th at the University of Vermont. This is also a great way to learn about the program if you are considering offering Odyssey of the Mind in your school.

Training for Judges will be held on **Saturday, February 12th**, at Camels Hump Middle School in Richmond. Those who have NEVER judged, or have not judged in the past two years, should plan to arrive and be READY TO START at 9:00am. Returning Judges (those who judged in the 2003 and 2004 tournaments) should ARRIVE at 10:00am for an update on rule changes. We will finish around 12:30pm.

The 26th Annual Vermont Odyssey of the Mind Tournament, the largest celebration of creative problem solving in the state, will be held on



Saturday, March 19th, 2005, at the University of Vermont. The tournament is open to the public, so please feel free to invite interested parents and potential team members to come and check it out.

Those wishing to register should visit <http://vt.odysseyofthemind.org/VolReg05.html> and read the information on this page. When you're ready, click on the link at the bottom of the

page to go to the ONLINE registration (you'll need a valid email address, and have "Cookies" enabled on your computer). When you're done, you'll get an immediate email confirmation, and we'll contact you before the training to provide training materials. If the registration fails for some reason, or if you need more information, call toll-free 1-800-805-5422 or send email to VTOOTM@ACCESSVT.COM

LETTERS

Vermont-NEA Today welcomes letters to the editor from Association members. The maximum length: 200 words, please. -LBH

I appreciate Angelo for his strong support of ESP

Please consider supporting Angelo Dorta in his bid for re-election for President of Vermont-NEA.

As a member of the Board of Directors of Vermont-NEA, I have seen Angelo in action and believe that he has matured in his role as President and in providing leadership to the Board.

In particular, I appreciate Angelo for his strong support of ESP members. With Angelo's leadership, we have made strides in raising the bar on retirement benefits for ESP. In addition, Angelo has insured that Vermont-NEA leads the way in assisting all paraprofessionals in Vermont to meet the NCLB requirements.

I believe that Angelo understands the unique challenges that ESP face in the workplace and is willing to commit the resources of Vermont-NEA to our struggle for economic security and professional recognition. It is my hope that with his leadership and support, we will continue to make gains for all members of our education community.

Sue Rusten

Windham Southeast EA

We need a new president

If you are like most Vermont NEA members, you are probably not reading this letter. As an organization we have reached an outstanding level of apathy.

Having a president remain in office for 12 years is representative of this apathy. It is completely inappropriate for an organization like ours to have a president so removed from the day to day work of educators. We need a new president at least every six years.

Bonnie Tuscany will be a very good representative of the needs of members. She has been in the classroom and has held a variety of educator positions that better qualify her as leader of our organization.

Vote Bonnie Tuscany for Vermont NEA President.

Catherine Lamb

Green Mountain NEA

I am a candidate for President of Vermont-NEA

Vermont NEA election time has arrived. My petition has been filed and I am a candidate for President of Vermont-NEA.

I believe it is crucial that there be strong, amiable working relationships among Vermont-NEA staff, the Board of Directors and the members of Vermont-NEA. The President should work to develop and maintain such relationships. There will be times when agreement will not happen. It is okay to agree to disagree.

The President should visit schools

throughout the state to get a deep sense of the varying working conditions and environments in the respective schools. A term used quite often is an open door policy. It is critical since the President is the representative of the 10,000 plus members of Vermont-NEA. Our members are on the front lines each day dedicating themselves to the children of Vermont.

The President should be visible and available to the members of Vermont-NEA. It is my hope to meet more and more members during my tenure. One of my highest priorities is to maintain contact with educators in the field. It is critical not to lose the perspective of the people working in schools each and everyday.

Contact me with any questions or concerns. bpt45@aol.com

Bonnie P. Tuscany

Morrisville EA

Bonnie is aware of the problems local members

I would like to urge all Vermont NEA members to support Bonnie Tuscany for President of Vermont-NEA. There are many reasons that I support her -- integrity, experience, commitment -- but if I had to pick one area that she will stand out, it is her commitment to the locals. As a 10+ year president of a local, I believe that they are the base and backbone of Vermont-NEA and the reason that Vermont-NEA exists. Bonnie knows this. She spends her days at the local level. She is aware of the problems local members have and what Vermont-NEA needs to do to better serve the its membership.

It sometimes seems that Wheelock Street operates above and around the classroom teachers and the local branches. I believe that Bonnie Tuscany is best equipped to get Vermont-NEA's priorities back where I think they belong. I urge all local members to consider this when they vote this year.

Francis Trask

Orange Southwest EA

Bonnie has a long history of quality service

When I took a teaching job in Vermont in 1972, I immediately joined the Teacher's Association. I experienced the hard work and dedication of the leaders and staff at Vermont-NEA. These efforts have resulted in many improvements in our working conditions and salaries. I have no doubt that this will continue in the future.

I am urging your support of Bonnie Tuscany for Vermont-NEA President. In addition to her work in the classroom, Bonnie has a long history of quality service to her local association, as well as the state and national association. Her service as local leader and negotiator, member of the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors, and State Vice-President give her the credentials to be our next President.

Because the office of Vermont-

NEA president involves a full time commitment, I believe that over an extended number of years, one can lose sight of the conditions and problems that classroom teachers and ESP members face in these changing times. I am a supporter of term limits for officers and members of the Board of Directors.

Change can be for the good. I believe that it is time for a change, and urge you to support Bonnie Tuscany for President of Vermont-NEA.

Tom Gallagher

Lamoille Union EA

Bonnie has served us well

I am writing to support the candidacy of Bonnie Tuscany for president of Vermont NEA. I have worked with Bonnie for twenty years at the Morrystown Elementary School where she is a proven leader. Bonnie has served the school in many ways over the years and is currently on the Leadership Team, among other committees. Bonnie was instrumental in successfully applying for our school to be an Apple Classroom of Tomorrow and she shares her considerable expertise on computers with her colleagues through teaching a course, or often just by lending a hand when needed.

Bonnie is excellent with numbers, facts and figures which has been extremely useful in her role as chief negotiator at the bargaining table. We have always been able to work out our differences with the school board in a professional way and potentially contentious issues have resolved amicably.

Bonnie has served us well on our local executive board and deserves a chance to serve as your Vermont-NEA president.

Leigh Lamphere

Morrystown EA

Vote for Bonnie

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

I have had the distinct pleasure of working with Bonnie since 1992; first as a fellow delegate to the national representative assembly, next as a fellow board member, and then as Vice President of Vermont-NEA. I have served with her on several committees within Vermont-NEA, such as the Executive Committee, Budget Committee, Strategic Planning Committee and Policy Review Committee. She is quick to grasp the issue at hand and then to help formulate plans to address the issue.

Bonnie is one of the hardest working people I know within the organization, both at the state level and the national level. This has enabled her to build a strong network at both levels that will help Vermont-NEA to move forward.

Bonnie's untiring dedication to our membership, experience in the classroom at both the elementary and

college level and her expertise in governance at the local, state and national levels will benefit all members of Vermont-NEA.

I urge you to support and vote for Bonnie Tuscany as President of Vermont-NEA.

Jay Burnell

Southwest VT EA

Thanks to Angelo for supporting retirement issues

Angelo, thank you. Your support of retirement issues shows your commitment to the well being of teachers and their families, not only during their carriers, but into retirement.

You and your team's council and perspective on issues ranging from full funding to healthcare have been invaluable. Vermont-NEA, represented by you and the staff, have been intimately involved in all facets of retirement. These are complicated issues both fiscally and politically. I believe we have the best informed and active state association in the nation in supporting retirement issues.

I would encourage all members to support your candidacy for President of Vermont-NEA in order to help provide a secure future for our members.

Joe Mackey, Chair

Vermont State Teachers

Retirement System

Angelo is a proven leader

I am writing to urge you to vote for Angelo Dorta for President of Vermont-NEA. Angelo is a dedicated, knowledgeable advocate for education at the local, state and national level. His is a strong voice for education and educators. He understands the needs of teachers and ESP and is willing and able to work to find solutions that are fair to all.

Angelo is a proven leader with the expertise to strengthen Vermont-NEA for all members. Please vote.

Linda Howard

Twinfield 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 Junction-Westford EA

It is time for a new point of view

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

I observed that Bonnie, as vice



LETTERS



president, traveled to the Northeast Kingdom Regional Council meetings on many occasions, talking with, and learning from the members. Her commitment to the job was evident.

Bonnie is currently in the classroom living the day-to-day NCLB challenges. This experience, along with her experience as Vermont-NEA vice president, are exactly what we need in the president's position.

Bonnie clearly understands professional development needs, as she has been an adjunct college professor training paraprofessionals, current teachers and pre-service teachers. She has a vision for stronger professional connections between professional organizations and Vermont-NEA.

Bonnie knows what is going on in public education and knows what is needed to promote our profession.

Her relationship with the Vermont-NEA staff and board of directors is an excellent example of her leadership qualifications. She listens to differing opinions and is open to change. It is time for a new point of view in the office of president.

Public education is mired in an abundance of negativity. We need a positive, cooperative approach by our leadership in order to combat these challenges. Please support Bonnie Tuscany for Vermont-NEA President.

Martha Allen
Essex North EA

Bonnie deserves your vote

This letter is to support Bonnie Tuscany for President of the Vermont NEA. Bonnie has been a great colleague to others at Morrystown Elementary School, where she has taught for years. Whenever teachers, experienced or new, have question they turn to Bonnie for her knowledgeable advice. Bonnie has demonstrated her strong leadership skills and ability to work with others on the local, state, and national levels. This ability to work with others has been a strong asset to our local association when she, as a chief negotiator, has helped us achieve our goals.

Bonnie has also served as Vice President of the Vermont NEA and is presently a state board member. Bonnie keeps current on issues that face educators as she networks with others on the national level and she thoughtfully sees how this effects all educators.

Because Bonnie is a teacher, she knows how the mandates effect teachers and students. Bonnie has proven to have the intelligence, leadership skills, and vision to make her our next President for the Vermont NEA. She deserves your vote.

Mona Bonin
Morrystown EA

Bonnie will work tirelessly

I am writing this letter in support of Bonnie Tuscany for Vermont-NEA president. Bonnie is an experienced, committed, very successful local leader who understands the impor-

ance of strong local associations. She also knows the importance of bringing in new members to maintain strong locals. Bonnie supports building student programs as a cornerstone for this because many of our veteran colleagues are going to be retiring in the next several years. She brings this expertise to the state level as a member of the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors where she works tirelessly for all members in all areas of the state.

As a past Vermont-NEA vice-president, Bonnie also has great knowledge of the issues that impact our locals from the national forum. These include retirement, health care, NCLB, professional development, etc. She has remained active by representing us on such committees as the one addressing pension offset programs.

I believe that as president, Bonnie will continue to strengthen Vermont-NEA for all members. I know that she will work tirelessly on our behalf to improve our public image and defend public education.

Therefore, I urge you to support her candidacy.

Lisa Champagne
Windsor Southeast EA

It's time for a change

Remember the importance of the November 2004 national election? The upcoming Vermont-NEA election is just as important!

It's time for CHANGE! I am writing in support of Bonnie Tuscany for president. Bonnie has proven herself in many association roles. She currently serves as a negotiator at the local level and is on the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors.

Bonnie's classroom experience allows her to know firsthand the many demands of our profession today. She works hard to protect to the rights of us all, support staff and teachers alike.

Bonnie has closely followed the budget of Vermont-NEA, asking important questions about current spending and about our future programs. A strong membership will allow us to meet the needs of members.

Bonnie's strong interpersonal and leadership skills will move the association forward. She will work hard at bringing together all parties to reach a common goal.

Please join me, support Bonnie Tuscany for president of Vermont-NEA. Watch your mailbox at home for your ballot in early April and VOTE!

Cherrie Torrey
Hartford EA

Full support for Angelo Dorta

I have been a member of the Vermont-NEA WSSU local for two years. Last year I was a non-active member, but this year I have had the privilege of serving as the Building Representative for my school. I also have had the privilege of participating as a Vermont representative to the Northeast Regional Minority Teacher Lead-

ership Conference, as well as a participant in the Women's Leadership Conference.

The main reason I was able to participate in both of these workshops was because of Angelo Dorta's support. I was recommended to Angelo by a fellow teacher to be a representative to the MTLC. Angelo had never met me, but after we had e-mailed back and forth as well as spoken on the phone, he fully encouraged my participation and helped in every way he could to get me to the conference.

Angelo called and e-mailed several times to provide as much information and support as he could to help me institute the NEA created KEYS program into my school. He even encouraged me to petition to be placed on the ballot as a Vermont delegate to the National NEA convention this summer.

I fully support his re-election as Vermont-NEA president.

Natasha Chiuchio
Washington South EA

Elect Bonnie Tuscany

I am writing in support of the candidacy of Bonnie Tuscany for President of Vermont-NEA. Bonnie is a dedicated and tireless leader of many years experience on the local, state, and national level. She is a tried and true negotiator, with great success on the local level, and she can put that success to work for Vermont.

Bonnie supports professional development, having been a teacher educator herself. One of the most important assets that Bonnie would bring to the position is that of being a current classroom teacher who understands what teachers and paraeducators face on a daily basis.

Bonnie has long had experience with the budget process, an attribute we need right now as we face fewer members and more from our state organization. Elect a proven leader with new ideas and insight to the position.

Terri Szymanski
Green Mountain-NEA

I trust Bonnie Tuscany

I have seen Bonnie Tuscany broaden her knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Vermont-NEA throughout her tenure on the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors and as Vermont-NEA Vice President. She has served us well in these capacities, and as a member of various Vermont-NEA and NEA committees.

As a Vermont-NEA member who strongly believes that our Association is vital to us as educators, I trust Bonnie Tuscany. I have tremendous pride in the work that we all do, and I want Bonnie to lead us and our Association into the future.

It is time for a change. We need a Vermont-NEA president who is currently a practicing teacher, and who lives our experiences "in the trenches." The past 10 years have been a time of significant change in education. Our jobs have changed dramati-

cally. We need someone who has lived through those changes to lead our Association.

Please join me in supporting Bonnie Tuscany as our next Vermont-NEA President. I believe that she has the skills that we need. If you are still uncertain, email Bonnie directly at: bpt45@aol.com, or ask her to visit a meeting of your local association or meet with you personally. You will be convinced.

Carol A. Hinchey
Essex Junction-Westford EA

Re-elect Angelo Dorta

Once again it is time to carefully consider your choice for Vermont-NEA President. Angelo Dorta has continued to support and represent Vermont's teachers, ESP, and public schools with passion, commitment, and vision. He continually works on the issues of valuing public education and the need for specific education policies. Angelo is very clear about the Association's goals and policies, and promotes membership, affordable health insurance, acceptable working conditions and professional salaries. He carefully reviews the No Child Left Behind Act to oppose or modify specific provisions to best serve Vermont. As a board member of the Vermont Accomplished Teaching Collaborative, he is aware of the importance of retaining highly qualified teachers and promotes and supports professional development that fosters excellence in Vermont classrooms.

Please consider your vote and re-elect Angelo Dorta for Vermont-NEA President.

Linda Parker, NBCT
Windsor Southeast EA

Angelo Dorta is on the right track for all of us

There are many reasons that I believe that we should support Angelo Dorta's reelection for president, but I will focus on some very personal reasons:

At the 2004 Annual Convention in Washington, DC, I was impressed with the energy and commitment that Angelo showed each day, following up on issues and questions posed by my fellow delegates.

I have attended two association trainings after receiving heads-ups from Angelo on these opportunities; I found each to be wonderful professional development. This focus has been a commitment from Angelo Dorta to our membership.

I also have noted that my working conditions and salary have appreciably improved during these last years. Under Angelo Dorta, the Vermont-NEA has worked hard to make sense of NCLB and to help all of us achieve "highly qualified" status. I know that Angelo Dorta hasn't done this single-handedly, but the president sets priorities and the tone of an organization.

Finally, my local paper, *The Caledonian-Record*, published this



NEA Director's Report

By Joyce Sullivan

NEA members are encouraged to call on Congress to fully repeal GPO/WEP: the social security offset and windfall elimination act. Vermont-NEA Board members Bonnie Tuscany and Jay Burnell are part of the NEA cadre working to repeal this legislation, and they need your help. Although GPO/WEP affects few Vermont teachers, since most of us pay into social security as well as retirement, it affects teachers in neighboring states like Maine and Connecticut. Log on to the NEA web site for more information and/or contact Bonnie, Jay, or myself before writing our congressmen.

IDEA has been reauthorized. Although the new bill isn't perfect, there have been some improvements. Some highlights include a greater focus on early intervention, ways to simplify discipline procedures while protecting civil rights, fair ways to reduce law suits between parents and school districts, and an opportunity for fifteen states to design a plan to reduce paperwork.

The highly qualified requirements for teachers and paraeducators are still not where we would like them to be



Joyce Sullivan jas3@sover.net

and full funding is not mandated by the bill.

Read Across America Resource Kits are now available to members. New this year are numerous posters including one featuring adolescents, a poster with a Spanish language theme, and a poster connecting NEA's reading partnership with major league soccer. In addition to the new variety of posters, resource materials have been produced on a CD-ROM. These promotional materials will help educators to promote reading year-round as well as on March 2, 2005 (Dr. Seuss' birthday). Go to www.nea.org/readacross to request a resource kit and sign up for an e-newsletter. ■

In Brief

February 8 is deadline for free books for Read Across America Day

The Literacy Empowerment Foundation, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, invites your school or other literacy project to apply for FREE books for Read Across America Day, March 2. During the past year, LEF has distributed over 3,000,000 books to schools all across the country for Read Across America Day and other literacy projects.

Resources are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Go to <http://LEFbooks.org> for more information and an order form or call 717-791-6210 or 610-719-6448

Get free Cat Hat posters at Saturn dealership

Working directly with the NEA, Saturn-UAW is distributing Cat Hat posters – which students can make into “Cat in the Hat” hats – at each of its 450 retailers nationwide. While supplies last, educators can visit Saturn (Shelburne Road in South Burlington) and pick up 30 of the posters for their 2005 Read Across America classroom event.

The poster begins as a simple, over-sized sheet of thick paper with red and white stripes. With a few careful scissor snips and some well-placed tape the flat poster becomes a red and white stove-pipe hat – ala Cat in the Hat. It is the perfect touch for a festive “read-in” and the students delight in taking the hats home. The posters are available beginning February 1. Questions? Email Teacherposters@aol.com.

Parent brochure on NCLB available

Vermont-NEA has published a brochure for parents titled “Living with the No Child Left Behind Act.” It describes what the law means for children and schools and provides an introduction to NCLB's testing requirements and ways parents can help their children succeed.

Email rtuner@vtnea.org for copies of the brochure for distributing to your students' parents.

➡ week a scathingly personal attack on Angelo Dorta's defense of our schools in the midst of No Child Left Behind requirements. When *The Caledonian-Record* attacks the association president, you know he is on the right track for all of us.

Donna Waelter
Blue Mountain EA

Join me in casting your vote for Angelo Dorta

I am once again honored to write an enthusiastic letter of support for Angelo Dorta as President of Vermont-NEA. It is a rare occasion when we have an individual who so thoroughly understands and represents both the challenges and aspirations of our educational community. Angelo's commitment to the key issues before us will ensure that we are once again well served by his leadership. His ability to advocate for all stakeholders on both professional and economic matters has ensured that both our working conditions and professionalism have advanced throughout his tenure. We are now in the admirable position of retaining a dedicated, intelligent and visionary leader to continue to guide us as we build coalitions to support, defend, and improve public education.

I hope you will join me in casting your vote for Angelo Dorta.

Kathy Buley
South Burlington EA

Support Tom Gallagher for VP

I am writing this letter in support of Tom Gallagher for Vermont-NEA Vice President. Tom is a person who

inspires others to seek new adventures in life. He is the person who takes the time no matter how long to explain something one may not understand. I found this out while in Washington, D.C. at the Representative Assembly, at times during the convention when situations were confusing who would show up to ease the tension, Tom Gallagher.

It is people like Tom who make our organization excel with pride. Tom is committed, capable, and humorous. These qualities alone are necessary for the Vice President because when things get tough we need someone who can look at the situation seriously, but yet realize it is all right to have a sense of humor.

Tom Gallagher is enthusiastic, considerate, and understanding to the needs of the membership of Vermont NEA. He works diligently trying to encourage goals and objectives for the future of the organization. Tom identifies with the needs of teachers and support staff in Vermont. I urge you to support Tom Gallagher for Vice President of Vermont NEA!

Rose Wenzel
Addison Northwest TA
Vergennes ES Para EA

Angelo respects the complexity of our work

I have had the opportunity to observe Angelo in action as a member of the Board of Directors of the Vermont Accomplished Teaching Collaborative. From working with him on this Board I have observed his dedication to, and understanding of the importance of providing a quality edu-

cation to all students in Vermont. Angelo remembers and respects the complexity of our work. Angelo fully understands the political and legislative issues we face in our struggle for basic professional respect and treatment. Angelo has gained the respect and the ear of educational leaders at the state level. He effectively speaks for us in the wider state community. I believe he effectively furthers our union issues by advancing our professional interests in continually improving public education.

Linda Berger, M.Ed., NBCT
Montpelier EA

Vote Tuscany for president

I encourage members to vote for Bonnie Tuscany for Vermont-NEA President. As an experienced Vermont-NEA Vice President, Vermont-NEA Board member, and local leader, Bonnie is qualified to do the job. Bonnie will work closely with all members, local leaders, the Vermont-NEA staff, and the Executive Director to serve the needs of the membership and strengthen the power of locals in our state.

As the NEA Director, I have seen Bonnie working with legislators and state leaders from around the country. Last year, Bonnie was a leader in securing Senator Leahy's support of legislation to repeal the social security offset provisions and will continue to fight for the repeal of GPO/WEP as a member of the NEA cadre. She is highly regarded by other state presidents, vice-presidents, and NEA directors who know her. Bonnie will not only fully participate in NEA as our

president; she will advocate for the needs of small states.

State officers need to represent the members we serve. As a practitioner who experiences first hand the pressures of HQ, AYP, and changes in curriculum standards, Bonnie has the expertise to address our concerns.

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

Joyce Sullivan
Windham Southeast EA

We need Angelo's enthusiasm, energy, and knowledge

I am writing to support Angelo Dorta, our current Vermont-NEA president. I met Angelo about 5 years ago at a Summer Leadership training, I was introduced to Angelo and he has remembered my name ever since. I am impressed because not many leaders take the time, care, and courtesy as Angelo to show such respect for a paraeducator!

Angelo is a strong confident leader and encourages others to be the same. He recognizes the strengths in leaders at Vermont-NEA and successfully builds strong working relationships. Angelo is a kind, fair, and open-minded man who tries to reach out to the members.

We need Angelo's enthusiasm, energy, and knowledge at Vermont-NEA. He advocates for all educators and support staff. With Angelo as our leader, Vermont NEA will continue to strive for excellence in education. Please support Angelo Dorta for President of Vermont-NEA!

René' Nill
Vergennes ES Para EA

OPPORTUNITIES

Upcoming VSTA Conference-

Teachers as Explorers

Want to beat the winter "Blahs"? Enjoy a real "Trip?" Attend the 2005 Vermont Science Teachers Association Pathways Conference!

The Sixth Annual VSTA Conference will be held on March 4, 2005, on the campus of Champlain College, with a theme this year of 'Teachers as Explorers.'

Keynote speakers, Betty Carvellas from Essex High School and Amy Clapp from Salisbury Community School will start off the day by sharing their experiences while participating in Arctic research on separate Grant opportunities, and they will share how such investigations can inspire and rejuvenate science classroom instruction.

Other featured workshops for K-12 teachers of science include:

The Elementary Science Experience (Kathy Renfrew, Pam Quinn)

An Interactive Approach to Teaching the Nature of Science (Wendy Moore)

■ Brain-based Teaching Strategies (Drew Hopkins)

■ Teaching with Technology: The WWW in your Classroom (Robin Heyden-Prentice Hall)

■ Guided Discovery (Linda N.M. Hopkins)

■ Exploring Archeology (Barbara Conrey—VTC)

■ Formative Assessment Probes: Uncovering Students Ideas in Science (Page Keeley—Maine Math and Science Alliance and Maine Science Teachers Assn)

■ Using Data-Collection Tools in Biology and Physics (Gay Craig, 'Topher Waring)

■ Exploring the Solar System: MESSENGER Mission to Mercury (Don Hendrich)

■ Cool Content in the Classroom (Betty Carvellas and Amy Clapp)

■ Following Student Questions: A Constructivist Approach to Science Teaching (Maureen Maidrand and Dennis DeLena)

In addition, a number of Short Topics will be presented - addressing Grant Opportunities for Vermont science teachers, Vermonts new Science Networks, the upcoming Tri-State Science Assessment and the Vermont Science Initiative program. Vendors and Exhibitors will be showing their newest materials for enhancing science instruction in our classrooms.

Registration on line will be available from mid-January at

www.vermontinstitutes.org/conferences/vsta

For further information or to have additional questions answered contact Gail Hall at

gailhall@education.state.vt.us

ESP Conference scheduled for March 18

A conference especially for Education Support Professionals is scheduled for Friday, March 18, at The Inn at Six Mountains in Killington. There will be a full day of training, with lunch and continental breakfast provided.

The conference will be free for Vermont-NEA members, \$150. for non-members. Save the date and watch *MONDAY*, Vermont-NEA's electronic newsletter, for registration and workshop content information.

Reading Rainbow Readers and Illustrators contest

The Reading Rainbow Young Writers and Illustrators Contest, based on the Emmy Award-winning TV series, Reading Rainbow, and sponsored by Vermont Public Television, expands children's love of literature and appetite for learning. The television show, hosted by actor Levar Burton, introduces young children to the joys of reading and the fun of learning.

In its 11th year, the Reading Rainbow Contest is a nationwide endeavor that encourages children, kindergarten through third grade, to write and illustrate their own story. Over the years, children from Vermont have gone on to place 1st and 3rd in the national competition.

Each contest participant will re-



ceive a certificate of achievement signed by Levar Burton, as well as an invitation to attend Reading Rainbow Storytime Parties at Barnes & Noble in South Burlington. Entries must be submitted with an official entry form and follow the national guidelines.

To Enter, go to www.vpt.org/link/kids/localevents.html or call 1-800-639-3351. The contest entry deadline is March 22, 2005.

1/2 page AIG ad - color