



TODAY

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Vermont-NEA member Karen Heath of Barre City Named 2005 Vermont Teacher of the Year

Photo by Chris Howe

MONTPELIER – Karen Heath, elementary and middle school language arts teacher at Barre City Elementary and Middle School, has been named the 2005 Vermont Teacher of the Year.

Karen's 20-year teaching career is an inspiring story of a woman who relishes stepping up to a challenge and delivering for kids. After her first year of teaching at an alternative high school in South Boston, she was asked to start up a new school in a different neighborhood in Boston. True to her nature, Karen accepted the challenge. She transformed a city-owned space into a school, hired another teacher, and ran a successful program.

She turned a vision into reality

In 1986, Karen began working at Maplehill Community in Plainfield, a group home for children in state custody. She spearheaded Maplehill's effort to start a small, independent school for middle and high school students with special needs. "I did everything - health, phys ed, math, science, social studies," explained Karen. "I was the only teacher when the school started, working with kids that had emotional and behavioral difficulties."

"A group of professionals working with this population of young people recognized the need for an alternative educational option for them," wrote Ellen Selkowitz in a letter recommending Karen as Teacher of the Year. "It had been discussed for several years," she added, "but it was Karen who 'took the bull by the horns' by initiating and completing the entire application process. She turned a vision into reality... If it hadn't been for Karen's courage and determination, the school would never have gotten off the ground so successfully and quickly."

I have watched Karen fulfill the district's dream

After 13 years at Maplehill, a school which continues its success serving special needs students in Central Vermont, Karen moved to a new challenge: creating and implementing



Karen Heath created Barre City's successful and challenging Reading Renaissance Program, an accelerated reading/writing program for high achieving students in grades 3-6.

a language arts program for high achievers in elementary school: the Reading Renaissance Program.

"In the spring of 1999, our district's school board endorsed the concept of creating an accelerated reading/writing program for Barre City's students in grades 3-6 who have the aptitude and are motivated to

achieve at high levels," wrote Barre City Co-Principal James G. Taffel in his letter supporting Karen for Teacher of the Year. "It was our good fortune to be able to find and hire Ms. Karen Heath as the teacher of this enriching program," he continued. "I have watched Karen fulfill the district's dream. She has created a

dynamic, challenging program that has nurtured the talents and inspired the minds of over 230 students. Using a rich and varied selection of literature, Karen has piqued her children's interest and established a learning environment where her students are continually engaged in so

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The AYP Hoax

By Angelo J. Dorta, President

"More schools sanctioned" was the main message in headlines and news stories across the state on November 16th, only one day after the Vermont Department of Education released results of federally required "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) determinations. Based on spring '04 testing, the number of public schools not meeting No Child Left Behind (NCLB) AYP provisions jumped from 31 to 39.

What's going on here? Is the quality of Vermont's schools actually declining?

Some readers are bound to have such concerns. Unnecessary citizen doubt about the performance of public schools is an inevitable outcome of flawed NCLB guidelines. Standardized tests are overused and misused. Students are reduced to test scores. Despite the adverse effects of labeling, schools and their educators are being judged, sometimes harshly. And, students' scores and schools' performance are being analyzed within a distorted framework.

dysfunctional relationships at home. It means all students of limited English fluency.

Schools receive no particular tribute for the learning growth of students from their starting points, or for excellent student achievement in other academic subjects and the arts. There is no credit for schools that consistently narrow the achievement gap within and among student subgroups, but just not as fast as NCLB demands. There generally is not enough flexibility to use other valid and appropriate student assessments. There are no tangible rewards for schools, only punishments.

Mandatory AYP determinations are purely numbers-driven. They presume all children in all schools can and should make the same achievement gains within one year. Of course, laws of statistical probability operating for up to 37 different AYP measures simply increase the likelihood annually that more and more schools will not attain their AYP goals in all categories every year.

Additionally, Vermont's rela-



Vermont-NEA President Angelo J. Dorta

It's only a matter of time, probably beginning next year, before the number of Vermont schools not attaining AYP goals rises dramatically.

AYP determinations soon will clearly reveal whether such school reclassifications normally are only temporary reprieves from the "failing" and "underperforming" labels.

A recent news story quoted a school board member saying, "If you get put on this list, it gives the whole school a negative spin." He then goes on to praise the \$100,000 in grant money that helped to purchase new reading books, to pay for the establishment of an after-school program with a strong academic component, to start art and music classes, and to provide classroom teachers with joint planning time to examine and discuss student achievement data.

Some obvious questions arise from this school's particular experience: Why not simply fund our schools adequately in the first place? Why not always ensure access to the arts in schools and to after-school programs? Why not simply establish and support what we know already works to strengthen schools: adequate financial and human resources, high academic and behavioral standards, up-to-date learning materials and technology, more parent and citizen involvement, and the rest?

No, instead our schools and hardworking educators are subjected to an AYP hoax, a scam. NCLB's exclusive reliance on standardized test scores and skewed AYP calculations heavily stacks the odds against local community schools and educators. Ultimately, it threatens to undermine public confidence in them. Instead, we should support teaching and schools that recognize children as unique learners.

Vermont has great public schools and educators. We need and deserve great public support for them. ■

How is the framework distorted?

NCLB requires as many as 37 different measures for each Vermont school. That's separate math and reading/language arts exams given at 6 levels (grades 3-8) and then subdivided again into student racial, income, disability, and native language groups, plus several other indicators.

A school's failure to hit its AYP target goals in only one category for two consecutive years starts a chain of worsening sanctions. That's like answering one question incorrectly on a 37-item test and receiving a failing mark. Moreover, absolutely no differentiation is made between a school with insufficient AYP in only one student subgroup category and other schools with insufficient AYP in all 37 measures, or between schools anywhere between those extremes.

NCLB unrealistically demands perfection in another manner. All students in all public schools must achieve state standards for math and reading/language arts by 2014. That means all learning disabled special education students. It means all students living in poverty or enduring

tively low school enrollments are more prone to sharp volatility of annual school-level scores. Student scores are used to set AYP goals and also to gauge whether AYP goals have been reached. Yet, basic statistical theory attests to the unreliability and inconsistency of conclusions drawn from small samples.

It's only a matter of time, probably beginning next year, before the number of Vermont schools not attaining AYP goals rises dramatically.

For instance, only two schools exited NCLB's AYP sanctions this year. Fourteen — seven times more — didn't make AYP for the first time. Of 31 schools that didn't make AYP in 2003, only five made AYP in 2004. Twenty-two others — over four times greater — didn't make AYP again in '04 and now must accept "School Improvement" sanctions.

Some individual and media accounts have stressed a few cases where schools have boosted student scores impressively enough to be dropped from the list of "identified schools." So far, such cases are rare. However, the next several years of

Health Care Policy: Public Issue #1

By Joel D. Cook, Executive Director

The upcoming legislative session has real potential to advance significant changes in the way health care coverage is provided citizens. Health care is not a “right” of citizenship in the formal sense of the word. It is, however, quite obviously a necessity.

Vermont-NEA made health care policy one of the five issues about which we asked candidates this year to read our position and tell us if they agree with it or not. Many legislators

ran this time because they know the importance of this issue to all Vermonters and want to be involved in making policy about it. And, there is a unique group that has taken on the task of trying to develop a consensus around policy reform.

It is called “Coalition 21,” so named for the number of its original players. It consists now of nearly 30 health care providers, insurers, consumer and labor groups. It was established by the Business Roundtable and Senator Jim Leddy (D. Chittenden) to

explore the extent to which it could forge a consensus about how the health care system should be altered. Vermont-NEA is ably represented on it by Mark Hage, our Director of Member Benefits.

Mark takes with him to this work the formal statement of principles about health care policy the Association adopted last spring.

We are reproducing Vermont-NEA’s Principles of Health Care Policy Reform here so our members understand the basis for our work.

Retirement Healthcare Funding

By Joe Mackey, Chair, Vermont State Teachers’ Retirement Board

One of the retirement benefits the State provides is 80% of your health insurance. Without this benefit many teachers would be unable to retire until age 65 when Medicare kicks in.

You should be aware of some new requirements the state of Vermont has to follow in order to provide this benefit. They come from GASB (the Government Accounting Standards Board) and require an organization like the State list the full extent of its liabilities. Until now, the accounting rules did not require the State to list the cost of the health benefit in the overall cost of the retirement program.

This accounting rule change, therefore, doesn’t mean the program costs more, it just means the costs look more.

In the past, we have simply paid the benefit as we go. The new requirements would have us either continue to pay as we go or “pre-fund” these expenses. If the state chose to pre-fund these benefits, the costs would be extremely large, an additional \$31 million dollars. If we simply pay as we go, we now have to report that amount as a liability.

Listing this amount as a liability could be misused to try to reduce or eliminate retiree health coverage. I am writing so that all teachers will understand this issue and be able to respond to it if anyone does attempt to use this accounting change to hurt the benefit.

It is important for us to maintain the benefits that we earned and paid for. When we retire we do so with the understanding that these promised benefits will be there. In order to maintain what we were promised, it is important that we receive the funding from the State that the actuary recommends. Please keep reminding your representatives of our needs and their responsibility. Do not believe your benefits cannot be changed. In order to maintain them you must be vigilant and vocal.

Principles of Health Care Policy Reform

Vermont-NEA wants to participate in the development of a consensus regarding how to change the health care system – in Vermont and nationally.

We recognize that Vermont educators have struggled and sacrifice to obtain and, particularly, to retain high quality health care coverage for themselves and their families.¹

We recognize that it has become increasingly difficult for educators without such coverage to obtain it.² Many support staff in our schools have good health insurance at acceptable cost. Most, however, either have no coverage or coverage that is inadequate, either because their out of pocket costs are simply unrealistically high or because their employing school board simply has not yet agreed to provide any coverage at any price.

We recognize that retired educators deserve and need access to good health care at rational and realistic cost.³ We must do what we can to help them get it.

We know that most approaches to “reform” in public health care policy have typically been little more than shifting costs from one group of patients or providers to others. That is because reform has almost always been partial, incremental, inadequate. No approach to health care reform short of one that addresses the whole system and the entire population can appropriately meet the principles we establish here for proposals we can support. Therefore, Vermont-NEA will endorse approaches to this public issue of fundamental importance in Vermont that adhere to the following principles:

1. Reform in health care policy must encompass the entire health care system. It should not seek or result merely in the shifting of system costs from one group of patients or providers to others. In particular, it should not seek to lump together those who receive some or all of their health coverage through taxpayers.

2. Health care reform should not be piecemeal. It should not address first one group with the mere hope or intention that other groups will be affected later.

3. All Vermonters should be able to obtain safe and timely health care services when they need them, with the guidance of medical providers they know and trust.

4. Access to health care should be available to all regardless of employment. Many thousands of Vermonters, whether or not disabled, are unemployed without fault. Many thousands are retired. Many thousands are employed but do not have adequate or, in some cases, any coverage. Their ability to obtain needed health care should not be compromised.

5. Access to health care should be established as a fundamental right of citizenship.

6. Health care finance should be adequate, affordable, and sustainable. These three standards characterize all good social institutions.

7. The health care system should be efficient. It should provide fair, equitable payment to providers and encourage them to implement those practices identified as best and as improving overall quality.

8. Health care providers must be accountable. There should be high standards, good evaluation systems, and thorough public oversight mechanisms.

Footnotes

¹ Most teachers have health insurance through their employment. All Vermont school boards participate for this purpose in VEHI, a partnership of Vermont-NEA and the Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust. By comparison with other employee insurance groups, VEHI is administratively efficient and cost-effective.

² Many support staff in our schools have good health insurance at acceptable cost. Most, however, either have no coverage or coverage that is inadequate, either because their out of pocket costs are simply unrealistically high or because their employing school board simply has not yet agreed to provide any coverage at any price.

³ Currently, retired Vermont teachers receive payment for 80% of their individual health insurance cost. Retired school support staff, if their employer participates in the Vermont Municipal Employees Retirement System, receive just \$30/month toward the premium cost of their health insurance. The cost of a useful health benefit is a contributing factor to the fiscal instability of public pension programs generally.

11th Annual New England Conference on Gifted and Talented Education

The 11th annual conference on Gifted and Talented Education will be held October 20-22, 2005 at the Killington Grand Hotel

Theme: Climbing High: Creating Curriculum for the Gifted Pre-Conference, Thursday, **Dr. Carol Tomlinson**, Differentiating Instruction

Conference Keynotes: Ms. Math, Rachel McAnallen, Gifted Learners and Mathematics

Stephanie Tolan, Social and Emotional Components of Gifted Learners, Winner of the Newberry Award for Young Adult Literature

This conference will also include featured speakers, more than 60 concurrent sessions, panel discussions, book signings, and networking.

Topics of giftedness to be addressed: Differentiated Instruction, Content Area Giftedness, Curriculum and Instruction, Social and Emotional Needs, Asynchronous Development, Assessment, Stress Management, Perfectionism, Depression, At Risk, Counseling, Advocacy, Administrative Leadership, Parenting, Current Research, Pre-service Training, Diverse Student Populations and other important issues.

For information, go to: www.vcge.org or www.necgt.org

New contact person for NEA Valuebuilder

NEA Valuebuilder, together with VALIC, is endorsed by Vermont-NEA for 403 (B) retirement investment products. For the past three year, the Valuebuilder program in Vermont has been managed very capably by Steve Dotson.

In mid-November last year, Steve was called up to active duty in Iraq. During his absence, **David Thompson** of Green Mountain Brokerage Solution, and a colleague's

of Steven's, will be handling all NEA Valuebuilder business in Vermont. Current Valuebuilder customers and others interested in learning more about Valuebuilder products can contact Dave Thompson at **1-800-604-9822**. Dave's business address is: Green Mountain Brokerage Solutions, 396 Park Street, P.O. Box 444, Barton, Vermont 05822

Vermont-NEA extends its thanks to Dave Thompson for his service to our members, and we hope Steve Dotson returns to Vermont very soon.

Vermont-NEA Scholars' Bowl playoffs begin January 22

By David Rome

The 21st year of Vermont-NEA Scholars' Bowl Competition is underway with a record 36 schools participating. Scholars' Bowl is a team Jeopardy-style competition between schools and students from all over the state.

In the fall, teams within their geographic region all play one another, with playoff seeding partially determined by this. Playoffs begin on January 22 at St. Michael's College, and will continue in March and April at Champlain College in Burlington. The league and state champion then represents Vermont at the Panasonic Academic Challenge at Disneyworld in Florida in June.

The league proudly announces BFA-Fairfax joins other Franklin County members Richford, Enosburg, BFA-St. Albans, and Missisquoi. Every high school in Franklin County is now in the tournament.

In the Northeast Kingdom, Canaan has rejoined the league along with Lake Region, St. Johnsbury, Lyndon and North Country.

In the other end of the state, newly formed Twin Valley joins Burr and Burton, Fair Haven, Mt. St. Joseph and Mt. Anthony.

Metro (Burlington, Colchester, Milton and Winooski),

Champlain North (Essex, Mt. Mansfield, Rice and So. Burlington) and

Champlain South (CVU, Mt. Abraham, Middlebury and Gailer).

The Scholars' Bowl is proud of

BFA-Fairfax joins other Franklin County members Richford, Enosburg, BFA-St. Albans, and Missisquoi. Every high school in Franklin County is now in the tournament.

In the Connecticut Valley, defending state champion Hanover is joined by Woodstock, Oxbow, Thetford and Bellows Falls.

The Green Mountain Region participants are Montpelier, Spaulding, Harwood and Lamoille.

Finally there are three regions around Chittenden County:

its inclusive league and our ongoing support from the Vermont NEA. We welcome others to participate.

If you are interested in more information or details of when competitions will take place, please contact tournament director David Rome at vtdavidr@adelphia.net or go to <http://members.aol.com/kcommo/vtsbowl/>

A brave move for the Vermont Association of Health, Physical Education and Dance

By Susan Adams

For the past few years the attendance at the Vermont Association of Health, Physical Education and Dance (VAHPERD) Fall Conference has been dwindling. After much discussion and soul searching the association decided to make three major adjustments; change from a one to a two day conference, move away from the university or school setting to a resort and change the date from October to November.

The move proved to be a huge success. Over two hundred and fifty professionals attended the two day conference, Nov. 11-12 at the Killington Grand Hotel, Killington, Vt. Evaluation forms turned in at the conclusion of the conference overwhelmingly supported the location and date as well as the quality of presenters and workshops. Numerous folks indicated they wished they had attended with a team from their school and would plan to do so in the future.

Physical education and music teachers were especially excited about the inclusion of Dr. Phyllis Weikart who presented several sessions on both days. Dr. Weikart, a nationally known author and educator is Associate Professor Emeritus in the Division of Kinesiology, University of Michigan, Associate Professor at Hartt School of Music, and Director of Movement and Music Division of

High/Scope Foundation.

Equally well received was Dr. Jean Blaydes Madigan who presented two sessions as well as the Keynote Address. Dr. Madigan is an internationally known educational consultant, speaker and author on the subject of how brain research supports the need for movement in learning and how movement enhances learning.

Thursday evening the VAHPERD Board hosted an Awards Banquet where the following professionals were recognized:

Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year
Lyn Porter
Allen Brook, Williston

Middle School Physical Education Teacher of the Year
Jon Hammond
Harwood Union High School

Recreation Professional Award
Jennie Hubbard
Norwich Recreation

Layperson Of the Year Award
John Albergini
Smile Elementary School
Bolton

Distinguished Service Award
Susan Adams
Jericho Elementary School

Outstanding Future Professional Award

Emily Gibbs
University of Vermont
and
Hillary Lavanway
Castleton State College.

A new Acknowledgment Award was added this year where professionals were invited to recognize someone who had an influence on them professionally. Several folks were recognized and money donated on behalf of the recipient was designated in their name to the VAHPERD student scholarship fund.

The VAHPERD Board wishes to recognize the invaluable contribution of the numerous professionals from both within and outside of the State of Vermont for organizing two full days of workshops and exhibits. A special note of appreciation goes to Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont for their generous sponsorship of the Conference. Congratulations to VAHPERD President Willie Cerauskis, Swanton Elementary School and her board: VP for Health, Nancy Emberley, VP for Recreation, Kevin Hattin, Greater Burlington YMCA, VP. for Dance, Sharon Newcomb, Doty Memorial School and VP for Physical Education, Rick Newton, Rivendell for organizing this wonderful Conference. ■

Eight achieve National Board Certification

Eight Vermont-NEA members achieved National Board Certification in 2004, bringing Vermont's total NBCTs to 77. Congratulations to:

Charles Herzog of Brookfield earned Generalist/Middle Childhood certification

Nancy Keller of Winooski earned Science/Early Adolescence certification

Laura King of Middlebury earned Generalist/Middle Childhood certification

Shawn Martin of Union-32 earned Social Studies-History/Early Adolescence certification

Helen Poulin of Newport earned World Languages Other than English/Early Adolescence through Young Childhood certification

Alicia Rominger of Williamstown earned Social Studies-History/Adolescence and Young Adulthood

Deborah Sanders-Dame of St. Johnsbury earned Exceptional Needs Specialist/Early Childhood through Young Adulthood

Valerie Sullivan of Morrisville earned Science/Adolescence and Young Adulthood

The NBCT process takes considerable time and effort. Laura King tells us why she went to the trouble:

"At the time, I was involved in a course focused on reflective teaching. The National Certification process

promotes the highest level of reflection from teachers: You truly see your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher and focus on how to make your instruction the best it can be for all students," she explained, adding, "As a mid-career teacher, I desired this level of evaluation—something that you can't get from local supervision. I knew my principal viewed me as a proficient practitioner here in my Vermont classroom—but I sought a measure that was more focused on national standards of our profession."

Here's what Laura found most worthwhile about the National Certification Process:

"We so often are bound by our teaching situations; our thoughts about teaching can become clouded by the complexities of our institution. Though we do have occasional opportunities to dialogue about essential questions about our field—we rarely dig deep for any length of time," she said, continuing: "The National Certification process is all about essential questions. Through the portfolio entries, you are constantly describing, analyzing and reflecting on your practice and its impact on student learning. You are left with a feeling that what you do every minute of your teaching day matters—that you do may a difference. As a result, I am a more reflective and purposeful teacher." ■

HQ definition for special ed teachers

In November 19, Congress passed the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization bill. Here's what the bill has to say on NCLB's definition of "highly qualified" (HQ) for special education teachers.

1. The law requires all special education teachers to be licensed or certified in special education, and possess at least a bachelor's degree. SpEd teachers, in order to be deemed "highly qualified," must not have had a waiver of licensing requirements "on an emergency, temporary or provisional basis."

2. New or veteran SpEd teachers working with students with the most significant cognitive disabilities—those who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate standards—will be required also to have an elementary certification; or for those teaching above the elementary grade level, they must demonstrate the ability to teach at the appropriate instructional level for their students.

3. New SpEd teachers assigned to teach multiple subjects must meet the NCLB "highly qualified" standard when they are hired in a least one core subject area (e.g., language arts, math or science). They must also comply with NCLB definition of HQ status

as written OR go through a HOUSSSE (Highly Objective State Standard of Evaluation) to demonstrate competence in other core subject areas. If they opt for the latter process, they must satisfy its requirements not later than two years after their date of employment.

4. Veteran SpEd teachers assigned to teach multiple subjects must comply with NCLB's definition of HQ as written in the statute, or they can take advantage of a HOUSSSE to demonstrate competence in other core subject areas.

5. SpEd teachers who do NOT provide core content, but are instead providing consultative services to an HQ core content teacher, are exempt from the subject matter requirements of the HQ definition in NCLB and IDEA.

Long before the reauthorization of IDEA, a HOUSSSE instrument was developed in Vermont and other states for classroom teachers of core academic subjects. Under IDEA, states are now permitted to develop a single HOUSSSE instrument that assesses a special education teacher's qualifications to teach multiple subjects. As yet, we don't know if or how this will play out in Vermont. We will keep you posted. ■



Luiza Bloomberg, first year paraeducator at Edmunds Elementary School in Burlington, holds a special cake baked for paras by art teacher Anne Lamont.

Burlington paras push for livable wage

BURLINGTON -- Parents and teachers cooked a special lunch to honor paraeducators at Edmunds Elementary School in Burlington. Art Teacher Anne Lamont baked a cake for the occasion. It promotes Burlington's Livable Wage Campaign for paraeducators.

Burlington paras are campaigning for a livable wage long before negotiations with the school board open on

a new contract. Their aim is to raise community awareness and support for a livable wage, and to send an early message to the school board.

Paras are sending letters to the editor, setting up public information public displays and holding special events such as this luncheon keep spirits high and demonstrate how determined paraeducators are to bringing up their wages. ■

The coming session: What we'll be looking to accomplish

By Joel D. Cook, Executive Director

In November, Vermonters elected many friends of education and workers to both the House and Senate. As a result, in January we will begin a two-year session with an ambitious legislative agenda.

While we are particularly hopeful to get our issues addressed, we know our chances expand substantially when our members locally have direct contact about them with their own legislators. We will be letting you know at particular points in the process when that help is needed, but it is almost always important, and it is always appropriate for constituents to let their representatives know what they think.

In this edition of *Today*, you will find discussions of our approach to health care policy and the elevation of teaching to a status enjoyed by other regulated occupations and professions. Here is a short list of some of the additional issues we expect to confront.

Education policy
Educator Quality. Vermont-

NEA has been and will remain in the forefront of any policy activity to help educators improve their skills. The effort described elsewhere to establish teaching as a self-regulating profession falls squarely within this heading. In addition, we will continue to follow and address any and all State policy and legislative activity under the federal law's so-called "highly qualified" standards for teachers and paraeducators.

Early education. What we know about brain development is well ahead of how we make use of that knowledge. Last session saw consideration of a legislative approach to programs for 3- and 4-year olds that got mixed up in consideration of cost, choice, and somewhat parallel policy developments in the Agency of Health and Human Services. During the off-season, Commissioner Richard Cate convened a work-group, in which we participated, to develop an approach to early education programs that could be implemented without legislation. That being said, there undoubtedly still will be legislation addressing this increasingly important gap in the

State's approach to education programs for very young children.

Technical education. The defeat at the polls of the "Regional Technical Academy" proposed for Chittenden and portions of Franklin Counties highlights the need for Vermont to address the future of technical education as part of the statewide education system as a whole. Most observers believe now that any consideration of combining the technical centers in Chittenden County should be resolved in the context of what the State decides should be its approach to technical education generally.

"Choice." If we could get away from the ideological connotations of the word "choice," we could probably engage more safely in discussions of ways to expand learning options for students. Instead, however, we continue to have to protect communities and their children from arguments that would take resources from needy schools – and their students – and deposit them elsewhere.

In any event, we have participated actively in efforts within the Education Coalition to develop a successor to the current law enabling some high school students to attend a school outside their district of residence. That law ends in 2007 and will have to be repealed or replaced. In addition, the State Board of Education directed the Commissioner to put flesh on the bare bones of its position statement in support of "expanded school choice." And, the Windham Foundation conducted a workshop on the issue in October, which is supposed to yield a report. We will work with legislators in both houses to develop a useful successor to the current law, one that avoids harming communities and learning opportunities for students "left behind."

Retirement

Teachers. The most important legislative issue involving the Teachers Retirement System is the development of a rational long-range plan that addresses its significant underfunding. We will most likely seek to eliminate the law that permits a governor to put in his recommended budget less than what the Retirement Board actuaries say is required to meet the Plan's needs: the Legislature would still be free to set the funding level, but we'd at least start with a better understanding of what the System's needs actually are.

We have been working all summer and fall with the Treasurer on a series of issues of lesser significance but that could improve the way the System functions and meets the needs of its members.

Support staff. Nearly 200 school districts participate in the Municipal

Employees Retirement System, to the benefit of many school support staff. We hope to develop a method through which to assure their representation on that system's governing board and, at a minimum, raise the profile of the total inadequacy of the present \$30/month system contribution towards health insurance.

Labor rights

Agency fee for teachers. Every public employee group in Vermont, with the exception of teachers, has the right to negotiate with their employer for "agency fee" provisions in their collective bargaining agreements. "Agency fee" is the term that describes the portion of a union's dues that account for its collective bargaining and related activities, to be paid by members of a bargaining unit who choose not to be members of the union. Teacher contracts contained these provisions until the late 1980's, when the state Supreme Court ruled they could not be enforced unless specific legislation OK'd it. Now is the time we will be seeking that legislation.

Employment implications of governance changes. In light of the significant increase in governance change discussions, it is time for legislation to protect the rights of school employees where governance changes are made. Right now, if school districts unite to form a K-12 system, employees and unions have no concern: their contracts are "assumed" by the newly formed employer. That is also true in several places statewide where people of good will simply have been able to work things out when school districts combined but not to form a full K-12 system. We will be asking the legislature to extend this simple "assumption of contracts" language to governance shifts other than to K-12 systems.

Education Finance

Integrity of the Education Fund. This special fund was established to help implement the Equal Educational Opportunity Act and was designed to insulate pre-K – 12 funds from being intruded on by other government programs. We expect to see attempts to make money in the Ed. Fund available for other purposes because we have seen those attempts grow in momentum over the past several years.

In light of budget difficulties in other parts of State government, it is only to be expected that some advocates will again seek to gain access to the Ed. Fund for their programs. The Education Fund, however, consists of funds – primarily property taxes – paid by the public with the understanding that they would be used for their schools. ■

Data driven professional development planning: An upcoming endeavor that needs YOU!

MONTPELIER -- watch your mailbox for a 9x12 white envelope stamped with the words "Survey Enclosed. Please Respond!" Vermont-NEA is administering a statewide professional development issues survey of k-12 classroom teachers and education support professionals, a survey developed by NEA Research. This survey will enable us to create a system that includes a process for research and data collection in order to identify professional development needs of our members.

We have randomly selected 1200 members across the state to receive this survey. The surveys will be mailed on or about January 7, 2005. Please mail the survey back to Vermont-NEA within one week of delivery in the postage paid return envelope provided. The surveys will be sent to NEA Research for scoring. The results of the survey will assist us in our strategic planning. Vermont-NEA strives to promote and provide high quality workshops and training opportunities in collaboration with schools/districts. In doing so, we attain the express goal of fulfilling the professional needs of members and advance the quality of public school teaching so that all students can/will achieve their full potential. - Sherry Gile

Credit Union ad
(color)

The time has come for Vermont to stop treating its first-class teachers like second-class professionals

By Joel D. Cook, Executive Director

This headline, in sum, will be the Association's position during the coming legislative session in discussions about the regulation of the teaching profession.

All Vermont public school teachers meet our state's comparatively stringent standards for their professional license. Nineteen of every 20 of them are already considered "highly qualified" under the federal government's artificial and imposed standard. Yet, not one of them is permitted an authoritative role in how their profession is regulated.

Among some 50 regulated occupations and professions in Vermont, only the teaching profession is not allowed, with appropriate State oversight, to regulate itself. In Vermont, it is only the state board of education that makes final decisions affecting the teaching profession. We will be asking the Legislature to confer at least some of that role on teaching and teachers.

In the 1980's, the last time Vermont teachers raised this issue directly, the then commissioner of education stood in opposition. Instead of their own authoritative regulatory body, teachers settled for the purely advisory "professional standards board," leaving all actual decision-

making about the profession with the commissioner and state board of education.

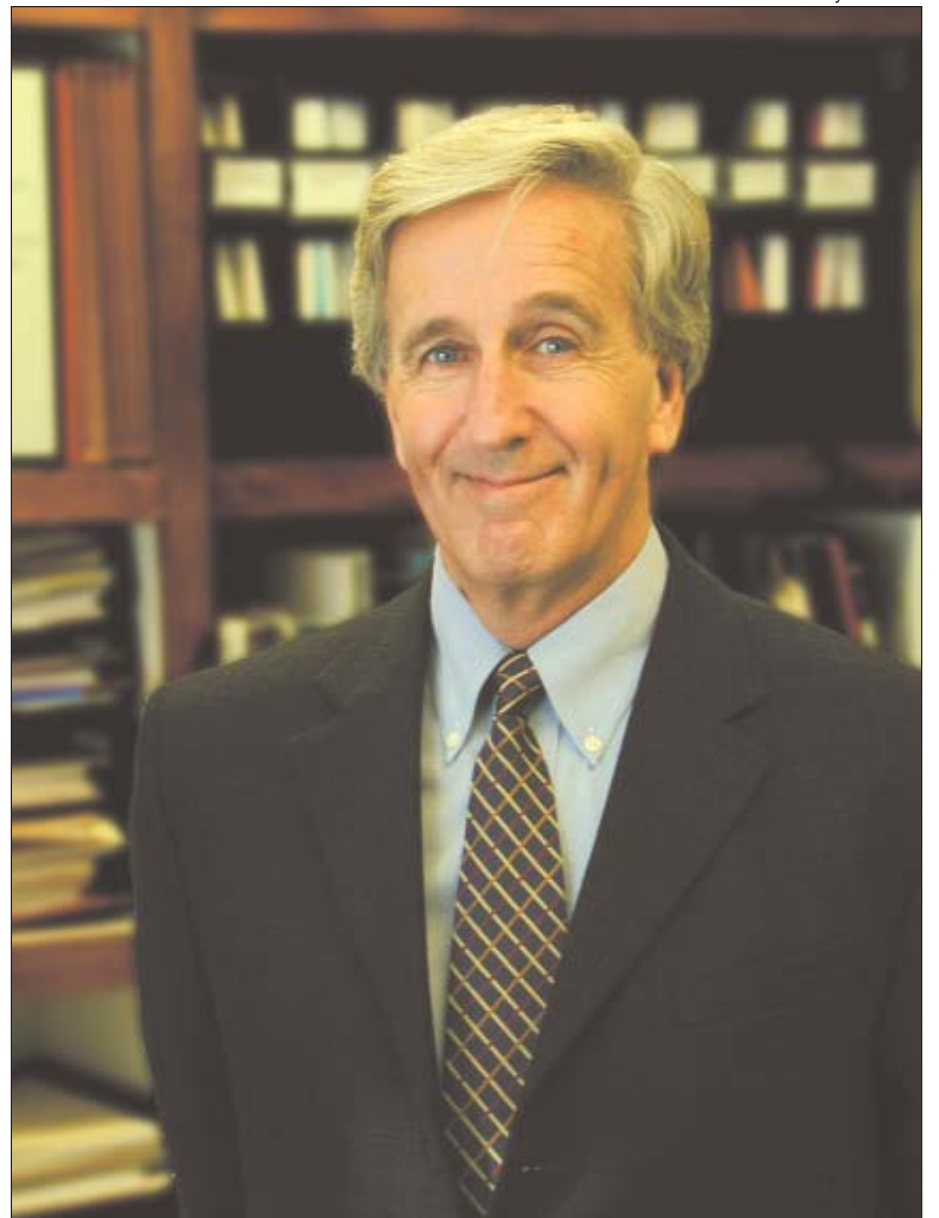
The professional standards board consists largely of licensed educators and has performed invaluable on behalf of teachers and teaching in Vermont. It has, however, no actual authority to establish, much less enforce, Vermont's licensing standards.

By contrast, every other occupational and professional group that is regulated by the State – every one – exercises direct authority over its practitioners. Every other occupation or profession is overseen by a public body that consists primarily of its own licensees and has the added benefit of one or more appointees from the general public.

Vermont is not alone in its treatment of teaching. More than half the states do something similar. No fewer than a dozen states, however, acknowledge the teaching profession by treating it the way they treat other licensed workers. It is time Vermont joined this smaller but growing number of states.

It is time to create an independent professional regulatory teaching board in Vermont, to dedicate staff to its training, development, and maintenance, and to leave the regulation of teaching, with appropriate State oversight, to teachers. ■

Vermont-NEA Photo by Art Huse



Vermont-NEA Executive Director Joel Cook is the Association's chief lobbyist.

Elevating the standing of teachers to the same level as comparable groups

Following November's legislative elections, we sent the following letter to successful candidates in the Vermont House and Senate. It summarizes our approach to several important issues in the upcoming session. In particular, it asks legislators to confer on teachers the same rights and benefits it has conferred on others: the right of professionals to regulate their own profession, with appropriate State oversight; the right of public employees to negotiate with their employers for "agency fee" provisions in their contracts; and the need to fund the public pension programs adequately. - Joel Cook

Dear Legislator:

Please accept our sincere congratulations on your recent election. We worked collaboratively with many campaigns, directly and indirectly, and are proud Vermonters are sending to Montpelier an array of highly

qualified Representatives and Senators.

We anticipate, with others, that the upcoming session will be dominated by consideration of health care policy on a statewide basis. We sit on the so-called "Coalition 21" as it wrestles to develop a consensus around access, quality, coverage, and cost. We look forward to being part of the process in addressing this "number 1" issue. There are always significant issues of education policy and finance, and we look forward to working with you on them as well.

Our particular reason to write at this early point, beyond congratulating you on your election, is to mention a few matters on which we will be seeking to elevate the standing of teachers to the same level as that of comparable groups.

For instance, of the roughly 40 occupational and professional groups that are regulated, it is only teachers

who do not regulate their own profession. In Vermont, the Secretary of State's Office of Professional Regulation staffs nearly 40 boards of practitioners who set and enforce standards of professional conduct. Only teaching is subject to the standards of others. We seek only to establish for teaching rough parity with other professions.

Of all groups of public employees in Vermont, it is only teachers who do not have the right to enforce "agency fee" provisions in their collective bargaining agreements. "Agency fee" is that portion of a union's dues spent on services it is required to provide all employees, whether they are union members or not.

We seek only to establish for teachers the same right that is enjoyed by every single other group of public employees in Vermont – the right to negotiate for agency fee provisions

with their employers.

Of the public pension programs funded in part by the State, the teachers' system is the only one that suffers from chronic under-funding. This is a difficult fiscal issue that has been decades in the making, but it will only get worse without legislative action sooner rather than later.

We seek only to develop a useful long-range plan to close the gap between funding levels of the State Employees and the Teachers Retirement Systems.

Some of these issues are quite simple, while others require real depth of analysis. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues as the session gets underway. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or thoughts you have about these or other issues of importance to public education and public school employees.

Thank you.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Vermont-NEA Photo by Art Huse

Karen Heath records Vermont-NEA radio message

BARRE -- Vermont Teacher of the Year Karen Heath is the voice in Vermont-NEA radio spots this year. Hear her during school boys' & girls' hockey and basketball on Central Vermont's talk and sports station WSNO and WDEV in Waterbury. The ad:

Announcer: Meet Vermont's 2005 Teacher of the Year... Karen Heath of Barre City Elementary

Karen: I've been teaching about 20 years, most of that in Vermont. I've primarily focused on English and language arts.

Announcer: According to Karen, becoming a good educator doesn't happen by accident.

Karen: It's a lot of work. I am there at 7:00 every morning and stay into the afternoon. I always bring work home. I work every weekend. I take classes. Yes, it's a job. However, I love what I do. I feel like it's my life also...

Announcer: The reason Karen teaches is clear.

Karen: I think a teacher's first job is having a relationship with the kids, then sharing one's expertise and helping kids be the best they can possibly be. So, I feel like every child deserves the opportunity to excel and to do as much as he or she can within the school system and not to be held back in any way.

Brought to you by Vermont-NEA... proud that Karen Heath is one of 11,000 Vermont-NEA members who believe every child deserves a great public school.



Steve Barone interviewed Vermont Teacher of the Year Karen Heath for a Vermont-NEA radio message.

Karen Heath continued from page 1...

phisticated and high level questioning, analysis, and interpretation of both fictional and non-fictional texts."

Develop and grow professionally

Karen earned her BA at Middlebury College and her master's in education at the University of Vermont. She has done coursework at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, St. Joseph's College in Rutland, and Union Institute in Montpelier.

"A teacher should be accountable for continuing to develop and grow professionally, enhancing content knowledge and pedagogical skills and putting him or herself in the position we are asking kids to be in every day," wrote Karen in her Teacher of the Year application. She said, "It is only when we are doing this on a regular basis that we can really understand some of the challenges our kids face in school."

In the presence of a master teacher

Karen has worked with every age student - preschool through high school. Now, in addition to her position teaching in Barre City's Reading

Renaissance Program, she is teaching a graduate level course to teachers on analysis and interpretation of literature.

"Karen's classroom is a study in best practice for elementary reading," wrote Barre Curriculum Director John Tapper in his letter supporting Karen as Teacher of the Year. He said: "When visiting Karen's classroom you know, almost immediately, that you are in the presence of a master teacher."

Teaching is a work of heart

What fuels Karen's lifelong passion to reach out and teach kids, from the gifted to the most challenging?

Karen says her personal feeling about teaching is summed up on matching t-shirts worn by a number of teachers at her school. They say: "Teaching is a work of heart."

Karen says teaching is all about heart. "If your heart is not in it, you should not be doing it. And when your heart is in it, you have the capacity to be an outstanding teacher"

"Education is all about heart, and that is why I love teaching so much," says Karen. "I could not imagine pour-

ing my life into something that was not about connections with others, as that, I believe, is one of our prime missions here on this earth."

As the 2005 Vermont Teacher of the Year, Karen will travel statewide and nationally visiting schools and working with teachers. She also will open the doors of her classroom to other educators. She will be Vermont's candidate for the National Teacher of the Year award. ■

The other awardees for the 2005 Teacher of the Year competition are:

Alternate: Pamela Quinn, teaches math in grades four, five and six at Salisbury Community School

Finalist: Barbara Gorbaty, teaches English and communications in grades 11 and 12 at Southwest Vermont Career Development Center

Finalist: Delia Clark, teaches third, fourth and fifth grade multi-age class at Founders Memorial School

This year's honorees were recognized at the State Board of Education's December 21st meeting at Barre City Elementary and Middle School.

Karen Heath: Certain aspects of No Child Left Behind are destructive

More from Karen Heath's interview:
About No Child Left Behind...

I feel that the No Child Left Behind Act, certain aspects of it, have been extremely destructive. Our school right now is a school that has been labeled as not making enough progress. I just learned at a staff meeting 10 minutes ago that \$120,000 could be taken away from Barre City School because the kids haven't made adequate yearly progress on standard-

ized tests. They're taking something away from the school. We're doing everything we can with a difficult population. And that aspect of No Child Left Behind, I feel, is destructive.

Other aspects of NCLB have driven some positive change, such as increased professional development and a strong focus on making sure students master basic academic skills. I just hope that that which was intended

to be an incentive to schools does not end up being counterproductive.

About her school community...

There's a strong sense of Community in Barre and at the school there's a constant striving to improve as teachers, as a school.

We have our struggles, but there's an attitude of we always want to do better. And the administration and teachers work hard for that...there's a sense of really caring about the kids. ■

Bellows Falls UHS teacher wins NEA Foundation Innovation Grant; Mt. Anthony physics teacher and Cambridge elementary teacher win NEA Foundation Learning & Leadership Grants

Innovation

Frances Boucher, grade 9-12 teacher at Bellows Falls Union High School, along with partners Julia James-Torres and Jeryl Julian, has been awarded a \$5,000 Innovation Grant by the NEA Foundation. Jennifer Rosenthal, 11th to 12th grade physics teacher at Mt. Anthony Union High School, and Holly Marie Kochalka, 5th & 6th grade teacher at Cambridge Elementary School, have won Learning & Leadership Grants from The NEA Foundation.

Since 2000, The NEA Foundation has funded hundreds of Innovation Grants to support creative projects that significantly improve achievement for underserved students. Innovation grantees collaborate with their colleagues, challenge their students, experiment with creative instructional ideas and develop professionally.

Grant winners Ms. Boucher, Ms. James-Torres, and Mr. Julian design a multidisciplinary unit on genealogy to familiarize students with the cultural diversity of Bellows Falls. Students research their ancestry, compile and graph genealogical data, and explore the history and culture of their ancestors' native countries. For their final project, students choose to publish their learning by producing a video for the community television network or write an article for the

school newspaper.

Leadership & Learning

The foundation's Learning & Leadership Grants provide public educators with opportunities to engage in high-quality professional development and lead their colleagues in professional growth. Learning & Leadership grantees then share their newly acquired knowledge and skills with their colleagues. This spirit of cooperation and sharing helps to strengthen public education.

Ms. Rosenthal, who was awarded \$2,000, was formally trained in chemistry but teaches physics at Mt. Anthony. She enrolls in several courses to increase her content knowledge of physics. Using what she learns, Ms. Rosenthal broadens the topics in her course and develops lab work and problem-solving methodologies that increase her students' understanding of physical science. Ms. Rosenthal develops an online network for physics teachers to share knowledge through her state's department of education.

Ms. Kochalka, who was awarded \$5,000 with partners Cara Dekens, Ellen Koier, Raymond Mascolino and Lynne O'Leary, leads grade-level study groups to investigate best practices for literacy instruction. The group analyzes student data, research-based instructional approaches, and

develops an action plan for enhancing the reading and language arts program. Throughout the year, the group shares their learning with paraprofessionals and teachers in a monthly newsletter, school website, and regular staff meetings.

The NEA foundation received many outstanding grant proposals, and is pleased to fund so many promising programs. Grants are being distributed to more than 190 educators in 29 states across the country.

Applications for Innovation Grants and Learning & Leadership Grants are accepted on an ongoing, year-round basis and reviewed three times per year in September, February, and June. These grants are available for all subjects, including the arts, literature, science, mathematics, social sciences, and technology. All practicing U.S. public school K-12 teachers, education support professionals, and higher education faculty and staff are eligible to apply for grants of up to \$5,000. The foundation's website has application details: www.neafoundation.org

The NEA Foundation inspires public education employees to ensure that all students succeed. Created by the National Education Association in 1969, the foundation makes grants to improve public education nationwide. ■

Richard F. W. Whittemore History Prize For Excellence In Teaching

Ethan Allen Homestead Museum is looking for an inspired teacher with a love of history. The Whittemore Prize honors the memory of a former Homestead trustee and history teacher who understood the importance of enriching the present through exploration of the past. Recognizing educators who follow in that tradition, the Whittemore Prize carries with it the prestige of an outstanding teacher as well as a \$500 cash award. Those nominated must meet the following criteria: inspire Vermont students with a passion for exploring the past be a practicing K-12 teacher (individuals only, no teams) teach history in any form teach in a public, private or home school in Vermont

Those submitting nominations should provide a written description of how the candidate excels in leading Vermont students to a discovery of their unique heritage. Emphasize teaching skills, rather than community service.

Include at least four letters of recommendation from any of the following: principals, professional colleagues, former students and parents. Do not send any news clippings, photographs, or craft items.

Nominations will be accepted from now until May 15. Information about qualified candidates may be sent to: Ethan Allen Homestead Museum 1 Ethan Allen Homestead, Suite 2, Burlington, VT 05401

Nominations may also be made to the Homestead office by fax at (802) 865-0661, or e-mail joyce@ethanallenhomestead.org

Young VPT viewer wins national 'Cyberchase' contest

Rachel Campus of Whitingham used her knowledge of math to score a second place win in the annual Cyberchase Online Contest. "Cyberchase" is a PBS program that airs weekdays at 5 p.m. on Vermont Public Television. It has a popular website at pbskidsgo.org/Cyberchase.

Sixty-one winners across America won prizes for themselves and their schools. Rachel, a fifth grader at Whitingham Elementary School, entered the contest by visiting the show's website and solving 10 math puzzles correctly. "I love watching 'Cyberchase' because it makes math fun," she said.

As a winner, she will receive a "Cyberchase" home DVD, CD-ROM adventure and book. Her school will

receive a set of related books, educational videos, teacher's guides, posters and activity kits.

Rachel's mother, Kathy Campus, said, "Rachel has greatly improved her math skills this year, and I believe that 'Cyberchase' sparked her enthusiasm for numbers and problem solving."

"Cyberchase," which premiered in 2002, uses humor, action and mystery to show children that math is fun and that everyone can be good at it. The award-winning series, aimed at kids 7-11, features a team of characters who outwit and outsmart the bad guy, Hacker, as he tries to take over Cyberspace.

Vermont Public Television devotes eight and a half broadcast hours each weekday to educational, nonvio-



Fifth grader Rachel Campus

lent, noncommercial programs for young viewers.

"Cyberchase" on VPT is sponsored by Vermont-NEA. ■

Brian Walsh appointed to Vermont-NEA Board

Brian Walsh has been appointed to fill an unexpired term on the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors. He will represent Vermont-NEA members in Chittenden, Area 3: Essex Junction-Westford, Essex Town, and Milton.

The unexpired Chittenden, Area 1 term on the Board still is open. Call Sandy at 1-800-649-6375 to volunteer to be appointed.

Chittenden, Area 1 covers Burlington, Colchester and Winooski.

LETTERS

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

I support Angelo Dorta

My name is Ted Fullard and for the past seven years I have been a Para Educator in the Northfield School system. For six of those years I have been a member of the Washington South Education Association, and Vermont-NEA. During that short time I have gotten to know and respect Angelo Dorta for the competent leader that he is. As an ESP, I find him to be an outstanding advocate for ESP concerns such as livable wage, having marched with him in the livable wage rally in Burlington in 2003. He also supports ESP issues such as the return of an ESP conference. He was extremely supportive of the newly organized Vermont-NEA affiliate, Vermont Education Support Professionals Association, contributing both his time and financial support to help get it started.

For the above reasons, and many more too numerous to mention, I support Angelo Dorta for president of Vermont-NEA, and I urge all of my colleagues, both teacher and ESP, to do the same.

Ted Fullard

Washington South EA

Please vote for Angelo Dorta

Ellen and I wish to lend our support to Angelo Dorta as he seeks reelection as our Vermont-NEA President. His list of accomplishments during a difficult decade of leadership is quite impressive. Not only has Angelo worked tirelessly on our behalf, but he understands that the fight is far from over; and he continues to be a strong force for all of us in Vermont education. As Co-Presidents of the Rutland Education Association, Ellen and I have experienced a small taste of the frustrations and the triumphs under which Angelo labors. While we are responsible for only a couple hundred members, Angelo works for many thousands of us every day. We ask that you allow him to continue in that quest to achieve our goals. Please vote for Angelo Dorta for President.

Russell Green

Rutland EA

We need a leader like Angelo Dorta

Leadership is defined as creating the vision for the future. In 1991 Angelo had a vision for our Association. He knew we must become better informed and more energetic on professional issues. Angelo felt that Vermont-NEA must respond effectively to the needs, concerns and aspirations of locals and the leadership must listen to local input and generate participation of all the members.

Has Angelo fulfilled his 1991 vision? No. Angelo has been a tireless

campaigner in the transformation of the Association. At times only his single voice was heard.

Angelo's vision advocated for many of the Association's current causes: Vermont-NEA Director of Professional Programs, election reform, instruction and school improvement issues, basic ESP contract standards, ESP Board representation, improved public relations and professional credibility, preservation of collective bargaining rights. His vision is not complete, but Angelo has raised the questions and they were discussed. What more can we ask from a leader?

Our public image is at a new level of respect and trust. Public education continues to be under attack worse than ever. We need a leader like Angelo Dorta. I urge you to support Angelo's vision and spread the word.

Support Angelo Dorta for Vermont-NEA President. I am!

Jeff Isham

Valley EA

Angelo Dorta has my vote

I am writing today to urge you to support the re-election of Angelo Dorta to the Presidency of Vermont-NEA. I am currently the Chair of the Vermont-NEA Human and Civil Rights Committee and I have had the chance to speak with Angelo about many issues relating to equity and student and educator rights. In each conversation Angelo has shown himself to be astute, well-informed, sincere, fairminded and deeply committed to enhancing the human and civil rights of all. Angelo Dorta has my vote in the April elections and I encourage you to support him as well.

Mary Ann Barnes

Colchester EA

Angelo works diligently

I am writing in support of Angelo Dorta in his reelection bid. I have worked closely with Angelo for the past 10 years in my capacity as a local leader. I believe Angelo works diligently to stay in touch with people in the classroom as well as with state and national initiatives that affect our profession. When NCLB was first authorized, Angelo immediately began work to help shape how this law would be implemented in Vermont. Under his leadership, Vermont-NEA has been a national model in many of its organizational efforts around NCLB. I feel Vermont-NEA can benefit from his continued leadership in the next two years.

Terri Vest

Twinfield EA

"Leadership"

When I hear the word leadership I think of Angelo Dorta. I recently attended the Champlain Valley Educators Convention. I brought with me two interested members. I, in passing introduced them to Angelo. One week later when we attended our fall Area meeting Angelo remembered these members' names and gave them the

same warm welcome which I, as a member, have been receiving for years.

I am very proud in a room filled with support staff when Angelo is speaking. They tell me he is speaking to them and knows all that we face as educators.

He is knowledgeable and easy to talk to, and no question is ever dumb. He has advice needed in any situation.

I was very impressed with Angelo when we were interviewing candidates. Angelo was not afraid to ask the most sensitive questions to the candidate. ALL FOR US, ALL FOR EDUCATORS.

We need Angelo's expertise! Angelo is top notch in all matters. We need his strength and energy. He will continue to strengthen our union for all members!

Marie Benway

WNESU

Angelo is an excellent, caring and enthusiastic leader

I am writing in support of Angelo Dorta for Vermont-NEA president. Angelo is an excellent, caring and enthusiastic leader who is always dependable, responsible, and flexible. Angelo strives for excellence in all endeavors. He is very approachable making it easy for him to become acquainted with educators and their concerns. As an advocate for all members, support staff and teachers, Angelo motivates members to become involved at all levels in the organization. He represents us at the local, state, and national levels with his outstanding written and articulate verbal communication. Angelo has certainly fulfilled his 2003 position statement "... strengthen the union and build the profession for a better future..." Angelo has been involved in promoting affordable health insurance, Livable Wage for support staff, encouraging new teacher and ESP professional development, and increasing NEA student chapters at Vermont colleges.

What impresses me most about Angelo is his integrity and dedication to the organization and his willingness to speak to issues no matter how challenging. We need Angelo's energy and expertise now more than ever during these trying crucial years in the education profession. I truly believe that Angelo will continue leading this organization in the right direction.

Rose Wenzel

Addison Northwest TA

Vergennes Elem. Para EA

Angelo Dorta truly values teachers and quality teaching

I am writing in support of Angelo Dorta for re-election as Vermont NEA President. As a relatively new member in the field of education, I am pleased by its supportive and inclusive atmosphere. This is especially true in situations where I have had the pleasure to work with Angelo. I work with Angelo as part of the Vermont Accomplished Teaching Collabora-

tive Board of Directors. He brings to our organization tremendous energy and experience in support of accomplished teaching. I am impressed by his genuine respect for teachers and the field of education. I applaud his promotion of teachers in key leadership roles. He is supportive of both improving teacher quality and providing the type of opportunities and recognition that high quality professionals deserve. I support Angelo Dorta as Vermont-NEA President because he truly values teachers and quality teaching and he articulates these values consistently well.

Joan Cavallo

Chittenden South EA

Angelo Dorta is the right man

It is my privilege to write this letter in support of Angelo Dorta's continuation as president of Vermont-NEA. I have known Angelo for 27 years, first as a colleague in Essex, then a fellow local Association president, and more recently as a member of the Vermont-NEA Board. Over these years, my respect for Angelo has only deepened.

During difficult and challenging times, Angelo is the consummate professional. He is able to articulate the position of the educational community in a positive and unwavering manner. Angelo's experience and success in defending public education in times that included the statewide challenges of Act 60, the federal mandates of NCLB, and the impact of the health care crisis on teacher negotiations, to name just a few, is evidence of a man of the highest intellect and competence.

Angelo understands the importance of upholding the needs of our membership in the arena of professional growth. He understands that the needs of teachers, paraprofessionals, and other support staff may sometimes differ, but that each voice is equally important and deserving of equal attention.

Angelo Dorta is the right man, in the right place, at the right time. I encourage you to support his candidacy.

Rich Wise

South Burlington EA

Angelo leads the struggle

It is with great enthusiasm that I urge all NEA members to continue to support our superb leader, Angelo Dorta. Angelo's passion and commitment has served Vermont's teachers, ESP and public schools well. Angelo leads the struggle and will continue to strive for professional salaries, affordable health insurance, full teacher retirement system funding and association sponsored professional development for new and veteran educators. Angelo's leadership and advocacy is critical for Vermont as our small state continues to face new challenges.

Angelo will work tirelessly to attract and retain new professionals,

Vermont-NEA Photo by Art Huse



Vermont-NEA's Convention Planning Committee said good-bye to Joan Alexander of Irasburg at their first planning meeting for 2005. L-R: Judy Allard (chair), Joan Alexander, Margaret McNeil, and Ted Fullard.

Joan Alexander steps down after 20 years of Convention planning Thanks, Joan!

MONTPELIER -- After two decades of service on the Vermont-NEA Convention Planning Committee, Joan Alexander of Irasburg stepped down in November.

Joan was co-chair of the committee, but never spoke from the Conven-

tion podium. She preferred a quiet role and was particularly astute at selecting keynote speakers. An avid reader, she often pressed for authors to be invited. At her behest, the committee tried for years to get short story writer and National Public Radio commen-

tator Bailey White. That invitation is still pending, but Joan's effort for several years to bring Captain Kangaroo to the Convention succeeded in October 2000. His visit inspired us all.

Thanks, Joan. Twenty years is a very generous contribution! ■

Letters continued

support mentoring initiatives, oppose unfair provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act, and increase teacher/ESP professional support.

Angelo's presidency has resulted in a 40% increase in NEA Small States Grant for Vermont-NEA, a fairer dues structure, advocacy to maintain our high teacher licensure standards, strong opposition to school vouchers, and a positive media campaign to promote Vermont public education. Angelo's leadership, vision and tireless efforts will benefit Vermont educators and the children we serve.

Maggie Eaton
U-32 EA

Angelo supports new teachers and new leaders

I am writing to support Angelo Dorta in his bid for re-election as Vermont NEA President. Angelo has supported and encouraged new teachers and new leaders to be active members of this Association. Because of his leadership, new leaders and teachers are given numerous opportunities to participate in committees and attend workshops. Angelo seeks out new

people to serve on various committees; he believes that their ideas are valuable and essential to the life-blood of Vermont-NEA. He makes sure that all members feel welcomed and have a stake in this Association.

Angelo also recognizes the importance of college students being involved in Vermont-NEA. Through Angelo's support, guidance, and attention a group of dedicated students and local leaders have been able to form the Vermont Student Education Association at the University of Vermont. Angelo personally responds to emails, phone calls, and conversations. He has been an involved and approachable leader. I believe that through Angelo's leadership, goals for the future and ability to articulate educational issues, Vermont-NEA will continue to strive towards excellence in public education.

Alison Sylvester
Green Mountain NEA

Angelo Dorta is a supporter of the Student Program

Angelo Dorta, as Vermont-NEA President, has been an advocate and supporter of the Student Program. He

assisted in the revival of the Student Program in Vermont in 2002. This involved his help with funding, staff support, and his presence at key events for the program.

To sustain the student chapter of the University of Vermont and develop new chapters at colleges in the state, the organization needs someone who has the interests of emerging professionals in mind. Angelo Dorta is a President who has not overlooked the students of education.

Time has shown Angelo Dorta as a promoter of the Student Program. Summer conferences in 2003 and 2004 that have been supported by VermontNEA leadership have also encouraged the growth and sustained interest in the Student Program. The participation of student leaders in these NEA conferences demonstrates Angelo Dorta's willingness to include the student program, promote leadership among pre-service educators, and work together to help the future of our public schools.

Angelo Dorta has the support for re-election of the Student Executive Board of the University of Vermont and of myself, Shannon Monette, Ver-

Upcoming Association events...

January 10

Deadline for the January issue of *Vermont-NEA Today*.

January 15

Vermont-NEA candidate petitions are due.

Deadline for Vermont-NEA Teaching Excellence Award nomination.

January 17

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

January 28-30

NEA New England Leadership Conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

February 1

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

www.vtnea.org/scholar.htm

Deadline for Human & Civil Rights Award Nominations.

www.vtnea.org/hcr.htm

February 2

Vermont-NEA Committee Reports are due.

February 4

Vermont-NEA New Teacher Conference at the Clarion in South Burlington

February 5

Vermont-NEA Board meets in Montpelier.

February 14

Deadline for the March issue of *Vermont-NEA Today*.

mont Student Director.

Shannon Monette
Student Chapter at UVM

Job well done!

Recently, more schools were placed on the federal list of schools not making sufficient progress. In the news release, our commissioner stated that it is just one indicator of a school's quality. We need to take those words to heart.

The list of acronyms in education is becoming mind-boggling. AYP, NCLB, HQTs, GE's. How about adding two more to the list, SVGE and SVGS: Some Very Good Educators and Some Very Good Students.

We should publicize the wonderful things that are happening every day in Vermont schools. Every day educators are providing excellent guidance and an excellent education to the students of Vermont.

Each and every day, we will continue to push our students for excellence, the same expectations that we have for ourselves. We can say to each other, a job well done.

Bonnie Tuscany
Morristown EA

Vermont-NEA New Teacher Conference

Clarion Hotel, South Burlington
Friday, February 4, 2005
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Vermont-NEA's first annual New Teacher Conference - Friday, February 4 at the Clarion Hotel in South Burlington - is open only to new teachers, those in years 1-3 of their careers. Participants may select two of these workshops, one for the morning and one for the afternoon...

Classroom Management Strategies

Presenter: Judy Steffens, Essex Town School District, Mentor Coordinator

This workshop will focus on practical classroom-management strategies. Participants will learn about and practice using these strategies to address difficult classroom behavior problems. They will also be given guidelines to use in deciding which approach best addresses a particular behavior.

Managing Instructional Time

Presenter: Debra Lynde, Milton H.S., English Teacher

New teachers, especially those in their first few years, struggle to stay on top of their lesson planning. It is tremendously challenging to design daily units and, at the same time, produce a unit timeline that gives the students (parents, paraprofessionals...) a clear picture of where the class is headed in the weeks to come. Too often, lesson planning is approached as a "just get me through this day" ordeal.

This approach to lesson planning requires the teacher to start with the end of the unit, the assessment and the focus of the essential question. This plan allows the teacher to look ahead in a disciplined manner, but builds in some flexibility to change or revise. Having a reasonably good map of where you are going and why is a big part of feeling confident about your curriculum and feeling in control of your teaching.

The first session will deal with a brief overview of the mapping system. Models of curriculum mapping will be shared and analyzed. Bring your syllabus, a unit of study, the GLE's, perhaps some texts, or whatever you can think of to use in your planning. A vision of the future, even if partial or tentative, gives direction and support to our daily lessons.

Vermont's Re-licensing Process: Developing an Individual Plan

Presenter: Judith L. Allard, NBCT

Do you understand the Vermont teacher relicensure process? Are you getting ready to write an IPDP? Do you know what an IPDP is? This workshop will introduce participants to the Vermont teacher relicensure process, emphasizing the first step in the process - writing an Individual Professional Development Plan. Each participant will be provided with a copy of the 2004 Relicensure Handbook for Educators produced by the Vermont State Department of Education. In addition, participants will be able to produce a first draft of their own IPDP and see a sample of a relicensure portfolio.

Communicating Effectively with Parents

Presenter: Kathy Buley, So. Burlington School District, Classroom Teacher

This workshop begins with the premise that successful and productive communication between home and school leads to a better learning experience for students. When parents and families become partners in the education process, student learning is enhanced. We will explore the various approaches

to communication (written, oral, formal, informal) as well as different purposes and circumstances (relay information, report class/student progress, respond to parental concerns, parent conferences and home visits, dealing with behavioral issues). Through discussion, group activities, role-play, and shared resources, participants will leave with new ideas and strategies for enhancing home-school partnerships.

Legal and Ethical Issues

Presenters: David R. Boulanger, Vermont NEA UniServ Director and Cindy Koenemann, Human Resources Director for Chittenden South Supervisory Union

This workshop reviews your rights and responsibilities regarding the state and federal laws that bear on your work as a teacher, as well as what it means to be employed under a collective bargaining agreement. We will also examine the "Code of Ethics for Teachers" and discuss its effect on your work with students, parents, and colleagues.

Understanding the Evaluation Processes: Formative and Summative

Presenter: Joyce Foster, Vermont NEA UniServ Director

This session will discuss the relationship between formative and summative evaluations as well as your relationship with your mentor teacher. In addition, we will explore how to navigate through self-evaluations, determine evaluation goals, and techniques for participation in pre and post evaluation conferences.

Examples of evaluation procedures will be explored as well as techniques for not only surviving but learning how to thrive in your school district's evaluation model.

There will be a special drawing of participants names at lunch to give away a CD player!

The New Teacher Conference is FREE to teachers who are members of Vermont-NEA. Non-members may attend by paying a registration fee of \$150. The fee may be applied to 2004-05 membership dues.

Conference participants who wish to stay overnight at the Clarion on Thursday evening before the conference can get a room at a special rate: \$89. Call the Clarion at 802-865-6600, and be sure to say you are part of the Vermont-NEA group.

For additional information, contact Vermont-NEA Director of Professional Programs Sherry Gile: 1-800-649-6375 x 123 or email sgile@vtnea.org

To register online, go to www.vtnea/newteacher.htm
Or send your name, email address and workshop choices to Vermont-NEA, 10 Wheelock Street, Montpelier 05602.