

# Today

Vermont-NEA

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## Education Finance Is the Number One Issue

*Legislators need to learn about your school, and you can help...*

### Joel D. Cook, Executive Director/General Counsel

After considerable effort to help most incoming legislators win their elections, Vermont-NEA now needs to help them learn a lot more about education. Why? Because the number one issue at the State House this year is the how and how much of education finance.

It is a very legitimate issue. Vermonters and their communities have shown tremendous support for the education of their children. And, since the late 1990's, they have been paying for schools in ways that help kids equitably wherever in the state they reside. By virtually every measure, Vermont's kids and their schools perform at or near the top of the states.

The basic policy issue now is the extent to which growth in Vermont school spending is sustainable as we experience a steady decline in the number of students.

#### Student Numbers Decline

Our schools are hardly responsible for the drop in the school-age population, which stems from insufficient economic development and the range of reasons young families take up — or do not take up — residence in our communities. Vermont's school-age population has shrunk by more than 10% — that's right — over little more than the past decade, a decline that will continue for several more years. So, "per pupil" costs inevitably go up, and with it public concern over taxes.

The explanations for education spending are numerous. One important and elusive reason is the extent to which schools have picked up the slack for other social services, the costs of which are now borne by local, rather than state, taxes — and that makes it more difficult to address the issue usefully.

#### A Thoughtful Approach vs. "Revolt and Repeal"

Some, like the governor and the five Republican House members who

would "revolt and repeal" the current spending system, attempt to simplify an inherently complicated matter. The governor says "just cap property tax increases" and the "R & R" group says "just scrap the entire system" and, somehow, start over.

Thoughtful lawmakers will do neither. For example, Speaker of the House Gaye Symington wrote in December to House members about how she approaches the issue:

*Specific and constructive ideas for change will be welcomed...I will ask the Education Committee to consider what each idea would mean for school quality, what it would do to address the underlying drivers of school costs, what it would mean for local decision making, and how it would affect school taxes. We're not going to undermine our public school system. We will not retreat to relying on local taxes to pay for schools. And we are not looking to undercut local decision making. Fundamentally, we must ask what we expect of our schools, seek how to deliver those services most effectively, and analyze how we pay for those expectations.*

Democrat Michael Obuchowski chair of the House tax committee, and his vice-chair, Republican Bud Otterman, wrote to Vermont newspapers:

- *First, all Vermont children deserve an equal educational opportunity.*
- *Second, Vermonters should pay their school taxes based on their ability to pay.*
- *Third, there must be incentives to deliver high quality education in a cost effective way.*

*Using these principles as a guide, we will look for ways to contain the costs of public education without compromising quality or jeopardizing small schools that are so important to our rural com-*



*munities. We will continue the hard work of addressing health care and energy costs, two of the key drivers of school budgets. But fundamental questions such as our governance structure, increasing numbers of children with special needs, and the ever increasing expectations our communities have of our schools must also be part of any serious discussion of school costs.*

We at Vermont-NEA need to do our part to help the thoughtful analysis legislative leaders intend to conduct.

We know how to respond to our detractors. To them, we say, tell us what you don't want our schools to do for our children.

- Tell us, if you don't like our having what you yourselves call the "best" student/ teacher ratio in the nation, how far toward a mediocre ratio would you like us to go?

- If you think the range of learning opportunities to which we are able to expose our students is "too broad," tell us what portions of the curriculum you would sacrifice.

- If you think we have "too many schools," tell us which communities should be required to shut theirs down.

#### We Will Do Our Part

Your Association can and will do its part to help the many friends of public education in the State House.

It would be immensely helpful to us and to our legislative allies if you, as a practicing educator, would tell us what you know about what makes schools, especially in Vermont, cost what they cost.

It begins and it ends with what our communities want for their children. But, in the middle are many other factors, not the least of which are the impositions on our schools made by political, sometimes ideological, decisions out of Washington and out of Montpelier. And, of course, schools are affected by the same general cost forces as all other institutions: health care, energy, transportation, general inflation, and all the rest.

#### We Need Specifics Here's How You Can Help:

We "know" about school costs generally, from common sense and observation — but you know so much more. We ask that you send us your thoughts and experiences about any of the matters listed on page 8, or about any other matter you think might be helpful in the coming debate. We don't need much — just a paragraph or two with information that provides real dimension to the school programs we pay for. Please jot down and mail, fax or email the description of your experience.

*The matters about which we need your thoughts are listed on page 8...*

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# Reauthorizing ESEA/NCLB

By Angelo J. Dorta, President

The historic Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was created by the Lyndon Johnson Administration in 1965. It provided important federal funding, for the first time ever, to help states and localities fulfill their traditional responsibility to educate K-12 public school students. Today, it's still the primary Congressional vehicle for directing federal money to remedial instruction of low-income students (Title 1), professional development for educators, bilingual education, afterschool programs, safe and drug-free schools, and others.

Since 1965, Congress has revised ("reauthorized") ESEA every five or six years. ESEA revisions during the Clinton years were known as Goals 2000: Educate America Act and Improving America's Schools Act. Later ESEA changes by the Bush Administration were re-named the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Until 2001, each ESEA reauthorization garnered explicit support from NEA and its state affiliates.

NCLB, however, fundamentally and greatly expanded federal government power in education. Its most seriously flawed provisions begin with the requirement that every U.S. public school student be proficient in reading and math by June, 2014. Certainly, that's a desirable aim, but it's impossible to accomplish in the real world.

The law also dictates student achievement and school "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) measures and timelines based on each state's academic standards and assessments, which first must be approved by the Department of Education in D.C. Punitive consequences — including mandatory levels of transportation fund reserves for student transfers and potential diversion of public tax dollars to the private sector for tutoring services and for school management takeovers by for-profit companies — await schools for not attaining multiple AYP targets annually (as many as 37 per school).

Furthermore, NCLB bypasses state licensing regulations to impose federal criteria for defining "highly qualified" teachers and paraeducators. It provides Teacher Incentive Fund money for merit pay systems. And, it significantly underestimates needed state and local funding for successful curriculum and assessment improvements, testing implementation, and professional development.

The lengthy process of reauthorizing ESEA/NCLB could begin as early as 2007. Of course, positive ESEA provisions prior to NCLB and also those added by NCLB should be retained. These include targeting funds to assist impoverished children, using disaggregated assessment data to help gauge and close student sub-group achievement gaps, mentoring for new teachers and needy students, strength-

ening parent involvement, greater access to schooling for homeless youth, help for rural schools, and dropout prevention programs.

Yet, nearly 100 professional education, business, governmental, civil rights, and religious national groups agree that NCLB's school accountability system needs major corrections. The coalition, calling itself the Forum on Educational Accountability, has proposed more than a dozen specific changes to the law. NEA also will focus attention on several additional policies to ensure NCLB becomes much more fair and equitable and can truly support higher levels of student academic achievement, educator quality, and school effectiveness.

Highlights of the reauthorization

schools offer tutoring and other supplemental education services before consenting to student transfers; and require tutors and providers of other supplementary services to be "highly qualified" and to serve all eligible students.

- Provide federal grant assistance to counter the "narrowing of the curriculum" phenomenon caused by excessive emphasis on reading and math AYP, especially in impoverished schools.

- Establish classes with an optimum of 15 students per teacher.

- Align criteria for ESEA Title 2/Teacher Quality State Grants with professional development standards articulated by the National Staff Development Council.

*Fortunately, as a result of November's national elections and four years of difficult implementation experience with NCLB, prospects should be much brighter for passage of key improvements...*

recommendations from the Forum and NEA include the following:

- Allow states flexibility to develop systems for student and school assessment with multiple measures of student learning and school success, not just use standardized paper-and-pencil tests for reading and math. Local district and school test results, student portfolios, and important data regarding Honors and Advanced Placement courses and graduation, retention, and dropout rates might be considered and included.

- Let states decide in exactly which grades to administer annual statewide student assessments.

- Permit states to use statistical "growth models" and other indicators of individual student learning over specified periods of time, not test snapshots of different student cohort groups.

- Ensure that assessments are fair, appropriate, valid, and reliable for students with disabilities, limited English, and other special needs. This includes closer alignment with students' IEPs, two initial years for students new to the U.S. to take assessments in their native language, and removal of the arbitrary federal limits on numbers of students who can qualify for assessments based on modified or alternate achievement standards.

- If current AYP methodology is maintained: designate schools "in need of improvement" only when the same student sub-group doesn't achieve AYP in the same academic subject for two consecutive years; afford more than only one year for schools or districts to show progress based on action plans before additional sanctions are applied; provide options for student transfers to other public schools and tutoring and other supplemental education services only for student sub-groups not achieving AYP; let

- Fund salary enhancement programs for teachers and ESPs who assume additional professional duties to assist colleagues and who broaden their professional knowledge and skills through additional coursework, advanced degrees, and National Board Certification.

- Revise the definition of federally designated "highly qualified" teachers to recognize state licensing and certification, and grant reciprocity for NCLB "highly qualified" paraeducators who move to other school districts or states with varying job qualifications.

- Require educator professional development training in parental and family communication skills, and encourage school-parent "compacts" with a clear list of parental responsibilities and opportunities for school-home engagement and coordination.

- Fully fund ESEA/NCLB programs and protect states and local school districts from unfunded federal education mandates.

NEA's comprehensive and carefully considered strategy for reauthorization of ESEA/NCLB was developed with input from Association leaders and members throughout the country and extensive study by its ESEA Advisory Committee. Fortunately, as a result of November's national elections and four years of difficult implementation experience with NCLB, prospects should be much brighter for passage of key improvements.

Yet, Association members must remain vigilant. Your experience and training are valuable resources in designing teaching and learning programs that actually work for students. That's why Vermont-NEA will help you to closely scrutinize developments and will encourage your participation as ESEA/NCLB proceeds through reauthorization. ■

## The 2007 Vermont-NEA Educators' Convention Date Is *October 17-19*

### *NEA President agrees to a do-over!*

MONTPELIER -- The date for the Educators' Convention in 2007, which Vermont-NEA had announced would be during the first week in October, now has been changed back to the more traditional third week. The 2007 Educators' Convention days will be October 17-18-19.

Please mention this to your colleagues who do not read *Vermont-NEA Today* as closely as you do. Our Convention is nearly a year away, but some people already are making plans for the fall.

The reason for the reversal is a decision by the Education Commis-



sioner not to begin statewide testing on October 8, which we presumed would be no problem. Unfortunately, it was a problem.

Vermont-NEA has managed to secure both the Champlain Valley Expo Centre and the Exhibitor for October 17-18. And, we are pleased to announce that National Education Association President Reg Weaver has agreed to deliver the Convention keynote on Thursday, October 18. Plus, we all are very happy that his schedule will bring him to Vermont the night before the event!

*President Dorta greeted NEA President Reg Weaver at this year's Convention.*

## Laurel Tobiason Wins Vermont-NEA ESP Award

Laurel Tobiason of Woodstock is winner of the 2007 Vermont-NEA ESP Award. Since 1993, this annual award has honored the contributions of Education Support Professionals in Vermont schools, Associations and communities.

Laurel has worked at the Woodstock Union High School and Middle School for over 25 years, and is co-educator in the school's Agriculture Department, serving all learning levels, including students with severe special needs. She has organized field experiences such as trail blazing at local elementary schools, tree planting, land management and shelter

building on farms, as well as field trips which have taken students to California (service work at Yosemite), Belize (agricultural study) and Peru (the construction of a school on the Amazon). Laurel will again help lead group back to Peru in 2007. (Look for a story about Laurel and her remarkable projects in the upcoming issue of our national Association newspaper.)

Vermont-NEA will honor Laurel and present her with a check for \$1,000.00 at the Awards Banquet at the Vermont-NEA Representative Assembly on March 31, 2007. She will automatically be nominated by Vermont-NEA to receive the National

Education Association ESP Award.

The national Award will be presented at NEA's annual conference for Education Support Professionals on March 9, 2007.

Roberta Roy, also of Woodstock, received Honorable Mention. These ESPs were nominated this year, an honor in itself:

Becky Auger – Washington West EA  
Olivia Bravakis – Washington Central EA  
Sandra Cassidy – Orange East EA  
Donna Draper – Rutland SSA  
Jody Mace – Rivendell EA  
Cheryl Stevenson – Peacham EA  
Raequel Turn – SWVEA – ESP

## UVM College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences Presents National Engineers Week

**One day activities – Friday, February 2, 2007 – 8:30 am -12:00 noon – Vermont Air National Guard**

Whether providing fresh water to a village in a remote region, or designing artificial body parts to improve a disabled person's life, engineers dramatically improve the quality of life daily around the world. Engineers Week activities are designed for elementary, middle and high school students — the engineers of tomorrow!

One-day activities for elementary, middle, and high school students:

Edible Car Exhibition (for elementary and middle school students)

Bottle Rocket Exhibition (for middle and high school students)

Passive Helicopter Drop Exhibition New! (for elementary, middle, high school)

Pasta Bridge Exhibition (for middle and high school students) –

Hangar Roof Truss – New! (middle/high school)

Register on line: <http://www.cems.uvm.edu/eweek/>



The Reading Rainbow Young Writers & Illustrators contest, based on the Emmy Award-winning TV series hosted by actor Levar Burton, introduces young children to the joys of reading and the fun of learning.

The annual Reading Rainbow contest encourages children, kindergarten through third grade, to create their own stories and colorful illustrations. Entries are judged by a panel of experts. Three winners are selected from each grade, for a total of 12 winners. First place winners in each grade level are sent on to the national contest.

Each contest participant will receive 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 contest rules.

To enter, visit [vpt.org](http://www.vpt.org) (<http://www.vpt.org/link/kids/localevents.html>) or call 1-800-639-3351 for contest rules and an entry form. Go to [www.vtnea.org/ReadingRainbowPoster.pdf](http://www.vtnea.org/ReadingRainbowPoster.pdf) for a colorful poster to promote the contest; it's 11x17, but can be scaled down to suit your printer. Contest Entry Deadline: Friday, March 16, 2007

### Essex Junction Westford teachers settle 3 years

The Essex Junction Westford Education Association settled a three-year contract after 7 hours at a mediation with Ira Lobel on October 26. Chief negotiator Susan Plunkett-Dunning reports that the three-year deal increases new money by 4.5% each year for a starting salary of \$38,239 this year, \$39,313 next year, and \$40,445 in 2008-09. The top salary reaches \$71,100 this year, \$73,097 next year, and \$75,203 in 2008-09.

The health insurance co-pay for teachers in Essex Junction and Westford stays at 10% this year, and increases to 11%, then 12% over the next two years. In addition, negotiators made language changes to clean up and align language in the contracts the local Association is merging. According to Susan, Essex Junction and U#46 gained a compassionate day and Westford now has language about having a seniority list and a seniority list challenge process.

### Teacher Tax Deduction Renewed

Our elected officials have done right by those teachers and paraprofessionals who reach into their own pockets so that students have adequate books, pencils, paper and art supplies. Congress voted this month to extend for two years the \$250 tax deduction for educators' out-of-pocket classroom expenses. Credit goes to the more than 1,200 messages sent by NEA cyberlobbyists, and to the leadership of Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and John Warner (R-VA).

### Discounts for NEA Members

To help Association members save money on classroom materials, NEA Member Benefits has expanded its line of cost-saving products through a partnership with **Classroom Direct**, a deep discount education superstore that stocks thousands of classroom materials and learning tools for educators, including home office supplies. Under the new arrangement, NEA members can obtain an additional 10% off **Classroom Direct's** already low prices. Members also receive free shipping on orders of any size, with the exception of orders shipped directly from manufacturers. Most orders are processed within 24 hours for three-day delivery.

This exclusive discount is only available [www.neamb.org](http://www.neamb.org). Order by calling 1-800-248-9171 and providing the discount code listed on the NEA MB Web Site page.

# RtI Response to Intervention OR Responsiveness to Instruction

*RtI is a term gathering much attention in the field of education. It refers to a process that emphasizes how well students respond to changes in instruction. A fundamental belief in this process is the provision of high quality classroom instruction.*

*There have been shifts in thinking about how we address the needs of students as well as some shifts in the law. We have changed our thinking on how we teach and how children learn. All these discoveries have resulted in changes in educational laws and practices.*

*ESEA/NCLB addresses accountability, school improvement and AYP. IDEA 2004 addresses effective instruction, progress monitoring and early intervening services. What do these statutes have in common? Both statutes focus on data-based decision making; share the importance of high quality, scientifically-based instruction and interventions; and hold schools accountable for the progress of all students in meeting grade level standards.*

*For all students to achieve, the general educator has a key role in implementing the RtI process. Read here what NEA says about the role of general education teachers in the RtI process.*

*-- Sherry Gile, Vermont-NEA Director of Professional Programs*



Sherry Gile

## The Role of General Education Teachers in the RtI Process

The Responsiveness to Intervention (RtI) process is the practice of providing high quality instruction and interventions matched to student skill needs, monitoring student progress frequently to make changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to important educational decisions.

RtI focuses on early identification of learning and behavioral needs and the provision of appropriate evidence-based interventions in order to address skill gaps early to keep them from becoming larger issues.

RtI is a school-wide prevention approach, the foundation of which is quality core instruction within the general education classroom. Supplementary supports and services, academic and behavioral interventions, are provided to struggling students based on data collection and analysis. These supplementary supports and services vary in intensity based on student need, and may be provided by a variety of personnel, including general education teachers.

Briefly stated, RtI is a systematic process of intervention to prevent school failure.

### Challenges and Opportunities of RtI

NEA believes that general education teachers have a key role in the provision of needed instruction to students who are struggling academically and/or behaviorally. As schools, districts, and states create and implement RtI processes/models, educators will have the opportunity to be involved in a process that supports the learning of all students by identifying and responding to student academic and behavioral needs with more emphasis on prevention through early intervention, rather than adhering to the traditional "wait to fail" model.

RtI opens up more opportunities for collaboration with other members of the education team and brings

timely and relevant supports into classrooms. The general education teacher has a crucial role in ensuring that the RtI process is implemented with integrity. Academic and/or behavioral data collected and analyzed throughout the RtI process may demonstrate a pattern of inadequate response to high quality interventions for some students. These data may indicate a need to refer students for additional assessment and consideration for special education services. Rather than relying solely on the use of a traditional discrepancy model in making eligibility decisions for special education services, student academic and/or behavioral data may be used as part of a process to identify students with specific learning disabilities.

There are, of course, challenges for educators working in districts that shift from the traditional approach to an RtI approach of early intervening. Such challenges include ensuring that RtI processes and procedures are not an "add on," but a meaningful transformation of a traditional system, and that educator workload is adjusted to facilitate and support the positive and appropriate implementation of the process.

### New and Expanded Roles

General education teachers in districts developing and implementing RtI processes and procedures can provide support in many ways from designing the local model, to participating in effective implementation, to serving on program evaluation committees to measure the effectiveness of the process. New and expanded roles for general educators include participation in systems design, quality professional development opportunities, team collaboration, as well as learning and implementing new strategies to serve small groups and individual students.

### System Design

General education teachers bring to the planning process a depth of un-

derstanding of how students learn as well as deep content knowledge. Coupled with the genuine desire to facilitate learning for all and each student, general education teachers can take on key roles in designing the local RtI process. These roles include:

- Identifying and analyzing existing literature on problem solving and RtI in order to determine a relevant and effective approach for the local district;
- Actively identifying and addressing systemic barriers to learning;
- Identifying, implementing, documenting, and analyzing evidence-based academic interventions;
- Identifying, implementing, documenting, and analyzing evidence-based behavioral interventions;
- Identifying technology needs and reviewing technology programs to reduce increased paperwork expectations;
- Engaging in ongoing communication and consultation with administration, school board members, related service providers, and parents; and
- Identifying professional development topics and issues of importance to the process.

### Professional Development

General education teachers implement a wide variety of instructional strategies and conduct ongoing assessment of student progress as a part of their practice. With an emphasis on early intervening for the purpose of prevention of school failure, teachers will be challenged to examine current practices, hone existing skills, and learn new knowledge and skills to ensure high quality instruction for each student.

Teachers will have opportunities to participate in focused quality professional development relating to RtI processes, procedures, and practices. Key issues to be addressed for teachers include:

- Differentiating instruction for a

diverse classroom,

- Ongoing curriculum-based data collection and analysis,
- Evidence-based intervention strategies for both academics and behaviors,
- Progress monitoring processes and procedures,
- Problem-solving methods to facilitate data-based instructional decision-making, and
- Professional collaboration skills.

### Team Collaboration

As the primary provider of instructional services, general educators are crucial members of school teams, often assuming leadership roles. As members of the general education intervention teams and special education individual education program teams, general educators play critical roles in decision-making and implementation of instruction.

Professional collaboration has been and will continue to be important as schools implement RtI. General educators will:

- Engage in ongoing collaboration to address small group and individual student needs;
- Collaborate with other school personnel in data collection and analysis;
- Collaborate with parents by helping them understand the new model and how it impacts their children, and ensure that parent input is integrated into each tier of intervention and subsequent evaluation;
- Identify professional growth opportunities.

### Serving Small Groups and Individual Students

General education teachers will continue to provide the best possible education for all students via whole group, small group, and individual instruction, as needed. To ensure that appropriate evidence-based strategies are selected and implemented for each

*Continued on page 5...*

## Vermont-NEA New Teacher Conference

*A very special gathering of teachers in their first four years of service.*

Friday, February 2, 2007 • 8:30 am-3:00 pm

Double Tree Hotel • 1117 Williston Road • South Burlington, VT

Enrollment is limited to the first 100 teachers who apply!

All meals included • Registration is required

Professional Development Release time is available through your contract.

Be sure to speak with your Building Principal.

Participants may choose two from these five workshops:

1. Positive Action for Safe Schools
2. Instructional Decision Making
3. Legal and Ethical Issues
4. Vermont's Re-Licensing Process: Developing an IPDP
5. Boundary Issues for School Personnel

Or, sign up for I CAN DO IT! (All day workshop)

- Workshops will be filled on a first-come, first served basis.
- For more details, full course descriptions and to register, visit [www.vtneaprofessionalprograms.org](http://www.vtneaprofessionalprograms.org).
- **The registration deadline is January 26, 2007.**
- Cost: \$35.00 for Vermont NEA members; \$25.00 for Students; \$150.00 for non-members, non-refundable.
- Accommodations at the Double Tree Hotel are \$92.00 + tax. Reservations may be made from the Vermont-NEA Professional Programs website or by calling 802-658-0250.

**Ask for the special reduced Vermont-NEA Conference rate.**



**The opportunities to affect student learning and outcomes provide compelling rationale for general educators to rise to the challenge of transforming traditional wait-to-fail practices to an RtI early intervening process.**

*Continued from page 4...*

student, general educators will engage in activities that will include:

- Consulting with other professionals and parents regarding early intervention activities in the classroom and at home;
- Applying progress monitoring strategies as part of the student intervention plan;
- Collecting data within the instructional environment in order to help identify appropriate intervention strategies, to identify barriers to intervention, and to collect response to intervention data;
- Referring students for consideration of a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) or other disability when a pattern of inadequate response to instruction and interventions is demonstrated by the student; and
- Working collaboratively with other team members and service providers to set realistic goals, design appropriate instructional strategies and

progress monitoring procedures, and periodically evaluate student progress for those receiving special education services, using RtI and other data.

### Meeting the Challenge

The opportunities to affect student learning and outcomes provide compelling rationale for general educators to rise to the challenge of transforming traditional wait to fail practices to an RtI early intervening process. To meet this challenge and to ensure success of the local RtI process/model, general education teachers are encouraged to:

- Reflect on current practices and ensure that high quality evidence-based instructional strategies are central to daily teaching and learning;
- Participate in professional development opportunities related to new processes, procedures, and practices;
- Translate and transfer new knowledge and skills into classroom practice that results in better outcomes

for students;

- Access support from others who also serve the academic and behavioral needs of students, such as
  - Reading specialists
  - School psychologists
  - School counselors
  - School social workers
  - Title I staff
  - Special education staff
  - Speech-Language Pathologists
  - Parents and families
- Expect leadership and resource support from building and district administrators, as well as from local policymakers, to facilitate the reduction of paperwork and create times for team collaboration; and
- Ensure that elements subject to collective bargaining are addressed appropriately. Intervening for students who are struggling academically and/or behaviorally are what general educators have been doing for as long as public education has been in existence.

With the appropriate implementation of RtI processes and models at the local level, the opportunities to improve upon the science, art and craft of teaching are before us.

### References and Resources

Note to reader: This fact sheet has been adapted from *Problem Solving and RTI: New Roles for School Psychologists*, by Andrea Canter, National Association of School Psychologists, *Communiqué*, 34, (5), insert, 2006. Available: [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org) Gresham, F.M. (2002). Responsiveness to intervention: An alternative approach to the identification of learning disabilities. In R. Bradley, L. Danielson, & D. Hallahan (Eds.), *Identification of learning disabilities: Research to practice* (pp. 467-519). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). (2005). *Response to intervention: Policy considerations and implementation*. Available from NASDSE Publications at [www.nasdse.org](http://www.nasdse.org) Johnson, E., Mellard, D.F., Fuchs, D., & McKnight, M.A. (2006). *Responsiveness to intervention: How to do it*. Lawrence, KS: National Research Center on Learning Disabilities © 2006, National Education Association, 1201 16th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036-3290 [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

## Letters Welcome!

Vermont-NEA Today welcomes letters to the editor from members of the Association. To be published, letters must be signed and must adhere to the 200 word limit. Email to vtnea@together.net is preferred. Publication deadlines are posted at www.vtnea.org/T-Online.htm.

## Letters

### Final Re-Election Bid

For the final time, I will be a candidate for Vermont-NEA President. My decision not to run again after 2007 is irrevocable. Therefore, Vermont-NEA definitely will have a new president, either by summer or beginning in July of 2009.

Regardless, it's been a great honor and a great responsibility to serve as your Vermont-NEA President. I thank all of you for the opportunity to support and represent Vermont's teachers, ESPs, and public schools. I appreciate your frequent words of encouragement and gratitude during my years as your democratically elected leader.

Your welfare and that of your students, schools, profession, and Association are the most significant considerations in any Vermont-NEA election. I've always worked very hard and strived to serve you well on those matters especially. If re-elected, I'll continue to do so until my last day in office.

**Angelo Dorta**  
Vermont-NEA

## Leadership positions in Vermont-NEA are open for election in 2007

MONTPELIER — Petitions from Vermont-NEA members who wish to run for elected office in the Association are due on January 15. All Active Vermont-NEA members are entitled to run.

Three important statewide seats are open:

### President Vice President Secretary-Treasurer

Terms are for two years. To be placed on the April 2007 election ballot, candidates must submit 100 Active Vermont-NEA member signatures.

Check **ARTICLE V, Section 4 of Vermont-NEA Bylaws** to learn the duties of Vermont-NEA statewide elected officers.

Six of the 14 Vermont-NEA Board Director seats are open for election: Candidates must work in the area the seat represents, and their petitions must have the signatures of 25 Active Association members who work in the Area to be represented. The open seats are:

- Addison-Rutland, Area 1**  
(Addison Central, Addison Northeast, Addison Northwest, Addison-Rutland)
- Chittenden, Area 1**  
(Burlington, Colchester, Winooski)
- Central Vermont, Area 2**  
(Orange North, Orange Southwest, Washington Central, Washington Northeast, Washington South)



Elected delegates from Vermont joined thousands at the 2006 NEA RA.

### Northeast Kingdom, Area 1

(Caledonia Central, Caledonia North, Essex-Caledonia, St. Johnsbury)

### Northwestern Vermont, Area 1

(Franklin West, Lamoille North, Lamoille South, Orleans Southwest)

### Southern Vermont, Area 2

(Bennington-Rutland, Southwestern Vermont)

Board Directors serve three-year terms. The Board meets about once a month, usually on Saturday in Montpelier. The Board of Directors, which includes three officers, the NEA Director and the Executive Director (as a non-voting member), is responsible for the management of all the affairs, property, and business of the Vermont-NEA Corporation.

### RA Delegates

In the April elections, 15 Vermont delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly in July will be elected. Every Active Vermont-NEA member is eligible to run, with submission of a petition with the signatures of 25 Active members.

Retired members who wish to run for the single retired seat in Vermont-NEA's delegation to the national RA need only submit their request to run in writing by January 15.

Questions? Contact Administrative Assistant Sandy Perkins at sperkins@vtnea.org or 1-800-649-6375 x101. Print a pdf of the petition online at www.vtnea.org/PETITION2006Candidate.pdf

## Add neamb.com to your list of favorites.

Neamb.com is the Web Site built exclusively for you and your family. It's the one site to visit for great rates on insurance, mortgages, credit cards, travel and more.

Neamb.com offers a wealth of consumer information, articles, and ideas relevant to your life—plus tips and tools for helping you make the best decisions for your family. Check out an exclusive array of quality products and discounts you won't find anywhere else.

Bookmark [neamb.com](http://neamb.com) and be sure to visit us often to get the most from your NEA membership.

## \$1,000 scholarships available to sons and daughters of Vermont-NEA members

The sons and daughters of Vermont-NEA members – twelfth graders, undergraduates, and graduate students – are eligible to apply for Vermont-NEA / Maida F. Townsend scholarships.

The \$1000 scholarships are based on merit, not financial need. Students majoring in any discipline are eligible to apply, but preference may be given to those majoring in education, or having that intention.

The scholarship application cover letter should include answers to these questions:

- What makes you unique?
- What are your educational goals?
- What are your plans for continuing

education?

The scholarship application requires the submission of transcripts and two letters of recommendation. Current high school students must have one recommendation from a guidance counselor or administrator, and one from a teacher. College students must have one recommendation from a professor in his/her field of concentration and one from another professor.

Applicants also must submit a list of co-curricular and community activities and a transcript from the institution the applicant is currently attending. For students attending schools with unusual grading practices, an ex-

planation of the grading system should accompany the transcript.

Each applicant must submit an essay under 400 words. Applications with essays that exceed the 400 word limit will be disqualified.

The 2007 essay question is: *"What was the most difficult decision in your life, and how did you handle it?"*

Applications with an official Cover Sheet must be received at Vermont-NEA Headquarters by the end of the business day on February 1.

Go to [www.vtnea.org/scholar.htm](http://www.vtnea.org/scholar.htm) for more details and to see a copy of the Cover Sheet which you can print out and use.

### NEA Director's Report

## Bernie wowed the NEA...

By Joyce Sullivan

NEA has set the following priorities for our legislative agenda for the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress: reauthorization of ESEA, closing achievement gaps, expanding education funding, addressing dropout/graduation rates, eliminating social security offsets, improving higher education, continuing/expanding educator tax relief, addressing health care, and increasing minimum wage.

My assignment on Capitol Hill was to meet with our continuing legislators to find out where they currently stand NEA's priorities. Chris Saunders, legislative assistant to Senator Leahy, indicated that the senator will support the repeal of GPO/WEP, raising the minimum wage, more funding for education—specifically renewing the e-rate, IDEA, and Title 1, support improvements to our government funded health care provisions through Medicare and S-chip (Dr. Dynosour expansion), and allowing importing of prescription drugs.

Senator-elect Sanders will be serving on the Higher Education Committee. He called a meeting of AFT and NEA leaders and lobbyists along with experts in Higher Education. Nancy O'Brien, one of NEA's lobbyists, invited Angelo, myself, and Kathy Sproule (Chair of the NEA Higher Education Committee) to join in this discussion. As you might expect, Bernie wowed the NEA, first of all, by setting up a meeting and inviting us, as well as attentively listening to what people had to say. He encouraged participants to share their knowledge and research with him. This is his first education committee and he wanted to become better informed.

#### ESEA's Positive Agenda

Last summer, delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly approved a positive agenda that we will use to further our positions on reau-

thorization of ESEA (NCLB) in 2008. The next step in is for our state leaders to meet with our federal legislators to deliver the positive agenda and ask them to join the coalition of 96 organizations who have signed on to our vision. The NEA Board authorized up to a million dollars to implement the RA's agenda. This financial support will allow intensive congressional lobbying, grassroots organizing of members, affiliate support and engagement, membership education and communication, fund raising for the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education, continued expansion of coalition partnerships and outreach, earned and paid media, and research.

#### Political Candidate Recommendations

As an organization we were quite successful in a number of targeted races for governor, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives. We succeeded in winning 14 out of 21 gubernatorial races (67%). We won 18 out of 26 U.S. House of Representative races (69%) including **Peter Welch's** seat. And we helped elect 14 out of 15 U.S. Senators (93%), including **Bernie Sanders**. Vermont-NEA greatly benefited from the services of Linda Manny, NEA staff, who helped our in-state political activists to encourage members to vote for numerous education supporters in the Vermont House and Senate.

Since we were a targeted state for the gubernatorial and federal, legislative races, we were recipients of numerous political advertisements on these candidates that were paid for from NEA's Fund for Children and Public Education. In addition, donations from these funds were made to our recommended candidates' campaigns. **Note that these funds are raised by individual donations by members and leaders throughout**

**the nation. Member dues do not support these political mailings and campaign donations.**

#### NEA's Health Care Agenda

NEA delegates to the Representative Assembly approved a new business item, last summer, which encouraged NEA to become national leaders in the fight for affordable health care for members, our students, and their families. NEA has joined the National Coalition for Health Care that represents half of the U.S. population. This coalition ([www.nhc.org](http://www.nhc.org)) has delivered a proposal to Congress that calls for health care coverage for every American, a core benefit package, five options for achieving universal coverage, equitable financing, and simplifying the administration of the system.

As members of the coalition, we will help lobby Congress, reach out to potential presidential candidates, meet with governors to bring about reform, and continue to analyze health care issues and educate people about these issues.

Best wishes for a healthy and enjoyable holiday season!



Joyce Sullivan (Jas3@sover.net) represents Vermont on the NEA Board of Directors.

### Upcoming Association events...

**January 13**

Vermont-NEA Resolutions Committee meets.

**January 15**

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

**January 16**

Vermont-NEA candidate petitions due.

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

**January 19--20-21**

NEA New England Leadership Conference.

**January 22**

School Nurses Day

**February 1**

Deadline for Human & Civil Rights Award

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

**February 2**

Vermont-NEA Committee Reports Due.

New Teacher Conference

**February 3**

Vermont-NEA Board meets in Montpelier.

**February 5**

Deadline for February issue of *Vermont-NEA Today*.

**February 15**

Deadline for Vermont-NEA Teaching Excellence Award nomination.

**March 2**

Building a Nation of Readers: NEA's Read Across America is a reading motivation and awareness program that calls for every child to celebrate reading on March 2, Dr. Seuss's birthday.

NEA provides resources and activities to keep children reading year round. Find all you need to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday at [www.nea.org/readacross](http://www.nea.org/readacross)

Visit Your Professional Programs Website Today!

**Vermont Educators**  
Building tomorrow... starting today

[www.vtneaprofessionalprograms.org](http://www.vtneaprofessionalprograms.org)

*Check this spot each month for information about professional programs!*

Early Childhood Education Report  
<http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/Topic.asp?tid=13&ReturnPage=default.asp>

Commissioner Cate releases Pre-Kindergarten Position Statement  
[http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdffdoc/dept/06\\_press\\_releases/press\\_release\\_06\\_1208.pdf](http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdffdoc/dept/06_press_releases/press_release_06_1208.pdf)

## It's Time We Talked...

By Tom Walters, Organizer

Call it what you will — property tax, education tax, an income-sensitive property tax, affordability — but clearly, the funding of public education in Vermont is going to be a key issue in the 2007 legislative session.

Luckily, most of the candidates recommended for election by Vermont-NEA won election. However, this does not mean that groups who do not understand or support your profession are going to rest. In fact, if anything, a strong pro-education legislature may actually *energize* those who believe they have the “solution” for public education.

These groups (ironically with words like “family,” “freedom” and

“institute” in their names) will be lobbying legislators hard to arbitrarily limit spending levels for “direct” instruction, create unfair school choice initiatives, increase class sizes, deflect meaningful discussion about early education and, in a nutshell, try to run schools as if they were factories. This is why *you* are needed.

As bills in the legislature work their way toward becoming law, it is highly likely that you will be called upon to speak about your expertise. No one knows education like educators and no one but educators can communicate what will and will not work in the classroom. It's your Association's job to make this communication easy for you.

Here's how we do it: *V.O.T.E. Insider* is a special Vermont-NEA electronic newsletter that will keep you up-to-date on action in the Statehouse. It will also be the place where you can communicate directly to the people who hold the purse strings and write the rulebook about the issues that are dear to you. For instance, when the legislature takes up the issue of Vermont's interpretation of “No Child Left Behind,” who better than you to tell lawmakers what this flawed law has done to you and your school? (Go to [www.vtnea.org](http://www.vtnea.org) to subscribe.)

Please, join with your colleagues in talking about your profession. Your



Vermont-NEA photo by Tom Walters

Political volunteers Ellen Green and Kirsten Vascik of Rutland speak with Peter Welch.

Association will make it easy for you. As educators in Vermont, you have much to be proud of. Please do not let your voice be drowned out by those who think they “know better.”

For more information, contact me at [twalters@vtnea.org](mailto:twalters@vtnea.org) or call 1-800-649-6375, ext. 118.

We need specifics ...continued from page 1.

# Please share your experience to help Vermont-NEA and thoughtful lawmakers in the coming legislative session!

We need your help in the form of a paragraph or two describing your thoughts and your experiences with any of the matters listed here, which may well be important in the impending debates in the Vermont Legislature over school funding. We don't need much for now — we can contact you if we need more. We encourage you to add pages. Please send us your thoughts (and remember to sign your name!):

Vermont-NEA, 10 Wheelock St., Montpelier 05602

Email: [twalters@nea.org](mailto:twalters@nea.org)

Phone: Tom at 223-6375 x118

Fax: 802-223-1253

These are the topics about which we need your input...

**AP.** We know that schools have responded to the importance of higher level offerings by increasing advanced placement classes. Do you have examples of AP's value to your own students?

**Testing.** We know that No Child Left Behind continues leaving all of us trying just to keep up. We are testing more children at more grade levels and with more frequency than ever. We know schools are responding with greater focus on tests and on providing special attention to different groups of students whose test scores jeopardize the school's public standing. We know school calendars are affected. We know there are pressures to shrink the remaining curriculum. What has been your experience?

**Imposed programs.** We know that portions of school programs have been imposed by the state. We don't dispute their usefulness. But, things like health education, Act 51, kindergarten, hazing/harassment/bullying prevention and intervention have found their way into community schools in part by state action. Tell us about their value to your students.

**Technical education.** We know technical education has been the focus of state policy this past decade. We know tech centers have expanded their curricular offerings, both with respect to technology and to general academic offerings. Can you give us some specific examples?

**Special needs children.** We know that the number of special needs students, especially the incidence of autism and related disorders, has increased and that communities have responded in part by increasing the number of paraeducators in our schools. We all know the federal government doesn't pay its fair share of its own mandate. Tell us your own local account or anecdote of how special education is important, despite its cost.

**Languages.** We know good school systems provide an expanded array of foreign language offerings. Tell us about the effect on your students of learning other languages.

**Arts.** We know the arts curriculum is under pressure in many places. Please offer examples of what participation in arts learning has done for real students.

**Refugees.** We know several school districts have been wonderfully responsive to significant refugee populations. What can you tell us?

**Health.** We know that school nurses provide necessary health services to students. Do you have examples of how the presence – or absence – of the nurse has made a particular difference in the lives of your students?

**Related professional services.** We know there is an array of health and social service professionals either working for or in schools. We'd like to hear about the value of occupational, physical, speech, or other therapists in the lives of your students.

**Coordinators.** We know home-school coordinators and job placement staff provide important connections for students. It would help us to have examples of how those functions have contributed to the quality of students' lives.

**Small schools.** We know that some of our small, especially rural schools do have fewer students than they used to. If you work in one of them, what are your thoughts about your own community's response.

**Buildings.** We know that school facilities have to be maintained and adapted. Provide us why some building expense was important to your students.

**Safety.** We know that the safety of our schools is an ongoing concern. Should those communities with school safety officers lose them? Should the quality of air flow in our buildings be subject to even less oversight so districts can spend less? Should we scrap efforts to make class door locks functional in the event of an emergency?

**Nutrition.** We know school breakfast and lunch programs are literally necessary for many of our students. Can you provide us some real life examples?

**Professional needs.** We know that educators are required to engage in professional development. Are you one of those whose careers really blossomed after attending particular workshops or courses? Please describe your experience to us.

**Action plans.** We know schools have been required to engage in “action planning” for almost a decade. Are there examples in your school of the value of this process?

**Small classes.** We know that actual class size is far different from the “student/teacher ratio.” We know of no private school that does not use “small class size” in its advertising. Can you provide examples of the value to students in your school of limited class sizes?

**Anything else.** We know there are other aspects of school life, and school cost, that we haven't mentioned. If you have examples, not covered by any of the items we've identified here, you'd like to share, please, please do.

*Thanks for all you do for your students!*