



TODAY

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Vision, cooperation, and a lot of work bring successful Addison County mergers

Vermont-NEA Photos by Sean Leach

CORNWALL – Merging local Associations is a Vermont-NEA priority, and for good reason. Merged local Associations, generally, achieve higher salaries and better benefits, and function more effectively at the bargaining table and in crisis situations. Smaller, isolated locals stretch thin the resources available from the state Association, and simply cannot muster the strength of a larger local.

Association members in Addison county understand this and have accomplished two very significant contract mergers. Addison Central teachers merged six contracts in a multi-year bargaining project, and succeeded in cracking a \$30,000 base wage and a \$50,000 maximum salary. Addison Northwest support personnel merged bargaining for ESP from four schools and won 19% new money over the 4-year agreement.

How they merged

These victories required vision, cooperation, and years of work. In the six rural elementary school teacher Associations in the Addison Central Supervisory Union – Bridport, Cornwall, Ripton, Salisbury, Shoreham and Weybridge – interest in merging their contracts developed several years ago. The teachers worked with former Vermont-NEA UniServ Director Mark Hage and developed a three-year bargaining plan. As the contracts in the schools expired, new contracts were bargained jointly, with the intention of having all contracts for these schools, except for Weybridge, expire in 2002. This set the stage for negotiating all of these contracts at once, with a unified merged contract as the goal.

In the Fall of 2001, the Association's merged bargaining team worked with newly hired Vermont-NEA UniServ Director Sean Leach to put together a contract proposal which standardized all contract language and benefits. Sean met with former Superintendent Jim Lombardo and "negotiated" much of the boilerplate language. Once these efforts were complete, the school board and Association bargaining teams began their formal talks.

Impasse was reached and mediation was held in January 2003, which resulted in an excellent settlement. Both sides signed the merged contract in May.

New money increases 4%, 5% and 6% for the three years. In 2004, the "4 by 4" indexed salary schedule includes a starting salary of \$30,000 – up from \$25,100 in

2001 – and the maximum salary will be \$56,400. Health insurance benefits are standardized, and by the third year of the agreement, all schools will have 90% Board-paid Dual Option. All other leaves, benefits, and language items were standardized, with two minor exceptions. The new contract takes effect for Weybridge teachers in the second year, as their previous agreement was still in effect for the first year. Ripton is a newly organized Association, and the merged contract is their first.

Addison Central merger

Sean Leach points out that Addison Central was a significant merger from many standpoints. "These six locals are very small, with the smallest representing four teachers and the largest representing 13," he explains, adding: "As a merged team, they represented 54 teachers – a good-sized group. Having a merged contract standardized all benefits. While some compromise was necessary in order to achieve this, their efforts resulted in very solid wages, benefits and working conditions."

The merger is also a win for the school boards involved, and for administration. Having identical provisions governing all six schools is more efficient and effective, and makes applying the language of the contract simpler. Sean reports that principals already find it is easier to attract and retain teachers, because the salaries and benefits in all six schools are identical. "Previously, teachers tended to want to be at the higher paying schools, which resulted in high turnover at two of the schools in particular," he says.

Addison Northwest merger

Support staff in the Addison Northwest Supervisory Union undertook a similar merger effort. In the fall of 2002, the ESP Associations from the Addison, Ferrisburgh, Vergennes Union Elementary and Vergennes Union High schools formed a merged bargaining team. They developed a contract proposal with Sean, and he negotiated much of the language and some of the benefits with Superintendent Tom O'Brien.

The merged Association took over the bargaining and met several times to negotiate with the merged school board team. When it got down to the last several difficult issues, both teams met for two nearly all night bargaining sessions to wrap things up. A settlement was achieved in May.



Congratulations to the bargaining team for the Addison Central teachers: (L-R front) Lili Foster; Kim Kimler (co-chief negotiator); Linda Peake; (L-R back) Susan Mock; Mollie Burke; Lisa Beck (co-chief negotiator); and Sue Sears. (Joy Dobson, Alicia Fallon, and Helen Kitchel missed the photo)



Bargaining team members for the Addison Northwest ESP tear up their old separate agreements: (L-R) Sandy Nyisalosky; Angie Dykema; Michelle Chamberlain (chief negotiator); Corrie Palmer; Rose Wenzel; and Rene Nill. (Marie Jewell missed the photo)

It is a great settlement for both sides. The new wage scales will help to insure equity in hiring. Benefits are standardized, and all contract language is identical. The deal calls for 19% new money over four years. In the fourth year, all support staff will have 90% board-paid Dual Option health insurance, including Addison, which previously had none.

The contract is the first for the newly organized Addison support staff, and it takes effect for Ferrisburgh ESP in the fourth year, as their previous agreement is in effect for the first three years.

Patience, insight, and effort by both sides

Sean says that "once again, size matters." The Addison Northwest merger

takes four Associations – the smallest representing 10 members – and creates a group which represents 70 staff. Plus, the merged contract creates wage and benefit equity among the schools, which helps to retain and attract staff.

Sean Leach is proud of the progress being made in Addison County by both sides in negotiations: "I was so impressed with the patience and efforts of the Association bargaining teams, and the leadership and guidance of both superintendents. Jim Lombardo of Addison Central and Tom O'Brien of Addison Northwest were instrumental in putting these agreements together. Both merged school board teams are to be commended, as well, for their insights and efforts." ■

INSIDE

The public's views on ESEA/NCLB	2
Taylor Mali to keynote Convention	3
Anniversary for Odyssey of the Mind	4
Vermont Society for the Study of Education	5

Portfolios: Enough is enough!	5
Recommended "Highly Qualified" notification	6
No Child Left Behind: Nice name. Bad law	6
NEA Director's Report	7
Letters	7

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10 Wheelock Street
Montpelier, VT 05602-3737
Telephone: (802) 223-6375
FAX: (802) 223-1253
Email: vtnea@together.net
Website: www.vtnea.org

President

Angelo J. Dorta
Executive Director

Joel D. Cook
Communications Director
Laurie B. Huse

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The public's views on No Child Left Behind

By Angelo J. Dorta, President

By mid-October, Vermont's Department of Education will announce which K-12 public schools have run afoul of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA). It will mark the first time every public school in the nation is compelled to demonstrate "adequate yearly progress" (AYP).

AYP is the individualized amount of improvement in test scores that a Vermont school must achieve each year to ensure that all students pass the state's *Framework of Standards* by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. All students means 100% of each school's student population.

Since student scores also are disaggregated by subgroup category (special education, limited English, poverty, six major racial/ethnic groups), Vermont Department of Education officials explain that 37 different assessment scores must be analyzed for AYP.

Inadequate AYP in any one of those assessment categories for two or more consecutive years means schools risk progressively stronger cycles of negative consequences and sanctions known as "School Improvement" and "Corrective Action."

In mid-August, Vermont schools received their students' preliminary, unofficial scores from last spring's Mathematics and English/Language Arts New Standards Reference Exams and Developmental Reading Assessments. They have been busy in September verifying the accuracy of the student data (numbers of students, required test-takers at each grade level, participation rates, reasons for excluded students, etc.) and must confirm or appeal the Department's AYP determination before school results are finalized and publicized.

But how much do parents and average citizens actually know about and support the basic features of this controversial federal education law? The 35th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools reveals some alarming facts.

Nearly two years after its passage, 76% of respondents still claim to know very little (40%) or nothing at all (36%) about ESEA/NCLBA. The percentages vary by only 4%-7% between public school parents and those who have no children at all in school.

When pressed for a favorable or unfavorable rating, 69% didn't know enough about the law to venture an opinion one way or the other. As a result, pollsters believe that the public will formulate its opinion of the NCLBA based on "...the results it produces. The impact on schools in the local community will be a key factor."

Despite the public's admitted lack of knowledge, their responses to a series of polling statements emblematic of the workings of the law do not bode well for the long-term viability of these specific education reform strategies. NCLBA is a major federal intervention, but 61% believe that local school boards — and another 22% believe state policymakers — should

opportunities. More than 90% said that parent involvement, general home life, the community environment, or degree of student interest are mainly responsible for the gap. Two-thirds of the polling sample also questioned the wisdom of requiring special education students to meet the same standards as other students.

The findings in the PDK/Gallup Poll lead its authors, Lowell C. Rose and Alec M. Gallup, to a bold assertion: "Impose on those schools a major federal mandate that attempts to reach worthy goals using strategies that lack public approval, and you have the ingredients for a failed system. While the public sees improved student achievement as an important

"Impose on those schools a major federal mandate that attempts to reach worthy goals using strategies that lack public approval, and you have the ingredients for a failed system. While the public sees improved student achievement as an important goal, it rejects the strategies used in NCLB."

- PDK/Gallup Poll

goal, it rejects the strategies used in NCLB." Since 73% say school improvement should come through the existing public schools rather than through alternatives such as vouchers, they conclude that "policy makers would do well to listen closely to what the public believes and what it is likely to support."

have the greatest influence in deciding what is taught in public schools. Eighty-four percent say schools should be judged by the improvement shown by students from their starting point, rather than by a fixed standard.

Regarding testing, 66% contend that performance of students on "a single statewide test" does not "provide a fair picture of whether or not a school needs improvement." Only 15% agree that tests covering English and math alone are sufficient indicators of whether a school needs to improve.

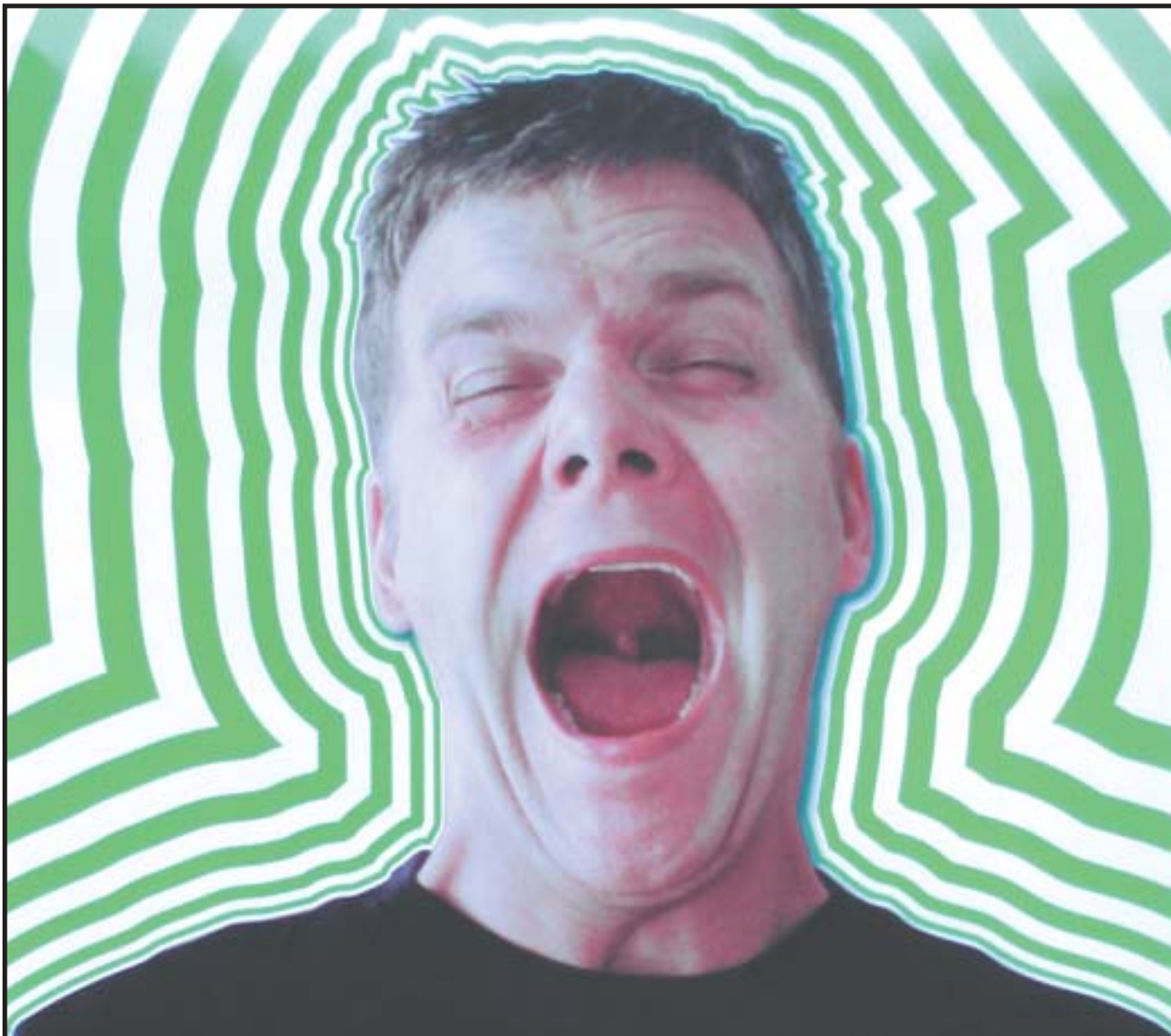
Similarly, 72% of the national sample is skeptical about judgements regarding students' proficiency in English and math based on a single test. Overall, 80% worry "a great deal" and "a fair amount" that there'll be less emphasis on the sciences, history, and art due to reliance only on English and math testing. And, 60% or more expect the current emphasis on standardized testing to encourage teachers to "teach to the tests" and believe it is a bad outcome of the new federal assessment plan.

While 90% of respondents believe that it is "very important/somewhat important" to close the "achievement gap" between middle-class white students and their impoverished and ethnic minority counterparts, just 29% attribute the gap to the quality of schooling and disparate learning op-

ment of Education representatives met with elected officials on the NCLBA Legislative Oversight Committee several weeks ago. As of August, DOE staff expects as many as 15 schools to be identified soon as formally "in need of school improvement." Of additional concern, 47 of 61 supervisory unions (77%) probably will not show satisfactory AYP for their special education sub-groups for the first time under the federal law, thus reaching the half-way mark to entering the School Improvement stage in 2004-05. Those numbers are expected to increase in the following years, primarily because of the statistical difficulty of fulfilling AYP goals for all disaggregated sub-groups each year.

The law's impact on schools in the local community indeed may be the decisive factor in its ultimate acceptance or rejection by parents and citizens, as the PDK/Gallup survey authors claim. If so, we all soon will observe how Vermonters react to a one-size-fits-all education strategy and NCLB demands for equal achievement by all students within the same period of time.

My bet is on rejection. ESEA/NCLB will require a complete overhaul at its next reauthorization three years from now. Local communities know their local public schools best and will be the final arbiters of school quality. ■



TAYLOR MALI

**Vermont-NEA Educators' Convention Keynote Speaker
Thursday, October 23 - 10:30 a.m.
Champlain Valley Exposition Centre, Essex Junction**

“Taylor Mali speaks of the world of the teacher with power and grace. His work is filled with the energy, joy, pathos and humor of everyday life in the classroom. Strong and compassionate, his voice is our voice. He’s been there.” -- Michele Forman

A poet and a teacher, Taylor Mali, four-time National Poetry Slam champion, will perform in person at the Vermont-NEA Convention General Assembly on October 23. All are welcome -- no registration, no admission fee. National Teacher of the Year 2001 Michele Forman of Middlebury UHS will introduce him.

Mali recently showcased his new one-man show, *Teacher Teacher*, for NBC, and at

the HBO Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen where he won the Jury Prize for Best One Person Performance. In addition to his live spoken word performances, Mali recently released “What Learning Leaves” (Hanover Press) and has released two CDs entitled “Poems from the Like Free Zone” and “The Difference Between Left and Wrong,” which will be available for sale at the Convention.

Yoh Theatre Players' SPEAKCHORUS to open Convention General Assembly

WOODSTOCK — It has become a tradition at the annual Vermont-NEA Educators' Convention to feature a performance by students -- to warm our hearts, amaze us, and affirm why we devote our professional lives to young people.

This year on October 23, the Yoh Theatre Players' SPEAKCHORUS of Woodstock Union High School will open the Convention General Assembly at the Champlain Valley Expo Centre in Essex Junction.

Under the direction of Harriet Worrell, the SPEAKCHORUS is a group of trained student voices -- usually 5 to 13 -- performing short programs of literature, lyrics, and philosophy woven into a single theme.

The SPEAKCHORUS has been performing for nine years throughout Vermont, at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and at educational and community meetings in Indiana, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New York.

Here's how Gene Childers of the Vermont Music Educators Association described a SPEAKCHORUS performance: “A Unique dramatic experience! SPEAKCHORUS is a ‘tour de force’ of inventiveness and precision in which the spoken word is transformed by vocal inflections, facial expressions and body language into a delightful celebration of the human spirit.”

Don't miss what promises to be a very fine performance by students from Woodstock Union High School. The SPEAKCHORUS will be up first at the Convention General Assembly, which begins at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, October 23, at the Champlain Valley Expo Centre in Essex Junction.

Vermont Chess Association offers FREE chess book for teachers

WAITSFIELD — “Winning Chess Strategies for Kids” is a text book for teachers and a chess book for children. With many dozens of illustrations, the 240-page lucidly written book appeals to readers with little or no knowledge of chess, as well as experienced tournament players. How the pieces move and their relative values, simple check mates, tactics and, of course, strategies, including a highly practical definition of the last two: “Strategy is knowing what to do, tactics is knowing how to do it.” The book diagrams openings such as the notorious “Scholar’s Mate” on up to chess geometry, triangulation, and “Zugzwang.”

Ideal for classroom work for third grade students and up, the book is the basis for chess programs in hundreds of Canadian schools. The author, Jeff Coakley, is a nationally rated chess master. He permits licensed teachers in accredited schools to copy material from the book.

The book is offered free (while they last) to Vermont-NEA teachers by the Vermont Chess Association Scholastic Coordinator John Balch. Request a book by sending him a check for \$2, made out to Vermont Chess Association, to cover the cost of postage: P.O. Box 26, Waitsfield, VT 05673. For more information, contact John Balch at 496-2525 or vtchess@gmavt.net ■

The NEA Foundation announces new NEA Fine Arts grant program

WASHINGTON D.C. — On behalf of the National Education Association (NEA), the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) offers, for the second year in a row, Fine Arts grants to NEA members. Available to secondary (grades 6-12) school art specialists through local NEA affiliates, the grants allow fine arts educators to create and implement programs that promote learning among students at risk of school failure. **Deadline: February 2, 2004.**

For more information on eligibility and grant guidelines, visit www.nfie.org/programs/finearts.htm. ■

Odyssey of the Mind -- Celebrating 25 years of creativity

RICHMOND — The 2003-2004 season marks the 25th Anniversary of Odyssey of the Mind, and the 25th season of Odyssey of the Mind in Vermont. Odyssey of the Mind is Vermont’s original and largest creative problem solving program and is designed to stimulate creative thinking in young people. Students work in teams to come up with solutions to one of a variety of challenging, but fun, Long Term Problems. This year’s problems include:

□ **Envirover** – teams must construct a human-powered vehicle to collect and deliver trash to a factor where it is used to construct a product

□ **Strategy Sphere** – teams design and build two devices to propel balls through a circular hoop, and devise a method to retrieve the balls

□ **Fantastic Art** – teams create and present a performance where works of art come to life. Two art pieces must be replicas of famous artists, two must be original.

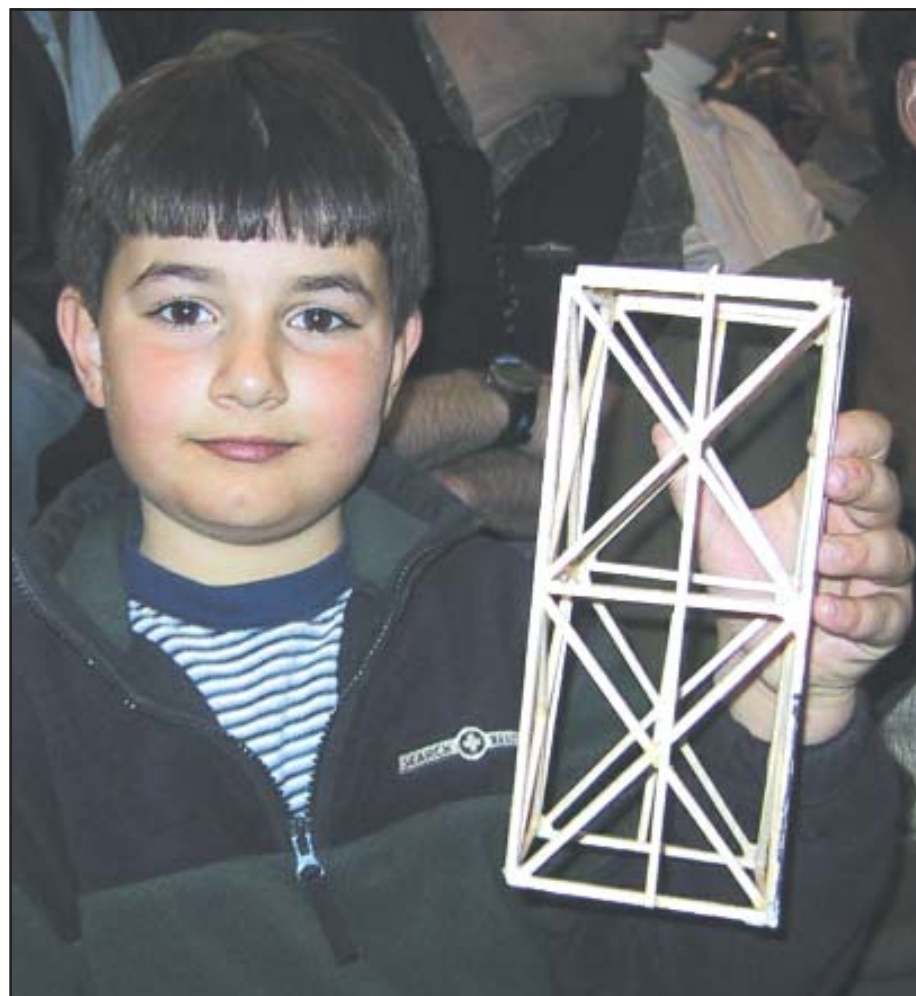
□ **Balancing Act** – teams build an asymmetrical balsa and glue structure that is wider at the top than at the base and test to see how much weight it will hold

□ **Featured Creature** – teams create an original performance about a mythological creature with unique characteristics and special powers

□ **Rewind with Humor** – primary level teams (usually K-2) tell a story, but in reverse! The performance must include at least three jokes.

In addition, teams practice solving a wide variety of short-term (spontaneous) problems throughout the season.

The culmination of these preparations is the annual State Odyssey of



The Odyssey of the Mind problem solving program is a Vermont-NEA partner and will be featured in a workshop (Oct. 23) at the Vermont-NEA Convention.

the Mind tournament in March, where teams come to display their solutions to their chosen problem before a panel of judges and the audience. Teams placing first and second, as well as those earning the *Ranatra Fusca* creativity award, are invited to attend the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals, to be held at the University of Maryland from May 29-June 1, 2004, where they will compete against teams from around the world.

In honor of the 25th Anniversary milestone, the annual Vermont tournament will be free for all teams reg-

istering prior to January 10, 2004. In addition, as part of the “Get OutoftheBox” membership program, schools can earn a free membership in the program for the 2003/2004 season, the 2004/2005 season, or BOTH. Free coaches training is also provided.

Further details and information on how to get a program started are available at vt.odysseyofthemind.org, by calling toll-free 1-800-805-5422, or by coming to the “Creative Problem Solving, Inside the Classroom and Out” workshop at the Vermont-NEA Convention at 12:30pm on Oct. 23. ■

Convention workshop participants will receive handbook on the Vermont re-licensing process

MONTPELIER — Teachers who attend the “Preparing a Professional Portfolio” workshop with Peter Anderson on October 23, 12:30 - 2:00 p.m., at the Vermont-NEA Convention will receive a copy of “The Vermont Re-licensing Process,” a handbook that assists educators in developing the Individual Professional Development Plan and relicensure portfolio required for Level II relicensure.

Exercises guide the educator in developing Individual Professional Development Plan goals and planning meaningful professional development to meet student learning needs. Other exercises teach the reflective process as the educator focuses upon the impact new learning has had on professional practice. Rubrics are included to help the educator and the local or regional standards board review the completed portfolio.

Handbooks already have been distributed to every local and regional standards board and will be available for educators to download from the Department of Education website. Each workshop participant will receive a copy.

Register for Peter Anderson’s portfolio workshop by calling Vermont-NEA at 1-800-649-6375. ■

Vermont Classical Language Association to meet October 24

BURLINGTON — The Vermont Classical Language Association will convene its annual Convention program on Friday, October 24, at Burlington High School. This is the program:

8:30 a.m.	Registration and Ientaculum
9:00 a.m.	Business Meeting
	Election of Officers
	Preparations for Latin Day
	Dedicatory Speech to Professor Emeritus Brady Guilleland
10:30 a.m.	Juvenal’s Satires: A Standards-Based Workshop to Textual Analysis
11:15 a.m.	Break
11:30 a.m.	The Epicure in the Latin Classroom: Methods to Incorporate Roman Cooking and Dining
12:30 p.m.	Lunch at Cannon’s Italian Restaurant
1:30 p.m.	Latin Swap Shop: Member Exchange of Instructional Materials
3:30 p.m.	Adjournment

For information, contact Clifford A. Timpson at BFA-St. Albans: 527-6560 or ctimpson@bfa.k12.vt.us

Vermont Society for the Study of Education is named a Vermont-NEA Partner



Vermont-NEA's Partnership/Sponsorship Committee interviews and recommends organizations for Partnership with Vermont-NEA: (L-R) Carol Willey, Tom Button (chair), Wayne Whitehill, and Bill Haines.

MONTPELIER — Vermont-NEA's newest Partner is the Vermont Society for the Study of Education. The Society shapes policies and promotes educational practices that work in the best interest of children. VSSE believes that education policy has been far too influenced by biased research and, in response, employs comprehensive, relevant, reliable research and scholarship based on sound theory. The Vermont-NEA Board approved the VSSE Partnership on Sept. 6.

Vermont-NEA's Partnership/Sponsorship program provides on-going financial and promotional backing for a number of worthy projects and organizations whose work supports students, educators, and public education. Read about Association Partners at www.vtnea.org/partners.htm ■

Portfolios? Enough is enough! Teachers are already professionals

Vermont-NEA members Shirley and John Stevens offer this response to the debate over the value of teacher portfolios.

Both my husband and I are now retired Vermont teachers with a combined service of 62 plus years of serving the needs of public school students in our state. Reading our August *Vermont-NEA Today*, the article on page 6, "Teacher Portfolios: 'Tedious busy work or valuable tool to improve educator quality?'" must be responded to, as requested by David C. Larsen.

Unfortunately, our response is not in keeping with the current thought that the teacher portfolio system of Vermont is a valuable tool to improve educator quality. Let me explain our personal experience as teachers at Poultney High School.

While teaching there, we had to participate in the IPDIP requirements for relicensure (which, by the way, was previously labeled "recertification," but this new jargon "sounded" more professional).

I, with English, psychology and secondary education majors and an

MA -- and my husband, with a BA in science and secondary education and an MSE -- became part of this process in order to continue teaching in Vermont and to gain "relicensure," all the while planning to retire long before our relicensures would expire. I, by the way, also continue to hold lifetime certification in the state of New York with no such requirements.

I completed the process for English and social studies. However, my husband, who at this time had near 34 years as an educator in Vermont, refused -- until the final deadline for his filing approached.

Our experience does not end here!

On the due date my husband copied WORD FOR WORD, my IPDIP, substituting HIS recertification (pardon, relicensure) for science 7-12 whenever English/social studies appeared on mine. His was accepted! Mine was rejected!!

We question how this current system improves quality in our Vermont education system. Improving the process should not make a farce of what quality means, especially by hoping it

makes the public view teachers as professionals. Teachers continue to prove this every day in the classroom. They have met the academic requirements to become teachers. They are already professionals.

Our Vermont teachers remain puppets to a system that does not recognize their dedication, their value, their on-going perseverance jumping hoops, reinventing the wheel, and trying to meet the requirements of their very job.

One last thought: What licensure do our college educators hold? I wonder, and so does my husband. As both he and I also taught in Vermont colleges, neither of us recall any such demands to prove our expertise.

We applaud our Vermont teachers -- current and future -- and hope they find their professional lives somewhat eased, appreciated, and remunerated. Enough is enough!

We hope you print this in its entirety as our "thank you" to all Vermont teachers... Let them fulfill their role without jumping any more hoops!!! ■

Teachers study in Japan

RICHMOND — Five Green Mountain-NEA members from Chittenden East studied Japanese culture in Osaka, Japan for three weeks this summer. Sandra Veilleux, Sharon Corologos, Linda Porter, Rebecca Tolle, and Dan Tolle (L-R in the photo) took a 3-graduate credit Institute in Japan, through UVM's Asian Studies Outreach Program (656-5765) and with funding from the Freeman Foundation.

Sharon Corologos says the goal of the Institute is to increase awareness of Asian culture in Vermont classrooms. ■



Reception for Vermont's National Board Certified Teachers

October 23rd
2:30-4:30
Inn at Essex

Convention attendees are welcome and invited to attend. Hors D'oeuvres will be served. Advance registration is required!

RSVP by Oct. 13th to:
Laurie Lawrence
(802) 747-0060

llawrence@vtworldclassteaching.org

Please join us in honoring your colleagues for their outstanding achievement and efforts in the improvement of education for students in their classrooms, their schools, and their state.

Susan Adams
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Susan Jensen
Lorraine Billow
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Juliette Longchamp
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Ellen Thompson
Shawn Gonyaw
Terri Vest
Karen Healey
Tammy Wallace
Wendy Hovey
Betsy Hubner

Retiring with Security in an Insecure World

MONTPELIER — Retiring with security and dignity is something all of us want. But putting together the pieces of a sound retirement plan isn't easy. Vermont-NEA wants to help you.

Vermont-NEA is sponsoring seven retirement seminars between October 29 and December 16. The seminars are open to all teacher and ESP members (only!), and are highly recommended for ages 35 and up.

Each seminar provides a comprehensive overview of the major components of a smart retirement "roadmap." Here, in brief, are the topics the seminars will cover:

- ✓ **Understanding and Benefiting from the Teacher Retirement System**
- ✓ **Health Insurance and Medical Supplement Plans for Retirees**
- ✓ **Social Security**
- ✓ **Retirement Income through 403 (b) Plans and Other Investment Options**
- ✓ **Caregiving Needs and Long-Term Care Protection**
- ✓ **NEA-Member Benefits for Retirees, Final Directives, Power of Attorney, etc.**

The seminars will run from **4:30 until 6 p.m.**, and light refreshments will be provided at no cost. Select a date/location:

- ✓ **October 29 at the Holiday Inn in Rutland**
- ✓ **November 5 at the Capitol Plaza in Montpelier**
- ✓ **November 12 at the Comfort Inn in St. Johnsbury**
- ✓ **November 19 at the West Mountain Inn in Arlington**
- ✓ **December 2 at the Hotel Coolidge in White River**
- ✓ **December 10th at the Putney Inn in Bellows Falls**
- ✓ **December 16th at the Hampton Inn in Colchester.**

These seminars are free, but they are limited to 30 members each, so please don't delay in registering. To sign up, contact Ellie McAndrew at 1-800-649-6375 or email emcandrew@vtnea.org. Please give her your name, the school where you work, and your home and school telephone numbers. Your email address would also be helpful in case we have to cancel a seminar because of inclement weather.

Door Prize: If you sign up at least one week before the seminar, your name will be placed in a drawing for a DVD player. Call or email soon! ■

Vermont-NEA recommends letter for "Highly Qualified" notification

MONTPELIER — One requirement of the so-called "No Child Left Behind" Act is that school districts notify parents if their child's teacher is not "highly qualified" according to new federally imposed standards. Such notification, obviously, could be unsettling for parents and an insulting disservice to many excellent schools and teachers.

In order to inform parents accurately about the nature and validity of this federally mandated notification under NCLB, Vermont-NEA proposes that districts sending a notification to parents use this letter, which we are forwarding to local Associations:

Dear Parent:

As you may know, a federal law — called the "No Child Left Behind" Act — was passed last year. It requires our teachers to become something it calls "highly qualified." We believe all our teachers are highly qualified, but this law adds new meaning to those words. The law also obligates us to notify par-

ents if their children are being taught by a teacher who, for one reason or another, the federal government does not consider to be "highly qualified."

We want you to know that the (___ Supervisory Union or School District), like everyone else, wants every teacher to be "highly qualified." In fact, in Vermont, we were committed to that goal long before this change in federal law. We don't hire people as teachers who are not properly qualified under state law and who cannot meet our own high standards. We are proud of the fact our teachers average (___) years of experience in the classroom, and (___)% have master's or advanced degrees. Further, they participate regularly in professional development programs, and we evaluate them to ensure that their teaching skills remain at the highest possible level.

If your son or daughter's teacher is identified as not "highly

qualified," it will only be because of this change in federal law, not Vermont law. And even under federal law, teachers have until the summer of 2006 to meet any new requirements, such as taking some specific courses or a test. Please rest assured that our teachers provide sound instruction to your children, will take whatever steps are required of them under federal law, and that we are supporting them as they do so.

As we adapt to the changes coming at us from Washington, we are confident, just as we have always been, that our staff is fully prepared to teach and care for your child and your neighbors' children. We — and you — wouldn't have it any other way. We greatly appreciate your continued support.

If you have any questions or would like more information about this federal law, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,
Superintendent of Schools

Focus on ESEA: National Roundup

New Poll Shows Support for Public Schools and Concerns about ESEA

In a recent survey of 1,011 adults by Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup, a majority of those polled support ESEA's objectives, but disapprove of its methodology. 85% said the quality of a school can't be determined by standardized test scores in math and English alone. 59% said teacher salaries are too low, and 56% oppose a voucher program in their state.

Minnesota Says No to ESEA's New "Highly Qualified" Teacher Provisions

The Office of Public Instruction in Minnesota says it has no plans to change state law to accommodate ESEA's "highly qualified" teacher provisions. The state is asking the federal government to allow it to license its teachers as it always has. In

Minnesota, which is mostly rural, state law requires middle and high school teachers to have a major in their subject area (such as science, math and history), and allows them to teach any subject that falls under those general headings. The new federal standard, according to Linda McCullough, the state Superintendent of Public Instruction, will be impossible to meet. There is speculation that other rural states will follow Minnesota's lead.

A New Collaboration between NEA and American Association of School Administrators

Rising concerns about ESEA has prompted the American Association of School Administrators to meet with NEA to discuss how the two organizations can share information and respond jointly to ESEA. AASA commended NEA for "having the courage to hold Congress and the [Bush]

administration accountable for imposing billions of dollars in federally unfounded mandates on cash-strapped states and local school districts."

Say that Again!

"The Department of Education likes to say that it is spending more money on education than at any time in history. But as this report shows, that is a meaningless measurement. The meaningful measure is what is needed to enact the reforms and what the President promised. And on that score, the President gets a failing grade," said Representative George Miller, U.S. Congress (D-CA), who prepared the report "Broken Promises — the GOP Record on Education." The report says President Bush underfunded ESEA by nearly \$6 billion last year and by \$8 billion in the education bill now before Congress. — Carolyn White, NEA Staff

"No Child Left Behind" Nice name. Bad law.

MONTPELIER — Every child can learn, but parents and teachers know that children need individual attention based on their individual needs.

The new so-called "No Child Left Behind" law (a.k.a. ESEA) imposes a one-size-fits-all approach on children, and demands that all children meet the same level of achievement in the same amount of time, regardless of individual differences.

Vermont's Congressional delegation, we are proud to say, is unanimous in opposition to this bad law. Senator Leahy, Senator Jeffords and Representative Sanders

deserve our thanks and our support for their stand in support of Vermont schools and Vermont schoolchildren.

Unfortunately, our governor has indicated time and again his belief that "No Child Left Behind" is good. He needs to learn the facts. Contact Governor Jim Douglas (1-800-649-6825) and tell him to support Vermont's Congressional delegation and work to fix the law so that every child can learn as he or she learns best, and schools can direct resources where children need them most.

Find out how the President and Congress must correct and fund NCLB at www.nea.org/lac ■

NEA Director's Report

It is my pleasure to serve you

Vermont-NEA Photo by Art Huse

By Joyce Sullivan

It is my pleasure to serve you in my new capacity as NEA Director. During the summer months I attended training for new directors, Vermont-NEA Leadership Conferences, and a planning committee meeting for the Northeast Regional Conference. Although my schedule is packed, it's exciting to be in the loop for what's happening on the NEA level and to rejoin the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors.

Three opportunities are available for leaders in our organization: Northeast Minority Leadership Training Conference, Women's Leadership Training Conference, and Northeast Leadership Conference. The Minority Leadership Conference will be held on October 24-26 following our educators' convention in Vermont. This conference focuses on essential skills training for new minority leaders. NEA will fund up to six leaders from each state. NEA asks for a two-year commitment from participants.

The other two conferences are planned for January. The Women's Leadership Training Conference will be held on January 22-23 and the Northeast Leadership Conference on January 23-25 in Mystic, CT. NEA will fund up to three leaders and an alternate from Vermont for the Women's Leadership Conference. If a member wishes to attend both conferences, it's possible since the Women's Conference ends at noon and the Northeast Leadership Conference begins that evening. Both conferences are being held at the Mystic Marriott Hotel and Spa.

The Northeast Leadership Conference theme is Taking the Lead: M.O.M. — mobilize, organize, and maximize. The planning committee is working hard to include workshops which will target all categories of membership particularly ESP. Vermont-NEA members Linda Howard and Terri Vest will be offering a work-



Joyce Sullivan is Vermont's representative on the NEA Board of Directors.

shop on developing a paraprofessional portfolio and Sue Rusten (Vermont-NEA Board) will be presenting a workshop on developing in-service training for paraeducators. Some of the other topics include organizing for campaign 2004, living wages, the impact of on line learning in higher education, virtual high school, engaging new members, and attacks on public education. The cost of the conference is \$110. Vermont-NEA President Dorta should have information on NEA funded leaders plus locals may consider funding leaders, too.

Trainings are open to all categories of membership including NEA retired and student members. Con-

tact Vermont-NEA President Angelo Dorta at 1-800-649-6375 if you are interested in attending any of these conferences.

As the year progresses I will continue to provide information to members in *Vermont-NEA Today*. I encourage members to access the Vermont-NEA web site at www.vtnea.org, that also has a link to the NEA web site. Even though I've been active in many levels of leadership over the years, I must admit that I have only recently accessed these sites and have found a lot of professional resources available that I'd overlooked.

Reach NEA Director Joyce Sullivan at jas3@sover.net ■

Letters

Turn off the "Free Press"

I have cancelled my subscription to the Burlington Free Press as a result of the sensationalism and negativism that continually accompanies educational issues reported in this "newspaper." When I was asked why by the circulation department contact person, I explained how offensive I found the reporting and headlines concerning some of our colleagues who made unwise professional choices. The comment I received was, "Well, the stories were on the radio and television stations." My comment was, "I turn them off and now I'm turning the Free Press off." I also told this person I would encourage the rest of the 9,998 licensed Vermont teachers to

cancel their subscriptions.

I strongly urge anyone who is tired of all the news that is unfit to print to discontinue financially supporting yellow journalism. I am one teacher who has had enough negative, unsupporting and inaccurate "reporting." Too often, we are attacked and falsely represented in the Free Press. The editor and reporting staff have no respect for what we do and how well we do it. Money talks and lack of it speaks loudly to them. Let the owners of and contributors to the Free Press put their money where their mouths are.

Linda Owen
Orange Southwest TA
Randolph

Article extremely helpful

I want to thank Angelo for his outstanding article on the anti-public school network in Vermont [September 2003 *Today*]. I was aware, to some degree, of this movement in Vermont, but to have all the information brought together in one article is extremely helpful. It will make me much more vigilant and much more vocal in my support for public education in this country.

Beverly Youree
Franklin Northeast-NEA
Berkshire

Vermont-NEA Today welcomes letters from Association members. Please limit length to 200 words.

Upcoming Association events...

October 6

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

October 22

Vermont-NEA Educators' Convention opens at 5 p.m. at the Champlain Valley Expo Centre in Essex Junction.

Exhibit hours: 5-9 p.m.

Workshop hours: 5:30-7 p.m.

Retirement Workshops: 7-8:30 p.m. at the Inn at Essex

October 23

Vermont-NEA Educators' Convention opens at 8 a.m. at the Champlain Valley Expo Center.

Exhibit hours: 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

General Assembly featuring Performance poet Taylor Mali: 10:30 a.m. - 12 noon

Workshops: 8-10 a.m. and 12:30-2 p.m.

I Can Do It! 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. at the Sheraton in So. Burlington

October 24

Vermont-NEA professional affiliates meet throughout the state (see the Convention booklet for affiliate meetings on other dates):

- Vermont Classical Language Association at Burlington High School

- Vermont Foreign Language Association in Montreal

- Vermont Council of Teachers of English Language Arts at South Burlington High School

- Vermont Alliance for the Social Studies at the Vermont Historical Society in Barre

- Vermont Council of Teachers of Mathematics at State Street School in Windsor

- Vermont Music Educators Association at Springfield High School

- Vermont State School Nurses Association at the Wilburton Inn in Manchester

New resources

Testing impacts access

Researchers find that high-stakes testing tends to limit access to general education classrooms for students with disabilities. Read about it: www.nea.org/specialed/saasresults.html

New guide helps in implementing ESEA, IDEA

NEA and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education have teamed up to provide guidance on implementing both IDEA and ESEA. Read about it: www.nea.org/specialed/ideaeseaintersection.html

1/2 page NEA Member Benefits ad

1/2 page AIG ad