

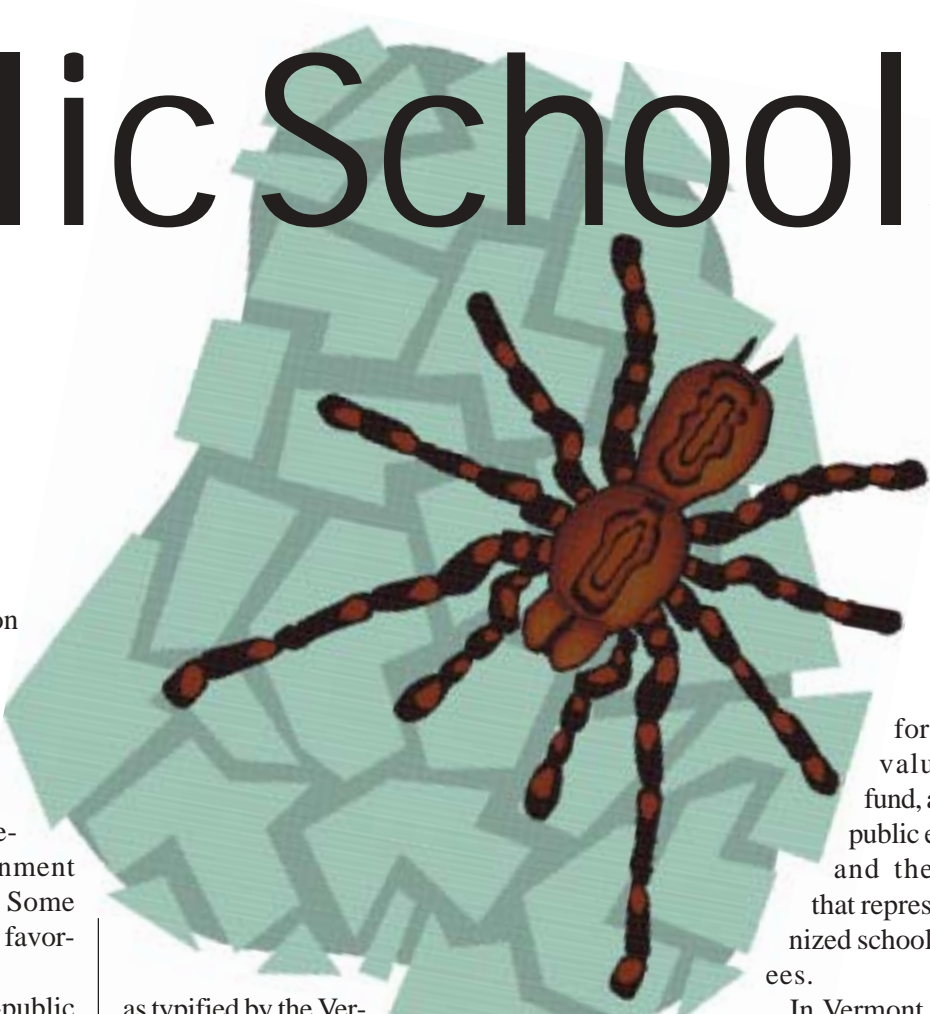


TODAY

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Vermont's Powerful Anti-Public Schools Network



By Angelo J. Dorta

I'm not paranoid, and I'm not prone to believe conspiracy theories. Yet, a clear picture emerges from solid facts and leads to this conclusion: In the past 10 years, a growing national anti-public schools network has reached deeply into Vermont culture and now into the highest circles of Vermont political and communications power.

The network strongly espouses school vouchers, charter schools, and preK-12 education tax credits. It generally opposes taxes and labor unions, but favors for-profit privatization of education services. The roots of the

Candle, Circuit City, and Mellon Bank -- contribute financial support to the network. Prosperous conservative foundations and policy think tanks provide analytical information, ideological precepts, and preferred terminology ("government schools," "monopoly," etc.). Some elected officials help cultivate a favorable legislative climate.

The network foments anti-public school sentiments with a concurrent dual strategy. It stimulates citizen demand for voucher/charter school/tax credit alternatives and also seeks to establish an advantageous political

as typified by the Vermont Student Opportunity Scholarships Program (Vermont SOS) started in 1998, whose staff and board include high profile GOP conservatives. An anti-public

forts to devalue, de-fund, and derail public education and the unions that represent organized school employees.

In Vermont, the twin pillars of the anti-public schools network are John McClaughry's Ethan Allen Institute and Libby Sternberg's Vermonters for Better Education. Have you ever heard or read anything positive from them about Vermont public schools? They seldom praise or even acknowledge our teachers and ESP for their good, hard work. They always portray Vermont student testing and school performance results in the harshest way, despite our students' consistently superior scores in state-by-state comparisons.

Media Assets for Anti-Public Schools Network

McCloughry and Sternberg also are public relations spokespersons with extensive Vermont media contacts. They are prominent, long-time commentators on Vermont Public Radio.

Continued on page 2...

The network views NEA as the primary roadblock obstructing its efforts to devalue, de-fund, and derail public education and the unions that represent organized school employees.

anti-public schools network primarily are in the conservative wing of the Republican Party, but they also extend to some misguided national "New Democrats" infatuated with charter schools.

Select national and state corporate business interests and wealthy individuals -- including owners and chief executive officers associated with Wal-Mart, Amway, Yankee

context for the alternatives

Public demand for vouchers, charter schools, and education tax credits is created by underwriting academic research to highlight poor student performance and public school problems and by subsidizing pro-school "choice" polling and public relations activities. Establishment of privately funded voucher "scholarships" is a tactic, too,

school political context is cultivated by assisting pro-school "choice" candidates and attacking the Association.

The anti-public schools network always includes in its criticisms NEA and its state and local affiliates. Why? Because the Association strives to strengthen and defend public education. The network views NEA as the primary roadblock obstructing its ef-

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Anti-Public School Network continued from page 1...

They also frequently appear on the opinion/editorial pages of virtually all daily and weekly Vermont newspapers.

Conservative editors and publishers of newspapers such as the *Burlington Free Press* — the only newspaper circulated throughout Vermont — and the Northeast Kingdom's *Caledonian-Record* especially provide readers with easy access to McClaughry's and Sternberg's writings. Free Press Editorial Page Editor David Awbrey now even gives McClaughry unprecedented opportunities for second-chance, 600-word rebuttals of responses submitted to oppose McClaughry's original commentaries. Print reporters often solicit Sternberg's viewpoints for news stories on a wide range of education topics.

WCAX-TV also is a major asset for the anti-public schools network. It is Vermont's sole statewide television station. Station owner Stuart "Red" Martin is a stalwart Republican Party contributor. The content and tenor of education news often critical of public schools, teachers, and Vermont-NEA — and the sometimes smirky delivery of lead news anchor Marselis Parsons — have rankled Association members for years. Parsons has hosted McClaughry and Sternberg as guests on his Sunday morning "You Can Quote Me" interview program.

They Lead Highly Partisan Advocacy Groups

McCloughry and Sternberg each claim to head "non-partisan" organizations. In reality, they lead highly partisan advocacy groups committed to the aforementioned anti-public education goals. They permit their websites to be linked with Republican ideologue James Dwinell, author of the weekly Dwinell Political Report electronic newsletter.

Unabashed conservatives mostly comprise their organizations' boards of directors and advisory councils, including unsuccessful former GOP state officer and legislative candidates Jack McMullen and J. Paul Giuliani, Rutland Republican House Representative Virginia Duffy and former Rutland Republican Mayor Jeffrey Wennberg, original anti-Act 60ite Jeff Pascoe, UVM political, economics, and finance academics Frank Bryan, Art Woolf, and James Gatti, and several well-heeled businessmen and investors.

McCloughry and Sternberg are experienced, influential, state GOP insiders with impeccable party credentials. They are key strategists on conservative Republican issues and have sometimes advised and supported like-minded Republican candidates, including Ruth Dwyer. Moderate Republicans with views similar to U.S. Senator Jim Jeffords, now an Independent, have been marginalized and defeated at the Republican Party primary polls by the GOP's conservative wing in re-



Angelo J. Dorta

cent years.

Prior to founding Ethan Allen Institute ten years ago, McClaughry was a White House Senior Policy Analyst for the Reagan Administration. He also served as a Northeast Kingdom House Representative, State Senator, and Vice-Chair of the Senate Education Committee. McClaughry ran unsuccessfully for Governor in 1992 against incumbent Howard Dean.

Sternberg worked closely with Mayor Jeffrey Wennberg and county Republicans to lead Rutland City's school voucher movement in the mid-90's. Failing to muster sufficient State House support, she helped recruit Washington, D.C.'s Institute for Justice — the nation's self-described "premier libertarian legal firm" — to assist the Chittenden Town School Board's pro-school vouchers lawsuit. Soon after, Sternberg became a strident, leading critic of 1997's Equal Educational Opportunity Act (Act 60) and launched Vermonters for Educational Choice. Apparently, a less forthright name — Vermonters for Better Education — seemed politically wiser soon afterwards.

National Resources Leverage Anti-Public School Activities in Vermont

McCloughry and Sternberg tap national fiscal and information resources to leverage their anti-public school activities. Ethan Allen Institute, for example, is one of over 40 state-level conservative or "free-market" think-tanks in 37 states — more than triple since 1989 and centrally organized through the State Policy Network (SPN) — and draws important funding from privately endowed, out-of-state conservative foundations.

For instance, in 1999-2000, McClaughry's Institute received \$5,000 from the Milton and Rose Friedman Foundation. Economist Friedman, now 90, is considered to have founded the school vouchers movement in the 1950s. The Institute also obtained \$2,500 from the Roe Foundation and additional unspecified assistance from the State Policy Net-

work. McClaughry was busy at that time promoting state-funded "educational freedom districts" formed from town public schools in competition for tax dollars against private and religious schools and subject to conversion into charter schools.

These conservative state-based policy think-tanks are informal, electronically linked network partners of better known and powerful national counterparts, such as the Cato Institute, Heritage Foundation, Hudson Institute, Center for Education Reform, American Enterprise Institute, Fordham Foundation, National Taxpayers Union, and Education Policy Institute. Although their advocacy websites sport benign, value-laden phrases such as "competitive free enterprise," "individual freedom," "frugal government," and "traditional American values" to sweeten their mission and belief statements, they share the same education goal: Taxpayer-funded tuition for use in private and religious schools and a competitive marketplace of providers of education services.

The alliance of state and national think-tanks creates and distributes anti-public education advocacy research. In a two-way fashion, it readily shares studies, reports, and commentaries that repeatedly disparage public schools' performance, levy blame at teacher unions, question the value of teacher licensure and advanced certification, and raise doubts whether teachers generally are underpaid or whether taxpayers are receiving their money's worth from the schools. The Institute for Justice's "U.S. Supreme Court and the Constitutionality of Vouchers" presentation, for instance, is available on Sternberg's website. Sternberg's examination of the 132-year "tuition town" phenomenon in Vermont is published and disseminated through the Cato Institute.

The conservative American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) plays a similar role specifically for state legislators, national policymakers, and Big Business leaders. ALEC

Barre EA works to recruit new members



Barre paraeducator Pam Burt and teacher Kathy Duprey plan the content of their Association's membership packet. BEA is a merged support staff and teacher local.

BARRE — The leaders of the Barre Education Association do not take excellent membership numbers for granted. Each year they gather in August to develop membership materials and plan their recruitment effort.

This month, teachers and para-educators will be greeted with a personalized membership package that includes a flyer outlining highlights of both the teacher and ESP contracts, the local budget and officer list, a description of members' due process rights, and welcome back messages from local president Ed Stout. One excellent piece in the package is a compilation of mini-testimonials answering the question, "Why I Join the Association." Here is math mentor Paula Beudet's answer: "Our local union is only as strong as our membership. We have to be involved in negotiations to make change happen." ■

Anti-Public School Network continued from page 2...

sponsors conferences, briefings, and consultations on education public policy and other issues, and is a straightforward proponent of school vouchers, charter schools, and education tax credits. It offers generic, ready-to-go model legislation to help state legislators win support for these proposals back home. State Representative Frank Mazur (R-South Burlington) is a regional ALEC leader. He recruits Vermont Republican colleagues for ALEC conferences, disseminates ALEC documents at the State House, and introduces ALEC anti-public schools model legislation.

Think-tank and ALEC information is purposely easy to customize for quick use by news staff or lawmakers. It can become the convenient basis for "expert" testimony and legislative findings. Indeed, both McClaughry and Sternberg occasionally appear in State House committee rooms to present self-assured oral and written statements for the official committee record based on their network's advocacy goals and persuasion research.

McClaughry and Sternberg are particularly active in locating, importing, adapting, and deploying the network's up-to-date news and investigations via print and electronic media. They select information that highlights and underscores negative depictions of public schools and the Association. Their insider connections with sympathetic newspaper editorialists and the network's hot-linked websites amplify their capacity to be omnipresent opinion-purveyors.

Appointments to State Board Confirm Political Power

Vermont Republican Governor Jim Douglas's recent four appointments to the State Board of Education stunningly confirm the current political power wielded by McClaughry and Sternberg and consummate the deep entrenchment of the anti-public

schools network in our state. These appointments comprise half of a State Board entrusted with selecting a new Commissioner of Education in September. Governor Douglas must approve the State Board's recommendation.

Who did the Governor appoint? New appointees Chris Robbins and Bill Corrow are board directors for Sternberg's Vermonters for Better Education. Despite accepting State Board responsibilities for the welfare of Vermont students and public schools, they still serve an organization that proudly provides its "How to Privatize Your Public School" guidebook. A direct link from Sternberg's website to the School Choice Now Political Action Committee, a group that only recommends legislative and state officer candidates fully committed to public, private, and religious school choice, further conflicts with their roles on the State Board.

Robbins has been a vocal proponent of taxpayer-funded private and religious schools for over a decade. He publicly desired to privatize Danville School even during his several years on Danville's school board and on the Vermont School Boards Association Board of Directors. He remains a current member of the Advisory Council of McClaughry's Ethan Allen Institute.

In 2002, then Orange County Republican State Senator Corrow forced a private and religious school vouchers bill onto the Senate Chamber floor over the strenuous objection of his Senate Education Committee chairwoman. Until now, however, he was best known as the school board member who became an unpaid "volunteer teacher" at his own Williamstown High School and then resisted Association demands that he renew his teaching license and obtain the proper academic subject endorsement.

Gov. Douglas's other two State Board of Education appointees also may stir some questions about their education policy intentions. Susan Schill is a new Board member and parent who homeschools her children. Although a veteran selectman and school board chair in Essex Town, Republican Tom James was reported to have made some public statements about his newfound belief in expanded school choice when his appointment was announced last spring.

Finally, although not appointed to a State Board slot, whom did the Governor choose to fulfill the unexpired term of Republican Caledonia County State Senator Robert Ide? None other than Bernier Mayo. Mayo is the former headmaster at St. Johnsbury Academy who also happens to serve on the Advisory Council of McClaughry's Ethan Allen Institute and whose pro-school vouchers and negative NEA writings are available on Sternberg's website.

An Anti-Public Schools Network of National Scope

Vermont's smallness and our great familiarity with the same high profile critics condition us to hear and see them only as individuals. Rather, next time, think again of the extensive system of think-tank persuasion research, political partisanship, media broadcast power, and funding that fuels their attacks.

It is an anti-public schools network of national scope — and with a strong, fervent Vermont component — that constantly denigrates our schools, profession, and Association and ultimately seeks to drain funding from public education to finance private and religious school vouchers and for-profit education services. ■

Special thanks to NEA's Heidi Steffens and Page Melton of Source Group, LLC for their conceptual analysis and information regarding the national scope of anti-public school network activities.

Scholars' Bowl gears up for new season

BURLINGTON — The Vermont NEA Scholars' Bowl tournament is gearing up for another exciting season. Scholars' Bowl is an academic tournament consisting of matches between schools from throughout the state covering all academic areas.

The Sue Pasco Memorial Tournament on Saturday September 20 at Essex High School is our first event of the season at which students and teachers can see what our competition is all about.

If your school is not presently involved with the tournament, consider the benefits for everyone involved:

1) You will be reaching a segment of your student population that otherwise might not be involved in school sports or activities.

2) Your school can demonstrate not only how strong you might be on the sports field, but on the academic playing field as well.

The eventual winner of the state tournament represents the state at the national competition held in Disneyworld in June, all expenses paid. Our tournament is viewed as one of the strongest statewide formats in the country, and we have a group of dedicated and involved coaches who have seen the importance of keeping this activity vibrant.

For more information on the tournament and how to become involved, please contact David Rome at vt davidr@aol.com

Vermont Fulbright Association to present program

The Vermont Fulbright Association will present its first annual RETURNING SCHOLARS PROGRAM on Wednesday, September 24, at 7:00 p.m. at the State House in Montpelier. Several speakers who had Fulbright grants will share their experiences teaching abroad during the 2002-03 school year.

This event is free and open to the public. For further information, contact Alan Berry at Harwood High School (802-244-5186 ext. 270) or email berrya@harwood.org

A Preview: Vermont-NEA Professional Subject-Area Affiliate Programs

Each year, the professional subject-area organizations affiliated with Vermont-NEA have the opportunity to offer programs in conjunction with the Vermont-NEA Educators' Convention. Vermont-NEA supports these programs, which usually are held on Friday of Convention week. Here are this year's professional subject-area affiliate offerings...

**Vermont Art Teachers Association
Boston Museum of Fine Art
Sunday, October 26
7:00 a.m. - 8:15 p.m.**

Rembrandt's Journey

Come with the Vermont Art Teachers Association on a convention trip to Boston's Museum of Fine Art for the opening day of the exhibit "Rembrandt's Journey." A certificate for recertification credit hours will be given.

We will join a Notch Above Tour on Sunday, October 26. It leaves Burlington at 7:00 a.m., Barre/Montpelier at 7:30 a.m., then White River Junction at 8:45 a.m., returning to Burlington at 8:15 p.m.

The cost is \$89 and tickets can be purchased by calling 1-800-639-2367.

For information, call Lois Thompson, VATA Co-Chairperson, at Mt. Abraham Union High School (453-2333) or email: <lthompson@mtabe.k12.vt.us>

Vermont State School Nurses Association

**Wilburton Inn, Manchester
Thursday, October 23**

Disaster Preparedness for School Nurses

Friday, October 24

Fall Conference & Annual Meeting

Contact Nancy Coleman for information: 442-0751

Vermont Council of Teachers of English Language Arts

**Best Western Conference Center
Wednesday, October 22**

6:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Annual Business Meeting

6:00 p.m. Cash bar

6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Annual Business Meeting, Buffet Dinner

Speaker: Reeve Lindbergh

**South Burlington High School /
Room 203**

Friday, October 24

9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

**Promoting Writing and Discussion
Related to Reading**

"Promoting Writing and Discussion Related to Reading," with Ed Darling and other presenters. This two-and-a-half-hour workshop will discuss ways of increasing student participation in reading-related writing and discussion. Two discussion formats will be demonstrated, two ways of developing and incorporating oral and written student presentations into classroom routines will also be demonstrated, examples of student written work will be included, and all these approaches will be related to the Vermont Standards. This material was developed with high-school classes, and most of it can be adapted for elementary and middle grade levels.

Registration Deadline: October 10

_____ \$35 for Wed dinner (includes \$10 VCTELA membership)

_____ \$15 for Fri program (does not include VCTELA membership)

Make check payable to VCTELA and send to Margaret Riter, Fair Haven Union HS, 33 Mechanic St., Fair Haven, VT 05743

Vermont Foreign Language Association

**Montreal, Canada
Friday, October 24**

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Annual Conference

All Teachers are Welcome! Include your friends and colleagues in languages, social studies and the arts for a day of discovery in Montreal. There is something for everyone. Sign up now for the exciting VFLA -sponsored annual conference, to be held this year in Montreal

Conference Fee: \$50 - Includes breakfast, snack, lunch, program, and ethnic tour.

8:00 - 9:00 Breakfast

9:00 - 10:00 Keynote: Pierre Ancil, President, conseil des relations interculturelles de Montreal - "Immigration and Ethnicity in Montreal: Recent Efforts at Francisation (in English)

10:00 - 10:30 Coffee Break

10:30 - 11:45 Breakout Sessions:

Teacher as Scholar

Focus on one of these topics and learn what the city has to offer you and your students: a. Francophone Montreal b. Jewish Montreal c. Hispanic and Italian Montreal d. Historic Montreal

Choose one strand and follow up with a guided afternoon tour.

12:00 - 1:00 Lunch

1:00 - 5:00 Guided tours of the city based on your strand of interest.

Reserve your place today!

To reserve your place at this conference please send \$50 to: VFLA Fall Conference, Box 8496, Essex, VT 05451. Include your name, address, e-mail, teaching assignment, school, and desired breakout session and afternoon tour (first and second choice).

Vermont Council of Teachers of Mathematics

**State Street School, Windsor
Friday, October 24**

8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

**Number Sense - Making Sense of It All:
Teaching and Assessment**

8:30 - 9:00 a.m. Registration, Coffee and Light Refreshments

9:10 - 10:20 a.m.

1) K-6 **Case Studies...What the Research Says About Number Sense** Presenter: Maureen Neuman, UVM

2) 4-6 **Large Number Concepts** - This workshop will show ways to help young students understand large numbers. Presenter: Amy Patoine Gale, Sutton School

3) 6-8 **Estimating and Integer Games** - Activities will be presented that can help students to estimate and to understand integers. Presenter: Carole Fortier, Caselton School

4) 9-12 **Vectors** - The NCTM Standards include a study of vectors for 9-12 students in the number sense strand. This presentation will delve into that area. Presenter: Ted Marsden, Norwich University

10:30-11:40

5) K-6 **Developing Number Sense** - Children are surrounded by numbers in their daily lives but how many are really counting numbers? This presentation explores ways in which different uses of number such as ordinals, nominals, measures and rates can confuse students when they are developing their counting skills and number sense. When does 6 subtract 6 equal 5? Presenter: Tim Whiteford, South Burlington Schools

6) 4-6 **Making Sense of Fractions** - The presenter will provide a number of problems that encourage an understanding of fractions and how to work with them, especially when multiplying and dividing fractions. Discussion will include strategies for solving problems, rather than following rules. Presenter: Karla Karstens, UVM

7) 6-8 **Floor Graphs** - Middle school mathematics students manipulate tables and graphs as part of their regular classroom experience (VT7.8.aa; 7.8.bb), but do they really understand the number concepts (7.6.aa; 7.6.cc) behind what they are doing? Participants will utilize floor graphs and graphing calculator technology (E.3.a) as a means of really understanding graphs and will explore the mathematical richness of the concepts they represent. Examples will be given from Connected Mathematics, MATH Thematics, MathScape, and Mathematics in Context to illustrate how this methodology can be superimposed into each standards-based curriculum. Presenter: Sharon Fadden, Danville School

8) 9-12 **Putting Sequences First** - This presentation will show how a reordering of topics can bring more meaning to the curriculum. Presenter - Harvie Porter Randolph UHS

9) **The Function Challenge**. This is a series of seven hands on activities appropriate for Algebra 2 students with prior knowledge of functions. The activities cover a wide range of function topics including linear functions, quadratic functions, exponential growth and decay, and fractals. These activities provide students with an opportunity to practice working with equations, graph functions, use estimation, use lines of best fit, as well as conduct internet research. Participants will complete a sample activity and will be provided complete instructions and scoring rubrics for all. Standards specifically addressed: 2.6, 7.8, 7.10
Presenter: Kim Messier, Lake Region Union High School

11:45-1:15 Lunch and Business Meeting - Luncheon Speakers: Bud Myers, Aldo Bianchi, and Deb Armitage
The State of Testing in Vermont - General Comments and Questions
1:30-3:00

10) K-4 **Developing Number Sense Through Literature** Presenter: Christine Hopkinson and others, Chittenden County South Schools

11) K-6 **Specifics about the Tests** - This presentation will present more specific information about the new tests than the general luncheon question and answer session. Presenter: Deb Armitage

12) K-5 **Making Sense of Numbers Through Science Activities** - This pre-

sentation will take advantage of comparing, measuring, graphing, calculating, and patterning to integrate math and science curricula. Suggestions for assessment opportunities, time management, and connected standards will also be included. Presenter: Betty Young, Curriculum Trainer for Everyday Math, CMP, Science Companion and Effective Teaching Practices.

13) 6-12 **Teaching Algebra to Math Challenged Students** - This presentation will show activities that can be used with math challenged students to help them to meet the standards. Presenters: Laurie Camelio and Kathy Howard, Mt. Anthony UHS

14) 7-12 **Specifics about the Tests** - This presentation will present more specific information about the new tests than the general luncheon question and answer session. Presenter Aldo Bianchi, VT DOE and Vermont Institutes

The registration deadline is October 10. Conference Fee (includes lunch): VCTM Member \$25.00, Non-member \$40.00. Make checks payable to VCTM and mail to Robert Chaffee, 7 Walnut Lane, Essex Junction 05452-4373. Include your name, address, email, and choice of sessions.

Vermont Music Educators Association

Springfield High School, Springfield, VT

Friday, October 24

8:30 a.m. - 5:45 p.m.

VMEA In-Service Conference

8:30 - 9:15

Registration begins & exhibits open
Graduate Credit Meeting (must attend this session or 5:00 session)

9:15 - 10:30

Great Beginnings (Bruce Pearson)

The Child Voice (Ken Phillips)

Assessing the Cast of Thousands (Pat Chiodo)

Internet Resources (Sandi Macleod & Tony Pietricola)

Recording Your Students (Chris Rivers & Bruce Sklar)

String Methods & Materials Round Table
Flute Clinic sponsored by Yamaha (Kerry Walker)

10:30 - 10:45

Break & Exhibit Time

10:45 - 12:00

Concepts for Teaching Improvisation to Beginning Instrumental or Vocal Students (Eugene Uman)

Teaching Kids to Sing (Ken Phillips)

Write Your Own Rubric (Pat Chiodo)

"Classics for Kids" VPR's Way to Fulfill National Standards (Jennifer Morris)

Drop by Chris & Bruce's Recording Technology Room

VT-ASTA with NSOA Annual Membership Meeting

11:30 - 12:00 Exhibitors' Lunch

12:00 - 1:30

Two concurrent lunch & exhibit times

1:30 - 2:45

Brief Meeting, Keynote Address, Performances

2:45 - 3:00 Mini Break

3:00 - 4:15

Rehearsing the Young Band (Bruce Pearson)
Help for Inaccurate Singers (Ken Phillips)

Standards-Based Grading: Using Technology To Make The Job Easier (Pat Chiodo)

Concepts for Teaching Improvisation to Beginning Instrumental or Vocal Students (Eugene Uman)

Recording Your Students (Chris Rivers & Bruce Sklar)

Tuning & Ear Training for String Players (Michael Hopkins)

Flute Clinic sponsored by Yamaha (Kerry Walker)

4:15 - 5:30

Simple Percussion Techniques (Steve Rice)

Choral Reading Session (Allyson Ledoux, facilitator)

"Classics for Kids" VPR's Way to Fulfill National Standards (Jennifer Morris)

Guitar Clinic (Steve Blair)

Internet Resources (Sandi Macleod & Tony Pietricola)

Instrument Repair & Maintenance (Jeff Vovakes) (until 5:45)

IAJE—Prep for All State Jazz Auditions (Steffen Parker)

5:00 - 5:45 Graduate Credit Meeting (must attend morning session or this one)

**Vermont Science Teachers Association
Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee
December 3- 4**

Pathways to Standards-Based Science

Come to the Pathways to Standards-Based Science Conference to be held on December 3rd (evening) and December 4th at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, VT. Renowned author and science educator Arthur Eisenkraft is the featured keynote speaker.

Contact Vermont Institute after October 15 for a copy of the program (828-0062). Sponsored by VSTA, Vermont Institute and the Vermont Department of Education.

**Vermont Business Teachers Association
Radisson Hotel, Burlington
Friday, October 3
9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.**

VBTA Annual Conference

9:00 - 9:30 a.m. Registration
9:30-10:30 a.m. **Workshop Session 1—National Teacher Certification**
Vermont World Class Teaching Project
Laurie Lawrence, Director

Ever wonder what's involved in this process and why teachers pursue it? Find out at this session. In addition, talk with Tamie-Jo Dickinson—Vermont Business Teachers' most recent participant.

10:30-10:45 a.m. Break
10:45-11:45 a.m.

Workshop Session 2—Vermont Business Teacher Certification
Marta Cambra, State Department of Education

This workshop will give you the latest information on the new certification competencies and recertification process. **Workshop Session 3—"Give the Kids Credit"**

JumpStart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy - Daniel Hebert, Executive Director, NH Partners in Education

This workshop offers a unique perspective of the importance of teaching our children basic financial principles. Efforts to get Vermont involved in forming a coalition will be discussed.

12:00-1:00 p.m. **VBTA Annual Meeting**
1:00-1:30 p.m. **Book Trade and Rubrics Sharing**

Wanting to teach a unit but only have

a few copies of something? Have too many copies of something you no longer teach but know someone else teaches? Bring them to the conference for our book trade! Along with copies of books and workbooks, add any simulations, resource books, etc. Have a great rubric for a unit or assignment? Bring 25 copies to share with colleagues.

2:00 - 3:30 p.m. **Scenic Lake Champlain Tour**

For an additional \$10 per person, hop on board this 1 ½ - hour cruise during Vermont's spectacular foliage season. For more information, go to vbtaonline.org or contact Phyllis Hayward at 295-8620 ext 230 or email haywardp@hartfordsd.com

VT Alliance for the Social Studies Vermont Historical Society, Barre Friday, October 24 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Teaching Local History: A Marketplace of Ideas

Co-Sponsored by The Vermont Historical Society, The Orton Foundation, and Center for Research on Vermont

9:30 - 10:00 Coffee, Registration

10:00 - 12:00 Speakers' Remarks

Introduction: Chris O'Donnell, CVUHS, Orton Foundation

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Jan Albers, author *Hands on the Land: A History of the Vermont Landscape*

Amy Cunningham, Vermont Historical Society, Education Coordinator
Amy Demarest, UVM/Shelburne Farms PLACE Program.

Connecting Students to their Home Place
12:00 - 12:30: LUNCH provided by program sponsors

12:00 - 2:00 A MARKET PLACE OF IDEAS: A Look at Local History Projects in Vermont

The program sponsors are excited to offer this opportunity for teachers to share some of the amazing local history projects and programs that have been developed all over the state. Bring your ideas, displays, hand-outs and questions and join in this roundtable discussion.

2:00 - 2:30 WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Our concluding session will look to the future as we focus on ways to enhance and support local and place-based learning in Vermont.

Pre-registration requested, but not required!

Register with Kathy Archer, Orton Foundation at karcherco@aol.com or 985-2507. Provide your name, school and contact information. For information, contact Chris O'Donnell, Champlain Valley UHS chriso@cvuhs.org or (H) 878-2304

Vermont Council on Gifted Education

**Sheraton Nashua Hotel
October 23 - October 25**

Different Drumming: The Psychology of Giftedness

On October 23 - 25, 2003 at the Sheraton Nashua Hotel, Nashua, New Hampshire, the New England Conference on Gifted and Talented Education will present "Different Drumming: The Psychology of Giftedness."

The keynote speakers are all leaders in the field of gifted education and their speeches will address attributes of some gifted children that might be viewed as "different drumming."

Linda Silverman, Ph.D. will speak Friday on "The Universal Experience of Being Out-of-Sync" and "Upside-Down Brilliance: The Visual-Spatial Learner."

Linda Kreger Silverman, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist. She directs the Institute for the Study of Advanced Development, and its subsidiary, the Gifted Development Center, in Denver, Colorado.

Barbara Kerr, Ph.D. will be featured on Saturday, speaking on "Gender and Giftedness, Milestones and Danger Zones for Boys and Girls" and "Spiritual Intelligence: Shaping Intuition, Empathy, and Creative Consciousness." Barbara A. Kerr is Professor of Psychology in Education at Arizona State University. She is Project Director for the National Science Foundation gender equity program and the director of a nonprofit retreat and professional development center called Cascabel.

James Webb, Ph.D., ABPP-CL, Clinical Psychologist, will present a pre-conference workshop on Thursday on "Accurate Assessment? ADHD and Other Common Mis-Diagnoses and Dual Diagnosis of Gifted Children" and workshops on the topics, "Do Gifted/Talented Children Really Have Special Needs?" and "Stress, Perfectionism and Depression." Currently, Dr. Webb is President of Great Potential Press, Inc.

This conference will also include featured speakers, concurrent sessions, Thursday afternoon excursions and explorations for early arrivals, panel discussions, book signings, Saturday sessions for children, and more.

Topics will include social emotional needs, asynchronous development, counseling, curriculum and instruction, advocacy, administrative leadership, parenting, current research, pre-service training, diverse student populations and other important issues.

For more information and a registration form go to www.necgt.org or call Alice Maurer 802-475-2580 or email amaurer@anwsu.k12.vt.us

**Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department
Teacher Training Workshop
Barre Town Elementary School
Friday, October 24
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
"Getting Wild" with Education
Calling all Educators!**

Are you looking for new ideas and materials to enhance your existing curriculum? Would your students enjoy the benefits of activities that challenge them both mentally and physically while exploring the great outdoors? The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department would like to assist you in developing such rewarding experiences in your school community. Physical educators and classroom teachers alike can find great value through these activities, which infuse outdoor recreation and environmental awareness into your teaching.

To better acquaint you with this new program, a fun and exciting teacher-training workshop is scheduled for Friday, October 24, 2003 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Barre Town Elementary School. Educators will receive background knowledge and materials needed to lead lessons on such topics as **Animal Tracking** and **Trees as Wildlife Habitat**. A complimentary lunch will be provided and there will also be an opportunity to win some great prizes! All programs can be adapted to various age levels and are aligned with the **Vermont Framework of Standards**.

Pre-registration is requested and can be done by contacting Julie MacDonald or Janet Finn: janet.finn@anr.state.vt.usv or (802) 241-3701.

Professional Subject-Area Affiliate Convention Programs

Vermont-NEA Professional Subject-Area Affiliates meet throughout the state during the October 22-24 Vermont-NEA Educators' Convention. Here's where and when...

Vermont Art Teachers Association
- October 26 / Museum of Fine Art, Boston

Vermont State School Nurses' Association
- October 23-24/ Wilburton Inn, Manchester

Vermont Council of Teachers of English Language Arts
- October 17 / Windjammer, South Burlington

Vermont Foreign Language Association
- October 24 / Montreal, Canada

Vermont Council of Teachers of Math
- October 24 / State Street School, Windsor

Vermont Music Educators Association
- October 24 / Springfield High School

Vermont Science Teachers Association
- October 3-4, Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee

Vermont Business Teachers Association
- October 3 / Radisson Hotel, Burlington

Vermont Alliance for the Social Studies
- October 24 / Vermont Historical Society, Barre

Vermont Council on Gifted Education
- October 23-25 / Sheraton Nashua Hotel, NH

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department
- October 24, Barre Town Elementary School

Advice from your attorney**Nine tips to stay out of trouble**

MONTPELIER — Every year, a number of Vermont-NEA members find themselves in trouble, not because they are bad people, but because they didn't consider the potential bad consequences of their actions. Even acts intended to be kind and professional can backfire.

Vermont-NEA attorney Donna Watts routinely handles cases where educators wish, after the fact, that they'd made a different decision. Here's some advice based on those cases:

1) Use extreme caution on overnight field trips.

"Field trips are becoming more and more problematic," says Donna. "You are responsible not only for the conduct and safety of the children, but for the chaperones, as well." She advises that educators weigh the benefit carefully against the risk.

2) Beware complimenting clothing.

Kids can misinterpret your words, so be very careful about what you say about their clothing or appearance. "And forget the lingo!" says Donna. "'Hot,' for example, is never the right word."

3) No personal use of school computers.

It is risky to use the school computer for personal business. "It's better to shop and email at home," says Donna. "Remain above reproach."

4) Beware of the banter.

A party joke most people think is funny could offend someone in the crowd. And innocent banter with kids can be taken the wrong way.

5) Don't be a "shoulder to lean on."

If one of your students is troubled, get help from the guidance counselor, advises Donna, adding: "But if you must be the shoulder to lean on, do not do it alone."

6) Do not drive kids home.

It is never OK to drive students in your car, advises Donna. "Call the parent or spring for a cab," she says. "It's the risk you can't afford."

7) No one-on-one tutoring without safeguards.

If you need to tutor a student, be sure the administration is aware or someone knows you are alone with the student.

8) Watch where you look.

"One of the most common allegations by middle school girls is that male teachers are staring at the girls' anatomy," explains Donna. She advises that adults be particularly aware of how innocent glances might be interpreted.

9) Do not phone students.

Donna says it's never smart to call students at home or to have them call you. If the message is important, talk to a parent. "Make it your policy to conduct school business at school," advises Donna.

How your Association provides legal representation

By Joel D. Cook, Executive Director/General Counsel

Vermont-NEA provides representation to its members in a variety of circumstances. Near the start of this new school year, we thought it would be useful for our members to be able to review what representation the Association provides and why. Here is information about this important service and benefit of Association membership.

□ What forms does representation take? We represent educators whose rights in the workplace are allegedly violated. If, for example, a school administrator or board appears to violate the local collective bargaining agreement, the local Association may file a grievance. If the employer violates its negotiating obligations, we might file an unfair labor practice charge with the Vermont Labor Relations Board.

The nature of representation depends in part on the nature of the alleged violation. If a teacher alleges misplacement on the local salary schedule, for example, a well-trained grievance representative, with consultation by the UniServ Director for the area, is all that is needed to provide appropriate representation.

If an educator who is a member of the Association faces potential discipline for asserted performance or conduct problems, one of Vermont-NEA's UniServ Directors or attorneys may be assigned to represent the educator, at least if the matter is not resolved at the superintendent's level.

If an educator who is a member of Vermont-NEA is facing possible suspension or termination of employment, we assign an attorney to provide direct representation. And, if a member teacher is subject to possible licensing action by the Department of Education, we also assign an attorney to take him or her through the process.

□ What is a UniServ Director? One of seven Vermont-NEA professional staff members who, within their assigned region of the state, provide assistance with organizing, bargaining, grievance processing, and several other services to local Associations.

□ Does an educator have to be a member to get representation? Unions are required to provide some representation even to non-members, if their jobs are bargaining unit positions. This so-called "duty of fair representation" (or DFR) is the obligation a union assumes in exchange for its status as the exclusive representative of all within the bargaining unit. The DFR requires a union to make decisions about processing grievances without regard to the affected individual's membership status.

□ Does the local Association have the right to decide whether to represent someone? Yes, within constraints imposed by the DFR. The local Association must ignore membership status in making the decision to initiate a grievance, and it must act reasonably in deciding whether or not to pursue a grievance.

□ Are non-members entitled to legal representation? No. Only members have paid for that degree of representation, which is provided in accordance with Vermont-NEA's Legal Assistance Policy.

□ Under what circumstances is an individual member entitled to legal assistance? The Association's policy authorizes the assignment of legal counsel to an educator involved in an "employment-related matter." That covers three basic situations:

- A dispute involving terms and conditions of employment between a school district and one of its employees who is a Vermont-NEA member;
- Defense of employment-related criminal charges brought against a member; and
- A dispute in which the State of Vermont is seeking or considering the revocation, suspension or restriction of a member's professional educator's license.

□ Does Vermont-NEA represent every educator accused of wrongdoing? At one level or another, it does, if the educator requests representation.

□ What form does that representation take? It varies with the circumstances. Very generally, if the educator does not want to contest either the facts or the proposed consequence, we guide the educator through the process, making sure the school district or the State acts properly in meting out discipline.

If, however, the educator contests the allegations, and our attorney concludes there is sufficient merit to challenge them, we provide the same defense that any private attorney would. I generally say we "represent" every member and we actually "defend" some.

□ What if the attorney believes the allegations against the educator? Our attorneys have the same professional ethical obligations that all attorneys face. While they cannot -- and do not -- for example, permit their clients to commit perjury about past conduct, they must -- and do -- provide the full array of legal services and counsel that private attorneys do. Their belief about the allegations is important in the context of legal advice but virtually irrelevant in the context of more formal representation.

□ Are innocent educators ever accused of improper con-

duct? Absolutely, and every year. When it happens, it is extraordinarily disruptive to the educator's professional and personal life. It is then that the availability of legal counsel takes on special meaning for members. We have represented educators wrongly accused of "inappropriate touching," sexual harassment, theft, verbal abuse, and more. Those are the cases that play havoc with schools and the lives of our members. They have, in many instances, generated hundreds and hundreds of hours of necessary legal services, all provided at no cost to the member beyond his or her Association dues.

□ Do our attorneys ever counsel teachers or support staff members to leave their school jobs? Yes. I believe, frankly, we counsel more educators to leave their jobs than anyone else does. That is because we are confronted by just about all who are accused of either inadequate performance or unprofessional conduct, and we know how to distinguish acceptable and intolerable.

Because our attorneys do this work all the time, we undoubtedly assist the overall system resolve difficult school employment cases more quickly, less contentiously, and less expensively.

□ Does that mean our members don't get dedicated representation? No. It means we know good cases when we see them, and we pursue them ardently. And it means we know bad cases when we see them, and we work just as ardently to resolve them well for the educator.

□ Can we offer an example or two? The easiest "bad" case involves any sexual activity between the educator and a student. We don't like it any more than any other member of the public. As a result, you will rarely see anything about such situations come up in public. They are almost always resolved without formal proceedings, by means of settlement.

The easiest "good" case involves a teacher "accused" of having too high standards, and who faces demands by administrators to lighten up. You may very well hear about cases like this, at least locally, since they sometimes do result in high profile proceedings. You can refer, on this page, to a list of types of situations we encounter most frequently to get a feel for how obvious or surprising they are.

□ What limits are there to members obtaining criminal defense counsel? Our attorneys do not provide criminal defense services. We contract with individual defense attorneys to do so and, under the terms of our membership agreement, the Association provides insurance up to \$35,000 toward the member's legal

Continued on page 7...

Nadeau resigns NEA office

MONTPELIER — Vermont-NEA member Wayne Nadeau stepped down from his new position as a member of our National Education Association's nine-member executive committee in July, less than four weeks after he was elected.

According to a statement issued by NEA President Reg Weaver, "Mr. Nadeau has concluded that, because of the controversy surrounding the temporary suspension of his teaching license earlier this year, it will be impossible for him to function effectively as a member of the Executive Committee and to achieve the goals that he set for himself when he ran for the position.

"His concern for the organization and for children and public education has prompted him to decline to serve."

Vermont-NEA President Angelo Dorta supported Wayne's resignation, saying it was the 100% correct decision.

The entire episode has been painful. Most of Vermont's delegation to

the NEA Representative Assembly campaigned hard for Nadeau's election. None of them knew that his license had been suspended. The matter was kept confidential, as it should have been, by his Vermont-NEA attorney and his school board. And the Department of Education does not publicize professional license suspensions.

But formal license suspension documents are a matter of public record. Two individuals from Hyde Park, one of them a member of the school board, requested and received copies of the document through which Nadeau and the Department agreed to the suspension. Early in July, news media outlets and Vermont-NEA received anonymous mailings that contained a copy of that document and an NEA news release about Nadeau's election to the national executive committee.

The agreement refers to the nature of the misconduct: More than a year ago, he engaged in consensual sexual activity in his classroom, after

hours, behind a closed door, with a female paraeducator. These have been Vermont-NEA's responses to media inquiries about the incident:

- Nadeau made a serious mistake in professional judgment and conduct.

- The Vermont Department of Education investigated the circumstances and disciplined him accordingly by suspending his license for 20 days.

- Nadeau resigned his new elective post with our national union after the matter became public and a hindrance to his ability to serve.

- Vermont-NEA agreed with Nadeau's decision to resign.

- Vermont-NEA members are entitled to Vermont-NEA legal assistance when they have employment-related problems, including matters affecting their professional license.

- Such legal assistance is strictly confidential between lawyer and client, consistent with the ethical obligations all attorneys have toward their clients. ■

Legal representation continued from page 6...

expenses, if the member is ultimately exonerated or if the charges relate to alleged corporal punishment.

□ **To what extent does Vermont-NEA comment on the cases it handles?** Generally, we don't comment at all. Most -- not all -- situations are ones our members prefer remain private. So, as a general rule, we don't talk about them. Some, the ones handled by our attorneys, are more formally confidential, and our attorneys are prohibited from discussing them with others, including other Association staff or Board members. If the educator involved gives permission, it becomes proper for us to comment.

□ **What if the member wants the situation made public?** Frankly, we almost always counsel our members not to make their situation subject of public discussion. That stems in part from our concern for resolving the legal situation in his or her favor and in part from our knowledge that the press generally will present the situation to the public in a manner unfavorable to the educator.

□ **What if the press wants our comment?** We try to respect our members' privacy as best we can. We can, and quite often will, offer observations about general situations, without making specific references to individual cases, and we explain the process.

If you read the early August Burlington Free Press account of individual teachers subject to licensing actions over the past year and a half, you'll understand immediately why trying to avoid commenting on individual cases is by far the best course for the Association to follow. Even though all the information in that account was available to the public, the Free Press

acted as though it had "uncovered" secret dossiers in some vault. The result of licensing discipline for any profession or occupation -- including teaching -- is not confidential, although the steps leading to that result may be.

□ **Under this heading of confidentiality, is there any difference between discipline by the Department of Education and discipline by a school district?** Yes. Vermont, like other states, values open government. Toward that end, most government meetings and documents are accessible by the public. There are exceptions, however. One is for personnel matters. As a result, personnel actions by public employers, including school districts, are generally not subject to disclosure.

On the other hand, there is no privacy regarding the result of licensing actions by the State. A teacher who has a license suspended or revoked by the State has no expectation of privacy, but the same teacher is entitled, generally, not to have personnel action arising from the same conduct exposed.

□ **What generally happens to teachers subject to a licensing investigation?** Usually, it will stem from a situation already investigated by school authorities and involving discipline at that level. Your superintendent is required to report to the Department of Education any matter that might subject a teacher or administrator to licensing discipline.

The Department investigates, and decides to recommend no action, license suspension or license revocation. Several possible hearings are possible but rarely occur, since most cases are resolved by a settlement. The Department has indicated it may



Joel D. Cook

begin using another sanction available -- a formal reprimand.

□ **What, then, can the Association do when it looks like we're protecting and defending "bad" teachers or other school employees?** There is not much we will say, both because matters of representation are often confidential and because it is rarely useful to, in effect, "defend" ourselves in the press.

What we can, and what we do, say is that Association membership has benefits, among them prepaid legal services. We represent any member in an employment-related matter or licensing dispute because, at a minimum, it is our contractual obligation to do so. And, more often than not, the educator is not "bad," just in trouble.

□ **What should a member in trouble do?** The first thing to do is to contact your grievance representative. He or she should know if and when to contact the UniServ Director, and the UniServ Director knows the circumstances under which to involve Association legal counsel. ■

Upcoming Association events...

September 6

Vermont-NEA Board meets in Montpelier.

September 8

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

Guide helps educators talk about NCLB

The Learning First Alliance, a partnership of 12 leading national education associations, has developed a *Practical Guide to Talking with Your Community about No Child Left Behind* to help schools, districts, and communities understand and respond to the requirements of the law. The materials give special attention to those schools that will be labeled "in need of improvement."

The web-based materials are designed to help districts, schools, parents, and teacher leaders explain and discuss the law, its requirements, and its implications for local schools and districts. They provide factual information and ideas for emphasizing local schools improvement efforts. They are intended to assist local efforts to rally community support for school improvement. They do not advocate for or against specific provisions in NCLB and can be adapted to fit each state and local context.

The materials include:

- Talking points for principals and superintendents;
- Tips for framing the discussion with the community and media;
- Strategies for school/district personnel and community dialogues;
- Timelines; and
- Additional resources.

The materials can be downloaded from the Learning First Alliance website. Go to www.vtnea.org -- and click "Guide to Talking about NCLB."

\$1,000,000 in Educators' Employment Liability Insurance is yours with Association membership

Educators who join Vermont-NEA are automatically covered by a \$1 million employment liability insurance policy.

Association members can view and print out a copy of the policy and a Question & Answer brochure about the policy by clicking "Educators' Employment Liability" on the Vermont-NEA website: www.vtnea.org A password is required. It is ***.

OPPORTUNITIES

Vermont-NEA photos by Jim Landon



Summer training: Three sites, nine tracks, 200 members

COLCHESTER — Vermont-NEA's annual day-long Summer Leadership Conferences attracted 200 Association members in late July and early August to training sites at Rutland High School, Lyndon State College and St. Michael's college.

Participants selected from a menu that included professional training for new teachers and leadership skills for officers, negotiators, and political activists. They received first class training, heard from Vermont-NEA Presi-

dent Angelo Dorta, consulted with Association staff, spent time sharing experiences with each other, and left fortified for the school year ahead. ■

The photos, clockwise from left, were taken at the St. Michael's Leadership Conference: Vermont-NEA UniServ Director Jerry Carruba, "I Can Do It" teacher Corinna Desilets, "I Can Do It" teacher Chris Kenyon, and UniServ Director Bob Raskevitz.



Letter

Disappointed with tone

Although I agree with Angelo J. Dorta's arguments against voter approval of teacher contracts (8/03), I was disappointed with the tone of his opinion piece. Arrogant, condescending, and mocking are three words that come to mind in describing it. I spend every day teaching my students to respect the opinions of others, while my president publishes an opinion piece belittling them and their ideas.

Dismissing other ideas as "stupendously lousy" and their proponents as "the usual constant critics," Dorta's tone is best summed up in his mocking assertion "these folks apparently haven't read 'A Review of Vermont Educational Expenditures from FY96

to FY01'...." They probably have read the document, have thought in depth about the issues, and have now read Dorta's article as well. If they did want to work with the NEA before, I am sure they will have little interest now. Why would they think it would do any good?

People find it easy to hate educators, the NEA, and any new idea because too many of us use arrogant language in communicating. All too often we create a divide, designate "us v. them" scenarios ... We need to keep open minds because the bludgeons will not work...

Tom Darling
Chittenden South EA
Hinesburg Community School

Train for 4-H Afterschool Program

BURLINGTON — The UVM Extension Service is offering a five hour training to learn about 4-H Afterschool educational opportunities. You will learn fun, hands-on activities and develop skills for working with young people, and sample two of the many and varied new 4-H Curriculum: *A Palette of Fun with Arts and Crafts* and *Public Adventures: An Active Citizenship Curriculum*.

Those who wish to participate may be Afterschool program staff, AmeriCorps members, parents, retired teachers, 4-H volunteers and leaders, 4-H and non 4-H camp staff. The training will prepare you to collaborate with UVM Extension and other staff and volunteers to add a 4-H educational component to an afterschool

program. The time commitment is flexible depending on your needs and interests. You will sample two nationally juried 4-H curricula designed to teach young people essential life skills and subject matter expertise. You do not need any previous experience with 4-H to participate in the training.

Trainings are scheduled from 9:00 am - 2:00 pm at the following locations: October 17th, Rutland- Howe Scale Building; October 24th, Springfield-Howard Dean Education Center; November 7th, So. Burlington-UVM Extension Office; November 14th, Berlin-UVM Extension Office; November 21st, St. Johnsbury-UVM Extension Office

To register, contact UVM Extension. There is a \$10 fee. ■