

Vermont-NEA Today

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Vermont-NEA Presents "Bullying Prevention and Response"

MONTPELIER – Public school educators in Vermont don't need to read the statistics to affirm what we know about the meanness and damage done by bullying. Still, the results of studies are eye-openers:

- 86% of children between the ages of 12 and 15, including both boys and girls, report that they get teased or bullied at school.
- Bullying occurs in school playgrounds every 7 minutes and once every 25 minutes in class.
- Bystanders, other kids watching, are present 85% of the time when there is a bully episode on the playground or in the classroom.
- When peers step in, the bullying stops within ten seconds 57% of the time. However, bystanders stepped in only 10% of the time.
- More than 50% of children between the ages of 8 and 11 reported that bullying is a "big problem" at school.
- In many cases, bullying can lead to childhood depression. In extreme circumstances, bullying can lead to childhood suicide.

Our Vermont Legislature stepped up to the issue of bullying in 2004 with Act 117, which defines bullying in schools and establishes requirements for dealing with it.

Vermont-NEA's Response

"Bullying Prevention and Response in Vermont Schools" is the result of Vermont-NEA's work to support educators on this important issue. It is a new two-hour workshop designed to help educators and school staffs prevent bullying, intervene effectively when it occurs, develop commitments to address and report bullying, and understand responsibilities under Vermont Legislative Act 117 related to bullying in Vermont schools.

The workshop, which is available to school districts now, was designed by Kathy A. Johnson of Vermont Equity Training & Consulting, and will be

facilitated by members of the Vermont-NEA Bullying Prevention and Intervention Training Team. Educators attending the workshop will:

- **Consider** the impact and importance of bullying prevention
- **Review** the definitions of bullying and harassment as defined in Vermont law
- **Analyze** case studies to clarify distinctions between bullying and harassment
- **Review** a continuum of behaviors related to bullying
- **Examine** what schools must do to comply with Vermont law regarding bullying
- **Consider** immediate and long-term plans for bullying prevention and intervention

Vermont-NEA is prepared now to arrange presentations of the new two-hour *Bullying Prevention and Response* workshop at Vermont schools. The session includes video clips, dialogue, case studies, a Powerpoint presentation, and pre- and post-workshop questionnaires.

The person in charge of coordinating professional development for each Vermont school district may send email to Administrative Assistant Yolly Turner at rturner@vtnea to schedule a session, or call her at 1-800-649-6375 x108.

"This workshop fills a great need for school districts working to meet their obligations around the issue of bullying," says Vermont-NEA Professional Programs Director Sherry Gile. "And, the training is an important opportunity for educators to learn more about the very real needs of the children they serve." ■



How Vermont Defines Bullying

Act 117, the bullying law passed by the 2004 Vermont Legislature – Sec. 1. 16 V.S.A. § 11(a)(32) – defines bullying as:

Any overt act or combination of acts directed against a student by another student or group of students and which:

- (A) is repeated over time;
- (B) is intended to ridicule, humiliate, or intimidate the student; and
- (C) occurs during the school day on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored activity, or before or after the school day on a school bus or at a school-sponsored activity.

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Sex, Schools, Politics & Media

By Angelo J. Dorta, President

Sex sells. The statement is a truism in modern American popular culture. Furthermore, sex sells particularly well in conjunction with another "s" word: schools. The specific topic makes little difference. Health classes on human sexual development, school programs for pregnant teens, "diversity" discussions that include gay/lesbian/bi-sexual/transgender issues, presentations by Outright Vermont, and – of course, usually most troubling – accusations of educator sexual misconduct with students. They all generate similar widespread attention and close scrutiny.

If even a small dose of politics is added, a highly volatile mixture results. Unfortunately, some legislators just can't resist the temptation to drink deeply from this potent cocktail. They realize that print and broadcast media quickly respond and often even add a dash of their own special brand of sensationalized urgency.

Vermont House Bill 471 illustrates the allure of the sex-and-schools theme and also spotlights the accompanying reflexive media interest. The bill proposes to solely target public school employees for a 10-year jail term and a fine of \$5,000 for having unforced sexual relations with students older than 16 years, the formal "age of consent." Currently, Vermont criminal laws apply specifically to any adult convicted of sexual contact with a child less than 16 years old or who forcibly exploits others, regardless of age. Although an educator definitely will lose his/her job and professional license for sexual misconduct with students above 16 years of age, too, the transgression does not trigger criminal penalties.

H.471 was introduced only very recently by its sponsors and hasn't yet received significant notice from the House Education Committee, to which the bill was assigned. For the most part, only legislative bills that are sufficiently discussed and then favorably voted out of committees by the mid-March "crossover" date have a realistic chance for passage in the House and consideration in the Senate during 2007. Bills from serious sponsors sometimes are intentionally filed much earlier in the legislative session to better afford time for consideration.

Despite a total lack of H.471 activity and not a current, relevant newsworthy event in sight for context, at least one broadcast news manager apparently caught wind of the bill and then promptly sent a reporter to get Vermont-NEA's viewpoint on videotape. Curiously, the interview was held just two days after a near-record 233 local school budgets passed unexpectedly. Although additional angles and deeper reporting on the surprisingly positive statewide budget votes were available to newsmen, especially in light of the months-long citizen debate



over property taxes, school costs, and staffing levels, viewers were given the sex-and-schools story as the foremost education news of the day.

Although addressing the topic of educator sexual misconduct always is unpleasant duty, Vermont-NEA's stance is clear and unequivocal: A safe and excellent school is a basic right of every Vermont child. All children deserve the greatest possible protection from predatory adults whoever they are: educators, clergy, counselors, whoever. To aim this bill only at school employees is unjust, disrespectful, and contrary to the facts. Sexual exploitation of youngsters is a terrible societal problem, not a school problem. Why should teachers and school employees be specially singled out for criminal penalties? For instance, the very next day after the television interview, the *Burlington Free Press* reported molestation charges against a Miami assistant youth pastor who was traveling in Stowe with teenage parishioners last April.

Certainly, if Vermont wants to criminalize some adults' sexual acts with 16 and 17 year olds to better protect young people, Vermont-NEA will help craft an acceptable bill. We'll seek to comprehensively address all situations where children are subject to dominating adult supervisory authority and institutional control, whatever the setting. The variety of adults in our communities to whom we entrust children nowadays must be specified and include clergy, health professionals, counselors of all sorts, mentors, summer camp staff, and coaches, all in addition to education personnel.

Thankfully, despite high-profile news coverage, sexual misconduct between Vermont school employees and students is rare. Still, we know that on those rare occasions, sexual activity between school-age students and staff can cause a lifetime of hurt and personal damage for affected young people. Such wrongdoing also darkens citizens' perceptions of the safety and quality of local schools.

Consequently, certain very good prevention methods come to mind that temper the sole fixation on punishments and focus on actually doing something to help kids:

- Teacher preparation programs in college that include training on proper boundaries between teachers and students. Early instruction about sexual misconduct that underscores an educator's legal responsibilities as well as the legal consequences for perpetrators.
- School districts that conduct highly rigorous background checks prior to hiring new personnel.
- Programs for new school employees that provide a thorough orientation regarding proper adult interactions with students.
- Periodic training even for experienced faculty and staff about behaviors that invite the appearance of impropriety and also reminders about safe, anonymous procedures for reporting suspicions to the school's Child Protection Team.

▪ The publicly accessible state and national registries created to help prevent school employees proven guilty in the past from obtaining school district jobs in the future.

Vermont educators probably will contend with the lurid power of sex-and-schools issues and related legislative proposals and news accounts for the foreseeable future. The dynamics are ingrained in our culture and in the news business. We can and will continue to shoulder our share of responsibility to keep children safe from adult sexual misconduct in public schools and elsewhere, without focusing so narrowly and unfairly on school personnel.

And the outcome of the television interview? The legislator eager to single-out public school employees received roughly two-thirds of the airtime and news script. Vermont-NEA's response comprised the remaining smaller portion, just about what we've come to expect with sex-and-schools news stories. ■

Vermont spends as much as it does on schools because it costs a lot to educate our children...

By Joel D. Cook, Executive Director/General Counsel

After more than two months examining what schools do, what we expect from them, and what it costs for them to do it (approximately \$1.3 billion last year), the House Education Committee emerged on March 16 with a bill focused on several ways to limit those costs. The plain result of its examination is a greater understanding that Vermont spends as much as it does on its schools because it costs a lot to educate our children. The bill projects a savings to Vermont taxpayers on the order of \$9 million and acknowledges that Vermont is and should be proud of the quality of our school system.

After a series of legislative "findings," which are used to set the tone for what follows, the bill addresses these issues:

"High Spending" Threshold

The governor has been proposing the state simply tell school districts not to increase their costs by more than inflation. That would have several bad effects, among them placing more serious constraints on lower than higher spending districts. Under 2003's Act 68, school districts spending well in excess of the statewide average – currently set at 125% of the average – are taxed twice on every dollar above that level. That provision has led lawmakers to consider changing that "penalty" level, with proposals ranging between leaving it alone (where it has a direct effect on about 10 districts) and lowering it to 115% (where it would affect about 80 districts). The Education Committee learned that a recent law will affect how elementary and high schools within supervisory unions are assessed for special education costs. The committee also learned that, while current law provides funding for secondary students 1.25 times the amount for elementary students, the actual cost differential is closer to 13%. This all led the committee to recommend reducing the weight for secondary students to 1.13 and the so-called "high spending" threshold to 123%.

High Spending Special Education Districts

A few districts have special education spending more than 20% above the state average. Current law provides the department of education the capacity to point this out to districts and to offer technical assistance to help them bring costs down. The committee decided to arm give the commissioner the capacity to withhold a portion of state special education funds from a district continuing for several years to spend high rather than implement department recommendations. The bill also would increase the reimbursement a school district receives for "state-placed students" and seeks

to help school districts limit the amount they spend on so-called "extraordinary services."

Collective Bargaining

Vermont-NEA pointed out that there are several aspects of school district administration that, by having them managed at the supervisory union level, could be carried out more efficiently and less expensively. One of them is collective bargaining. The committee's proposal would require school districts and their employees, therefore, to negotiate at the supervisory union level but – and this is the most important aspect of the proposal – leave the decision whether to ratify an agreement with each local school district. The Association has huge experience under this heading and is convinced that, by virtue of the efficiency to be gained and the relatively small differences between contracts within supervisory unions, this proposal is a useful contribution to addressing administrative costs.

School Calendar

The years-long attempt to mandate a single statewide calendar continues in the body of this proposal. Vermont-NEA has taken no position on this matter, since our members have widely divergent views and the implications for either education or the rights of education employees are small. The statutory number of student attendance (175) or in-service (5) days would not change, nor would the

calendar you have negotiated at the local level.

Mandates

The federal and state governments are responsible for many requirements schools have to fulfill. Obvious ones include special education and "No Child Left Behind" compliance, school quality standards, action plans, and many special curricular offerings. The committee decided to get a handle on those mandates, as they affect schools as well as the department of education, so it included a proposed special committee in its bill to include the commissioner and representatives from major education organizations, including Vermont-NEA.

Medicaid

It's been nearly a decade since the legislature required school districts to attempt to maximize Medicaid receipts. Just recently, the legislature authorized the state to require families eligible for Medicaid to pay a premium to obtain the coverage. Some low income families can't afford the premium or, at least, decline to pay it, thereby foreclosing the school's access to Medicaid funding for their children. The committee decided to examine this phenomenon and other ways in which the Medicaid program affects school operations.

Social Service Costs

The extent of social needs among children has grown steadily, largely without notice outside schools, and,

since neither the capacity of our social service agencies nor state funds have kept pace, it has fallen to Vermont's schools to add the costs of many needed social services to their budgets to help make sure children in school are "ready" to learn and succeed in life. The committee, therefore, wants the state to understand the true dimension of this issue and to consider what, beyond shining a light on it, to do about it.

Fiscal Management

The committee wants to make it easier for school districts to take advantage of various efficiencies in use around the state. By having all districts report financial information in the same way, it reasons that it will be easier for districts to share with one another various fiscal practices. Therefore, it proposes to have the department develop a plan for integrating how school districts maintain and report their financial information.

Fiscal Assessment

No one reasonably believes lawmakers will refrain from wanting to require school districts to take on new projects. The purpose here is to have the legislature understand the cost of any new proposal before enacting it.

Governance

Once past the analysis of what we expect from our schools, the committee focused a lot of its attention on how schools are organized, with particular attention to the current round of community discussions set in motion by the commissioner. Last summer, he sent around an essay suggesting that school districts be consolidated into larger units, roughly approximating current supervisory union boundaries. It was natural for the committee to consider proposing a law that would lead to just that, until it was confronted at a public hearing last week, where virtually anyone discussing governance asked that they stop, or at least slow down. It is our view that, even if consolidating districts has merit, the idea will always, inevitably, fail unless local school districts are brought along and, in fact, reach their own conclusion about the value of consolidation. There are many other practical and tactical issues involved, but, for the time being the committee decided on two things: a report and proposal from the commissioner; and an analysis of major related issues by the current Council on Education Governance.

Next Steps

To this point, little is available to say about school tax policy that is not the direct province of the Education Committee. Its proposal now goes to the Ways and Means Committee, where taxes become the focus. There will be more to report, therefore, about school revenue, as that committee takes its turn in this matter. ■

Great Testimony

For months, we have endured rhetoric suggesting that taxpayers are not getting their money's worth from our public schools, and relentless criticism blaming school costs on "student teacher ratio" and spendthrift school districts.

In response, Vermont-NEA members have been speaking out, delivering powerful testimony about schools before legislative committees. On Town Meeting Day, Vermont taxpayers spoke out, as well. In better than 92% of communities (233), they chose to support their local school budgets.

Now, both the Vermont House and Senate have passed school spending bills that take a moderate approach and do not demand the extreme education spending caps promoted by the Governor.

What you are about to read is the kind of testimony that has made a huge difference in the school funding debate – an excerpt from March 14 testimony by Vermont-NEA member Mary Ann Barnes of Colchester before a joint hearing of the House Education and Ways and Means Committees. She was among five educators who delivered important testimony "from the classroom": Christopher Hood of Hinesburg, Rebecca Smith of Burlington, Donna Waelter of Wells River, and Heidi Willis of Salisbury. Vermont-NEA Organizer Tom Walters said her words drew applause:



Mary Ann Barnes

As you work on this huge issue of funding education, I urge you to keep my students and all of our Vermont students foremost in your mind. I urge you to keep your eyes on the real issues. Let's get this one right. Let's finally fix the fight over funding Vermont education, and let's do it by putting equity at the top of the list (as the Supreme Court has ruled!) and by making it fair for all. Fair doesn't always mean the same. It's high time we all were willing to craft a progressive tax system that looks to individual income as a factor."

Contact Tom Walters (twalters@vtnea.org) to join the ranks of Vermont-NEA members who are making the case for kids and public schools before lawmakers. And, to keep informed about legislation, subscribe to *V.O.T.E. Insider* online at www.vtnea.org/e-newsletters.htm.

Vermont-NEA Welcomes New Partner: "Children Gather Round"

MONTPELIER – Our Vermont-NEA Board of Directors has welcomed a new program to the Association's roster of Partners. *Children Gather Round* is an intertribal drumming group dedicated to bringing first-hand knowledge of Native American culture to people of all ages and abilities. The program includes storytelling and has students perform Native American drumming, singing, and dancing with presenters Mary Mitchell and Susan O'Neil.

Children Gather Round offers performances and residencies throughout Vermont. We encourage you to invite them to your school – everyone in the audience will have a chance to drum, sing, dance and rattle



together while learning respect for the drum and its Native American heritage. To arrange for a *Children Gather Round* performance, just contact one of the presenters: Mary Mitchell (mary@zarts.biz) Susan O'Neil (celt44@localnet.com)

NCFCU Offers Grants, Scholarships, Awards

To encourage learning, NorthCountry Federal Credit Union is offering grants, scholarships and awards for teachers and students in Vermont's ten northernmost counties. Applications are available at northcountry.org or by calling (800) 660-3258.

- Ten \$500 grants will be awarded to K-12 public school teachers to use in their classrooms. Applicants must explain how the funds will benefit their students. The deadline is June 1, 2007.
- Ten \$1,000 scholarships are available for high school seniors who have played a significant role in improving

their communities. The deadline is April 13, 2007.

- One \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to a senior at Burlington High School based on character and financial need. Applications must be received by April 13, 2007.
- Every public high school in the northern half of Vermont is invited to nominate a student for a \$250 community award. One award is available per school. Names will be accepted until May 11, 2007.
- Modest funding is available on an ongoing basis for high school students' community projects.

VSSE Will Honor Bill Mathis and Katherine Paterson

BRANDON – The Vermont Society for the Study of Education, a Vermont-NEA partner organization, will present its 2007 John Dewey Award to children's book author Katherine Paterson and school superintendent Bill Mathis. The award is given annually to those who, through their professional efforts, have made significant contributions to the education of young people in America. VSSE established the John Dewey Award in 2002 when it conferred its first awards upon Senator Robert Stafford and Governor Phil Hoff.

William J. Mathis, Superintendent of Schools of the Rutland Northeast School district and nationally recognized education researcher and writer, is a son of Tennessee. He grew up in Knoxville and received his undergraduate degree from the University of Tennessee. After a tour of duty as a United States Air Force officer and a faculty member at the Air Force Academy, Mathis went on to receive his Ph.D. in Foundations from the University of Texas in Austin.

A highly skilled researcher, Mathis did the early cost analysis work on No Child Left Behind which has been used throughout the country. Mathis is on the National Board of Directors of the Education Finance Association and is a fellow of Education Policy Research Group at the University of Arizona. In 2002 Mathis was the Vermont's Superintendent of the Year

and a finalist for National Superintendent of the Year. Mathis is a frequent speaker at national, state and local education meetings and he has consulted nationally on a wide variety of educational issues.

Katherine Paterson, nationally and internationally celebrated children's book author, is the daughter of missionaries. She was born in China and, by the time she was 18, had moved 18 times. Her first novel was written while she was a student in a creative writing class. Since that time, she has gone on to write picture books and books for the very young; but it is her novels for young readers for which she has received world-wide acclaim. Paterson has been the recipient of the Newbery Award twice and in 1998 she was presented with the Hans Christian Andersen Award in recognition for her body of work. Her book *Bridge to Terabithia*, which won the Newbery Award, also won the Grand Prix des Jeunes Lecteurs in 1986. The movie version of the book has just been released.

The John Dewey Award presentation ceremony will take place from 4:00 to 6:00 PM on May 4 in the Memorial Lounge at the University of Vermont's Waterman Building. The presentation of awards will be followed by remarks from the recipients and a question and answer period. The ceremony will close with a reception and book signing. ■



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You Go Girl! The Annual "Women Can Do" Conference Is an Amazing Event...

Submitted By Lynn Vera,
Guidance Counselor at Center for Technology, Essex

The "Women Can Do" conference is an amazing annual event planned by Vermont Works for Women and a group of educators and professionals dedicated to economic opportunities for girls. Every fall, over 300 girls in grades 9-12 from more than 60 high schools arrive at Vermont Technical College in Randolph for a full day of hands-on workshops in trades and technology. The conference goals are twofold: first, to expose Vermont girls to interesting and profitable career possibilities available through trades and technology and, second, to encourage and support girls who are enrolled in nontraditional programs in technical and career centers.

The workshops are taught mostly by women who are practicing professionals in their field. Workshops are active, giving girls the opportunity to try out actual equipment, tools and techniques used on the job. Girls may operate a bulldozer, backhoe or radial arm saw, wield a chainsaw, operate a fire hose, solder a pipe, design a bridge, or build a web page. They can investigate a mock crime scene, try their hand at drafting, design and build a mousetrap-powered vehicle, and create their own computer animation. Read and see more on the website www.vtworksforwomen.org

Is Your School Connected?

Registration materials for the fall 2007 *Women Can Do* conference (October 11) will be sent to Vermont high schools in late August. Please check that there is somebody excited about inviting your schools' girls.

If not, are you willing to be a motivated contact person for your school? Please email Miriam at mbalsley@vtworksforwomen.org or call 802-878-0004.



Photos taken at the 2006 "Women Can Do" Conference

Women Can Do Planners Are Looking for Retired Teachers...

The *Women Can Do* conference planners are seeking volunteers to help with registration and to be guides, workshop hosts, and assistants for the October 11 conference at Vermont Tech in Randolph. Retired teachers, men and women, would be most welcome.

Interested? Just call Miriam Balsley at 802-878-0004, or email her at mbalsley@vtworksforwomen.org. And feel free to spread the word!



"*Women Can Do*' is one of the most effective tools we have for encouraging young women to explore nontraditional trades and technical careers. Jobs that require technical skills are among the fastest growing and best paying. Young women should be encouraged to choose these careers."

-- Chip Evans, Executive Director, Vermont Human Resources Investment Council

John Minelli of Hartford Receives Inspired Teacher Scholarship for Visual Learning

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION – John Minelli of Hartford is one of 30 educators nationwide and internationally to receive a 2007 *Inspired*

Teacher Scholarship for Visual Learning. His award-winning project focused on 6th grade students supporting the transition of elementary school



"Inspired Teacher" John Minelli also serves as president of his local.

students into the middle school, and used Inspiration, PowerPoint and various digital technologies.

The scholarship program from Inspiration Software supports technology purchases and professional development activities for educators who champion the integration of visual learning and technology into the curriculum. Recipients use the \$750 scholarships for classroom technology purchases and a wide range of professional development activities.

John will use his scholarship to purchase licenses for the Inspiration software, version 8 for his district, and a digital video camera for the Hartford Memorial Middle School. "The transition from elementary to middle school is often a stressful time

for many children," he said. "Using PowerPoint (and including digital audio and video in their slides), our sixth grade students essentially took over the transitioning activities. They created digital presentations that told elementary school students all about life in the middle school.

"My goal was to create a student-directed activity; one in which groups of sixth graders had the chance to choose the direction of their projects and to use some sophisticated pieces of digital technology. The Inspiration software was vital in the planning of each stage of the project."

Educators from K-12 schools, colleges and universities are eligible to apply for the Inspired Teacher Scholarships for Visual Learning.

Footprints toward Sustainability

Footprints toward Sustainability, an award winning integrated arts program, is currently accepting applications from schools for participation. The project was developed by Maggie Sherman of Hands on Productions and Diane Gayer of the Vermont Design Institute.

Footprints toward Sustainability is a hands-on program which includes the making of clay footprints, dialogue, and designs for community based concepts of sustainability. The program engages creative energy, builds civic responsibility, and plans for the future. This program aligns to the Vermont Standards. The target audience is 6th grade/middle school children on up.

Schools may apply to the Vermont Arts Council for funding. Maggie Sherman and Diane Gayer are happy to work with schools on developing their applications. Both are listed as Juried Artists in the Artist Register.

Maggie Sherman is an artist who has been making art in unexpected places since 1980, provoking people to think about their lives and their values. She uses the "get gooeey & giggle" approach to engage people and draw them into a process that allows them to see themselves and each other in a new way.

The Vermont Design Institute (VDI) is a non-profit collaborative of design professionals formed to serve rural communities in Vermont. VDI brings an ability to educate teachers and students about design as a problem-solving technique, communicating through drawing and visual media, visualizing community design solutions, and working with local leaders and decision-makers.

For more information or for help applying to the Vermont Arts Council for funding, contact:

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LETTERS

The Right Person for the Job

I'm writing to encourage all Vermont-NEA members to vote for Brian Walsh, in the upcoming election for vice president. He would be an outstanding vice president. He is enthusiastic, full of energy, and committed to Vermont-NEA and our members. He is knowledgeable and hardworking.

I have every confidence in Brian. He will do all that is needed to keep Vermont-NEA moving forward to the future. Brian is a good listener and treats each situation fairly.

Vice President is an important office and we need someone with Brian's integrity in that seat. I know Brian will do an outstanding job. He is dedicated to serving our members well.

Marie Benway
Windham Northeast Support Staff

Brian Has Shown His Strength as a Leader

I am writing this letter in support of Brian Walsh and his candidacy for Vermont-NEA Vice President.

I worked with Brian during the National RA in Orlando, Florida this past year where he was a first time representative. He not only showed great enthusiasm for being there, but was very vocal during our State meetings when discussing New Business items. He also became liaison between the Peace and Justice Caucus and our State, bringing us a lot of information about New Business items, meetings, and events that were happening throughout the week. I have also participated in the Vermont-NEA days with him, and know that he is actively involved in the Vermont-NEA.

Brian has already shown his strength as a leader at the local level in Essex where he currently serves as President of the Essex Junction Westford EA. I feel that Brian Walsh will bring energy, enthusiasm, and hard work to the Vermont-NEA if elected into this position.

Natasha Eckart
Washington South EA

A Worthy Choice for Vice President

Brian Walsh has served as president of EJWEA through two challenging contract negotiations and has consistently demonstrated a collaborative and cooperative leadership style. His first order of business was to broaden the leadership of the local Association and empower more members to become part of the decision making pro-

cess. When negotiations stalled, Brian had the courage to listen to his advisory committees. Together, officers, negotiators and membership worked to resolve a difficult situation.

Brian believes in the strength and intelligence of the membership to make decisions, listens to our concerns, and promotes solidarity through open communications in a revived newsletter. The members of EJWEA no longer feel that decisions are made without their knowledge or input.

I know Brian to be a man of intelligence and compassion. His belief in the strength of the entire Association and his respect for the individuality of each member of the Association make him a most worthy choice for Vice President of Vermont-NEA.

Carol Willey
Essex Junction Westford EA

Support Brian Walsh

Brian Walsh is a strong advocate for all teachers. Over the years Brian has been there for Vermont-NEA members whether it be on a personal basis or in representing us all on contractual matters. He will bring to the vice presidency hands on experience coupled with a strong view of the future. Please support Brian's Candidacy.

Joe Mackey
Essex Junction Westford EA

Brian Is the Consummate Professional

It is my privilege to write this letter in support of Brian Walsh, who is running for vice president of Vermont-NEA. I have known Brian for about ten years, most recently as a fellow local Association president and member of the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors. Over these years, my respect for Brian has only deepened, as has my conviction that the members of Vermont-NEA will be well served under his leadership.

Brian is the consummate professional. He is able to articulate the position of the educational community in a positive and unwavering manner.

His experience and success as a Vermont-NEA Board member and local president in Essex Junction will

serve us well.

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

Brian Walsh is the right man for the position of vice president. I encourage you to join me in supporting his candidacy for vice president of Vermont-NEA.

Rich Wise
South Burlington EA

Brian Walsh – A Union Man

When Brian Walsh asked me to act as his campaign manager, my response was quick and easy. I said yes.

As President of the Essex Junction Westford Education Association, Brian invites participation and acts on the wishes of the membership. Brian successfully rallied teachers, nurses, librarians, the outgoing and the hesitant, the veteran and the novice to demand and ultimately achieve fair and comparable contracts achieving six years of labor-management peace. He recognizes that informed and involved members provide the foundation of a powerful organization. As I thought about Brian's commitment to this fundamental truth of unionism, I said yes.

Brian appears and speaks at labor rallies, walks picket lines, writes letters of support for COTS workers exercising their right to organize. He speaks passionately of the need for livable wages and respectful working conditions for our schools' support staff. Brian stands shoulder to shoulder with support staff negotiators as they struggle to realize a new contract. Does Brian Walsh advocate for the rights of workers of all types and trades? Again, I said yes.

Soon you will receive the invitation to help select Vermont-NEA's next vice president. I hope you will join me and say yes to Brian Walsh.

Tom McConnell
Essex Junction Westford EA

Setting the Record Straight...

Barbara Greck Broke the ground on Indoor Air Quality

In an article in February, we reported that a team of educators and administrators from Rutland was the first ever from Vermont to attend the *National Symposium on Indoor Air Quality* sponsored by NEA's Health Information Network and the U.S. Environmental Health Agency. We have short memories!

NEA invited Barb Greck to attend one of the first EPA/NEA air quality conferences in Washington. She also represented Vermont-NEA at meetings over issues of air quality in Vermont schools in the early 90's. Barb recalls that Bernie Sanders, Anthony

Polina, and professionals in the building and air handling industries attended those meetings, as well as many teachers and administrators who wanted to see regulations in Vermont at that time.

Barb Greck deserves recognition. She broke ground on the air quality issue in Vermont more than a decade ago. She wrote about it for *Vermont-NEA Today*, and she wrote her master's thesis at St. Michael's on Indoor Air Quality in Vermont Schools.

Air quality is still a serious problem, and we have just heard bad news: Due to a 9% increase in the Department of Defense budget, the IAQ in Schools budget may be zeroed out. ■

NEA Director's Report

HQET... an idea we will not tolerate

By Joyce Sullivan

The February NEA Board of Directors Meeting included meeting with our congressional delegation, honoring 2006 teachers of the year, taking positions on business for the summer convention, and updates from our officers, executive director, and legal staff.

Congressman Peter Welch was welcomed to the Hill by NEA at a legislative breakfast. This gave Angelo and me an opportunity to meet Connie Dougherty, his legislative assistant, and talk with Peter directly about ESEA Reauthorization as well as increased funding for special education and Title I. Angelo introduced Peter to President Weaver and several members of NEA's government relations staff. Peter shared that he's been working closely with Senators Sanders and Leahy to discuss issues affecting Vermont and the nation.

The breakfast was followed up with a meeting with Peter's chief of staff, Bob Rogan, to discuss specifics regarding ESEA Reauthorization and Social Security Offsets. Vermont-NEA is fortunate to have another congressman who is open to listening to our ideas about education. Peter's appointment to the rules committee makes him a key player in congress regarding the passage of legislation.

Senator Leahy's staff shared that the senator is seeking to help form the agenda for legislative hearings regarding reauthorization for ESEA. Many of the issues that are addressed in NEA's Positive Agenda for Reauthorization of ESEA were included in a draft letter from the senator to the education committee.

At the NEA's legislative briefing, NCLB/ESEA *It's Time For A Change!*

was distributed. The publication includes teacher and ESP stories from around the country that show the effects of NCLB on students and educators. I will be distributing copies to our legislators. Vermont-NEA Board Director Terri Vest's story appears in this publication.

At the National Foundation for Innovative Education Gala, teachers of the year for 2006 were honored. Vermont's honoree, Doug Wehner, a former pre-tech teacher from Lamoille Union High School Technical Center noted, "Hey, this is like the academy awards. I wish everyone could see this!" Vermont-NEA Vice President Tom Gallagher, Angelo, and I were on hand to share in Doug's excitement at this award ceremony. Doug is currently teaching in New York City.

Proposals for by-law changes, standing rules, and constitutional amendments were discussed by the Board of Directors. Proposals are raised by individual members at regional conferences and the NEA Board itself. Delegates to the Representative Assembly vote on all proposals this summer in Philadelphia. Items from the Board that will be considered include a change to the NEA Constitution that would open up membership to "persons interested in advancing the cause of public education" and accelerating the increase in the special dues assessment used to suppress unsupportive legislative ballot initiatives and other attacks on education. Instead of an additional dollar increase (from \$7.00 to \$8.00), the Board is proposing a \$2.00 increase for 2007-2008.

Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen informed the Board that the budget committee is proposing that dues be

set at \$151.00 for full time teachers and \$85.50 for full time ESP members. Funding formulas for dues are based on the average teacher and ESP salary data provided by NEA Research.

Executive Director John Wilson filled us in on the expected release of a report by the Aspen Institute calling for a new designation of Highly Qualified **Effective** Teachers for licensure. HQET would link student performance on testing to licensing. This prompted a writing campaign to legislators and an appeal to members for contributions to the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education to send a clear message that this is an idea that we will not tolerate.

As always, I encourage you to contact me with your views about any of these issues. Contact legislators on the state and national level about your experiences in the classroom. Go to the nea.org and read *NEA Today* to stay current on national and international issues.



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

Upcoming Association events...

- April 1-14**
Vermont-NEA Election Weeks.
- April 7**
Vermont-NEA Scholars' Bowl State Finals at Champlain College.
- April 9**
Deadline for the May edition of *Vermont-NEA Today*.
- April 16**
Vermont-NEA Election ballots due at Vermont-NEA by 5:00 p.m.
- May 5**
Vermont-NEA Board meets in Montpelier.

AEA Seeks Donations for Tornado Victims

Students in Enterprise City, Alabama returned to school on March 14, two weeks after a powerful tornado devastated Enterprise on March 1, killing nine people and destroying 236 homes. Among the dead were eight students at Enterprise High School, which suffered a direct hit. Enterprise High School students, plus approximately 600 elementary school students from Hillcrest Elementary School had to be relocated.

In an act of true heroism, Alabama Education Association member and teacher, Shannon Bridges, was seriously injured when she threw herself over students to protect them from the storm. The five-month pregnant Bridges suffered serious injury. Thankfully, her unborn child is safe.

AEA is accepting donations for the tornado victims. Send checks to The AEA Foundation, P.O. Box 4177, Montgomery, AL 36103. Or, go to *Enterprise Alabama Tornado Fund: www.cbt-alabama.com* to make a credit card contribution. All contributions are tax deductible.

One more RA Candidate

Natasha Eckart (Chiuchiolo) is a candidate for Vermont delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly in July in Philadelphia. She is a member of the Washington South Education Association.

Statement

I am a fifth grade teacher in my fourth year at Northfield Elementary. I have served as Building Rep and now serve as President for my local, WSEA. I have participated in both the MTLF and the Regional Leadership Conferences. I have also attended the national RA for the last two years and would like your support to attend again this year so I may represent my local, African American members, and new teachers.



Vermont Odyssey of the Mind Tournament

HINESBURG – The 28th Annual Vermont Odyssey of the Mind Tournament was held on Saturday, March 10th, at Champlain Valley Union High School. One-hundred and six teams, K-12, displayed their creative solutions to this year's Long Term problems, and participated in solving a spontaneous problem to test their quick-thinking abilities.

The following teams qualified to advance to the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals, to be held at Michigan State University in East Lansing from May 23-26, 2007, where they will compete against approximately 800 teams from around the planet.

- Tag 'em Div I (Vehicle)
1st and Ranatra Fusca Winner WALLINGFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
2nd CALAIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- Tag 'em Div II (Vehicle)
1st FREDERICK TUTTLE MIDDLE SCHOOL
2nd CROSSETT BROOK MIDDLE SCHOOL
Ranatra Fusca Winner MILTON TOWN SCHOOLS TMB

- Tag 'em Div III (Vehicle)
1st HAYES FOUNDATION (Rutland)
2nd COLCHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL
- The Large And Small Of It Div I (Technical)
1st MANCHESTER ELEMENTARY MIDDLE SCHOOL TMA
2nd BREWSTER PIERCE MEMORIAL SCHOOL
- The Large And Small Of It Div II (Technical)
1st HARWOOD UNION JR/SR HIGH SCHOOL
- Around The World In 8 Minutes Div I (Classics)
1st and Ranatra Fusca Winner FERRISBURGH CENTRAL SCHOOL
2nd CROSSETT BROOK MIDDLE SCHOOL
- Around The World In 8 Minutes Div II (Classics)
1st SOLARFEST (Middletown Springs)
2nd STOWE PLAYHOUSE
- Around The World In 8 Minutes Div III (Classics)
1st and Ranatra Fusca Winner RIVENDELL ACADEMY
2nd BELLOWS FREE ACADEMY-ST ALBANS
- Out Of The Box Balsa Div I (Engineering)
1st and Ranatra Fusca Winner RICK MARCOTTE CENTRAL SCHOOL
2nd HARTLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- Out Of The Box Balsa Div II (Engineering)
1st FREDERICK TUTTLE MIDDLE SCHOOL
2nd MILL RIVER UNION HIGH SCHOOL

- Out Of The Box Balsa Div III (Engineering)
1st BELLOWS FREE ACADEMY-ST ALBANS
- I'm Only Thinking Of You! Div I (Drama)
1st and Ranatra Fusca Winner CROSSETT BROOK MIDDLE SCHOOL
2nd SOLARFEST (Middletown Springs)
Ranatra Fusca Winner MALLETT'S BAY SCHOOL
- I'm Only Thinking Of You! Div II (Drama)
1st and Ranatra Fusca Winner CROSSETT BROOK MIDDLE SCHOOL
2nd RIVENDELL ACADEMY
- I'm Only Thinking Of You! Div III (Drama)
1st ENOSBURG FALLS MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL
2nd POULTNEY HIGH SCHOOL

More information about participating in the Vermont Odyssey of the Mind Program is available at <http://vt.odysseyofthemind.org> or by calling Tim Perkins, Vermont Association Director, at 1-800-805-5422 (Toll-Free). Assistance in getting a program started in a NEW school may include a free membership and state tournament registrations, free awareness sessions, and free coaches training sessions.

Joan Aleshire *Plus Hot Latin Music* at "Teachers Who Write"!

MONTPELIER – Friday, May 11 will bring the twentieth annual *Teachers Who Write* conference to Vermont College in Montpelier.

The twentieth! In celebration, the Vermont Council of Teachers of English Language Arts has asked award-winning poet and teacher Joan Aleshire to deliver the keynote address and invited Miriam Bernardo and Jairo Sequeira to offer a lunchtime concert of Latin music.

A resident of Shrewsbury, Aleshire is author of four well received collections of poetry, and has taught in Warren Wilson College's MFA Program since 1983. Bernardo and Sequeira, both of Montpelier, are lead members of the popular Amapola ensemble, where Bernardo's fiery solo voice is underscored by Sequeira's nimble accompaniment on classical guitar. The conference will also feature an array of workshops useful to any writer or teacher, grades K-12.

Blogs, Constructed Responses, Shakespeare and Grade Expectations

In addition to Aleshire's keynote address, "Writing Your Heart Out," and the Bernardo/Sequeira lunchtime concert, "Musica Muy Seductivo," conference participants may register for two workshops, among them D.R. Boardman's "Writing with At-Risk Students" and Nancy King Mildrum's "Working with Gifted Young Writers." Novelist/actor/playwright Peter Gould (of the Gould and Stearns per-

formance duo) will offer "Adapting Shakespeare for Student Performance" and Jonah Ibson will lead a writing/reading workshop, "What Is a Poem?"

Other workshops include "Responding to Student Writing," with Dorianne Cedeno, Karen Kurzman's "Great Grade Expectations! Incorporating GEs in Writing Constructed Responses," a writers' workshop led by Joan Aleshire, and "Using Blogs and Podcasts in the Classroom," led by UVM faculty member and NWPVT 2006 Summer Institute instructor Paul Martin.

Also featured is a workshop with Kate Mullin-Phalen, "Teaching Students to Develop and Write a Personal Philosophy," "Teaching Reading at the Primary Level," with Vermont Strategic Reading Initiative Director David Liben, and a session led by Nancy Woods, "Looking at Writing through Reading, Grades K-4."

Teachers Who Write has become a springtime ritual for many of Vermont's teachers and writers. "Coming to this conference feels like coming home," writes Nancy Olson, of Brattleboro Union High School. "An oasis in the parched desert of professional development!" claims

Meg Clayton, who teaches at the Barnet School.

Teachers Who Write is sponsored by the Vermont Department of Education, the Vermont Council of Teachers of English Language Arts, and the National Writing Project in Vermont. A \$75 registration fee covers all activities and a sumptuous buffet luncheon prepared by the New England Culinary Institute. For more information, contact Rose Wheeler, at the Vermont Department of Education: rose.wheeler@state.vt.us (802) 828-3114. ■



Award-winning poet and teacher Joan Aleshire of Shrewsbury will deliver the keynote address.

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