Although Vermont voters gave Gov. Phil Scott another two-year term last month, voters delivered strong veto-proof majorities in the House and Senate.

Among the key factors in boosting the legislature's ability to thwart Scott vetoes was the dedication, enthusiasm, and turnout among educators, union members, and friends of public education.

"Educators across Vermont showed that when they vote, they win," said Vermont-NEA President Don Tinney, a long-time English teacher from BFA St. Albans. "While we are so far immune from the toxic political culture that abounds in much of America, my fellow educators and I know we are an election away from serious threats to our schools and students."

Vermont-NEA-recommended candidates were victorious in some key races across Vermont, most notably retired VSEA president Bob Hooper, who ousted long-time union foe Kurt Wright in Burlington's New North End. That means an end to Wright's annual crusade to take away your right to strike.

The Vermont-NEA Board and its Political Education Action Committee focused on several key races around Vermont.

At the top of the ticket, the record was overwhelming: our recommended candidates for US Senate, US House, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Auditor of Accounts, Treasurer, and Secretary of State won handily. (Our recommended candidate for governor, Christine Hallquist, did not win.)

"What the election shows is that Vermonters value their schools, value economic fairness, and value working families," Tinney said. "I look forward to working with the legislature and the governor to do right by our students, our schools, our educators, and our working families."

In a key race, Cheryl Hooker became the first Democrat to win a senate seat in Rutland county for years. In another key race, Sen. Christopher Bray easily defeated two anti-education independents. The Senate, already overwhelmingly Democrat, became even more so on Election Day. Democrats and Progressives now hold 24 of the chamber's 30 seats.

And while they increased their majority, it is interesting to note that on several budget votes during the veto-laden end of the session, the Senate voted unanimously against the governor.

In the House, Democrats picked up 12 seats, Progressives held at 7, and Republicans lost ground. The makeup of the House is now 102 seats for Democrats and Progressives; seven for independents; and 43 for Republicans.

Last year, then-minority leader, Don Turner, was able to muster absolute party discipline among the 50 Republicans, enabling the sustaining of all of the governor's vetoes. That won't happen any more.

In fact, at 43, the number of Republican seats is the lowest since 1966, according to the Burlington Free Press. At a time when the Democrats fielded candidates in 115 House races, Republicans fielded 79.

But it was more than just numerical advantages that propelled such a good election for Democrats and Progressives, according to Vermont-NEA Political Director Colin Robinson. "We saw an energy and enthusiasm among voters who care about schools, about workers, about our rural economy that we haven't seen in a while," he said. "And, in more and more places, our members made a huge difference."

In all, Vermont-NEA members generated 10,000 emails; 5,000 phone calls; more than 10,000 pieces of targeted mail in key districts; and thousands of text messages. Additionally, Vermont-NEA members volunteered on campaigns throughout the state.

The activism here was not a fluke. More than 220,000 National Education Association members were involved in this year's midterm elections, up nearly 165 percent from 2016.

More than 1,500 educators ran for state and local offices in states where the #RedForEd movement propelled teacher and student concerns to the forefront.

Indeed, a former teacher ousted Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, one of the most anti-union, anti-student politicians in the country. (Former Vermont-NEA President Martha Allen waged a vigorous campaign against an entrenched incumbent posting an impressive vote count that ultimately came up a bit short.)

"It's crucial to ride this momentum into the coming legislative session," Tinney said.

"The governor and his allies show no signs of stopping their fight against our schools and our union. We need to show him and lawmakers that when it comes to what's right for our students, nothing can stop us!"

Stay tuned for more ways you can stay involved in the political process in the coming year.

As many of you are aware, the new year is bringing significant changes to how your health benefits are administered, bargained, and designed. We will be keeping you informed in every issue about the latest developments.

Statewide Bargaining for Health Benefits

You may know that state law (Act 11) now has your health benefits negotiated on a statewide basis by your union representatives and those of school boards on a "commission" set up for the purpose. The commission must begin bargaining no later than April 1, 2019, but the parties are free to decide to meet earlier than that.

Your union negotiation team, with four representatives appointed by Vermont-NEA and one from the American Federation of State and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), will be announced shortly. The team will be communicating regularly with the membership.

Restoration of VEHI Governance Equality

In addition, and very importantly from your union's perspective, the legislature changed the composition of the VEHI board from one dominated by school boards (4 representatives for them, 1 for

continued on p. 7
Your Classroom Is Home for Students

I have not conducted any scientific research on this topic, but I can say with confidence that we all know at least one person who will be tuning into the Hallmark Channel over the next few weeks to watch a marathon of special holiday movies. A common theme in many of these films is the same theme found in much of classic Greek literature—returning home. Both Luke Skywalker and E.T. had the same mission on their individual hero journeys—returning home. And since so many of our members are still basking in the glory of the Red Sox winning the World Series, let’s remember that baseball players score no points until they return home.

Home matters. Our stories begin at home; it is the first place where we are loved and where we feel that we belong. As children, we feel safe in our homes. As adults, we create a comfortable sanctuary for our children and other loved ones in our homes. We know that we learn our core values and beliefs at home.

As do many people of my generation, I find it easy to become sentimental about home at this time of year, inspired by Norman Rockwell images of Thanksgiving dinner and visions of stockings hung by the chimney with care. I will, however, leave the sentimentality about the romantic notion of home to the greeting cards and ask you to think about the sense of belonging we expect children to have in their homes, the unconditional love that most of our students receive within their families.

I believe that educators work diligently to create effective learning environments which allow their students to feel at home in their classrooms. I know that I am only one of thousands of educators in Vermont who have said over the years, “I want my kids to feel at home here.” This doesn’t mean hauling in a dozen beanbag chairs—although it might for some—but it does mean taking measures to generate a sense of belonging for our students.

Every child needs to feel respected, accepted and supported by educators and by peers before they will actively engage in academic and co-curricular activities. Over 100 years ago, Vermont’s favorite education philosopher, John Dewey, explained that students build social capital within the relationships they develop at school and the greater community. This requires one-to-one conversations, small group discussions, playing and socializing together, and working shoulder-to-shoulder with educators who care about students as unique human beings.

As I am writing this column, I am mildly scolding myself. That internal voice is telling me, “They already know this. Why state the obvious? Educators already know that kids love to go to school when they know they are loved there.”

Nevertheless, I am going to continue with this reminder: Allowing your students to feel at home in your space at school is a most valuable gift. Never, ever underestimate the power of accepting, respecting and loving the children and youth who walk into your school. No computer or any other technical device will provide them with the embrace of true belonging the way you can. All children need to know that there are people at school who will look after them and care about them, just as they should be cared for in their homes.

In too many cases, you will actually provide a greater sense of belonging at school than some students find in their homes. According to the Vermont Department for Children and Family Services Division, there were 25% more children in DCF custody in 2017 than in 2013; and 100% more children in the conditional custody of a parent, relative or other person known to the child and family. During the last quarter of 2017, 1,252 Vermont children were in DCF custody, 612 in conditional custody. The conclusion of 3,085 child abuse investigations identified 1,098 unique child victims and 916 substantiated incidents of abuse. Of the 21,201 calls to Vermont’s Child Protection Line, 5,527 reports were accepted for intervention.

While this data might be discouraging, please let these sobering statistics be reason enough to acknowledge just how important you are in the lives of Vermont’s children and youth and just how important it is to make each and every student feel at home in your school.
The following is reprinted from School Me, NEA’s site geared to new educators. Visit the site at nea.org/school-me for a trove of educator-submitted content.

BY CASSANDRA JOSS

Balancing my career as a teacher and my life as a wife and mother hasn’t always been easy. As most teachers know, taking work home is a common practice. Answering parent emails on the weekend, grading papers at night, and lesson planning in the early morning hours are things most teachers can admit to. Sometimes, taking work home with you is inevitable. However, it’s important to maintain a healthy balance between all that work and your personal life.

As a veteran teacher of 15 years, I’ve learned there is no such thing as a perfect work-life balance. With the ebbs and flows of life and teaching, there are bound to be some turbulent times now and then. However, it pays off to take time and work on staying balanced between the two.

Here are a few guidelines I set for myself to ensure a healthy balance:

1. Set Boundaries for Work

Juggling all of your responsibilities can seem impossible for teachers at times. I like to stay extremely organized and set a schedule for when I will get all my work done. With a schedule, I am able to set boundaries for myself for when I will take work home or stay late at school. If I break my routine I can hold myself accountable and readjust my workload so the next week I am on track to complete work as planned.

2. Learn to Work Efficiently

Over the years I have gotten better at working efficiently, but when I first started as a teacher I struggled with it. Small changes like planning your lessons online and making to-do lists can increase efficiency exponentially.

Prioritizing your to-do list and sticking with the list is also crucial to work efficiently.

3. Don’t sweat the small stuff

Try not to worry if not everything is just as you imagined it would be. Learning that not everything will get done in the way you want it to and at your ideal time is a very valuable lesson. A teacher’s to-do list can be never ending. Instead of stressing over what you can’t do, use that time to plan when you’ll get done what is left.

4. Have a positive attitude

Choose to look on the bright side of things and try your best to have a good attitude. When you maintain a positive mentality in times of stress, you set an example for your students to do the same.

5. Set aside time for yourself

To be the best teacher you can be, you need to be the best version of yourself.

Whether it’s going for a run, meditating or reading your favorite book, taking time for yourself will give you some necessary personal time to recharge.

When teachers are exhausted due to a lack of a healthy work-life balance, they become less effective in the classroom. It is possible to keep up with your teaching career, the needs of your students, and your life at home.

However, there is no one-size fits all solution when it comes to achieving the ideal balance. Find a method that works for you and work to maintain the work-life balance you’ve built for yourself.

Your Profession

WORKING TOGETHER WORKS FOR YOU, YOUR STUDENTS

BY SABRINA GATES, School Me Blog

When thinking of a traditional classroom, you probably envision one teacher working alone with a group of students. While educators often work alone in the classroom, they do not—and should not—operate independently. Throughout my career, I’ve always found that the best way to improve an educational experience is to work together.

Here are some of the advantages of a collaborative educational environment—not only for your students, but for yourself.

It may seem like a no-brainer, but a true brainstorm is not possible without collaboration. Collaboration provides a safety net; it helps you catapult your thinking and develop ideas that may seem crazy at first.

Working with a small group of trusted teachers gave me the opportunity to turn what I thought was a silly idea at the time into a unique and creative lesson plan. When it was time for my class to study Elizabethan England, I had the idea to have my students rewrite Shakespeare into different time periods that we had already studied. I was hesitant to bring this idea to a large group – it seemed so out there! But after developing the idea with my peers, I had a new and creative lesson plan that my students would love. Peer-to-peer collaboration can turn a small idea into the seeds for something fabulous.

The process of becoming a National Board certified teacher was the most important of my career. The experience—particularly working with other professionals—made me turn inside-out and think about things from a new perspective. Learning and working with others made me dig deeper and explore who I was as a learner and a teacher. Equally important, it made me explore who my kids could be as learners.

In our educational culture today, it’s extremely important to join professional learning communities and pursue professional learning opportunities to ensure ongoing growth for our students and for ourselves.

The collaboration shouldn’t end among the teachers — it should be used during the school day among students, as well! Plan activities that give students the opportunity to work and collaborate together to learn and grow from each other. Collaborative learning has been shown to not only develop higher-level thinking skills in students, but boost their confidence and self-esteem as well.
Millenials: Schools Need More Money, Strong Unions

By Tim Walker, NEA Today

Approximately 31% of Americans under the age of 30 turned out to vote in the 2018 midterm election on November 6, according to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University. That by itself may not sound like a particularly impressive number (general voter turnout was around 49%), but it represents a huge increase over 2014 and the the highest participation since CIRCLE began analyzing the youth vote in midterm elections 25 years ago.

“[Youth voters] will play a significant role in shaping our country’s future through their commitment to service and renewed interest in politics,” John Della Volpe of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University said in response to the numbers.

If their level of political engagement continues to increase, Millennial voters could be delivering good news for public education in the years to come. A recent survey by the GenForward Project at the University of Chicago finds that Millennials (loosely defined as adults aged 18-34) overwhelmingly believe that increased school funding is “the most important way to improve public education in their local school district.”

Investing more money in public education is the foundation of the #RedForEd movement that caught fire across the country in 2018. Many Millennial educators were leaders in the massive walkouts that called attention to cash-starved schools and the plight of teachers and other staff in their districts.

Founded by Dr. Cathy Cohen, Chair of the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago, the GenForward Project draws on a nationally-representative survey of 1750 young adults to analyze their attitudes on a number of important issues.

According to “Millenials and Public Education in the United States,” over 75% of respondents believe paying teachers more would do more to improve public schools than, for example, creating more charter schools.

And an overwhelming majority also believe that strong teacher’s unions mean a strong public education system.

On the issue of school safety, Millennials by a wide margin prioritize expanding access to mental health resources over increasing the number of police officers in schools.

In addition, pluralities have a “very” or “somewhat” unfavorable opinion of Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, even though a sizable percentage didn’t have a position on her one way or the other.

The survey also reveals, however, that Millennials support school vouchers – more so than the general public, according to other polls.

Surprising? Not really, says Cohen. “Millennials are looking for and willing to support most initiatives they deem reasonable that are framed as improving public education,” she explains.

At the same time, this expressed support should be put in context, Cohen adds. While millennials may see vouchers as one policy option, they do not prioritize them as one of the most effective ways to improve public schools.

Furthermore, support drops among respondents if the program is not exclusively targeted toward low-income families. In some states where voucher programs exist – namely Indiana – they have been expanded to include more middle-class and affluent families.

“Only about 5% of people of color and 9% of whites in our survey picked increasing school choice through vouchers and charter schools as their first policy option,” Cohen says. “Again, while young adults generally support a number of different policies they believe will improve education, increasing funding for public schools is their preferred policy option across race and ethnicity.” (When given the choice between vouchers and more school funding, 71% of respondents opted for the latter.)

Disaggregating data along racial and ethnic groups is a feature of GenForward’s surveys. Given that differences usually surface in responses, the uniformity in the results in this survey is striking, says Cohen.

“We usually uncover powerful differences tied to identities such as race and ethnicity. There are relatively few policy domains, such as education, where you find the consistency in policy positions among millennials across race and ethnic groups,” she explains. “This level of agreement is unique and suggests strong and stable opinions on the issue of how to improve public education in the country.”

2019 Stand Up for Students Days Set

Now that Vermont educators helped elect a union- and education-friendly legislature, it’s time to show up and Stand Up for Students.

Our annual lobby days, Stand Up for Students Days, give you and your colleagues a great chance to advocate for what really matters. Whether its strengthening services, improving teaching conditions, investing in schools, or protecting your retirement, your voice is by far the most influential to lawmakers.

This year we again have two days for you to join your fellow members under the Golden Dome: February 20 and 27, both Wednesdays. While we’ll get you more details as the days draw closer, plan now to join us and your peers from around the state.

“It’s one thing for lawmakers to hear from me, our lobbying team, and other Vermont-NEA officials,” said Vermont-NEA President Don Tinney. “It’s quite another to hear from you. Every time one of you testifies before lawmakers, they listen. As well they should – after all, you’re the true education experts in Vermont.”

We will be giving you more details in the weeks ahead. Stay tuned by reading the weekly @vtnea newsletter and checking our social media feeds or going to vtnea.org/standup2019.
Thomas Payeur, a Winooski High School math teacher who serves as president of the Winooski Education Association was named the 2019 Vermont Teacher of the Year. At a ceremony honoring teaching excellence yesterday at the University of Vermont, Payeur was celebrated for his dedication to students.

“We are so proud of Tom,” said Vermont-NEA President Don Tinney. “Every day, thousands of our members dedicate their talent, time, and heart to their students. Tom is a great representative for Vermont’s educators.”

Payeur has been teaching mathematics for six years, all of those at Winooski High School. He is an innovator in the field of proficiency-based education, leading school change efforts to develop best practices in teaching 21st century skills. His mathematics instruction is grounded in research-based methods. His students come from all around the world and constantly challenge him to rethink his assumptions and explore new ways of problem-solving. He strongly believes that all people are math people.

“Tom is both a leader and an innovator in proficiency-based education at Winooski and one of those teachers who is able to connect with and inspire students on a person to person level,” said Secretary of Education Daniel M. French. “This honor is an absolute validation of the struggle to reform education with a focus on 21st century skills, across the state of Vermont and the nation as a whole,” said Payeur. When communities are given time and space to come to consensus on the skills their future generations will need to master, hope, possibility, and success bloom in tangible results. The work requires relentless persistence, artful communication, flexible problem solving, imaginative creativity, cultural competence and a focus on the well-being of all involved. The students, staff and larger community of Winooski regularly embody these skills, and as such, I dedicate this honor to them.”

Winooski School District Superintendent Sean McMannon said, “’Chill’, ‘snappy dresser’ and ‘wicked smart’ are just a few of the descriptors I have heard from Winooski High School (WHS) students about Tom Payeur.

He builds trusting personal and professional relationships with students, always shows a passion and deep understanding of math and works tirelessly to shape our district into an engaging student-centered learning environment where all students feel known, challenged and own their learning.”

WHS Principal, Leon Wheeler added: “There are educators who dare to believe that in their classroom teaching and learning can be relevant, engaging and empowering for each of their students. Tom Payeur has humbly and resiliently immersed himself in achieving this at the school level. Grounded in research and Math best practices, his vision of “what can be” led our math team to fundamentally redesign the math program to become truly student-centered. The skills, knowledge and mindset he demonstrates builds confidence in our students to see themselves as mathematicians and inspires our school community to persist in our transformation.”

As the 2019 Vermont Teacher of the Year, Payeur will travel statewide visiting schools and working with teachers.

He is also Vermont’s candidate for the National Teacher of the Year award, sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Winooski’s Payeur Named 2019 Vermont Teacher of Year
Your Power

Pearce Urges Steady Course on Your Retirement

As sure as the first flakes start flying, calls to severely curtail the retirement you and your colleagues earned over a career start making the news. Gov. Phil Scott and other Republicans continue to fixate on the Vermont State Teachers Retirement System, clamoring for a way to get out of the promises made for nearly three-quarters of a century.

So far, you and your retired colleagues have fought attempts to do what has been done in other states. In fact, agreements you have made with previous governors and legislatures have made the system stronger, not weaker.

You’ve also stepped up when asked: in the last decade, you have agreed to contribute more toward your retirement, work longer to collect it, and ensured that it will be there for current retirees and for you when you retire.

In fact, more than 22,000 current and retired teachers depend on the system to provide financial security after a career dedicated to Vermont’s students and families.

“The promise made to us is as valid as it was when it was first made in 1947,” said Vermont-NEA President Don Tinney, referring to the year the pension was established. “Over those decades, you and your colleagues have paid every penny you’ve owed. We will not stand by and let your retirement be taken away.”

Perhaps the strongest advocate for your retirement is State Treasurer Beth Pearce. A staunch defender of economic justice for all Vermonters, Pearce has been criss-crossing the state to advocate for the continuation of the current defined-benefits plan.

This fall, she attended many Fall District Meetings and walked hundreds of members through the reasons why politicians should not mess with your retirement.

“Learn from history: the same arguments made in the 1990s and early 2000s should not be used to support quick fixes at the expense of future taxpayers and retirees,” Pearce said in her presentation to the Chittenden/Northwest Vermont Fall District Meeting. “The changes we make now, or in the future, should be based on an effective means of providing retirement benefits at the best value. Defined benefit plans provide the best value per retirement benefit for both the employee and other taxpayers. Disciplined, forward thinking is the approach that’s needed.”

What would not be disciplined, she said, is any move away from defined benefits. Or a repeat of the rampant underfunding the state undertook more than a decade ago.

“Through 2016, even after consistently paying the actuarially recommended contribution since 2007 and addressing the retiree health care issue in 2014, we are still paying approximately $25 million a year for past shortfalls in funding,” Pearce said. “And we have a plan in place to make sure we live up to our promises now and in the future.”

In fact, if the governor and legislature follow that plan, the teachers’ retirement system will be fully funded in 20 years – meaning an elimination of the unfunded liability.

One of the key steps the state took to improve the health of the retirement system was your agreement to increase what you pay. In 2009, a teacher paid 3.54 percent of salary for her pension. In the compromise made in 2010, teachers agreed to pay 5 percent of their salary; new teachers hired after June 2015, the amount is 6 percent.

This move did two things: it meant that teachers would work a little longer to collect their pensions, pay a little more, and receive spousal health benefits for the first time. It also saved the state an estimated $16 million a year in interest payments.

“In other words, teachers did their part, as they always do,” Tinney said.

What the state shouldn’t do is ditch the plan. Some pundits claim that converting new hires to a 401k-type defined contribution plan would solve the underfunding issue.

Pearce said, in so many words, that such a move would backfire.

“A defined contribution system will cost states and local governments more money than the current defined benefit system,” she said. Indeed, some estimates show that switching from the current plan could cost the state more than $22 million a year and still do absolutely nothing about the unfunded liability. “Evidence exists in other states that the unfunded liability would continue to grow,” she said.

“Dignity in retirement at a lower cost to the taxpayer should be the goal,” Pearce said. “A defined contribution plan will not only cost more, it will deliver less.”

She pointed out that retirees without financial security often depend on social services and other programs paid for by the public. In fact, if retirement security is elusive, the entire state suffers. “Reliable and adequate income in retirement is important to Vermont’s economic prosperity,” she urged.

She pointed out that the National Institute on Retirement Security found that defined benefit plans can deliver a given level of retirement income at a cost that is 48 percent lower than defined contribution plans.

Instead of throwing out the current system, Pearce said we need to “avoid a quick fix and address the fundamental weaknesses in our revenue structure and spending patterns, including the paydown of long-term liabilities over the long term.”

You can learn more and see Pearce’s presentation at vtnea.org/yourpension2018.
DANVILLE – The members of the Caledonia Cooperative Education Association on Oct. 8 voted no confidence in their superintendent after years of Mathew Forest’s mismanagement of Caledonia Cooperative Supervisory Union schools.

“It gives me no sense of pleasure that we are here tonight. But after years of trying to work with our boards and administrators to address the culture of fear, intimidation, and mismanagement by our superintendent, we have just taken a vote of no confidence in Superintendent Mathew Forest,” said Bill Douglas, a special education paraeducator at Peacham School who serves as the union’s spokesman.

“In light of our lack of confidence in Mathew Forest, we will urge the CCSU board to not renew his contract. Our students deserve schools where everyone – from students to teachers to paraeducators to principals to parents – can teach, learn, and interact with respect, free from fear and intimidation. Our students deserve better from their superintendent.”

The vote comes after years of widespread dissatisfaction with Forest’s job performance. Two years ago, the union conducted a survey that found a majority of educators disapproved of Forest.

The union took its concerns, quietly, to the board and administrators. Yet instead of working to improve, Forest continued to foster a culture of mismanagement, distrust, intimidation and fear, according to the union.

In September, educators released the results of another survey that found fewer than 20 percent of educators approved of Forest’s performance. The release of that information prompted the Burlington attorney representing Forest and the district to threaten the jobs of union members who released the survey. The union subsequently filed an unfair labor practice charge against the district, alleging multiple violations of Vermont labor law.

“We think it is past time to have new leadership in this district,” Douglas said. “And that’s why today we are calling on the boards of this district to do the right thing and part ways with Mathew Forest so that we can rebuild the trust and improve our schools for the communities’ children.”

As of press time, the local was set to meet with the supervisory union’s board to further discuss members’ concerns.
Last year, your union made a proposal to eliminate the residential education property tax. The reason? To make the way we pay for our schools simpler, more predictable, transparent, and more fair. The idea didn’t result in any concrete legislation during the most recent session, but the idea is gaining support from educators, legislators, and policy makers.

We know all too well what happens when Montpelier talks about education: it’s always about the property tax rate. Polling shows us it is the most detested tax Vermonter pay, and it’s also the most politicized. By getting rid of it – while keeping the property taxes on businesses and second homes intact – Vermont can refocus the education discussion where it belongs: on what’s good for students.

The elimination of the residential education property tax will also ensure that all Vermonter – including the most wealthy – will pay their fair share toward our state’s schools. As it stands, middle class Vermonter – even those who are income sensitized – pay a bigger portion of their income for schools than wealthy Vermonter do.

Voices for Vermont’s Children and the Public Assets Institute – a left-leaning Montpelier think tank – are working with us to push this proposal through the legislature. We believe that it can make it easier to fund education, and, more importantly, make it possible to discuss our schools in a way that is far more productive than we do now.

All children deserve an excellent education, regardless of where in Vermont they live. This proposal would go a long way in ensuring that we always put students’ needs first. Imagine an education discussion in Montpelier centered around children and not the blame-game over who is responsible for the property tax rate. As it stands now, lawmakers and the governor spar more over the residential education property tax rate than they do over how to make our great schools even better for all Vermont children.

Eliminating the residential education property tax is a top priority for Vermont-NEA in the upcoming legislative session. If you want to know more, visit fairforvtkids.org.

Have a Restorative Winter Break!

While this time of year can be hectic, we hope you can find some time to be with friends, family, and loved ones this month. As a reminder, Vermont-NEA Offices will be closed Dec. 24 and reopen Jan. 2.

5 Tips for Maintaining a Healthy Work-Life Balance, p. 3
President’s View: Your Classroom is Home to Your Students, p. 2
Treasurer Beth Pearce Defends Defined Benefit Retirement System, p. 6

Burlington EA’s Betsy Nolan talks about education during a Christine Hallquist press conference.