



# MTA News

## A Message From Your MTA President Christopher White

### MTA News

Middletown Teachers' Association

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*"Great issues are not decided by the courts, but by the people!"*

--Eugene Debs

How often have we been told by the state what we need to do in order to be better educators? How many times have we heard individuals criticize our profession? How many legislative mandates have we had to swallow as we try to uphold the sanctity of our profession? Too many! However, time and again, history has shown the validity of Debs' quote.

My thoughts immediately recall the Opt Out movement. The hard work and persistence of parents and our NYSUT brothers and sisters is what finally swayed the thinking of our legislatures. In addition, the grassroots groundswell that has fought the linkage of test scores to APPR has resulted in a moratorium on APPR until the state figures out what mistakes to make next.

As we fight this battle, I wish I could tell you what is happening on a district level, but that process has been hijacked by the state. We are unable to move forward until we see what more is unveiled by the state.

As we wait on a local level, even more disconcerting on the national level is the case of Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association. On January 11th, the Supreme Court began hearing arguments in this case--a case that could have an historic and devastating effect on the efficacy of teachers' unions. What does that mean for us? For NYSUT? For collective bargaining? It means that our collective bargaining rights could be thrown out the window, and the contract that has a storied history in our district would be rendered obsolete.

As this newsletter goes to press, NYSUT is visiting with our units to do an assessment of our membership in an attempt to stave off any repercussions from this case (a decision is expected in June). We will be looking at our strengths and weaknesses as we try to move forward and become stronger than ever. Through self-reflection and assessment, we can become stronger. The operative word is WE. *We are stronger together, and we will dictate what becomes history, not the courts. We have the power to direct*

Mark Your Calendars!

2/3—Exec. Board

2/12-2/15—Presidents' Weekend

2/10—Rep. Council

2/17—Exec. Board

### Newsletter Submissions

Newsletter submissions can be

sent to Jennifer Sitko at

[jensitko@yahoo.com](mailto:jensitko@yahoo.com) and copied

to Stephanie Stopa at

[sstopa.mta@gmail.com](mailto:sstopa.mta@gmail.com)

The submission deadline for the next newsletter is February 22nd.

Please use private emails for newsletter articles.

## Member Spotlight

*The Member Spotlight is an area where the MTA highlights the accomplishments of our members: anything from winning awards to earning advanced degrees to volunteer and charitable work to participating in races can be included. Please contact the MTA with any suggestions or ideas.*

- Patrick Woods

Congratulations to MHS special education social studies teacher Paul Freely. Dr. Freely earned his Ph.D in K-12 Studies from Capella University this month. Way to go Dr. Freely!

Q: Earning a doctoral degree is no simple task. What were some of the motivations that drove you to undertake this challenging endeavor?

A: An old Chief Petty Officer in the Navy once told me that learning is what we are here for; if you stop learning, you are not living to your potential. As an educator I am a student first and a teacher second, and learning is very important to me. I was also motivated by a desire to use my knowledge as a way to help others in education. Everyone who found out I was pursuing my PhD always asked if I was going to become an administrator. The answer to that was always no! I find working in the classroom as a special education teacher to be very satisfying because of the students I work with. Seeing a student understand a concept in history and the look on their face when they know a fact is indescribable. I came into education late in life after 20 years in the Navy and 10 years in business, and this is where I need to be. The PhD was a goal I set for myself and it was very important to me to achieve it.

Q: How long did it take you to complete and were there ever times when you second guessed your decision?

A: I started this journey in the fall of 2009 and had completed all of the preliminary class work in the first two years. I have been writing the dissertation and conducting the research since 2011. So start to finish it has taken over six years to complete the degree. I only second guessed my decision about a hundred times. It is a lot of work and research that can be extremely frustrating, but once you have reached a certain point in the process you can see a light at the end of the tunnel. I saw the light about a year ago when the first draft was approved. After that point it was a lot of editing and formatting the document for publication.

Q: What were some of the more challenging aspects you encountered during the process?

A: Using APA 6. Until this point my writing was always based in history and as such I was very well versed in using the MLA format. Footnotes and endnotes are what I am used to. Another challenging aspect was dealing with the statistics and the formulas to establish my findings. Not being a mathematician, I hired a statistician to “crunch the numbers” after I scrubbed the data of personal information and student identifications. The last challenge was balancing work, family, and the dissertation. You have to be disciplined to schedule times to write and conduct research that does not interfere with the work, family and recreation. Every time I hit a roadblock I always found a way around it after a round of golf, walking the dog, or taking the wife out for dinner.

Q: Do you have any recommendations or suggestions for other professionals in the field of education who may also be interested in starting a doctoral program?

A: Find a topic you love to conduct your research on; you are going to be spending a lot of time with the topic and the information. Do not be afraid to ask for help from your mentor and others at the university and in your own school. The questions you ask will help narrow the focus of your study and some people may see issues which need to be addressed as you go forward. I did my program through Capella University online, which is fully accredited as an NCATE institution. Ask questions, have fun, and do something that is important to you. It's not about the money or the title or the prestige; it's about setting a goal and achieving it.

## New or New to You Management

- Stacey Atlas

Welcome back! Upon your return you may be faced with some classroom management concerns. Many times January (or after an extended break) students forget the expectations in the classroom. It never hurts to quickly review the guidelines you set up at the beginning of the year. Since this is not new information, this will not take up much of your instructional time. It is well worth the 5-10 minutes! Keep these tips in mind when sharing classroom expectations:

- Communicate infraction and consequence
- Be explicit
- Follow through; be consistent
- Remind students you care
- Respect students
- Communicate with students
- Build/rebuild rapport
- 1:1 conversations as needed

If management is not under control, spring fever will be even worse. If you would like guidance and support, please reach out to me: Stacey Atlas- [stacey.atlas@ecsdm.org](mailto:stacey.atlas@ecsdm.org) 326-1317.

## Rejuvenate

This is the time of year many teachers experience rejuvenation! We have returned from a much needed winter break where we reconnected with family and friends. Hopefully you took some time for YOU.

As we return to work and forge ahead with curriculum mandates and the pressure to teach everything before state testing, remember the feeling of being overwhelmed as you instruct your students. Continue to chunk material, scaffold new material, and access student's prior knowledge before diving into new knowledge.

Feeling overwhelmed? Try these strategies:

- Place an agenda up for students to see
- Take one lesson at a time
- Look for gradual release (I do, We do, You do)
- Did you scaffold in the event some students need more guidance?
- Rate student engagement
- Lesson closure (picture it)

Often times, when we slow down and look at things individually, they no longer overwhelm us. So instead of looking at the entire day or the entire unit of study, look at things one lesson at a time.

## MTA Benefit Fund Manager Needed

- Tom Blon

Position to commence July 1, 2016. Stipend provided.

Responsibilities include:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| -Review vision and legal plan eligibility lists       | - Review monthly billings                             |
| -Prepare quarterly financial reports                  | - Coordinate yearly Benefit Fund tax audit            |
| -Organize and distribute yearly tax liability notices | - Assist Benefit Fund trustees in carrying out duties |

Contact chairperson Tom Blon ( [tantblon@gmail.com](mailto:tantblon@gmail.com) ) for details.

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## *Benefits Of Being a NYSUT Member*



1. Higher pay & better benefits
2. A contract you can rely on
3. A strong voice at work
4. Professional learning

### **5. NYSUT Member Benefits**

**NYSUT members & their families can choose from a variety of insurance, financial, legal, and shopping & travel programs designed with the NYSUT member in mind – including term life insurance, auto insurance, legal & financial services, car rentals, vacation packages, and much more!**

### **Member Appreciation Month is back again this February!**

Since it was such a big hit last year, we're doing it again! Member Appreciation Month is coming February 2016.

To be eligible for these drawings, all you need to do is participate in our voluntary MAP Alert email service.

This year will be even bigger because it's a leap year... that means more chances to win even more great prizes!!!

Once again, Member Appreciation Month will be filled with a series of special prize drawings for items donated by Member Benefits and our endorsed program providers. Prizes will include gift cards, Beats headphones, a Go Pro camera and more.



We will announce the winners of these special prize drawings exclusively on the Member Benefits website throughout the month of February.

It's the strength of the more than 600,000 NYSUT members that makes it possible for Member Benefits to offer more than 40 endorsed programs & services designed with you in mind.

For more details about this exciting event, visit the Member Benefits website at [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) or call **800-626-8101**.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.