



Middletown Teachers' Association

MTA News

A Message From Your MTA President Christopher White

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Middletown Teachers' Association

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As the holidays approach and the new year looms, we often reflect upon the year that has past. We try to learn from it, so we make sense of the future that awaits us. We resolve to make better changes in our personal life, as well as our professional lives.

There has been much debate surrounding the future of unions. Will we become a right-to-work state? Will this year start the attack on unions?

We are standing on the cusp of history. Will labor stand together in a united voice to protect all that we have bargained? It will be more important than ever to make sure your voice is heard on a local, state and federal level.

We will have quite a year on our hands, but remember we are never alone. This holiday season has taught me, on a personal level, the goodness of people and the importance of friends and colleagues. All we need to do is ask.

So, as the winter break approaches- enjoy the break, and find renewed strength in family and friends. Have a wonderful holiday!

ED 14 Meeting

~Robbyn McCauley

I had the pleasure of attending our ED 14 Meeting this past Wednesday. This meeting brings together teacher associations that fall under the ED 14 Region and hosts different speakers. Most of the discussion this week centered on the elections and our new president-elect. There is much concern for the future of education and our union. When one does some research on the potential new Secretary of Education, it becomes quite clear that she is no friend of public education. When one does some research on potential Supreme Court appointees, it becomes clear that a more conservative judge will be put forward by the president-elect and that is a potential threat to unions (remember the Friedrich's Case? There are many more cases just like that one and it is believed a more conservative judge will lean against the constitutionality of agency fee). And, finally there is the grave concern of a Constitutional Convention.

In November of 2017, all voters will be asked if a Constitutional Convention should be held to revise and amend the current

Newsletter Submissions

Newsletter submissions can be

sent to Jennifer Sitko at

jennsitko@yahoo.com and copied

to Kerry Luba at

klubamta@gmail.com

The submission deadline for the next newsletter is January 3rd.

Please use private emails for newsletter articles.

Retirement is Not as Far Away as You Think!

~ Cara Haug

As one of the delegates to the NY State Teachers' Retirement System (NYSTRS), I attended the annual meeting in Saratoga in November. Currently, NYSTRS is ranked #9 out of the top 1,000 US pension funds and is going strong with \$108 Billion in assets. One of the things they stressed is that it's never too early to start thinking about retirement - especially if you have circumstances that are out of the ordinary. It's good to know what to expect and what resources are available. Here are some of the highlights:

- You should be receiving (or have just received) your annual benefit profile in the mail soon. Check it for discrepancies and notify the district if there is any incorrect information.
- It is advisable to sign up for an online NYSTRS account (MYNYSTRS.org) You can find great deal of information on the website. You will need your member number which can be found on your benefit profile. On the website, you can:
 - Apply for prior service credit, military credit, or transfer of service (If you are a member of another NY State retirement system (teaching - NYC, SUNY, etc. or non teaching, and would like to merge your memberships).
 - If you're thinking of retiring soon or if you have questions about retirement or your benefits, etc, you can schedule a video consultation (at various locations throughout the state - Central Valley, West Nyack, Yorktown Heights, etc.), an in-person consultation, or attend a PREP seminar (Schedule can be found on MYNYSTRS.org).
 - There's a pension estimator so you can start planning your retirement and what benefits you can expect to receive.
 - Beneficiary forms are also available if you would like to change your beneficiary.
 - The rules for military service eligibility have been expanded, so if you weren't eligible for service credit previously, you may be now.

The bottom line is that retirement is not as far away as you think so it's a good idea to be prepared. MyNYSTRS.org is a good way to get started with the preparation! Happy Holidays!

New or New to You

~Stacey Atlas

We are all in different places when it comes to applying for our Professional Certificate or recording our 100 hours of PD. Below are some links to help assist you in the process. Please reach out to me with any specific questions, as I will continue to look into assistance when applying for certification.

Here is the link to apply for certification: http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate_pathways.html

Here is another link to help with certification questions: <http://eservices.nysed.gov/teach/certhelp/CertRequirementHelp.do>

Types of certificates: <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/typesofcerts.html>

Here is a link to PD (100 hrs) requirement for certification: <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/maintaincert-prof.html>

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First Book Success and Gratitude!

~ Stephanie Stopa

A big THANK YOU to our over 100 MTA and MTAO members who helped unpack, sort, label, and distribute our thousands of books! The events at both Presidential Park and William A. Carter were a great success. We had a huge selection of books starting with board books for infants and ending with entire series of books for high school readers. Hundreds of children of all ages attended and each child left with 5-10 free books. It was heartwarming to see the excitement on their faces as they went through row after row of free books. Children were sitting at tables and on the floor reading silently or to each other. Parents were reading to children. It was a great sight to see! At the end of the event, the remaining books were delivered to each of the buildings and either distributed to students or shared with the PTA/PTO's for their events.

This was a true community effort. Support was widespread from every corner and unit of our district. Starting with the District funding the custodial and security staff, to the PTO/PTA's registering parent members, spreading the word and volunteering both Friday and Saturday. Bill Wilcox printed the flyers and posters in a quick turn around and our k-8 office staff helped distribute them. The Building & Grounds warehouse crew, with a shout out to Mike Wagner, received, stored and delivered the pallets to each building, problem solved our last minute issues and made return trips delivering the remaining boxes of books to each building. High school club advisers Emily Pacella (Key Club), Jennifer Younghans (National Honor Society), and Commander Wall and Master Sergeant Willard (ROTC) signed up dozens of students who helped sort, organize, label, and supervise throughout Friday and Saturday. Elle Lorica at MHS created our beautiful flyer that was printed and displayed on the district website as well as the MTA Facebook page. With the support from all those mentioned, in addition to the over 600 district staff members who completed registration forms, we successfully coordinated an historic community event!

An extra special shoutout to the First Book Committee members for their many hours of planning to coordinate this event:

MHS: Janet Langlitz, chairperson and Myriam Velez, co-chair

Carter: Claudia Donohue, Karen Cierniak, Jenn Mathias

MH: Dottie Feffer

PPE: Brittany Alderman, Nicole Morales

MMS: Stephanie Stopa, MTA liaison

ED 14 Continued

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NYS Constitution. Why is this important to me, you may be asking. Three reasons: first, the constitution establishes our basic organizational structure for state government and changes could lead to one branch having too much power. Second, the constitution establishes our fundamental rights as NYS citizens and as a public employee. Included within these rights are the right to a free public education, prohibition of reduction in public pension benefits and rights to workers' compensation. Finally, the constitution sets the most important policy goals for the state and, therefore, impacts every other law currently in place and on statutes yet to come. As Sparrow Tobin said at the meeting, "We must educate, agitate, and advocate" for public education, unions, and all of our rights. So, what can we do? **Get involved** with our local union, **stay active** with the political process starting today and **be ready** to do some work for our rights in 2017.

Together we ARE stronger!!

New or New to You Continued

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School District Responsibility Link: <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/maintaincert-sd.html>

Here is a link to Frequently Asked Questions: <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/faq.html>

How to keep your professional account updates on PD:

1.) All coursework PD must be recorded on My Learning Plan (MLP). There is a place where you can add courses outside Middletown School District (grad, conferences, etc.). All coursework must be on MLP.

2) The State is in the process of creating an approved list of PD meetings. For now, it is suggested you record all PD meetings that are not found on MLP on the PD record sheet.

3) All PD Record Sheets must be sent to the Personnel Department at the Board of Education Office before the end of the school year.

4) Personnel will upload all PD meetings to your account. However, they only do this once a year, at the end of the school year, so please be sure to have your PD record sheet in on time in order to receive credit for the PD you accumulated over the school year.

If you need additional assistance with inputting courses into MLP, please go to the district website:

- *click on Staff Resources,
- *scroll down to My Learning Plan,
- *you will see links to assist you.

MTA Benefit Fund News

- Tom Blon—MTA Benefit Fund Manager

Trustee needed: Would you like to be more involved with your union?

Benefit fund trustees are responsible for the proper administration of our fund. Meetings are quarterly, in addition to volunteering during fall & spring will days.

Contact Chris White or Tom Blon for details.

Family vision plan: NYSUT member benefits has a voluntary vision plan for family members. Details/ brochures/applications or the option of enrolling online is at the following address:

<http://memberbenefits.nysut.org/program-service/insurance/vision-plan>

Financial counseling: NYSUT Member Benefits has added a financial wellness evaluator to their online Financial Planning Center. Provided by Fidelity Investments, this new resource can help NYSUT members & their families determine those areas where they are doing well in planning for retirement along with where they may need some assistance.

<http://memberbenefits.nysut.org/financial-planning-center/financial-wellness-evaluator>