



Middletown Teachers' Association

MTA News

A Message From Your MTA President Christopher White

MTA News

Middletown Teachers' Association

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As we head into the holiday season, many of us will be spending time with family, others will travel, and some will use the time for quiet reflection. As we approach the new year, I know that many members are wondering what the future will bring?

As 2017 comes to a close, our union will see many changes and more obstacles. Our Labor Relations Specialist, J.R. Wilson, will be retiring at the end of the year, and we will be welcoming Mr. David Gribben to the Tarrytown Regional Office. I know I look forward to meeting him and to working with him as your president.

While we ring in the new year, we can continue to celebrate the victory in the defeat of the Constitutional Convention. The convention was voted down with an overwhelming majority and demonstrated not only the power of NYSUT, but the power of all unions. In the weeks leading up to election day I saw hundreds of lawn signs, bumper stickers, and magnets from all different groups encouraging people to vote "No." This defeat was a true validation of what we do every day and was a genuine showing of solidarity.

Finally, while the global view is important, I understand that many of us will focus on the immediate changes come the new year. In light of recent news, I know that many members wonder what direction the district will be heading in come the start of 2018. I can assure you that there has been much work on the part of the district to ensure that all the work and improvement done over the last decade will remain in place even under new leadership. While the district has a clear plan in place, I have no fear for our future in this district because I have the utmost trust in all of you, the teachers of this district. While leadership is no doubt important and our district has changed tremendously in the last thirteen years, none of this could have been possible without your hard work and dedication. We will continue to do what we do best as we head into the new year, and we will continue to help our students to succeed, no matter how our leadership changes because that is what we do day in and day out. This is and what always will be what makes us great educators and what makes Middletown great!

As we begin the process of great change in the immediate future, I want to wish you all a happy and safe holiday!

Newsletter Submissions

Newsletter submissions can be

sent to Jennifer Sitko at

jennsitko@yahoo.com and copied

to Kerry Luba at

kerry.luba@ecsd.org

The submission deadline for the next newsletter is February 9th.

Please use private emails for newsletter articles.

MTA in the Community

- Jennifer Younghans

In a few short weeks 2017 will come to a close and we will begin a new year. This is the time of year where we not only reflect on what happened over the past year, but also look forward to the new possibilities in the coming year. A time of year when we set New Year's resolutions. In that respect it a great opportunity to think about all of the ways in which the MTA has had a positive influence on our community. Countless times we have donated our manpower to a variety of school sponsored events as well as events held within the City of Middletown. Our mere presence shows our students that we are truly committed to not only their education, but also to the community in which they live.

On December 16, several MTA members participated in the wreath laying ceremony at the Veterans' Memorial Cemetery in Goshen. The ceremony is a part of a national effort through Wreaths Across America to lay wreaths on the graves of all U.S. veterans. The mission of the organization is to "Remember our fallen U.S. veterans. Honor those who serve. Teach your children the value of freedom." The act of laying a wreath on their grave and saying their name aloud is a small gesture to keep their name alive and thank them for their service. Again, thank you to the members who participated and to all our members who served our country.

This time of year also represents the season of giving. Many of us are involved in school wide community endeavors such as adopt-a-family. Across the school district, we, as teachers, reach out and help to make sure the holiday season is just as bright for our students whether it be providing holiday presents, gift cards, food baskets or winter necessities. Our collective man power can truly make a difference. At the high school, faculty and staff were able to provide holiday gifts and winter necessities to twenty local children. The generosity of all of our members is truly inspirational.

On a final note, keep this season of giving and resolutions alive throughout the year. Make a resolution to get involved more with community endeavors in the new year. There will be plenty of opportunities for our involvement in the new year. Moreover, if you have anything you would like the MTA to get involved in, please feel free to reach out to me. The more we get involved the greater our presence will be in the community.

If interested in volunteering or if you have any ideas of how to get more involved, please contact Jennifer Younghans, MTA Community Outreach at jennifer.younghans@ecsdms.org.

New or New to You: Build Rapport

- Stacey Atlas

OK, expectations, rules, consequences...check! They are all in place, modeled, reviewed; so why is management still impacting the classroom? We ask ourselves, "Do I have good student rapport?" Often times we 'think' we have good rapport with our students, but the proof is in the pudding. If classroom management is creating an environment not conducive to learning, something needs to change. As the adult, role model, it is up to you to make change happen.

How To Build Rapport

Bring fun and personality into the classroom from day one! When students are enjoying class time they trust you are there for them. The key to building rapport with your students is creating an enjoyable learning environment with a teacher whose personality is 'consistently pleasant and good-humored' (Linsin, 32).

Every time you interact with a student you are creating a memory; a moment in time for the student to reflect back on. Inevitably, a storm of emotions are attached to that memory. Emotions play a big role in our ability to obtain new knowledge. When we feel safe, and have a sense of belonging, we flourish! One of our roles as teachers is to create a classroom where all students feel safe and have a sense of belonging.

Our words matter! What we say, and how we say it has a direct effect on our students in AND out of the classroom. Every time you pass a student in the hallway, smile and say 'Hi'. You CAN make a difference EVERYDAY! :)

Did You Know?

- Robbyn McCauley

My Sisters and Brothers,

As we move farther into our academic year, it is apparent that there is much to be thankful for, as well as much to be aware of and concerned about. I am so thankful that the Con Con was voted down and yet there is a Supreme Court case on the current docket (Janus) that we are watching because it is a threat to unions across America. I am so thankful for our Teacher Center that has been cranking out excellent professional development opportunities, especially for those that fall under the CTLE Requirements. And yet, it is difficult to add another “have to” to what are our already packed schedules during this very busy time of year. I am so thankful for the building that I work in; the colleagues that have become friends and like family. And yet, I know that there are buildings with administrators that seem to arbitrarily make decisions that are hurtful and as we watch and work on that, I encourage each and every one of us to use the contract language that supports us.

Did you know...

According to Article V, Section II, Item J of our contract, “A teacher at all times shall be entitled to have present a representative of the Association, upon request, when he/she is being reprimanded or disciplined for any alleged infraction of rules or delinquency in professional performance.” In addition, it is past practice in our district that whenever a teacher ***feels that any meeting with any administrator may be disciplinary in nature, they have the right to stop the meeting and ask to bring in a representative. This representative can be anyone that the teacher is comfortable with and the administrator must comply.***

I chose this piece of the contract to share because it is critical that every member of our unit is not only aware of this, but utilizes this right. At any given moment when an administrator calls you into their office, walks into your classroom, stops you in the hallway, I don't care where, how or when it happens, if ***you feel the conversation is becoming disciplinary in any manner, politely state, “I'd like to have a rep of choice here with me for this” and the conversation should stop at that point. The administrator does not have the right to override your decision to have a rep present. And, if your rep of choice isn't available right then, you have the right to reschedule the discussion to a mutually agreed upon time.***

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Benefit Fund Information

Tom Blon—MTA Benefit Fund Manager

MTA Benefit Fund Update

Thanks to all members who participated in our fall will day.

Spring Will Day: Tuesday, April 10, 2018. Scheduling for appointments will take place late March, early April.

National Legal Office Telephone Numbers:

NY residents: 800 - 832 - 5182

All other areas: 800 - 292 - 8063

After Hours Hotline: 800 - 292 - 8063

Vision Plan

MTA members are covered under the basic plan.

Members can purchase a Family Plan (\$395 / yr) through the following website

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

Contact MTA Benefit Fund Manager T. Blon at tantblon@gmail.com for further information.

#YouAreFired

-Kaci Peterson

I had the privilege to attend the Summer Leadership Conference hosted by NYSUT this past August. One of the workshops that resonated with me was called “#YouAreFired”. This workshop provided its participants with a framework for using social media responsibly within the workplace. What was made clear from the very first second you walked into the door was that privacy does not exist on social media and you should not have an expectation that it does. The key in using social media is knowing that your audience is not as limited as you believe or intend it to be so be careful when sharing with your social media audience.

Do's:

1. Be familiar with your employee work rules and policies with respect to electronic communications.
2. Set your social media page privacy settings so that only “friends” can view it.
3. Stop and think. If you are wondering, “should I post this?” it probably means that you shouldn't.
4. Assume that anything you post may be seen by EVERYONE.

Dont's:

1. Post comments that a school might find inappropriate if read by students or parents.
2. Post photos of yourself engaged in behavior that a school might find inappropriate if seen by parents or students.
3. Think you can make comments “private” by sending them by private or direct message.

RULE OF THUMB: “Green Eggs & Ham Test”

Consider the following before posting, liking, tweeting, etc:

Would you like it in the press?

Would you like it on a colleague's desk?

Would you like it in the Boss' hand?

Would you like to read it on the witness stand?

Don't Forget About Your Prior Service!

- Cara Haug

Before joining the NY State Teachers' Retirement System, did you do work for a state or government agency that would allow you to accrue service credit that could be applied to your NYSTRS service credit? Many people don't realize that time spent in previous jobs may count toward their service credit when they retire. Some of the jobs that may be eligible for NYSTRS service credit include: substitute teaching, working for a state agency, town camps, bus drivers, time in another NY state public retirement system, and military service.

Members must have at least two years of combined prior service to be able to buy back service credit. The cost of prior service credit varies depending on your tier. If you think you qualify, go to NYSTRS.org. There, you can find specific information, prior service claim forms, military service claim forms, and contact information in case you still have questions. Prior service credit can add to your service credit and affect your date of retirement and your pension factor. If you think you might be eligible, it is worth checking out!

Did You Know...

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For our buildings and those administrators that seem to be looking for the “gotcha” when it comes to teachers, I'd encourage you to **ALWAYS** have a rep of choice with you when called in/being talked to. That person is there to listen, can actually speak for you if you prefer, take notes, and if necessary, to caucus the meeting (in order to talk privately with you). It is a powerful tool that we need to be sure to utilize when necessary.

As our membership becomes more and more familiar with our contract and the rights it affords us, we will continue to get stronger and more unified. During these difficult times, we have no other choice. After all, we are stronger together.