



Middletown Teachers' Association

MTA News

A Message From Your MTA President Christopher White

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Middletown Teachers' Association

AFT Local 2831

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As the dog days of summer dwindle and cooler weather comes, we become more comfortable in our routines and classrooms. It is during this time that we are reminded of the potential each new year presents: hope, strength, and unity. It is equally important to remember the school year that has passed. Though we should not dwell on the past, we must learn from it.

The Janus court decision has affected unions nationwide for possibly the next fifty years. Though unions were dealt a blow, our union sisters and brothers responded with a resounding recommitment to our union. At the new teacher orientation, 100% of the new teachers joined us in standing together. I am so very proud of our union and the direction it is taking. Knowing that we are strengthening our bond, no one can tear us apart. Like a family, we may not always agree, but we will always have each others backs.

As our year progresses, it is important that our community sees us as role models. Local events are an excellent opportunity to show that you are proud to be a part of the fabric of the Middletown community. Students and parents should know they can count on us. To that end, we will be hosting events to foster a stronger collegial bond amongst each other, as well as within the community.

I wish you all a happy and prosperous school year!

Welcome New Teachers!

Newsletter Submissions

Newsletter submissions can be

sent to Jennifer Sitko at

jennsitko@yahoo.com and copied

to Kerry Luba at

kerry.luba@ecsd.org

Please use private emails for
newsletter articles.

- Robbyn McCauley

On August 27th, our newest members had New Teacher Orientation at the MTA Offices. New teachers learned about our Benefit Fund, Vote-Cope, the Teacher Center, and the Mentor/Intern Program.

Additionally, each and every new member joined the union as dues paying members! This is a wonderful show of solidarity and adds to the strength of our union. Afterwards, new teachers were treated to lunch at Cosimos and given time to socialize and ask questions. As always, it was an amazing day for our new colleagues to begin their careers here in Middletown.

New or New to You - *This Moment*

- Stacey Atlas

One day you will look back on this very moment and smile, laugh, tell stories. One day, not today! Today is the moment you have been waiting for. The moment when you get to apply all you learned and experienced; in school. The moment you walk into YOUR classroom and begin to shape young minds. The excitement is refreshing!

Then, they walk in...the moment you begin to speak you feel flushed, shaky, scattered. Everything you planned is rushing through your head faster than you can 'get it out'. Some students are listening, some are catching up with friends, some are tuned out, etc. This moment is overwhelming! So much to take in at once. This is YOUR critical moment! Do you address the students not listening? If so, HOW?

We walk a fine line as educators. In order to teach, we must first get control of the room. How we obtain and maintain control sets us up for the rest of the year. If we are too harsh, we lose rapport. If we are too lenient, we are taken advantage of. But if we do it just right, we hit the jackpot! In this moment it is crucial to be supportive to one another. Seek out people who are good listeners. People with whom you can learn from. As you find your **Marigold** (<https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/marigolds/>) remember to be one to someone else. Your **marigold** is a person or persons who are positive, supportive, and energetic. They share successful classroom stories, provide suggestions on **HOW**, explain your confusions away, and make you feel good overall. Marigolds aren't always surrounding you. You may need to seek them out. You are worth the effort! When we feel supported we are unstoppable! Life isn't measured by money or objects- it is measured by moments and people. In this moment, take the time to find 'your people'. They are your marigolds! They will support, guide, and celebrate you through this moment. So in this moment, be someone's marigold! Be positive, uplifting, supportive! It's infectious!

If you need a marigold- I'm here; I'll help you plant your garden!

Stacey Atlas- stacey.atlas@ecsdsm.org 845-326-1317

Benefit Fund Updates

-Tom Blon

Chair: Ashley Burke

Secretary: Pamela Phillips

Christopher White, Gina Graziano, LoriAnn Lawrence

Fund Manager: Tom Blon

1. Address Change/ Name Change

Please keep your MTA information current! Notify the Membership Coordinator, Tom Blon, (tantblon@gmail.com) if you have changed your name or mailing address, or if you have changed buildings.

2. Will Days October 16, 2018 & April 9, 2019

3. National Legal Office Telephone Numbers

NY residents: 800-832-5182 All other areas: 800-292-8063 After Hours Hotline: 800-292-8063

4. Vision Plan

MTA members only are covered under the basic plan. Members can purchase a Family Plan (\$395.00 / year) through the following website:

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

MTA in the Community

- Jennifer Younghans

Welcome back! I hope that your school year is off to a great start. As the MTA Community Outreach organizer, I would like to take a second to thank all of the MTA members who donated their time to a variety of activities last year. At the end of the school year, many of our teachers helped by scooping ice cream at the Kids Celebration hosted by the Middletown Police Department. It was a fun-filled day of activities for the kids of Middletown. Summer did not prevent our members from being present in the community. On August 18, MTA members, alongside members of the Middletown High School National Honor Society, handed out water to race finishers at Run 4 Downtown. MTA members were then treated with a taste of Middletown by sampling from the many great restaurants Middletown has to offer. More recently, many of our members participated at the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk on Sunday, October 14th.

Our participation in these community-based events helps to show our students our commitment to their success beyond the classroom. It is a great opportunity for us to interact with students and their families. With a new school year, there will be additional opportunities for us to get involved. Please look to your email for upcoming events, including a Middletown Trunk or Treat on Saturday, October 27. In addition, 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@ecsdm.org.

Race 4 Downtown Volunteers with National Honor Society



MTA members in attendance included: Jennifer Younghans, Chris White, Jason Lichtenstein, Antoinette Thompson, and Jessica Bauernfeind

New or New to You - Parent Conferences

- Stacey Atlas

Parent Conferences can be an overwhelming experience. We prepare the best we can for what we know about conferring with parents/guardians. Conferences are a way to communicate to parents/guardians about their child's strengths and areas of weakness. While we would all love nothing more than to have only wonderful things to say about every child, sometimes we are met with the difficult task of informing the parent/guardian of behaviors that hinder the child's academic/social success. Whether you are meeting with parents/guardians during conference day/night, teacher requested meeting, parent requested meeting, CSE, 504, or any other reason- here are some suggestions to help you prepare for conferences.

Being prepared covers many areas. Some ideas to consider:

- ◆ Do your homework – read the student's cumulative folder, speak with other staff members (guidance counselor, social worker, school psychologist, etc.) who may have helpful information.
- ◆ Have pertinent family/guardian information – who does the student live with, what language is spoken at home.
- ◆ Have conversations with parent/guardian throughout the year. This makes conferences go smoother.
- ◆ Have all the necessary data and facts – homework, test and quiz results, attendance, etc.
- ◆ Have the conversation: Using data and facts, what are the student's options at this time? How can they pick their grade up? Will they pass the class/regents? Summer school? Midpoint? Repeat course/class?
- ◆ Have a plan – if necessary (and possible), do not just present information but also have a plan for improvement with a follow-up meeting date in mind.

It is also a good idea to rehearse and plan how you will present the information. Some suggestions:

- ◆ Begin and end the conversation with positive statements.
- ◆ Avoid words with negative connotations and be sure to rehearse your phrasing so that you will make the best word choices during the conference.
- ◆ When referring to behavioral concerns, be sure to be specific using exact language and describing the event(s) factually.
- ◆ Try to address only one problem at a time - prioritize.
- ◆ At the meeting - take notes (you can generate a form for this in advance) and try to document the important points. Save this information.

While parent/guardian contact is a job requirement, it is also a very powerful tool when trying to help students achieve success. Parent/Guardian support can assist you with finding the best solutions in order to support and help every student reach his/her full potential.

Monhagen Library Awarded Education Grant

Congratulations to Monhagen Middle School Library Media Specialist, Emily Soper, for winning the Lowe's Toolbox for Education grant! Last May, Ms. Soper was awarded \$2,000 for Monhagen Middle School Makerspace. According to the official press release, "The grant is allotted to buy makerspace materials like copper tape, LED lights, wheels, a few toolkits and tools, batteries, glue, glue guns, and filament to sustain a 3D printer. The Library Media Center also hopes to purchase things like Littlebits robotics, an easy-to-use 3D printer, Stikbots for stop animation, the Makey Makey invention kit and Bloxels, which promote an interest in computer coding, and brain games with residual funds." The project will be completed in June.

The program started off with donated materials used for "maker 'pods'", but quickly took off. According to Ms. Soper, "the point of this project is to pique the interest of our students for STEM or 'STREAM' learning for possible careers in programming, building, engineering, robotics, art, and beyond."

For more information on the program, visit www.ToolboxForEducation.com