

The Rochester Teacher

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Representing teachers • retirees • school instructors • substitute teachers • home/hospital teachers

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Winner of NYSUT Journalism Awards and the Ted Bleecker Award as "BEST OF THE BEST"

RTA Receives NYSUT's 2006 Local Community Service Award

The Rochester Teacher's Association has been selected as a recipient of NYSUT's 2006 Local Community Service Award.

As a result of a resolution, passed at the 1996 Representative Assembly, this award was created to recognize a local's collective and sustained contribution to community service during the 2005 calendar year. The RTA's awarding the Peter Castle Memorial Scholarship and the Gordon Dorway Scholarship Award, working with Dial-A Teacher and Homework Hotline, awarding the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. award, and raising money through the Retired Teachers Association to purchase Books for Kids exemplifies the purpose of the award.

The award will be presented to **RTA Vice-President Martha Keating** at the upcoming NYSUT Representative Assembly General Session on Saturday, May 6. A special reception honoring award recipients will be held on Thursday evening following the general session in the Hyatt's Regency Ballroom. The RTA's involvement in community service will also be highlighted in a *New York Teacher* issue following the convention.

In a letter to Dr. Urbanski, NYSUT President **Richard C. Iannuzzi** writes "please extend congratulations to the members of your local for their dedicated effort. Their work in enriching the lives of the community members is laudatory and worthy of this award."

Books For Kids at 7 Schools This School Year

In the 2005-2006 school year, Books for Kids has visited 5 schools, with plans for two additional elementary schools.

Leading the Books for Kids efforts this year were retirees **Polly Bradbury, Dick Raymond, Katherine Barkley, Lili Bonanni, Donna Corsale, Carolyn Dean, Joe DeRoller, Kathy Evans, Fran Hall, Karen Huey, Nob Ichishita, Carol Kaza, Cile Nix, Sue Neilson, David Smith, Jeanie Wells, Mary Jo Whalen, Rita Zimmer, and Mary Barnum.**

This year, Books for Kids gave books to the first grade classes of **Simone Araya** at #46, **Pat Hatch** at #52, **Carole Botash** at #28, **Shawnette Dingle** at #42, **Kathleen McCarthy** at #46. School 41 is scheduled for April and School #17 for May.

A project of Rochester Retired Teachers, Books for Kids gives new, hardcover books to students in first grade classes in Rochester public schools. Books for Kids is funded solely by donations from Rochester retired teachers, plus bottle and can deposits collected at the RTA and NYSUT offices. A BFK Committee member confers with the teacher of the selected class to assess the interests of each student. BFK members then meet at Barnes and Noble in Pittsford to select a book for each student. BFK visits the class to pass out the books and retirees read with the students. BFK is grateful to Barnes and Noble Pittsford for a generous discount.



RRTA Books for Kids in **Mrs. McCarthy's** first grade at School 46 on March 23. From left: Reader **Dick Raymond**, photographer **Rita Zimmer, Fran Hall, Donna Corsale, Mary Jo Whalen, Kathy Evans, Reader Joe DeRoller, Mary Barnum, Sue Nielsen**, joined by happy recipients of *Why is Blue Dog Blue?* and *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?*

RCSD Staff Earn Awards

Lynn Gatto, second-grade teacher at Rochester's School No. 28, has been named a Disney Teacher Award recipient for 2006. She is one of 44 award winners chosen from among 10,000 applicants nationwide. The award celebrates recipients' creativity, innovative teaching methods and ability to inspire students while actively engaging them in learning. It brings with it a \$5,000 honorarium for the recipients' schools.

Gatto will receive the award during a week of festivities and professional development at Disneyland in July.

Kevin Coughlin, instrumental music teacher at Wilson Magnet High School, will receive the 18th Annual Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) Musicians' Award for Outstanding Music Educators in the category of Band Educator. The awards will be presented following intermission at the RPO concert Thursday, May 4 at the Eastman Theatre.

Delene Goode, social studies teacher at East High School, has been chosen to participate in a study program in China for three weeks this summer. She is one of four New York State teachers chosen as part of the National Consortium for Teaching About Asia. The program enriches participants' knowledge of China through first-hand experience, including school visits, tours, lectures, cultural performances, and discussions with other educators.

Outstanding Education Conference

What happens when the District turns over to Superintendent's Conference o the RTA? A smashing success by all accounts! On March 27 more than 3,000 teachers descended on the Riverside Convention Center for a day of workshops, a keynote address, comedy entertainment and greetings from City of Rochester and NYSUT and AFT leaders.

The majority of the evaluations completed at the Conference attested to the success of the event. Teachers enjoyed being treated professionally. The impressive address from national education icon Jonathan Kozel was frequently praised. The Open Forum with the Superintendent and Board Members was also highly valued. Other workshops were also given kudos.

Dr. Urbanski stated that the hard work of Margaret Sergent, Bill Gerber and Jonathan Hickey and their volunteers ensured the success of the day.

See photos on page 4.


RTA Representative Assembly Acts on Constitutional and By-Laws Changes

As this issue of the *Rochester Teacher* goes to print, RTA's Representative Assembly is scheduled to vote on a proposed due's increase of two dollars per paycheck. The increase, according to **RTA's Treasurer John Pavone**, is needed to maintain the needed services for members and to protect the viability of RTA's general assets. The proposal was already approved unanimously by RTA's Executive Council.

"We're a strong and effective union," said Pavone, "because we have earned the confidence of teachers and because they have always supported us with the needed resources to accomplish our work on their behalf." RTA members have received the proposed language earlier this month. RTA's Representative Assembly, our union's policy-making body, is the only group that can authorize constitutional and by-laws changes for the organization.

At its March, 2006 meeting, RTA's Representative Assembly voted to approve changes to our union's Constitution. Under Article II (Purposes), the Teacher Union Reform Network (TURN) standards for responsible and responsive teacher unions were added (see below) to the already existing language. RTA, a founding member of the network since 1995, has been active in this coalition of progressive mostly-urban locals from both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association.

RTA President Adam Urbanski, TURN's director since 1998, strongly promoted the adopting of the TURN standards-both at the network and at the RTA. "We're a union of professionals," Urbanski said, "and these standards are a good fit with what our members value. As a union, we have both the opportunity and the responsibility to give voice to the collective wisdom of the teachers whom we represent. The bottom line for them, and therefore for us, is to promote the kind of teaching conditions that would contribute towards greater prospects for better learning for all our students."



Standards for Responsible and Responsive Teacher Unions

Responsible and responsive teacher unions are committed to:

- * consider students' learning as our primary goal and assume professional accountability for students' progress
- * take responsibility for teaching quality, support teachers' professional learning and leadership, and ensure that teachers are empowered at the school and classroom level
- * improve on an ongoing basis the terms and conditions under which both adults and students work and learn
- * expand the scope of collective bargaining to include instructional and professional issues and teacher involvement in educational decisions
- * organize members by promoting quality and create ways for excellent practitioners to become leaders in their schools and in our unions
- * collaborate with other stakeholders as equal partners and involve families and communities in students' learning
- * protect the right of collective action and collective bargaining
- * engage in democratic and transparent practices that are equitable and ethically and fiscally responsible, to embrace social justice, self determination, fairness, due process, tolerance and honor dissent
- * preserve and improve public education
- * maintain an open mind to new and promising ideas and changes



NYSUT President **Richard Iannuzzi** visited **Uma Mehta's** science class during a tour of several Rochester schools in April. President **Iannuzzi** (right) is shown here with **Franklin's International School of Science Principal Ali Abdulmateem, RTA President Adam Urbanski** and **Ms. Mehta.**



by Adam Urbanski



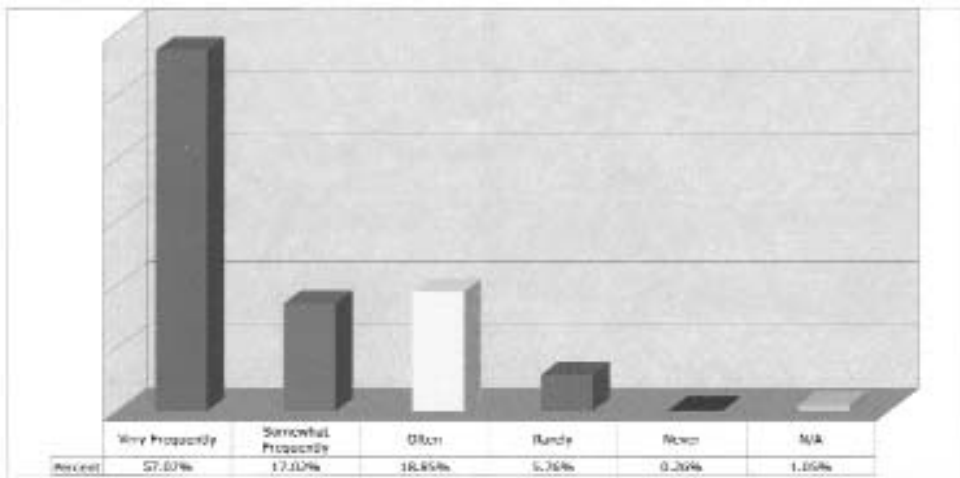
Safety and Discipline: What Rochester Teachers Think

In a recent survey conducted by the RTA's School Safety and Student Discipline Task Force, the overwhelming majority of Rochester teachers express grave concerns about the situation and little hope that it'll improve. Nonetheless, two-thirds of all Rochester teachers surveyed indicated that they feel safe performing their professional duties at schools each day. And that's despite the fact that an equal proportion of teachers feel that students' behavior has worsened (33.25%) or dramatically worsened (35.34%) during the past five years.

An astounding 92% of teachers consider student discipline to be a concern at their schools. Fewer than 7% do not. Yet, more than half (54%) say that there are no clear disciplinary consequences for violent student behavior – such as fighting, assaults on teachers or possession of weapons. And 76% say that where school-wide rules and consequences do exist, they are not consistently enforced. Here are some of the other findings from our survey:

- More than 91% of teachers reported that they observed frequent defiance or disrespect for teachers; 92% said that students often disobey teachers; and nearly 93% report that classroom instruction is interrupted by students' inappropriate behavior.
- More than 77% said that students are often punched, kicked or pushed by their peers at school. And 34% said that teachers are, as well. Verbal abuse by students is a serious problem, say nearly 90% of the teachers surveyed.
- Nearly half (49.5%) of all teachers surveyed said that "at-risk" students do not receive the support services or the intervention that they need. And more than 71% believe that there are not adequate support systems for students who have behavior problems.

**Question #6:
Classroom instruction is interrupted by a student's inappropriate behavior:**



When it comes to student needs and (mis)behavior, fewer than 14% of teachers responding to this survey said that they think the District even understands their school's needs. Nearly 82% are not so confident. That's the most daunting finding because it betrays little hope that relief will come any time soon. It is our union's responsibility and priority, however, to ensure that this will not remain so.

There can be no affective teaching or learning in an atmosphere of chaos, disorder and danger. And if all students can learn, then all students can learn to behave, too. That is why we are working together with Superintendent Rivera to develop appropriate services and alternatives for students who need them. Only then will we see the academic improvements that we all want for all our students.

The RTA's School Safety and Student Discipline Task Force, led by Jonathan Hickey, also included Marie Jenkins-Cox, Bill Quinlisk and Ellen Best. For a full report on this survey please log on to our union's website: www.rochesterteachers

Announcing the "Coping with the Fourth Quarter" P.D.



First you tear out May and June from the district calendar and tape them together. Next, cut off the weekends. Cross out any field trips, field days, and or final exams. Finally, starting with the last day of school, number the remaining days backwards until you get to today...which we can't count anyways!

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Staffing Schools

The District has completed the staffing process. This annual procedure is based on the District's budget, the school's anticipated enrollment. It is a process that includes the RTA. Each principal in the district attends the meeting for his/her school/program.

The number of teachers is identified and the roster is reviewed for: accuracy, job sharing, resignations/retirements and returns from leave. When fewer teachers are needed in any particular tenure are needed for the next school year, the least senior teacher(s) is identified for displacement. On some occasions, there is a tie in seniority between two or more teachers. In order to break the tie, we review the date of hire, the date the Board of Education actually included the names as hires, and finally the date the teacher signed the contract. When all three dates are identical, names are written and a random draw occurs.

There are approximately sixty staffing meetings each year. It does require a lot of time to go through each and every teacher's name and to solidify the teaching roster. The number of vacancies are identified that will be available on Placement Days. Displacement letters are printed for the identified least senior teacher being displaced. Principals are reminded that in the case of displacements, the teachers in the tenure area should be gathered together and offered the opportunity to volunteer to be transferred. The most senior teacher(s) have the option of volunteering to leave the school. They then become participants in Round Two at Placement Days.

If you have questions about any of the above, please contact Martha, Margaret or Jonathan at the RTA Office.

Some feedback from The March 24th Educational Conference

By Margaret Sergent, RTA Secretary



"I feel more empowered to do something about changing my pedagogy from test driven/scripted programs to meeting each child's needs."

"This workshop was very good (*Integrating Performing Arts into the Classroom*). I liked that it was a hands-on experience. We need more workshops like this!"

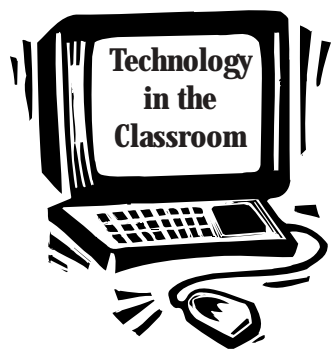
"Jonathan Kozol was a very powerful speaker!"

"As a result of this conference, I feel supported and appreciated."

"I feel that our union leadership, the Superintendent, and the School Board are really "on the same page" and working in partnership."

"I feel renewed - the sessions were very relevant and the conference was well organized."

"I found the Mayor's enthusiasm refreshing and feel that we really have our community and school leaders working together and supporting each other's efforts. It is refreshing to hear a unified message."



by Bill Gerber

First Aid For Your Mac

When simple measures such as restarting your Mac fail to make things right, you'll probably need to call in Disk Utility's First Aid tools. Here's how to use them.



Launch Apple's Disk Utility

You'll find Disk Utility in /Applications/Utilities. Click on the First Aid tab and select the name of the volume you want to fix from the list on the left side of the window.

Turn on Journaling

To make it easier for First Aid to do its job, make journaling is enabled for your disk volumes. The Journaling feature (introduced in OS X 10.3) keeps track of changes to files on your drive. If a crash occurs, this helps the utility restore the drive to its previous, stable state.

If Journaling is already enabled, the Enable Journaling button in the toolbar will be dimmed. If it's not dimmed, click on the button. This won't fix your current problem, but it's a good preventative measure.

Verify or Repair?

Disk Utility gives you two options: Verify and Repair. When you verify, the utility checks for problems but doesn't make any repairs, even if problems are found. This can be useful if you're not yet sure you want to risk modifying your disk (perhaps because you want a chance to back up your data first, just in case).

If you're using OS X 10.4.3 (or later) and you think the problem is with your startup disk, you might also choose to verify. It's annoying but true-you can't repair a disk that you're using. A new Live Verification feature, however, lets you verify even the startup volume, so you can see whether problems exist before you have to bother with rebooting from another volume or your OS X installation disk.

Live Verification works only for volumes with Journaling enabled, which is another reason to enable it. Also, like any new feature, Live Verification has some bugs. In particular, false error messages occasionally appear. For example, you can ignore an "Incorrect size for file temp" error message.

Choose Your Medicine

Now decide whether you need to run Repair Disk Permissions or Repair Disk. They are quite different, so you may want to run both.

Repair Disk Permissions fixes faulty permission settings for all files installed by OS X's Installer utility. OS X uses Unix permissions settings to determine your read and write access to files. If programs or documents won't open or are acting oddly, a permissions problem is often the culprit. You can repair disk permissions only on disks with OS X installed.

On the other hand, you can run Repair Disk on any volume, even one without OS X installed. This tool attempts to repair problems in a disk's directory, which keeps track of where everything on the disk is stored. This kind of repair can fix almost any ailment, from an inability to open a document to a complete failure to start up.

If you selected Repair Disk, and Disk Utility claims to have found errors but fixed them, select Repair Disk again, just to make sure. If Disk Utility finds errors it can't fix, you'll need a more powerful repair utility, such as Alsoft's DiskWarrior or Micromat's TechTool Pro.

If the Repair Disk Button Is Dimmed

When you choose the current startup volume, the Repair Disk button will be dimmed. The easiest way to fix this problem is to insert the Tiger DVD (or the Tiger Install DVD that came with your Mac) and hold down the C key while your Mac starts up. This will make it boot from the system software on the DVD instead of the software on your hard drive. Select Disk Utility from the Utilities menu. Now you'll be able to choose your regular startup volume from the list and click on Repair Disk.

Retirees Corner by Ted Modern

This winter and spring many "Relaxed Retirees" have or will be traveling far and wide. Some of the interesting destinations have been: South America, the Caribbean, Maine, Florida, Arizona, Hungary, Antarctica, Myrtle Beach and cruising the Danube River.

Others have stayed home to enjoy their families, do volunteer tasks and even work.

If you would like to do some volunteering consider Literacy Volunteers of Rochester. Contact RRTA's Marianne Overcash [621-4372] for more details. She has set up a program with them for RTA Retirees and Active members.

It is also the time of year for the United Way Campaign, have you sent in your pledge? Consider designating RTA's Dial-A-Teacher.

Nomination forms for RRTA Representatives to the RTA Representative Assembly will be mailed to dues paying RRTA members the end of April. Consider representing your fellow Retirees.

Something new has been added to a few of RRTA's activities - a rain date. If an activity has one, the flyer will state the date and details. Be sure to check the flyer, as the date won't be on the RRTA calendar.

The deadline for registering for the May 10 Mackenzie Childs Factory tour and lunch is May 3.

May will be a busy month: helping at the NYSUT Convention May 4-6, Mackenzie Childs tour May 10, Shaw festival May 11, RRTA meeting May 18 and Birding and lunch May 24.

A huge THANK YOU to the BOOKS FOR KIDS committee, the contributors to fund the project, Pittsford Barnes and Noble and the teachers of the classes. By the end of May each student in EIGHT first grade classes will have been presented with a hard cover book.

Please note that the May RRTA meeting is May 18. Hope to see you there.

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Rochester Teachers Association NYSUT AFT, AFL-CIO

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MEDIA REVIEW

Media Review is devoted to the discussion of books, movies and television presentations that have interest for teachers. *The Rochester Teacher* hopes these reviews will encourage debate and reviews by any member. Send your comments or reviews through the courier to RTA office.



Mary Barnum

TEACHERS HAVE IT EASY

The Big Sacrifices and Small Salaries of America's Teachers

by Daniel Moulthrop, Ninive Clements Calegari, and Dave Eggers

2005 The New Press 296 pages

TEACHERS HAVE IT EASY aims to demonstrate that teachers do not have it easy. Dave Eggers is the author *A HEARTBREAKING WORK OF STAGGERING GENIUS* and the founder of nonprofit tutoring and writing labs in San Francisco. Ninive Calegari, the director of an Eggers' lab, and Daniel Moulthrop, former teacher, join with Eggers to show that teachers leave the profession for economic reasons.

They present three common views of teacher salaries: "#1 ...Teachers are paid well.... Their workday ends at 3 p.m. and they have summers off.... #2 Though their job is difficult, teachers are paid adequately, and the profession inherently involves a certain amount of sacrifice -- much like, say the clergy. #3 ...Teachers need to be paid more..., but where would the money come from?"

All the talk about recruiting and retaining better teachers is belied by the grim economic realities that "A teaching career guarantees a life of subsistence earning - month to month and hand to mouth - for the teacher and her own children."

Forty years ago, a teacher's salary provided a middle class existence. This is no longer true. Most young teachers enter the profession burdened with student loans. Many teachers must work second jobs to survive. Teachers often can not afford to live in the neighborhoods where they teach. The salary which allows a single teacher to survive cannot support a family or allow for the purchase of a home.

The authors quote teachers from across the country. "I teach in a very affluent area. It's frustrating seeing the kids drive up in a Mercedes or BMW or SUV.... For ten years, I drove an old Honda Civic, and the kids said, 'Oh, that's the teacher's car.'"

"Currently I commute forty-two miles because I can't afford to take a job in the county where I live. I pass about five high schools on the commute before I even get to the highway that takes me to the school where I teach."

"Thirty five years old, and I'm calling Dad asking him to sign a loan for me. I'm a thirty-five-year-old college graduate, that's the worst thing."

If you're a teacher you know all this, and so this book is not worth your time if Eggers et al did not offer something beyond.

Read "Section II Understanding - Truly Understanding - What Goes Into Effective Teaching." The authors use quotes again, here from teachers and cognitive scientists to describe the teaching act and art.

Linda Darling Hammond says, "Good teachers know how to understand student's thinking: where they are, what they know, what they understand, how they learn and perceive. They understand how the structure of the discipline works, and that allows them to figure out what the ideas are, the scope and sequence of what students need to encounter in order to build their knowledge so that it adds up to deeper understanding.... That's a lot different from having an idea for a particular lesson on a particular day."

Gaea Leinhardt says, "One thing that makes teaching extraordinarily hard is the intensity of being 'on' for the six and a half hours that you're on, in ways that almost no other profession requires. You can't drop down and not pay attention When you're with the kids, you cannot not be there.... For me, it's a sense of changing direction all the time. We're starting a lesson, and even if nothing is interrupting the lesson, I need to constantly remember where we are, where we're going, and where people are with me.... It's extraordinarily intense."

One entire chapter is a chart comparing the day of a pharmaceutical salesman with a teacher's day. It will make any teacher smile or even, perhaps, howl.

The last section of the book attempts to offer ways give teachers more money and thus, keep them in the classroom. This section is very short. Every teacher should read it. Two of the pay schemes involve teacher unions and one a charter school.

I recommend **TEACHERS HAVE IT EASY**. Read it for a preview of the latest merit pay proposal. There is a good index. The authors also provide a sort of appendix listing "Innovative Schools, Districts and Unions," "Recommended Reading," and "Other Educational Advocacy, Reform, and Support Organizations." There is no mention of the American Federation of Teachers or the National Education Association. However, The Teacher Union Reform Network is listed.

Reviewed by Mary Barnum

All CSD Counselors

The RTA Counselor Section will meet from 2:30 to 3:30 in the NYSUT Conference Center, 30 North Union Street, on the following dates:

May 9 & June 13

Congratulations for wearing your flag pin

and

Welcome aboard to the over 100 new contributors who signed up at the March 29 RTA conference.



Our total is now 1394

DON'T YOU BE THE WEAK LINK.

Send your Vote/Cope form to Dave Altobelli or Mary Barnum at the RTA office

Scenes from RTA's Educational Conference

Superintendent's Conference Day 3/27/2006 March 27, 2006



On March 27, Superintendent's Conference Day, Rochester teachers participated in the largest RTA Educational Conference ever. Nearly 3000 colleagues had the opportunity to meet our city's newest mayor as well as our state and national union presidents.

Teachers participated in fifty workshops, were entertained by **Wavelength** ("A Funny Thing Happened Leaving No Child Behind"), and heard a passionate keynote by the noted author and education activist **Jonathan Kozol**.

The RTA's Superintendent's Conference Day workshops and meetings were held at the Rochester Riverside Conference Center.

Along with Jonathan Kozol (pictured at left addressing the conference), other notable speakers included **Rochester Mayor Robert Duffy** (top left), **Superintendent Manuel Rivera** (pictured with Jonathan Kozol, top center), **NYSUT President Richard C. Iannuzzi** and **AFT President Edward McElroy** (flanking RTA President Adam Urbanski in center picture).

Photos by Alex Johnson and Bill Gerber

