

The Rochester Teacher

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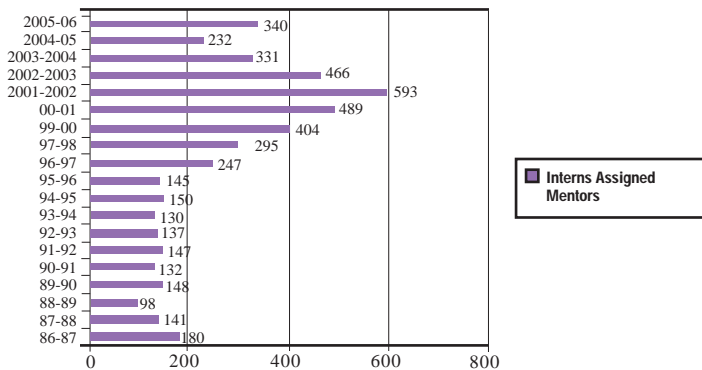
Rochester Teachers Association NYSUT, AFT, AFL-CIO - 30 North Union St., Rochester, NY 14607
Representing teachers • retirees • school instructors • substitute teachers • home/hospital teachers

Vol. 31, No. 7 September 2006



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

Over 300 New Teachers Hired Before September



In August when Mentor Coordinator **Marie Costanza** addressed the new teachers at Dr. Freddie Thomas High School during New Teacher Orientation, she said she was "beaming with excitement" because three of the new teachers were her former students.

"I can't express to you how proud I am to see three of my former favorite students all grown up and getting ready to make a difference in the lives of our Rochester City School District youngsters."

Costanza's former students were three of the 377 teachers that were hired by the District before the opening of school.

She says, "This was incredible! Last year, the District had hired 124 teachers before September. By the end of the 2005-06 school year the total number of new teachers hired was 340. As a result, the majority of mentors were not assigned until after the year had begun. This makes it much more difficult for new teachers to have a successful start."

Costanza says this increase in the number of new hires has not been the norm for the past 3 years. The highest number of new hires took place between 1999 and 2003, when the average number was 488, with the number peaking at 593 during 2001-2002, when a retirement incentive was offered.

Last spring, when the New Teacher Orientation Planning Committee met, they were initially told that the District projected a low number of new hires--perhaps 100 teachers. To be safe, Costanza used a base number of 150 for planning purposes. This figure was based on the average number of new teachers in attendance at the New Teacher Orientation during the past three years.

Throughout the summer Costanza continued to receive weekly updates. At the end of July, she realized she needed to increase the number of materials ordered; at that point the number of new hires had reached 180.

A week before the New Teacher Orientation, when **Diane Bozza**, the coordinator of the orientation was assessing the room organization, she made the decision to move the large group sessions to the student cafeteria because the lecture hall only has a capacity of approximately 250 people.

That was a good decision. By Thursday, when RTA President **Adam Urbanski** and the other RTA Officers addressed the audience, the number of new teachers in attendance had risen to 322.

Margaret Sergent, Secretary of the RTA, who has been a member of the NTO Planning Committee for the past 4 years, attributes the increase in new hires to a variety of factors.

She says, "There were 123 teachers that took advantage of the retirement incentive offered by the District. This left a large gap for the District to fill. Secondly, the District began recruiting earlier than usual, which provided the opportunity to hire in the areas that were of the greatest need - Math, Science, Foreign Language and Special Education. Lastly, the District was awarded the Reading First Grant at ten additional schools which allowed for the hiring of new elementary teachers at those schools."

Since August the number of new teachers has continued to increase. Before the school year began, Costanza had activated 167 mentors to work with 377 new teachers. This year 41 new mentors were hired. Costanza is anticipating more activations because new teachers continue to be hired daily.

Though the next selection process for new mentors does not begin until the spring, Costanza encourages eligible teachers to submit applications any time throughout the year. In order to apply, teachers must be tenured in the RCSD, and they must have 7 years of teaching experience, with 5 years in the RCSD. LT/Mentor applications are available on the RTA Website or by emailing marie.costanza@rcsdk12.org. Applications are kept on file for one year.

New RTA Unit Elects First Leadership Group

Working under their first contract, the newly formed RPPP (Rochester Preschool-Parent Program) Unit elected their RTA leadership on August 9th. There was a strong showing for the mid-summer organizational meeting by members eager to continue the positive legacy of relationships and teamwork that has been the cornerstone of this group for many years.

This new unit has 100% union membership.

RPPP has served as part of the RCSD for over 60 years in giving 3 and 4 year olds a rich initial school experience. Using the successful teaming formula of teacher, parent group leader and peer consultant, both children and parents grow in skills and confidence that enable engagement in the RCSD school community.

The members of this unit are energized by the significant role they play in the early life of children and their families. With about 25 Pre-K classrooms in 15 district schools, their impact is widely felt. Congratulations on a great beginning!

Pataki Vetoes Retirement Incentive Legislative Update

Governor George Pataki vetoed two pieces of legislation that could have benefited many teachers. Under legislation that cleared both houses, a "55/25" early retirement bill was rejected using veto number 226. Also the governor killed the age equalization among tiers bill using veto #398. The second legislation would have permitted teachers in Tiers II, III and IV to retire after 35 years of service regardless of age.

Retirement:

The legislature passed a bill allowing retirement upon completion of 35 years of service in Tiers II, III and IV regardless of age.

Other Bills:

The legislature did extend the Health Insurance Moratorium for retired school district employees. This prohibits unilateral diminution of health insurance benefits for retired teachers. This bill is enacted annually.

The maximum amount that can be earned for 2007 has been raised to \$30,000.



RTA WISHES RIVERA WELL Rivera to Boston

After five years of successfully leading the District, Superintendent Manuel Rivera announced on September 22 that he will retire from the District next July 10th. He worked collaboratively with the RTA as well as with the community. He is slated to head the Boston School District that shares many demographics and other characteristics with Rochester.

RTA Delegates Attend AFT Convention

RTA delegates joined over 3000 others from 520 locals from across the United States at the 79th biennial convention of the American Federation of Teachers in Boston, July 20 through 23.

Over 70 resolutions were debated and voted upon. A comprehensive resolution on No Child Left Behind asks that Congress extend the 2014 date when all students must demonstrate proficiency through testing, as well as correct funding deficiencies and unfair policies by including English language learners in states' testing and accountability systems.

Reflecting a membership that includes other public employees, nurses and health care workers, the convention voted to support the 660 nurses at Englewood Hospital in New Jersey who have been on strike since June 29 in protest of unsafe staffing levels and cuts in their pensions. The delegates directed the AFT to campaign against the increased use of part-time faculty at the college level, noting that 30 full-time to 70 part-time is not academically sound, as well as to fight for equitable salary and benefits for part-time higher ed faculty.

The delegates approved a dues increase from \$153 per year to \$167.40 in September of 2006 and to \$176.40 in September of 2007.

One of the highlights of the convention was an address by Han Dongfang, who demonstrated with students at Tiananmen Square in 1989, started a union for workers and was jailed for his activism. He described the wholesale mistreatment of Chinese workers (7 day weeks, 13 hour days, dormitory living) and pledged to continue the struggle for workers' rights in China.

Senator Edward Kennedy, co-author of No Child Left Behind, enumerated the ways the Bush administration has failed our children. "The law has become an empty slogan for the administration."

At the Human Rights Committee luncheon, Jane Alao, a social worker from Darfur in the Sudan, described the horrible and widespread human rights abuses in her country, in particular the large scale rape of girls and women, who, according to the law of their country, need the witness of "4 men or eight women" to bring formal charges of rape.

RTA President **Adam Urbanski** was reelected AFT Vice President, receiving the fourth highest vote total of the 40 candidates. Additionally, AFT President **Ed McElroy** has nominated Urbanski to the position of Chair of the Democracy/International Affairs Committee of the AFT, which is a member of Education International.



by Adam Urbanski



You and the RTA: A Two-Way Street

Now that we're into the new school year, I would like to resume my school visits and guest teaching. During the next several months, I would like to visit each school to meet with RTA members and, if possible, to coordinate it with visiting a classroom. The purpose of my school visits is to learn more about the concerns of our members so that we could assist in addressing these issues. The school visits to meet with RTA members are best coordinated through your RTA Faculty Representative(s). But please feel free to call me directly (546-2681) or e-mail <urbanski@rochesterteachers.com> if you would like to invite me to guest-teach in your classroom.

Additionally, through your RTA Faculty Representative, you could invite other RTA officers and consultants to come to your school for updates, sharing information, workshops, or to help resolve concerns and assist with dilemmas.

On matters related to contractual rights, please contact RTA's First Vice-President **Martha Keating**, RTA Secretary **Margaret Sergent**, or RTA's Labor Relations Specialist **Jonathan Hickey**. Jon now also chairs RTA's School Safety and Student Discipline Committee, so please contact him on issues related to that topic. When it comes to budgetary issues, especially assistance with understanding your school's current budget, member benefits, or RTA Conference days, RTA's Treasurer **John Pavone** would be the most knowledgeable resource. RTA's Second Vice-President, **Debbi Jackett**, is our lead person on professional development opportunities through the Rochester Teaching Academy (formerly ULead) and on RTA's after-school tutoring under the NCLB Supplemental Educational Services. All technology-related questions should be referred to RTA Consultant **Bill Gerber**. **Patti Brody** is RTA's consultant on Special Education. RTA Consultants **Mary Barnum** and **Dick Raymond** can assist with School-based Planning and RTA Building Committee issues.

You can find contact information for all of the above-mentioned RTA officers and consultants on our website: www.rochesterteachers.com. Or just call the RTA office (546-2681) and we'll take it from there. As always, we want you to feel comfortable to visit us at the RTA (30 North Union Street, Suite #301), but we also want to bring the union to you - when needed.

Have a successful school year. We look forward to seeing you at our place or yours. Or both.



Van White, Democratic nominee for the Rochester City School Board, with RRTA members who phoned NYSUT members on his behalf: **Beryl Conklin**, **Carol Giunta**, **Aino Turu**, **Patti Brody**, **Freddi Macek**, **June Ivanick**, **Barb Buckingham**, **Bobbi Miller**, **Mary Barnum**. RRTA also mailed out a special endorsement issue of the *Rochester Teacher* to all NYSUT members who are registered Democrat and live in the city. Additional RRTA workers were **Mary Gentry**, **Paula Kromberg**, **Bob Allen**, **Nob Ichishita**, **Jim Kraus**, **Barb McDaniels**, **Georgianne Lanser**, and **Delores Locklear**.



Rosemary Rivera, Alliance for Quality Education, BENTE President **Dan DiClemente** and RTA Secretary **Margaret Sergent** attend a press conference at School #29 to support ACT in Education Month.

AFT CHARTER SCHOOL ANALYSIS CONFIRMED

A long-delayed U.S. Department of Education analysis of the academic achievement of charter school students compared to regular public school students released Aug. 22 showed that charter school students for the most part performed at lower levels than students in regular public schools. "The department's study provides further evidence against unchecked expansion of the charter school experiment," says AFT president **Edward J. McElroy**. The AFT has been calling for the release of the analysis of 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores among these groups for more than two years, and "we are pleased that the department has finally made it public," says McElroy.

The study confirms the findings of a 2004 AFT report on the 2003 NAEP charter school data, which showed that charter students usually do not perform as well as their peers in public school. In a 2004 advertisement in the New York Times, critics of the AFT report said characteristics such as parental education, household income and the quality of learning resources in the home are necessary to make an accurate comparison between achievement in charter and regular public schools. The analysis released this month adjusts for race, socioeconomic status and other characteristics.

Updates for the RTA Website

During the past year, the RTA website (www.rochesterteachers.com) has undergone some changes. The goal is to make this site a tool for teachers to have quick access to teaching and union related materials, as well as a way to communicate important information to all of our members.

Currently, we have been updating the RTA Contract section which includes information about the new contract which took effect on July 1, 2006. You can download the documents which were distributed after negotiations were completed and the updated salary schedule which will be in effect through June, 2009. The latest information about the Professional Development Incentive and the Wednesday schedule for professional development is also available.

All RTA members are encouraged to check the website frequently to stay informed with the activities of our union. If you feel there is a document or information which is important for all members, please contact **Jon Hickey** (jhickey@rochesterteachers.com) or **Bill Gerber** (bgerber@rochesterteachers.com) and they can add the information to the website.



Another Year Begins

Forty years ago I became an employee of the RCSD and a brand new RTA member. My salary was less than \$6,000. I had no mentor. (There was a helping teacher during my probationary period who visited maybe three times a year.) My evaluation was mostly a narrative with some ratings. My Principal was THE decision maker. I was on strike and fined two-days-for-each day missed twice. (A one-day walk-out in support of the integration of schools, plus the 1980 eight day strike).

So how has our union changed things from 1966?

Salaries are at a more professional level and competitive with the suburbs, plus dental insurance was added. There is a strong, Lead Teacher/Mentor program, now twenty years old, instead of the administrative helping teacher position. Once tenured, teachers can elect PART/Summative as a three-year collegial evaluation system with administrative input. There is now shared decision making through School Based Planning Team. Building Committees were invented. A Living Contract Committee allows for continuing negotiations instead of only at the end of a contract. We have had no strike since 1980. The Salary Benchmarking formula went a long way toward helping. A better working relationship with the District has been developed along the way. Then there is the professional development incentive and the absentee reduction plan. What did I miss?

And what about the students?

They're still ready for us...full of expectations...just like they were forty years ago.

Have a great school year!!

Collegial Learning Through the Rochester Teacher Center

The Rochester Teacher Center announces that it will continue to support teachers in designing and implementing their own professional learning initiatives over the coming school year. RTC Director Susan Goodwin reports that the RTC Collegial Learning Circle Program developed and first implemented eight years ago, continues to grow. She says that, "RTC Circle members are taking charge of their own learning, producing high quality work, and are consistently focused on students and how they learn." Teachers interested in applying to participate in this year's program can get an application by going to the RTC website, www.rochesterteachercenter.com. Applications must be submitted by September 20, 2006. Teachers can call the RTC for further information.



RTA Parade Support-ers in front row: **Katie Rinere**, **Jessica Rinere**, **Lizzie McMIndes** and **Tommy McMIndes**
Back row: **Aimee Rinere** (#44), **Willie Humphrey** (RRTA) and **Pam McMIndes** (# 35)

Carrying the Banner for the RTA are: **David Sutliff**, **Mary Zimmer** (#9), **Natalie Sawczuk** (RRTA), **Paul Sutliff** (IIT at Edison) and **Brooke Weinstein** (daughter of **Nancy Weinstein** of #16)



2006 Labor Film Series

The 17th Annual Labor Film Series has begun in the Dryden Theatre at the George Eastman House. Co-sponsored by the George Eastman House and the Rochester Labor Council, the film series has provided audiences with many thought provoking film opportunities that illustrate the working lives of men and women from all over the world. The cost of the films are free to local unions. If members are interested in attending the films, please contact **Margaret Sergent** for tickets. All films shown at the Eastman House Dryden Theater, 900 East Avenue.

Friday, October 6 - Rochester Premiere 8 p.m.

WHO NEEDS SLEEP (Haskell Wexler & Lisa Leeman, US 2006, 78 min.)

Friday, October 13 8 p.m.

GOIN' DOWN THE ROAD (Donald Shebib, Canada 1970, 90 min.)

Friday, October 20 8 p.m.

FIVE EASY PIECES (Bob Rafelson, US 1970, 98 min.)

Friday, October 27 - Rochester Premiere 8 p.m.

OUR DAILY BREAD (UNSER TÄGLICH BROT) Nikolaus Geyrhalter, Austria 2005, 92 min.)

Building Committee Responsibilities

By Margaret Sergent, RTA Secretary



Faculty Representatives in individual schools and work sites should hold Building Committee Elections this fall. The Building Committee should have no more than four (4) elected teachers and a faculty representative. The collective bargaining agreement (our contract) states, "The Building Committee shall meet upon request at a mutually agreeable time with the Association Building Committee to discuss and review local school problems and practices, school operations, and questions relating to the implementation of this Agreement." Once elected, Building Committee members should schedule regular meetings with their principals to address issues.

Building Committees have duties and responsibilities that are required to be completed in the month of October. The first should be to discuss and develop a plan for handling assaults on teachers and staff. This plan should be reviewed annually and filed with the appropriate school chief and the RTA. This should be completed by October 1. The second responsibility is that the Building Committee and the principal should review and/or develop a plan to deal with emergency situations where a teacher must consent to assume substitute duties. Copies of the emergency substitute plans should be filed with the Superintendent and the RTA by October 15.

There are other responsibilities that should have been completed in June of the previous school year. A classroom interruption policy should be developed and again filed with the appropriate school chief and the RTA. If this plan has not been completed for a school site for the 2006 - 2007 school year, it is recommended that the Building Committee complete this along with the emergency substitute plan and the assault plan and forward it as well.

Other Building Committee responsibilities are outlined in Section 9.9(c) on page 10 and 11 of the contract. If Faculty Reps or committee members have questions, they may contact the RTA at 546-2681.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH TECHNOLOGY

By Debbi Jackett, RTA 2nd Vice President



Welcome back to school - and some dramatic changes in our schools. Almost everyone is learning how to use the new student information system, the new e-mail system, and the new professional development management system. Have you figured out what Avatar is? Or Outlook? Or Chancery? (answers: PD, e-mail, and student information). Oops - I forgot about IEP Direct.... If you're feeling a little (or a lot) overwhelmed by all of these new systems, you're in good company. Every teacher, even those who have successfully avoided encounters with computers for the past several years, is faced with learning and using these new systems. This is probably how a lot of our students feel when they're struggling to learn new skills.

From the information and training I've received in my school, it appears that the district is trying to provide opportunities to learn these new systems. I'm not sure that enough training is being offered - it seems that the dates and times may be too limited. Have you tried the training through Element K - some teachers have found this helpful because you can do it online.

RTA is joining this new push to move information online. The Rochester Teaching Academy (formerly known as ULead) will be using the Avatar system to handle registration for workshops and courses starting this fall. We will not be sending out registration packets every six weeks. You will not register for courses and workshops by mailing or faxing us a registration form. We will not be mailing you a confirmation of your registration. Instead, you can find the listings for the Rochester Teaching Academy on the Avatar system. You can register and receive confirmation online. You will receive e-mail reminders that your course date is approaching. If you're on a waiting list, the system will notify you if there's a cancellation and offer you the seat. Avatar will also keep a record of the PD you have taken if it's offered through Avatar. And, you can do this on your home computer!

We think that Avatar will make it easier for you to manage your professional development - it should be "one stop shopping" for many of you because district PD and Rochester Teachers Center PD are also on this system. And it's easy - if you can shop online, you will be able to learn how to use Avatar quickly. As we learn this new system, I'm sure there will be a few glitches - please let me know if you have trouble with the system. But don't procrastinate - you'll start finding Rochester Teaching Academy listings on Avatar by the end of the month. I hope you'll agree that this change is a good thing.

Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program

600 Maryland Ave., SW Suite 320
Washington DC 20024
202.314.3527 phone
202.479.6806 fax
fulbright@grad.usda.gov
www.fulbrightexchanges.org

The Fulbright Center in the Netherlands is looking for American high school teachers for Educational Exchange

The Fulbright Center in the Netherlands announces a new program for high school teachers in the Netherlands who want to set up a high school educational exchange with an American high school. In the Netherlands there is a lot of interest in cooperation with an American high school. One of the elements of this new program is a conference on September 15th about High School Cooperation with the US. The Fulbright Center is delighted to announce that more than 100 Dutch teachers applied for participating in this conference.

The outcome of an educational exchange project can be variable: a project over the Internet, a teachers exchange or a student exchange. It can be a project in a certain subject: geography, history or arts or just about getting to know each others culture. The Fulbright Center knows more than 100 teachers who are interested in an exchange with the US and we can establish contacts between your school and a school in The Netherlands. If you send some specific information about your school we can look for a good match!

Please send an e-mail if you want more information or if you want us to bring you in contact with a Dutch high school teacher. Contact Marlies Eijsink, Program Coordinator of the High School Cooperation Program: m.eijsink@fulbright.nl call: +31-2-5315934.

Fulbright in the Netherlands website: www.fulbright.nl

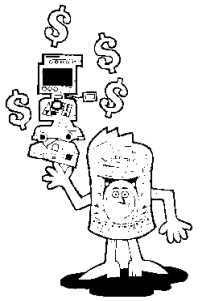
For more information about these programs and other Fulbright events please visit the OTHER OPPORTUNITIES page of our website: <http://www.fulbrightexchanges.org/View/ViewOtherOpps.asp>

Please feel free to pass this along!



MONEY MATTERS

by John Pavone, Treasurer



Q. Do you know the Teacher Payroll Dates for this school year (2006-2007)?

A. The Payroll Dates are listed below. Please note there are three Payrolls in March.

Payroll Dates - 2006-2007

September 15, 2006	February 2, 2007
September, 29, 2006	February 16, 2007
October 13, 2006	March 2, 2007
October 27, 2006	March 16, 2007
November 9, 2006	March 30, 2007
November 22, 2006	April 13, 2007
December 8, 2006	April 27, 2007
December 22, 2006	May 11, 2007
January 5, 2007	May 25, 2007
January 19, 2007	June 8, 2007

Wednesday PD Schedule 2006-07

District PD Dates		Instructional Task Dates	
Sep 20	Feb 14	Sep 21	Feb 28
Oct 11	Mar 14	Oct 18	Mar 21
Nov 15	May 10	Nov 8	Apr 18
Jan 10		Dec 13	May 23
		Jan 17	

School-based PD Dates		Unnumbered	
Sep 13	Feb 7	Sep 6	Mar 28
Oct 4	Mar 7	Oct 25	May 2
Nov 1	Apr 4	Nov 20	May 30
Dec 6	Apr 25	Jan 24	Jan 13
Dec 20	May 0	Jan 31	Jan 20
Jan 3	Jan 6	Feb 21	

Optics in the Spotlight

The Rochester Section of the Optical Society of America cordially invites you to

Science Educators' Day

Thursday, October 12, 2006

4:30 - 8:00pm (Dinner Included)

Rochester Riverside Convention Center - Lilac Room

Every two years the Optical Society of America holds its national meeting in Rochester, attracting attendees from around the world. As part of the meeting, the Rochester Section of the Society hosts an event intended to expose high school and middle school science teachers to the amazing world of optics. Numerous exhibits will be on display - making demonstration of the fundamentals of optics easy, fun and inexpensive. Local society members will run the demonstrations and be available to talk about the bright future in optics and the opportunities available to your students. Each participant will receive items to take home, including demonstration aids and lesson plans for each of the exhibits. There will be several additional aids given away at floor prices. Dinner will be provided.

This event is provided at no cost for High School and Middle School Science Teachers of the Greater Rochester area.

Space is limited please reserve a spot soon!

To register complete the attached form and

E-mail - Eday@osa.org

Fax - 585-241-1526

Mail - OSA Educators' Day c/o Per Adairson

The Institute of Optics

The University of Rochester

Rochester, NY 14627

Old form

REGISTRATION DEADLINE - Friday, September 20, 2006

Questions? Email us at Eday@osa.org

Please print clearly

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ Zip Code _____ Phone () _____
School District _____ High School / Middle School _____
School Name _____
Science Specialty (i.e. Chemistry, Physics, etc.) _____
Email _____
Demonstration requests? _____

Registration for Science Educators' Day implies consent that management may use any pictures taken during the event, which may include your likeness, without remuneration.

The Rochester Teacher

Rochester Teachers Association NYSUT, AFT, AFL-CIO

Official publication of the Rochester Teachers Association Affiliated with the New York State United Teachers, the American Federation of Teachers (Local 616), AFL-CIO, and the Greater Rochester Labor Council.

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No Member
• Should Experience Being A Victim Alone •

CALL RTA

Crime Victims Assistance Committee

HelpLine! 234-9739



by Bill Gerber

How to Thrive - - Not Just Survive -- in a One-Computer Classroom

Are you a teacher in a one-computer classroom? Do you long to incorporate technology into your lessons but not know how? Are you unsure how to start, feel overwhelmed, or believe it is more of a hassle than it is worth?

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES THAT WORK

In many classrooms, the single computer is relegated to the back wall. Be sure to place the computer in an easily accessible and easily supervised place. Keep the computer away from direct sunlight, water, magnets, and chalk dust.

Another strategy is to create "stations" or multiple activities, using the computer as only one of the tools necessary to complete assignments.

If the computer is used as a station, a strategy for moving students through that station is a necessity. Following are some possible traffic strategies:

- Post a schedule. Allow a set amount of time for each student at the computer station. Students are responsible for getting to the station at the appointed time.
- Draw Popsicle sticks. Write each student's name on a Popsicle stick. Place the can of Popsicle sticks at the computer station. Draw a stick at the start of the day. The person whose name is on the stick will start the day at the station. That student will draw a stick to determine who goes next.
- Establish color-coded groups. Divide the class into five groups. Write the names of each group on a different sheet of colored paper, and post the papers by the computer station. The students in each group will spend time at the computer on a given day (for example, the students in the red group will have computer time on Mondays). The students within a group will go to the computer in assigned or random order.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Many teachers in one-computer classrooms project the computer screen onto a larger screen that the entire class can see. However, when using such devices with small screens, you may find distortion; 32-inch or larger screens seem to work best for Internet displays.

Other teachers encourage students to quickly print articles and read them at their desks while different students use the computer for new tasks. Though this rapid race to print may result in printing some articles that are unneeded, teachers find toner and paper much less expensive than additional computers.

Still others borrow computers, use the computer lab, ask if a student can work quietly on an unused computer in another teacher's room, or provide alternate times during which students can access the computer -- before school, at lunch, during recess, or after school.

Many teachers are scroungers! And scrounging often results in locating additional computers! Sometimes those computers are old ones that don't have all the bells and whistles -- but they can be fine for word processing. Newer computers can be used for Internet access or multimedia projects that require high-speed modems or special features.

ACTIVITIES FOR A ONE-COMPUTER CLASSROOM

- Have a student:
- check the weather forecast at weather.com and e-mail it to the school principal, who can announce it before school ends so everyone will know how to dress the next day.
 - use an online tutorial or the Global Grocery List Project to compare grocery prices from around the world.
 - e-mail an expert at Ask an Expert, which connects with experts in any subject area.
 - check School Menu and compare your school's lunch with others all over the country.
 - use a site such as ePALS to find a partner class in another school -- or on another continent.
- Encourage Student Writing and publish work on the Web.

Retirees Corner

By Ted Modern

Where did the summer go? Even if you weren't doing all the things "Relaxed Retirees" do, just working at keeping cool in July was a major chore. We probably will want it back come January and February.

A correction for the Medicare article in the recent RRTA mailing. Medicare Part D should have been Medicare Part B.

On August 10, the "Relaxed Retirees" that worked at the RTA hospitality booth at the NYSUT Convention were treated to lunch by NYSUT ("Dinosaur Barbecue" ribs, chicken, pulled pork, rice, beans, cornbread and salad). Before and after lunch, the "Relaxed Retirees" were put to work for RTA and RRTA.

This time it was "just" a small mailing to collate, label, tape and keep in the right zip code order. This was done in two NYSUT conference rooms. In one room nine sheets were collated, labeled, folded, taped and zip code sorted to be sent to 1672 retirees. The other group labeled, folded, taped in two places and zip code sorted one sheet to go to 3906 active members. This was an all day work-a-thon. After they were all boxed according to Post Office rules, Sue and Dick Raymond took them to the Post Office so that they would go right out.

During this "highly skilled" operation, "Relaxed Retirees" not only discussed every topic imaginable, but several participated in a Scotch tape war. This was one of several friendly disruptions. I believe the following were all of the "Relaxed Retirees" that were there. I apologize if I left anyone out and/or misspelled your name.

Sue Raymond, Lili Bonani, Dorothy Rossi, Mary Jo Whalen, Rita Zimmer, Karen Huey, Cile Nix, Marianne Overcash, Rosalie Kiely, Freddie Macek, Polly Bradbury, Linda Rapkin, Bob Allen, Beryl Conklin, Mary Casey, Donna Corsale, Kathy Evans, Judy Flanders, Arlene Hanley, Elissa Hemmings, Dick Raymond, Mary Gentry, June Ivanick, Nob Ichishita, Carol Bonsignore Kitchen, Ted Modern, Mary Barnum, Dorothy Reed, and Carol Giunta.

Our trip to Longwood Gardens, Valley Forge National Park, QVC, Brandywine River Museum and much more was a HUGE success thanks to Karen Huey. A big "Relaxed Retiree" Plaudit for Karen. I have many stories to relate about the trip but they will have to wait for another time. You might want to ask someone about a coach load of retirees getting "BUSTED" in the dark.

Fran Hall has a "WORD WIZARD" reading appreciation program for two women's homeless shelters situated in the City. They are supervised by the CATHOLIC FAMILY CENTER. Fran is looking for four or more women to read to the homeless kids of homeless mothers twice a month. The program provides a VERY simple lesson plan, plus an activity and gently used books to be handed out to each child after story time. It takes forty-five minutes to execute from start to finish. For more information, contact Fran at franhall@yahoo.com.

The book signing and reading by our own Eldridge McClaney is on October 19. Don't forget to sign up for the many upcoming RRTA activities.

Have you sent in your 2006 - 2007 dues?

Hope to see you at the next RRTA meeting October 5, 10 AM at the RTA offices.

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

GIRLBOMB

A Halfway Homeless Memoir

by Janice Erlbaum

2006 Villard

252 pages

Her first book, **GIRLBOMB**, is Janice Erlbaum's memoir of leaving home at age fifteen. However, "Girlbomb" is also the title of the column Erlbaum has been writing for BUST magazine for over ten years. Since 1993, BUST has been presenting "the third wave feminine perspective on pop culture." The column, "Girlbomb," fiercely defends the rights of women.

Erlbaum employs a conversational tone in both column and book. Readers relate to her experiences, even if one has never been thrown against the wall by a mother's boy friend, even if one has never tried PCP.

GIRLBOMB gives us a good understanding of how Erlbaum reached her present ferocity. In 1984, Janice is living with her mother in Manhattan. Her mother is a successful businesswoman. She has already left two abusive husbands. Now she marries a third abuser.

Erlbaum's describes months of fights. "As bad as the fights were, the times in between were even worse, because that was when Dave and my mother were aggressively trying to pretend they weren't both nuts. God, how I loathed her when she was with him. She adopted all his mannerisms, his sarcastic sneer, his "sociological" observations on "those kinds of people." Together, they made these desperate, ridiculous plans - 'Next year we're thinking of moving to France.' - and my internal eyeballs rolled so hard they practically bounced. My mom and Dave became manic about putting a good face on things, both seething with paranoia and rage, and I was often the proxy target of their mutual hatred. They'd called me in for a family meeting and tell me that I wasn't doing my part around the house, that they hated my clothes, and what was I doing with all those hickies, missy? 'You need to cool it with the boys.' My disgusting stepfather leered as my mother imperiously agreed. "You're really stacked. The boys must be on you like dogs." His eyes flicked over me like a tongue. It was around this time that I started to think about leaving."

Dave leaves (is arrested, is thrown out) many times and Janice's mother promises she will not let him return. Erlbaum describes the night that she leaves home. She is fifteen. Her mother comes into the kitchen and says her name.

"I knew right away. 'Listen to me, Janice.' My stomach flipped. I choked on a laugh, like I'd inhaled a dandelion puff. I couldn't speak. I backed away from the stove... Dave was coming back. I had told her I was leaving if she took him back. And she was taking him back. This math only added up one way. I walked out of the kitchen and into my bedroom, grabbed my book bag, and headed for the door. My mother stood by the door, arms folded. She said, 'Where do you think you're going?' I had no idea. 'Out,' I said. And I walked out.

Erlbaum finds refuge, of sorts, in a shelter and a group home. She meets girls who possess more self loathing than she. For example, "Sherri was about six months pregnant, her belly stuck out like a load of laundry in front of her, and she was determined to miscarry - often, when the nuns weren't looking, she'd take a flying leap at the arm of a sofa or smash her belly into the stair banister."

After 18 months, her mother convinces her to return home. Dave has left, she has a new baby brother, and her mother is taking anti anxiety pills. Janice takes up serious school skipping, clubbing, multiple sex partners and drugs. She moves in with a boyfriend who knows people who know people who can get coke. How she lives through all this and graduates from high school is never made clear. At one point in her cocaine period, she admits, "I'm sure I died."

Chapter 16 and 17 describe her life with cocaine. "We sat back, and I let the tingle cascade down my throat, burning toward my heart like a gunpowder fuse. Then it hit, and I rode the crest of a wave so high I felt like I could see the whole ocean at once, the refracting curvature of the earth. This is what made it all worth it, all the scrambling and the scheming, the anxious waiting, and the miserable headaches - this feeling of manifest destiny, of unstoppable rightness. I was a genius, the most sensitive being on the planet; ideas and impressions rising into my head faster than I could record them, whole novels, symphonies, shades of violet gray..." And she finds herself using more and more cocaine. "I think it might have been late January, but it could as easily have been early February. I don't know what day or night or time it was. I don't know when we'd last slept. We hadn't eaten in a while - I knew because I was only vomiting water, and dry heaving over the toilet, as Sebastian searched and scraped for remnants of the coke in the other room.... My heart fluttered like a plastic bag in the wind. I rested my head on the cool tile floor and swore for the millionth time... I just gotta quit..."

I recommend **GIRLBOMB**. This is a very good writer. This is a very good description of some difficult teenage years.

Reviewed by Mary Barnum

Vote Needs You...
COPE

The Vote/Cope "family" has just grown by 95 new contributors. Our strong linked chain continues to grow.

Thank you to our newest RTA interns who happen to appreciate the benefits of Vote/Cope. Be a strong "link"...contribute to Vote/Cope.

See your RTA representative for a contribution form. Send the completed form to RTA c/o David Altobelli.