

The Rochester Teacher

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

Vol. 32, No. 1 September 2007



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

Teachers Grade Their Principals

Last spring, RTA conducted its annual survey of teachers regarding their principals' performance. We received a wide range of responses to the twenty-question survey.

Below is a chart showing teachers' responses, in schools that returned at least 50% of their surveys, to the last (summative) question on the 2006-2007 survey. RTA Faculty Representatives will be given the complete results for their school to share with teachers. The same aggregate statistical information will be sent to school principals in the 25 schools for which the data was tabulated. Please contact **Jonathan Hickey** at the RTA office (546-2681) or at jhickey@rochesterteachers.com with any questions or for additional information.

I have confidence that the current principal can provide leadership at our school.				
School	Response Rate	Yes	No	Did Not Answer
25	100%	100%	0%	0%
19	50%	100%	0%	0%
23	88%	95%	5%	0%
46	81%	91%	5%	4%
39	100%	89%	4%	7%
7	60%	86%	14%	0%
Franklin Global	100%	85%	15%	0%
2	77%	85%	15%	0%
22	55%	85%	11%	4%
36	69%	83%	13%	4%
Montessori	82%	78%	22%	0%
29	82%	74%	26%	0%
SOTA	54%	69%	31%	0%
35	62%	68%	28%	4%
16	50%	65%	30%	5%
57	63%	60%	40%	0%
6	67%	55%	35%	10%
15	58%	50%	17%	33%
44	83%	50%	50%	0%
54	71%	47%	27%	26%
3	59%	44%	49%	7%
45	91%	41%	57%	2%
North S.T.A.R.	78%	40%	60%	0%
14	72%	38%	59%	3%
5	57%	2%	96%	2%



Longfellow Teachers for Citizenship Education.

Longfellow Teachers Promote Civic Education

The Civic Mission of Schools is being addressed in a variety of ways across our nation. Rochester's Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Elementary School took up the challenge of identifying programs and educational activities which promote civic education in schools.

The teachers of Longfellow identified two programs sponsored by the US Department of Education run through the Center for Civic Education in Calabasas, California. These programs are: **Project Citizen** - a program which focuses on the role of state and local government. The curriculum involves an entire class of students in a series of structured cooperative learning activities. Project Citizen students do the following:

- Identify a problem that requires a public policy solution
- Gather and evaluate information on the problem
- Examine and evaluate alternative solutions
- Develop their own proposed public policy to address the problem
- Create an action plan to get their policy adopted by government

We the People - The Citizen and the Constitution - a program that provides upper elementary, middle and high school students with an innovative course of instruction on the history and principles of constitutional democracy in the United States. The program provides critical thinking exercises and cooperative learning techniques which help students develop intellectual and participatory civic education skills, while increasing students understanding of the institutions of American constitutional democracy.

Teacher training for both of these programs were conducted at different times at Salve Regina University, Newport, Rhode Island. The Director for both programs was **Michael Trofi**, AFT Vice President of the West Warwick Teachers Alliance, Rhode Island #1017.

The Longfellow teachers that attended the training were:

- Project Citizen:**
Gladys Vascanie, Vice Principal
Al Smith
Ruth Smith
Kristal Tillman
Joe Di Paolo
- We The People:**
Carol Coddling
Linda Thompson
Vicki Phillips

Speaking of the school teams Al Smith said it was "a quality, worthwhile venture. These programs will help Longfellow promote civic learning."

If you want more information about these programs contact; Eileen Gerrish (egerrish@nybar.org) or Michael Trofi (mtrofi@westwarwickpublicschools.com)



Emily Cotto (Monroe), Mariela Polito (#28) and Matt Ross-McGuire were among the new hires at the week long New Teacher Orientation held during the last week of August. Matt had previously been a paraprofessional at School #2 and is a part of a growing trend of paras working towards their teacher certification.

Rochester's "Career in Teaching" Program Wins NEA Partnership Award

The Career in Teaching Program, a partnership of the Rochester City School District and Rochester Teachers Association, has won a national award as an outstanding partnership between a union and administration resulting in a successful teacher induction program.

The 2007 National Education Association/Saturn/United Auto Workers Partnership Award for Teacher Induction Programs will be presented on June 29 at the NEA Board of Directors meeting in Philadelphia. Rochester is one of six cities from across the country chosen for the award.

"I am especially proud of this program because it is a commitment of teachers and administrators to provide what is best for children: great teachers," said Rochester Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. **William C. Cala**.

"We are proud of our longstanding partnership in Rochester to build a more genuine profession for teachers and more effective schools for our students," said RTA President Dr. **Adam Urbanski**.

Established in 1987, Rochester's Career in Teaching Program incorporates support for new teachers, provides opportunities for highly accomplished teachers to share their skills, and offers peer review and assistance to help teachers improve their practice.

The program designates four stages in a teacher's career—intern, resident teacher, professional teacher, and lead teacher—and provides programmatic support and professional opportunities at each level. It also includes a set of professional expectations that echo those of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

The Career in Teaching Program has been recognized by the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future as a model teacher induction program. It is credited with contributing to Rochester's higher than average teacher retention rate for the past 20 years.

District Files Final Appeal

The District opted to file an appeal to the State's highest court, the Court of Appeals, concerning the Masters degree award. This is despite its loss at all previous levels: arbitration, Supreme Court, Appellate Court and permission from the Appellate to take the case to the Court of Appeals. NYSUT continues to argue the case for the RTA. The Court of Appeals should rule sometime this school year as to its willingness to hear the District's case.

If you were hired after August 2000 without your masters degree and have not yet forwarded a copy of your masters diploma to the RTA, attention **Martha Keating**, it is time to do this.

262-6000
Monday to Thursday, 4 to 7 PM
6-6:30 PM WXXI-TV



by Adam Urbanski



NCLB: A Parent's Perspective

At the beginning of a new school year, and at a time that the United States Congress is in final stages of considering the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind), I yield my column space to a parent's perspective. Nicole Rosen has children in our schools and also has some strong feelings about NCLB. Here's her essay:

I am an involved parent. I have two children in separate RCSD schools. Both my children started at the Children's School of Rochester (CSR), a school that I treasure and hold close to my heart. I have been PTO fundraiser for four years and have organized many school-wide events. My son is now in the MAP program at school 50. Five years ago, my immigrant parents attended a briefing at CSR. My father, noting the diversity of the school, the obvious enthusiasm of the staff, as well as the good behavior of the students, said to me, "This is what America should be." Overly sentimental perhaps, but he meant it and I wholeheartedly agreed. However, NCLB is threatening all that.

NCLB drains the creativity and energy out of the staff. The November to May testing period is ridiculous, over-burdensome and exhausting. With what now seems like all of the children having 8 page IEPs that have to be followed, but no extra funding for staffing, every corner, every staff member is now administering tests to students who need more time, students who need more quiet, students who need a scribe, students who need a translator. Don't misinterpret me, the students should get the help, but with testing 7 out of 9 months, it is a logistical nightmare. The preparation alone is too time-consuming. Moreover, with punitive consequences for poor test results, the pressure is to teach to the test results in repetitive and uninspired curriculum. At CSR, the staff truly looks at the whole child and by talking to each other and collaborating; they could figure the right teaching approach for each student. But there is no time for that anymore. Effective teaching requires time, thought, and creativity because each student learns differently and each class has its own personality. The current testing schedule does not allow for thoughtful teaching of the whole child. Furthermore, if a school doesn't do well, or "needs improvement," NCLB regulations call for closing that school instead of helping that school. The consequence, of course, is that the students from the failed school now have to find a new school, which results in bigger classes at CSR, more kids who have to adjust to a new school, more new classmates, new standards, and new behavior requirements. So teachers now have maximum size classrooms filled with students who are unprepared. The city is becoming a special ed district but the teachers are not getting the help to deal with the current student population.

Everyone having to take the test is completely illogical. CSR has a substantial ESL draw. At last count there were roughly 30 languages spoken there. Prior to NCLB, newly arrived immigrant children had a grace period to take the tests. I believe that is no longer the rule. Liberian kids who have lived in refugee camps for months finally arrive in America only to be forced to take a test in a language that they do not yet know?

Lastly, it is very difficult for parents to get a clear sense of NCLB impact. What is a school issue versus district issue versus county...state...federal? To further compound the confusion, teachers seem reluctant to speak openly. An effort to be diplomatic, tow the party line perhaps? I have no clue. I was surprised by the candor at the NCLB seminar where I heard RTA President Adam Urbanski and Rochester's Interim Superintendent Bill Cala speak. Surprised, but also frightened and grateful at the same time. I am sending a copy of this letter to the list of legislators I received that night.

Sincerely,
Nicole Rosen

REF Honors RCSD Teacher Patricia Dodge

Patricia Dodge retired after teaching for 40 years at School #4, making a difference every day for students. Yet when she retired as a teacher, she hadn't finished helping students. "Now that she has 'retired,' Mrs. Dodge continues to work with our school's performing arts group. She rehearses with the children, she creates sets, props, and every single costume," wrote School 4 art teacher Patricia M. Sansone. She also drives young people to audition for School of the Arts, and gets their instruments repaired. "She is a shining star, a real light in our community!"

In honor of her hard work, **Rochester Education Foundation** is presenting Mrs. Dodge with the Educator award at the REF Partnership Awards Dinner Oct. 23, 2007 at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center at 5:30 p.m.

"She was a teacher to most of my family, and they loved her as much as I did," reported 6th grader Deja Jackson in a nomination letter for Mrs. Dodge.

Mrs. Dodge is one of seven on the distinguished slate of honorees REF will honor at this year's dinner. The educator and volunteer awards are presented following a public nomination process, through which numerous dynamic educators and volunteers were nominated.

Tickets to the dinner are \$50 with table sponsorships ranging from \$500 to \$5,000. All proceeds benefit Rochester Education Foundation, a not-for-profit group founded in 2005 which is focused on obtaining resources for students and building and supporting community partnerships. For information, please call REF at 271-5790 or see our order form on-line at rochestereducation.org/events/partnership_awards_2007.shtml

Rochester Education Foundation has given the city school district about 500 musical instruments as a result of its Spring for Music instrument drive. It also has donated more than 12,000 new books to city school students and city school libraries, and 7,000 used books to city school teachers as part of its Give Back, Give Books program.

**RTA
thanks all
who
marched
in the
Annual
Labor Day
Parade**

From
the
Desk of
Martha
Keating

Certification Continues to be Problematic

August was once again a dismal month for meeting with teachers having certification problems. Obtaining NYS certification is a requirement of maintaining your teaching position. It is an **individual teacher's responsibility** to be aware and secure proper credentials. The RTA can be of very limited help to members who have not gotten their certification. Imagine the frustration, rage and disappointment for teachers who are being put out on leave, or worse yet, being forced to resign or be terminated.

The District has issued contracts that seem to guarantee work to probationers for two years before they will move against them for lack of certification. However, as the job market changes, there is no guarantee of employment beyond the one year.

The District does not request expedited processing from the State. The State is drowning in paperwork: 16-20 weeks for fingerprinting clearance and longer after that for awarding certification.

If the District has mistakenly permitted a teacher to work in areas other than their certification area, it will not resolve the certification issue. The responsibility for getting licensed rests with the individual.

Our message to members:

- Review the requirements for certification at www.nysed.gov/
- Sign up for all required tests and workshops
- If you are missing courses, do them ASAP
- Take care of fingerprinting
- Maintain good records
- Contact the RTA early rather than late for help

Do not join teachers with 1 to 25 years of experience with the Rochester City School District who are either unemployed or on unpaid leaves of absences.

There will be an eight week course this fall at St. John Fisher to help teachers pass their required State tests. For more information, contact **Martha Keating** at the RTA Office.

Debbi Jackett 2nd Vice President

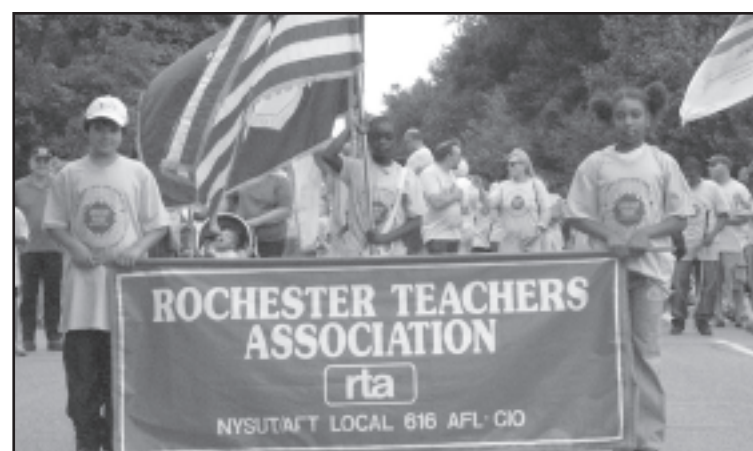


Look to Your Union for Professional Development

Hundreds of district teachers and professional staff have taken professional development workshops and courses at the Rochester Teaching Academy. We offer courses in classroom management, teaching strategies, and meeting diverse learning styles (just to name a few). Last year many of our workshops became 8, 10, and even 15 hour courses. Teachers can attend courses after school, during breaks, and on Saturdays. We were able to offer several courses over the summer that were well attended. We are currently in the process of getting PD approval for several new workshops and longer course. These new programs will be offered this winter and early spring.

Remember to check the Avatar system under RTA to locate information on our PD programs and to register. If you have not used the Avatar system before, ask a colleague to help – it's pretty easy to use. As a reminder, 2nd and 3rd year teachers are eligible to participate in the PD incentive program if they take 24 hours of approved PD. Tenured teachers must take 36 hours in order to participate. First year teachers are not eligible for this program. Participation is VOL-UNTARY!

If you have any questions about Rochester Teaching Academy programs, give me a call at the RTA office (546-2681). I teach in the morning, so you can usually reach me at RTA after 12:30. I am also using a new e-mail address at the office – djackett@rochesterteachers.com. Welcome back to school – I invite you to come to RTA this year for some great professional development!



**RTA and the
VOTE-COPE**

Committee wish to thank the 32 new RTA members who have already signed up to contribute to our political action lobby. We hope the rest of our new teachers and other veteran teachers will join them.

CONTRACT AND BUILDING ISSUES

by Margaret Sergent, Secretary



Building Committee Responsibilities

Faculty Representatives should hold Building Committee Elections this fall. The Building Committee should have no more than four (4) elected teachers and a faculty representative. 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 is 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 to 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.

In June of the previous school year a classroom interruption policy should have developed and filed with the appropriate school chief and the RTA. If this plan has not been completed for the 2007 - 2008 school year, the Building Committee should 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 pages 9 - 11 of the contract. If Faculty Reps or committee members have questions, they may contact the RTA at 546-2681.



MONEY MATTERS

by John Pavone, Treasurer

Q. What are the pay dates for the 2007 - 2008 School Year?

A. The pay dates are listed below. Please note that the second pay period in November is on a Wednesday and the last pay period in June is not the last day of school. Your last pay check will be on June 20, 2008. The last day of school for teachers is Thursday, June 26, 2008. This is dictated by the New York State Regents.

Friday September 14, 2007	Friday February 15, 2008
Friday September 28, 2007	Friday February 29, 2008
Friday October 12, 2007	Friday March 14, 2008
Friday October 26, 2007	Friday March 28, 2008
Friday November 9, 2007	Friday April 11, 2008
Wednesday November 21, 2007	Friday April 25, 2008
Friday December 7, 2007	Friday May 9, 2008
Friday December 21, 2007	Friday May 23, 2008
Friday January 4, 2008	Friday June 6, 2008
Friday January 18, 2008	Friday June 20, 2008
Friday February 1, 2008	

Save the Date:
Friday
December 7,
2007
RTA Holiday
Social
at SOHO

RTA Members are invited to contribute articles and/or pictures for all issues of the Rochester Teacher. Please submit items via email to Jon Hickey at jhickey@rochesterteachers.com

The Rochester Teacher

Rochester Teachers Association NYSUT, AFL, 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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This publication is owned by the Rochester Teachers Association. It is published monthly from September to June in the interest of Rochester teachers and is dedicated to the promotion of the Association.



What's all the buzz about?



You might have heard your colleagues talking about MAP, the Member Assistance Program available from NYSUT Member Benefits Trust. Or maybe you've already joined. But if you haven't, you may want to once you read about MAP's benefits.

By joining MAP, an e-mail based program, you'll be among the first to hear about new, endorsed programs and program updates. You'll receive special offers from Member Benefits or from providers of its endorsed programs. Your opinions will be solicited on new programs under consideration for endorsement. When possible, you'll help Member Benefits test potential new programs and provide feedback.



Frequently, MAPers are entered into drawings for prizes donated by providers of endorsed programs and Member Benefits. Since MAP's introduction last spring,

MAPers have entered drawings for Bose® Quiet Comfort 3 Acoustic Noise Cancelling Headphones, free admissions to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, a summer fun pack filled with a variety of items, and an OfficeMax gift card worth \$100. In addition, new MAP enrollees and existing MAPers are automatically entered into quarterly raffles; to date, prizes included digital cameras and an iPod nano.

MAPers receive e-mail communications from Member Benefits and occasionally from

its providers of endorsed programs. Member Benefits oversees the frequency of e-mail communications to ensure you will not be bombarded. On average, a MAP e-mail alert is sent once every three weeks.

Rest assured, Member Benefits does not share your e-mail address with outside interests other than endorsed program providers and then only under controlled circumstances. Once a program provider receives approval from Member Benefits to send you an offer or information, the vendor will be required to destroy the e-mail listing after sending the communication.



This exciting, new program allows you to help shape future programs and services exclusively available to you and your colleagues.

Help make a difference. Become a MAP team member. Enroll on our secure page by logging on to www.memberbenefits.nysut.org and see the feature on our home page.

For information about this program or about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please call NYSUT Member Benefits Trust at (800) 626-8101, e-mail benefits@nysutmail.org, visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org, or refer to your NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description.





Anticipating the arrival of OS X v 10.5 — (A.K.A. Leopard)

by Bill Gerber

Below are just a few features and improvements expected of the highly anticipated Mac OS X, v10.5 "Leopard", scheduled to be released this October.

Time Machine is backup the way data backup and restoration should be - to a home network, with the right equipment attached. It's beyond comparison. You shouldn't need to hire a geek or network admin to get it to work, it's not buried, and you don't need to install any third-party software.

Spotlight indexes and searches, with a fair amount of elegance and invisibility, across open machines connected on the network.

The Dictionary now has a direct gateway to Wikipedia. While I don't find Wikipedia to be the ultimate source for information, I do value its community-driven structure. With true identity tied into page edits, it could quickly become the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.

Personal information management is far more seamless on OS X than it is in Windows. Fundamentally, iCal and Vista's Windows Calendar do the SAME thing - but iCal's "To Do" list is linked with Apple Mail. Moreover, .Mac provides a simple gateway for calendar publishing.

Help isn't just documentation, it's largely directional. I needed to find where to change the network Workgroup for my system. I typed "workgroup" in the System Preferences search box - and OS X macro'ed its way to the proper Preference Pane, tab, and precise field where I could change the setting directly. OMG!

Expose isn't new in Leopard, but Apple has extended desktop usability by adding Spaces. While virtual desktop software has been available for years, Spaces is quite intuitive and clean.



Scott Spino Literacy Program 2007-2008

Dear Literacy Partners,

It is the beginning of a fresh new year for the Scott Spino Literacy Program and we thank you sincerely for volunteering once again.

Included in this packet you should find some resource materials, the dates for this year's meetings with your child, and some details about how the program works for those of you who are joining us for the first time.

As in the past, we invite you to contact us with any questions or concerns at any time. We value each volunteer in this program and will do everything we can to make sure your experience is rewarding.

Thank you so much for giving precious time to precious students!

Sincerely,

Geri Spino geri.spino@excellus.com

Cathy Heffer cathyheffer@frontiernet.com

Karen Guidarelli kguidare@rochester.rr.com

Cell: (585)329-4172

PUBLIC INPUT NEEDED

The 2007-08 State Budget includes an historic increase in school funding, particularly to high need school districts across the state. In 2007-08 New York State increased aid to school districts statewide by \$1.76 billion, an unprecedented amount. More importantly, this year's budget bill includes a four-year commitment that by the 2010-11 school year, annual state school aid will increase by \$7 billion. This year alone the Rochester City School district is receiving a \$32 million increase in operating aid and under the plan agreed to by the State Legislature this number will nearly quadruple over the next four years.

In an effort to ensure that this new school aid results in increased student achievement the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE)—the leading education advocacy group in the state, is launching a comprehensive advocacy campaign to advocate for how this money should be used. Over the next several months AQE will solicit input from parents, educators, education policy experts and other members of the public in an effort to develop a local platform for how increases in state aid should be used. The goal of this research will be to build a consensus around an agenda for the Rochester School District that AQE will advocate for over the next year.

The first step in developing this new campaign is for the public to offer its input. AQE is currently circulating a survey for parents and teachers to complete. To obtain a copy of the survey call 585-288-4693 or go to:

<http://survey.geneseo.edu:8080/survey/entry.jsp?id=11888556739>
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RETIREE CORNER

by Katherine Barkley

Wow! The summer really flew! School is back in session and retirees are taking pleasure in the fact that they no longer have to rise in the darkness to face another busy, busy work day (...week...month...year). On a personal note, I broke my wrist in mid-August and woke the morning after surgery thinking, "Thank God that I have retired, and don't have to start a new school year with a broken wrist." I have vivid memories of my second year at RCSD when I came to school with my leg in a cast for the entire winter. It was not fun. So, here's to all those colleagues who still drag themselves into school, sick or well, energetic or fatigued, good weather or bad. Blessings on you. (And blessings on the three wonderful colleagues who got me to and from school throughout that long icy winter of 1975-76. Teachers are GREAT people!)

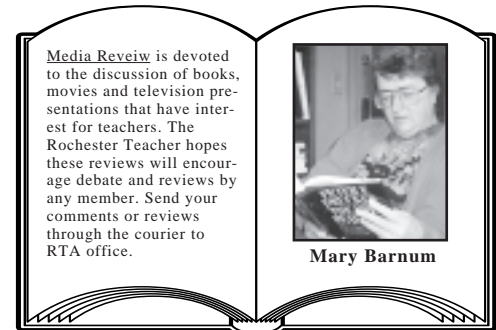
I notice that for many retirees a new school year brings more than a touch of nostalgia...with wistful memories of those years when schools and students and lessons absorbed us from September until June...and more. Several friends have reported having back-to-school nightmares, even years after they have retired. You know the dreams. The ones where you find yourself in a classroom and the kids are coming, or they're already there, and no one has told you what you're supposed to be teaching. You don't know who the kids are, and there are no books or materials, no plans, no schedule, nothing. You don't know where to find the things you need, or where to go for help. You realize that you simply forgot to get ready. And you wake in a panic that can leave you anxious and unsettled for hours.

Luckily, reality is quite a different story. Retirees continue to have busy, productive lives, yet have far less stress than in our teaching years. Over the summer, RRTA members took a luncheon cruise on the Esperanza Rose (Keuka Lake). We also did a couple of mailings, and Books for Kids has made plans for the school year. We have been making phone calls to get out the vote for the Democratic Primaries on September 18. RTA endorsed school board candidates are Malik Evans, Willa Powell, Melisza Campos and Allen Williams. City Council endorsements are for Jim Bowers and Elaine Spaul. Be sure to vote.

On September 6th, the first day of school for kids, an RRTA group went to see The Philanderer at Niagara on the Lake. Now that's a nice first day of school! Upcoming September events include our "Not Back to School" picnic at the Canandaigua Yacht Club on the 19th, a Mt. Hope Cemetery Tour on the 25th (Pat Corcoran, a Rochester retiree, leads the tour and always does a great job), a visit to Pidge Bower's horse farm in Middlesex on the 27th, and the Breast Cancer Walk on the 30th. We are off and running!

Make sure to pay your RRTA dues so that you will get notices of upcoming events. There are many plans afoot for entertainment, for committee work, and for great companionship. I hope to see lots of you throughout the year.

MEDIA REVEIW



Media Reveiw 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

COLLATERAL DAMAGE

How High-Stakes Testing Corrupts America's Schools

by Sharon Nichols and David Berliner
2007 Harvard University Press 148 pages

In *COLLATERAL DAMAGE*, Sharon Nichols and David Berliner show how the tests required by *No Child Left Behind* are changing and perhaps destroying our public schools. Needless to say, they do not believe these changes are improvements.

Nichols teaches at the University of Texas, specializing in adolescents. Berliner teaches at Arizona State; his specialty is teacher education. Both are authors of multiple titles on schools and education.

These authors say tests are good; standards are good. However, the minute tests become "high-stakes," they corrupt. "High-stakes" means the test results cause someone to suffer - held back a grade, lose a job, close a school. The authors cite Campbell's Law: "The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social process it was meant to monitor."

Most American believe that it is good to give kids tests and, if the kid fails, it is the kid's own fault and he/she should suffer. But it is also his/her teacher's fault and the teacher should suffer. And, by the way, it is also the principal's fault because the principal did not make the teacher make the kid pass. So, the principal should suffer also. And close the school!

So, those tests required by NCLB are generally supported by the public. The purported goal of *No Child Left Behind* is to help poor kids who are not learning in poor schools in poor neighborhoods. This book says that high-stakes tests are not helping these children. Moreover, high-stakes tests will never help these children. In addition, high-stakes tests are harming the rest of the kids, demoralizing teachers and corrupting our public schools.

There are several chapters on cheating. And, interestingly, it is not the kids cheating, it is the adults. Teachers and principals and test makers change answers, coach correct answers, change scores.

The authors present an excellent discussion of the validity (or lack thereof) of these tests. The tests are being constructed and scored by for profit companies who take shortcuts in designing, field testing and scoring. The authors gathered most of their data from news reports. One story from Orlando notes that, "Dozens of this year's graders were graduates of foreign universities who provided little more than copies of their college degrees, often written in a foreign language, to get a temporary job scoring..." Even the revered College Board makes very big mistakes. In 2005, over 5000 SAT scores were lower than they should have been, sometimes by as much as 450 points, all caused by errors in scanning. Of course, it took months to correct this and, meanwhile, kids lost scholarships and acceptances at their preferred schools.

On the alignment of the tests with standards, Berliner and Nichols are eloquent. They are, after all, experts in educational research; they know what tests can and can not do. They quote Einstein, "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts."

Many schools who are struggling to improve their AYP concentrate on the "bubble kid," students who just need a few points improvement to pass the test. It would make sense in the business world to concentrate on them. After all, why waste time and teacher on kids that we know are going to easily pass or who are going to fail miserably?

No Child Left Behind became Federal Law in 2002. It is up for reauthorization this year. I direct you to the the current (September 2007) issue of AFT's *American Teacher*, which recently arrived in your mailbox. AFT asks you to tell your U.S. Senators and Representative that you want NCLB fixed. AFT has included post-cards for you to tear out and send. Teachers must speak out, especially because there are those who are lobbying to make this law even more corruptive.

No matter what Congress does, students and teachers are already voting with their feet. High-stakes tests have encouraged dropouts of both. Bright students are leaving for schools in which the test is not the totality of the curriculum. Musicians and artists must go someplace else for inspiration. In most states 50 % of teachers leave before completing five years in the classroom. And more of our low achieving students, those supposedly for whom this whole absurd plan was designed, are dropping out.

I recommend *COLLATERAL DAMAGE*. I think every teacher should read this book, just so you will know that there are some very bright, very talented scholars out there who know you are right about this test madness.

The link to AFT's campaign about NCLB:

<http://www.unionvoice.org/campaign/FixNCLB>

Reviewed by Mary Barnum