

# The Member Ship



The Newsletter of The West Genesee Teachers' Association, <http://www.wgta.net>

## There's a New Sheriff in Town

A new leader has been approved as the New York State Commissioner of Education and her name is Mary Ellen Elia. Former Commissioner, John King has moved to Washington, D.C., where he was recently selected to replace Arne Duncan, current Secretary of Education. King was not the greatest at delivering an unpopular message. As a result, he was shown the door, only to find a staircase behind it, leading to a promotion. Here comes education reform 2.0. Does Commissioner Elia hold the same tenets that Commissioner King did? How will she deal with the grass-roots, parent driven opt-out movement? Is this just going to be a kinder, gentler form of the same message? In July, I had the opportunity to be a part of a discussion with Commissioner Elia, Regent Anthony Bottar, and a small group of teachers, here is my takeaway.



### Common Core

There may be no one in this country with greater reputation for being pro-Common Core than Commissioner Elia. She held the position of Superintendent for Hillsborough County Schools in Florida for the past 10 years. This school district includes the City of Tampa and has over 200,000 students enrolled in it. Commissioner Elia was known to travel outside of Hillsborough County, promoting and assisting other districts in their implementation of the standards. She is completely committed to their implementation. She is aware that in New York State the roll out could not have been worse. She also believes teachers need time and professional development to assure that the teachers are more comfortable with developing curriculum and lessons around the standards.

### Testing

The Commissioner believes in accountability for both students and teachers.

*Continued on Page 2*

### Important Dates:

**Fall Fling:** Friday, October 16, 4-6, @ The Wildcat-All welcome!

**Jeans Fridays:** (Cash or checks made payable to the organization)

Oct. 16, Please consider donating \$5 to the Carol Baldwin Foundation

Oct. 30, Please consider donating \$5 to the Leukemia Lymphoma Society

### Viewpoint on... The Lederman Case:

A case that challenges the New York State Teacher Evaluation System  
Cut and paste this link to read Diane Ravitch's Blog regarding the case: <http://dianeravitch.net/2015/08/16/peter-greene-and-alexandra-miletta-on-the-lederman-case/>





She believes that tying state test scores to teacher evaluations is a good thing. Her belief in the value of tying these two things together is so strong that she developed and implemented a merit pay program in her former district. Teachers were given financial incentives for scoring well on their evaluations. These evaluations included a Value Added Measure component which is an attempt to measure growth that a student has made during their term with a teacher. I could provide you with the formula for VAM, but I'm afraid your head will spin. Additionally, Hillsborough County received a 100 million dollar grant from the Gates Foundation in 2009 to improve the evaluation of teachers.

As far as students go, the commissioner knows that she has a group of informed, angry parents on her hands that have taken it upon themselves to refuse to allow their children to take the state exams. To try to pull these parents back into the fold, the commissioner has helped facilitate a few changes in these exams. Both the ELA and Mathematics exams will be shortened and the State Education Department will no longer use Pearson Education as their test developer, switching to Questar. Additionally, the commissioner stated that teachers will be a greater part of the test making process. Currently, discussion and criticism of the exams by teachers is now legal. The commissioner is looking for help from educators in pulling disenfranchised parents back into the mix. She asked that teachers remind parents the value of assessments in analyzing the needs of the student and how to address them. I responded to this statement by saying that we have already lost the parents. As teachers, we may not have agreed with many of the changes that have occurred over the last few years, but regardless of an individual teacher's level of displeasure with the amount of testing, new standards and a new teacher evaluation system, we did it! It has been a few years now and a growing number of teachers have become increasingly vocal about the direction that has been taken. Parents like their teachers. Parents trust their teachers. If a parent is conflicted regarding test refusal or rapid changes to and implementation of the standards, who do they ask? They ask their child's teacher, and value that opinion. I have been asked by parents, as many of us have, are we better off today than 5 years ago? A few years back, a teacher's answer to that question might have come through as, "let's wait and see." Today, I hate to say it, we have enough data to suggest otherwise and teachers are talking. If New York State or Federal Government makes good on their promise to financially punish school districts which have high opt-out rates, I believe that will further boost the parent's movement to take back control of their child's education.

### *Teacher Evaluations*

The commissioner believes in teacher evaluations, including tying students' standardized test scores to that evaluation. That being said, she was a teacher in Western New York many years ago. She understands what it is like to run a classroom and she understands the pressure that teachers are under, as well as, understanding that the development of curriculum and lessons around standards takes time. She is very pro-teacher and worked well with teacher unions in Florida, which is very encouraging.

### *Charter School*

As the end of our ninety minute meeting, I asked the commissioner a question that I feel needs to be asked of every power broker of every level of education, "Is this education reform or an education sell off?" Her response was, "I believe in public education!" She followed that statement up by saying that she believes that charter schools have a role to play in the education of children in this state; however, they need to be held to the same standards as public schools. Charter schools are not going away, but the playing field needs to be level before we start comparing them to public schools.

I give my compliments to the commissioner for listening to the genuine concerns of the teachers in the room. I believe she was not just listening but was receptive to our input. This is much different from the experience teachers had with the former commissioner. I believe she understands that the professionals along with the parents in New York State are not going to let their children's educational experience be altered without their input. I believe she heard loud and clear how tight the relationship is between parents and teachers. There is no substitute for doing what is best for children, so it's the teachers that get to wear the white hat. The commissioner still gets to wear the badge, let's hope she's the Andy Griffith type.



“A teacher affects eternity; He can never tell where his influence stops.”

-Henry Adams

### ***A Tribute to Jo Ann Macaluso, A Dedicated Teacher, Kind Friend, and Mentor***

By Richard Duggan

In September, the West Genesee school community lost a long time teacher, colleague, and friend, Jo Ann Macaluso, unexpectedly. During her tenure, she became a role model for countless students, a beloved friend to her colleagues, and a friend to families in the area.

Macaluso was a graduate of SUNY Oswego, where she received her Masters degree in Reading Education. After completing her student teaching at Onondaga Road Elementary in the Fall of 1967, she was offered a permanent teaching job at the school. Her lifelong career of teaching began January 1968. She was trained in the Weehawken Writing Program, from Weehawken, NJ. She then trained every elementary teacher in the district the Weehawken Writing Program. Jo Ann taught there until 1987, when she moved over to West Genesee Middle School as a sixth grade Social Studies teacher on the W team.

While at the West Genesee Middle School, Jo Ann was named Teacher of the Year, a most well-deserved recognition for such a dedicated teacher. Always thinking, always planning ahead, Jo Ann would transform her classroom into an African village complete with huts, trees, and live fish. Her most well-known project was the Greek games held each spring at the middle school. Each sixth grader participated in the games, learning about cooperation and fair play as they played. She always put the interest and well-being of her students first.

Before the 2015 school year began, Jo Ann was in her classroom preparing for the year ahead. She visited with her colleagues, but more importantly she was there to get her room ready for the new school year. Sadly, that would be her last time in the classroom.

On September 17, Jo Ann passed away peacefully and unexpectedly at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, New York, where she was being evaluated for newly diagnosed heart conditions. As a friend, colleague, and mentor to many, she will be missed. However, her memory will always be alive in our hearts.

Contributions may be made in JoAnn's memory to WGMS PTA, 500 Sanderson Dr., Camillus, NY 13031.



A note to NYSUT members with Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield who may have been affected by the recent cyberattack, please read the following information about identity protection coverage from Blue Cross Blue Shield here: <http://www.excellusfacts.com>

## Identity theft protection available for NYSUT members



# TRUE IDENTITY PROTECTION™

***NYSUT Member Benefits is excited to announce that its newest endorsed program – ID Watchdog – is now available to all NYSUT members & their families looking for protection against the growing threat of identity and credit theft.***

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According to Javelin Strategy & Research, an estimated 13.1 million Americans fall victim to identity theft each year. These individuals are hit with approximately \$7,000 in fraudulent charges per person and spend about 330 hours each trying to recover from the effects of identity theft.

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or visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org).**



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

Sept/Oct. '15

## Contact Your WGTA Executive Officers

<http://www.wgta.net>

John Mannion, President

Email: [mannionforwgta@gmail.com](mailto:mannionforwgta@gmail.com)

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Mary Weaver, Vice President

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### ***Sick Bank Explained***, By WGTA Secretary Jeanine Stables

The Sick Bank provision in our current contract provides an important support for members who find themselves in need of additional sick leave. The contract provides a detailed explanation of the conditions and procedures involved in utilizing this resource.

Here are some of the specifics:

- A member must use all of their accumulated sick time, plus a loss of pay for the next ten consecutive school days before eligible for sick bank.
- The maximum number of days for any one individual in any one circumstance is seventy (70).
- Requests for a sick bank should be sent to WGTA President John Mannion, in writing, and should include a physician's recommendation, the nature of the illness and an estimation of the number of additional sick days needed.
- A teacher may contribute no more than three sick days per year to a sick bank.
- Once a request is submitted, the union president and the superintendent consult on each application, before it is submitted to the cabinet. The sick bank must then be presented at the next cabinet meeting for approval. If it is approved, notification is given to the general membership, and a request for promissory pledges is sent. When possible, we try to keep the donation period open for one week. The timing of this is important, as the final total must be submitted to the Board of Education at the next meeting.

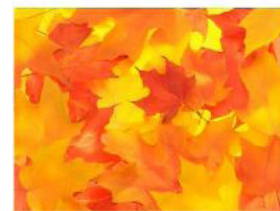
This process can be long, depending on when the request is made. If you think you may need sick bank support, please contact your building leader or an executive officer. Thank you to everyone who donated to our last sick bank.

## ***What Can Directing Council do for You?*** By WGTA Secretary Mary Weaver

Being on the West Genesee teaching Center Directing Council is interesting. Teacher Involvement is an important element of the committee, especially for the action research and collegial circle opportunities. Through Collegial Circles and Action Research programs, teachers in our district have the opportunity to learn from one another as well as teach new concepts in the field of education to colleagues. This year, teachers have more opportunities to participate in collegial circles than action research opportunities. The idea is that more teachers will be able to actively learn from each other and have a greater direct impact on students.

WGTA is involved in the teaching center directing council because there needs to be 51% of teachers on the council for a vote. Some of the committees include collegial circles and action research approval.

Please visit the West Genesee website <http://westgenesee.org>, and search for the Teaching Center webpage. Once at the Teaching Center page, bylaws for the teaching center are available on the lower right hand menu.



**Fall Fling--- October 16th**  
**HOSTED BY THE WGTA**

Where: The Wildcat  
Who: ALL WGCSD EMPLOYEES AND WGTA  
RETIREES  
What: Pizza, wings, beverages and dare I say,  
laughter  
Time: 4:00pm-6:00pm





### Did you know...?

- Westar Federal Credit Union** was started in 1963 by teachers from this district. It was known as the *West Genesee School District Employees' Federal Credit Union*.
- Once a member always a member. Many retirees all over the country still use Westar for all their banking needs.
- Even when you don't live here anymore we can still help with your lending needs. We will even fax the loan papers for your signature in front of a notary so we don't even need to be in the same room to complete your loan papers! (Our rates are VERY competitive.)
- Various transactions can be accomplished using the local interoffice mail delivery service currently in place between buildings. If you can't get here to deposit or need a check issued from your account it's very handy!
- With our Free online banking service (Virtual Branch/CheckFree) you can access your account 24/7 365 days a year.
- Our mobile app allows you to do exactly the same things you do sitting at your computer but on the go.
- Bill Pay securely pushes money OUT of your account instead of allowing Billers to reach INTO your accounts and take their payments. You are in control of your money.
- We would love to show you why at Westar Federal Credit Union "It's Not Banking, It's Personal."

2565 Hambletonian Way / PO Box 60 / Camillus, NY 13031

[www.westarnet.com](http://www.westarnet.com)

Phone: (315) 672-7827 / Fax: (315) 672-9282

### ***Know Your APPR Agreement,*** By WGTA VP for Grievances Keith Newvine

If I had to give a recommendation for our new APPR agreement, I would say this: open your door and teach. For the most part, this is what our new agreement is about. I say "for the most part" because there are certain things we just can't get rid of in our current contract. I'm talking to all teachers. We have all been in our own little bubble these last few years. The attack on my livelihood from Albany has forced me to close my door and be a bit selfish, because I knew that if I didn't take care of myself, none of the politicians would.

This APPR agreement takes care of that. This agreement gives us the chance to open our doors and let people in rather than close our doors and shut people out. This agreement puts us all in, together. This agreement gives us the opportunity to work together toward a common good, which is the success of all of our students.

By now you should have heard this presentation at least once. If not, on the following page, page 8, is the first page of our APPR agreement. Please take a look at it and email me ([konevine@gmail.com](mailto:konevine@gmail.com)) with any questions. The full 8 pages of the agreement are also available upon request.

**West Genesee Central School District**  
**Annual Professional Performance Review Plan (APPR) for Teachers**  
**September 1, 2015 -- August 31, 2016**

**Introduction**

On April 13, 2015, Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2015 was signed into law, adding a new §3012-d to the Education Law. Education Law §3012-d requires all school districts and boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES) to submit new APPR plans, and gain the Department's approval for such plan, by November 15, 2015 or September 1 of any subsequent year.

The superintendent, in collaboration with a joint committee of professional staff members and administrators, developed this professional performance review plan. The members of the committee included three teachers selected by the West Genesee Teachers' Association president, three administrators selected by the Superintendent of Schools, the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, and the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.

By September 15, 2015, the West Genesee Board of Education shall adopt a plan for the annual professional performance review of its teachers providing instructional services or pupil personnel services. Once approved by the West Genesee Board of Education, the plan will be submitted, using a State-prescribed form, to the Commissioner of Education for approval. If revisions to the plan need to occur after review by the Commissioner, said revisions are reviewed by the Board of Education prior to submission to the Commissioner.

The plan shall be filed in the district office and made available to the public on its website within ten days after its approval by the Commissioner.

The Board of Education shall ensure that the performance of all teachers providing instructional services or pupil personnel services is reviewed annually.

The content of the plan shall include:

1. the district's process for ensuring the State Education Department (SED) receives accurate teacher and student data, including the process for teachers to verify the subjects and/or student rosters assigned to them;
2. how the district will report to SED the individual category scores and the overall effectiveness rating for each teacher;
3. a description of assessment development, security, and scoring processes utilized by the district;
4. the details of the district's evaluation system, including the name of the approved teacher practices' rubric, any other instruments used to evaluate the teacher's performance, and the district's scoring methodology for the assignment of points to either of the measures of teacher effectiveness categories;
5. a description of how the district will deliver timely and constructive feedback to teachers on the their APPR;
6. the appeal procedures that the district will employ; and
7. required certifications.

# The Back Page

*Your guide to services, deals, and promotions for the WG education community*

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*Advertisements in The Member Ship are provided free to West Genesee Teachers' Association Members and their family. Please send your advertisement to Kelly Chambala (SR) at [kchambala@gmail.com](mailto:kchambala@gmail.com). The only other advertisements that are run in The Member Ship are those provided by NYSUT, AFT, or the AFL-CIO.*

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## **WGTA Email Directory**



Join the FREE WGTA Email Directory. There are currently around 200 WGTA members, retirees, WG Staff and WG parents in the Directory. We share our Email addresses and send each other educational articles, WGTA and union information and personal notes.

If you would like to be a part of this FREE Directory, please send your name, Email address and WG status (school name / retired / WG staff, etc.) to Lynn Davis at: [DavisRetired@gmail.com](mailto:DavisRetired@gmail.com).

Email address are only shared with other members of the Directory.

The WGTA is thankful for all of the work you do every day.  
Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours.

The Member Ship is published by the West Genesee Teachers' Association-3106, P.O. Box 417, Camillus, NY, 13031-0417. Affiliated with the New York State United Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers, NEA, AFL-CIO.