

THE MEMBER SHIP



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

President's Notes by Michael Perkins
West Genesee Teachers' Association
SLC Concerns and Notes - March 2021

RTI / Interventions

At the K-4 elementary buildings, teachers have learned a lot this year about how to help those students who need further interventions. Many teachers do not want to go back to the "Old Team Time RTI model" that was used in the past. Teachers have new thoughts on what may work better. Going forward to next year, how are elementary teachers going to be given a voice to express their concerns and recommendations on how Tier 3 interventions or Team Time can work more effectively? Can there be a district-wide survey sent out so all teachers voices can be heard?



Elementary classroom teachers must keep track of Tier 3 students. In the current RTI model, there isn't any written down criteria for Tier 3 students for math or ELA that is used consistently throughout the district. Teachers have asked for these criteria in the past, but there isn't any. One school may "think" a student is Tier 3 whereas a different school may not consider them to be a Tier 3 student. There is no consistency between the elementary buildings.

Why isn't there a clear criterion (that is written down and shared to all buildings) as to what a Tier 3 student should look like in math and ELA? If there was, it would help with keeping things consistent throughout the district. It would also help in the future to show where the need is within the district and where support services should go. For example, if a school does not have any Tier 3 students and a different elementary school has 10 Tier 3 students, then more support services should be allocated to the school that is in need of more services.

If we still get funding for RTI, are we going to have true RTI support throughout our district?

Answer: There is no connection to funding and RTI process. There needs to be more work on formative assessment. We need to plan across the buildings. This is a PLC issue that needs to be addressed by the principals in each building. Measuring tools for assessment needs to be common more so for initial assessments (Fall, Winter, Spring). Bill Roberge is the administrative lead for RTI.

Cohort Teachers

We need a status update on compensation for elementary teachers with a split cohort. It has been a few weeks now that the TAs have been getting their stipend. What is the latest? I'm hoping they aren't trying to buy time to see if we go to 3 ft., so that we can combine cohorts.

Answer: This topic is a matter related to current negotiations with the district and cannot be addressed at this time.

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COVID STUFF

Wondering if once we get vaccinated, this will mean that we will not need to be quarantined if we have a positive contact?

I am just unclear on the travel rules with the new guidance regarding vaccinated people. Do vaccinated people need to go through the same testing procedure with the test from the place you travelled and a test four days after your return?

There is much confusion regarding the testing/quarantine procedure related to travel. Since many teachers are now fully vaccinated or will be prior to Spring Break, what is the district's policy? Is testing required and if so, does the district require proof prior to return to work?

Answer: After full vaccination (+ 2 weeks) you are good for 90 day

Re-Opening

As we begin to enter a new phase of possible re-entry with increasing vaccinations and lowering Covid-19 numbers I think the district has a responsibility to try and keep staff as informed as possible. As much as we need to be mindful of the student's mental health, we need to be as mindful of the staff's well-being. Ample time should be given not only for the eventual return to "normal," but to allow for the cognitive and emotional shifts that will be required for more changes that are forthcoming. I'm not saying we have to be told everything because frankly I don't think anyone really knows. At the very least, we should be informed of what the short term and long term vision is with the understanding that continued flexibility is required. Thank you.

Other school districts are talking about going back to all students 5 days a week after spring break. Is that being discussed in our district? We need more preparation time than we received about returning to the building on Wednesdays. Thank you.

If the CDC guidelines recommend that classroom desks are 6 feet apart, why are we starting to measure desks at 3 feet apart, without the completion of the surveys? Teachers, staff and parents are very concerned about this. Our success is due to following the CDC guidelines. I do not understand why you would defy those CDC guidelines when we have seen success. Students, staff, principals and teachers have had multiple changes and have worked harder than they ever have. Having yet another change is not what is best for the well-being of all involved. If you are changing desks to 3 feet apart, will the CDC recommendation of plexiglass between each desk happen at West Genesee? My hope is that we stay as we are and focus on the fall.

Re-opening the high school to 5 days a week is not feasible under our current model. Once we decided to establish our current system it left us with no ability to adjust to changes or re-opening. Materials are stored all over the school and in storage. What's the process for that to be accessed and distributed?

Answer: David is meeting with principals to plan possible changes to our current plan. We are currently in a conversation period where we're sharing ideas. It will move along pretty quickly. If we have the opportunity to change, it will be based on changes to health guidelines and community expectations. The high school schedule cannot be blown up. CMS schedule cannot be blown up. We built our plan for what we had to deal with at the time. Anything we do will be based on what is possible and shouldn't reduce our ability to provide a better experience in September. Guidelines from Onondaga County determine what we can and expected to do. The county guidelines sometimes counter or blur what we see from the CDC. We need guidance from the county on buses and cafeterias related to increasing the number of days that students can be in school. This will be a major hurdle to returning to 5 days per week for middle - high. We won't see any changes until after spring break. We are still trying to figure out what is possible.



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Communication

Dave Cirillo is not answering emails from employees even when multiples are sent. I wanted to know my retirement benefits if I left at the end of quarter 2 and have not received an answer. Other employees have stated the same thing. This needs to be taken care of immediately.

The main concern continues to be a lack of communication from the district to parents and teachers.

There is a lack of communication to staff regarding "school reopening". There are several rumors in the school and general community about what is happening in different buildings, as well as on the nightly news. District staff has received little to no information to confirm/deny the rumors. The information that we are receiving is only being disseminated to staff about 5 minutes before it goes out to the community at large.

Answer: David Bills is addressing this concern.

Changes to Buildings

The new configuration has been approved for 5th grade to stay in the middle school. Our 4th graders will be the "new" 5th graders. Can we please be consistent amongst the elementary schools in terms of "moving up" ceremonies? It would not be fair to have one elementary building continue a graduation celebration with parents in attendance and other buildings do not. Thank you for your consideration.

Answer: Yes, we do need consistency on "Celebrate the 4th grade" milestone ceremonies. Bring this up at PLC. David will communicate with the elementary principals.

Technology

The technology we have in the elementary classes is becoming increasingly unreliable. The old (no touch screen) promethean boards are having technical issues on a regular basis. Sysops report that this is an issue across the district and many of the issues they try to help resolve has to do with old promethean boards and systems that are no longer supported.

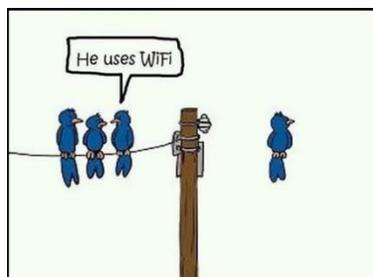
If teachers are being asked more and more to rely on technology in their classrooms, then this technology needs to work on a consistent basis. Often, the pens to the boards do not work or will not align properly. Sometimes the boards or computers just shut down. Not having a full-time sysop in our buildings leads to frustration because issues cannot be resolved right away and well planned lessons go to the wayside as teachers continually struggle with tech issues.

Some teachers piloted new boards years ago. Are there more of these boards for teachers? What is the long-term plan to replace the aging promethean boards?

Each building needs a full time SYSOPS back. There are way too many tech issues arise each and every day that need to be solved on the spot in order for staff to continue teaching. Not having a building SYSOP impedes instruction on a daily basis for many. The combination of outdated promethean boards, unsupported technology, and not having a full time SYSOP per building leads to wasted time, loss of instruction, and growing frustration all around.

Answer: Future may require a district tech committee. David will communicate with Bill Roberge about the needs for spending on the technology to replace the old boards with new tech.

SYSOPS - evaluate what needs to be supported by Barb Ritch and what needs to be supported by SYSOPS. We have other staff than SYSOPS to manage tech problems.



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2021 - 2022

As we think about next year and moving forward, can you make a commitment to keep numbers low in kindergarten and not allow class sizes to balloon to 25 like in the past? Can a cut off number be set and then children be sent to a school with fewer children per class. Too often kindergarten classes are huge at Onondaga Road Elementary and Stonehedge Elementary and significantly smaller at East Hill and especially Split Rock. Having a difference of 8-9 kids per class is extremely impactful.

When the time is right, can the discussion that was barely started before the pandemic about exploring a pre-k or developmental kindergarten concept at WG be revisited?

Answer: [Next year we will return to the discussion of developing PRE-K / Developmental K Possible use of flexible boundaries to reduce class sizes over 25 in Kindergarten.](#)

High School

Why would the district cut a school counselor at the high school when we have support for mental health for all of our students on our strategic plan?

There is a lack of equity in science teacher's class sizes in the high school. This problem has existed in the high school for many years now. Can we change this so that there is more of an even spread of students between science classes?

Answer: [David Bills is going to work with the high school administration to address both concerns.](#)

Member Record Keeping

Each June the district sends out salary agreements to members to sign for the following school year. Included on this notice is the base salary, employment status, placement step, degree type, and credit hours beyond your degree. Be sure to carefully check your salary agreement each year to ensure the district has the correct information credited to you. In addition, twice a year the district sends out an Employee Attendance Record Report. Be sure to check this attendance record report for accuracy. If you have had to isolate or quarantine this school year due to a covid exposure, and you had to work from home with approval from your building principal, your sick time should not have been used. There is no option in the BOCES subservice system to choose to work from home, but your absences had to be in the system to arrange for a supervisory substitute.

Seniority List as of 1/31/2021

[2021-Teacher Seniority List](#)

[2020-Teacher Seniority List](#)

Everyone, please check your data on the most current Seniority List to confirm accuracy! Unless you took any unpaid days of leave, you should have gained 200 Units and 1.0 years of Seniority as compared to last year's 1/31/2020 "Corrected Seniority List."

If you believe your information is in error, PLEASE email Dave Cirillo, (dcirillo@westgenesee.org) asap!

Also CC: Karen Fredericks kfredericks@westgenesee.org, and Mary Beth Smith or Dawn Personte.

Where Are They Now?

Mary T. O’Sullivan (formerly Stessen) had been a secondary English teacher at Camillus Jr High, West Genesee Jr High, and West Genesee High School from 1973-1985.

An opportunity from GE, now located in Liverpool, NY, at the time gave her the entrance into a long career in the aerospace and defense industry. Her English teaching skills came in handy, as she discovered that engineers didn’t know how to write, punctuate, or organize their written material.

Along the way, she encountered many interesting characters, and what impressed her most was the lack of inspiring leadership throughout these large companies. What you learn and teach as teachers, are values: honesty, integrity, loyalty, respect, and in most cases, manners and common courtesy. When she found these qualities lacking, and the behavior so unsettling, she used those incidents as the basis of her master’s degree courses.

Finally, she decided it was time to put all these papers and essays into a book about the behaviors and lack of values she encountered working in industry. The result is *The Leader You Don’t Want to Be*. Her inspiration for the book came from observing years of behavior that you couldn’t make up and that you wouldn’t permit in your own home.

The following comments are taken from the professional press releases for the book.

Mary T. O’Sullivan is on a mission to improve leadership in business today. Her new book, *The Leader You Don’t Want To Be – Transform Your Leadership Style from ‘Command and Control’ to ‘Transformative Visionary’*, drives this home.

This book is a daring callout to today’s business leadership. Mary O’Sullivan is throwing down the gauntlet by saying it’s beyond time for today’s leaders to throw out the “Chieftain commands all” mentality and embrace 21st century thinking. When this happens, leadership can create great companies with great cultures that hire and guide great employees — who then create great results.

Here are some of the reviews of the book so far:

“Mary’s book takes her career experiences and brings them to the present. The recommendations are timeless and valuable. ~Tom Brillat, Director Mystic Seaport Museum, Interpretation Department (retired)”

“Wonderfully constructed with great flow between chapters. I loved the chapter heading quotes and the tease concerning the next topic at the end of each chapter! ~Conrad Donahue, Captain, US Navy (retired)”

“... the analogy between seat belts and face masks is powerful. It clearly shows the failure of leadership during the pandemic. ~Steven Smith, Author & Teacher, former Naval Aviator”

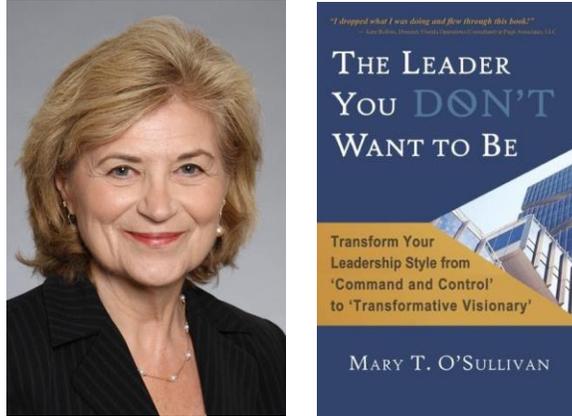
“[The book is] very intriguing and eye-opening (realistic) ... It’s a really good read and transitions so effortlessly. ~Tracey McMillian-Booker, Manager of Human Resources at Norsk Hydro”

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The book is available on Amazon right now. [You can get your copy here.](#) Just click the link.

If you read the book, I'd love to hear your comments. You can email them to me at mary@encoreexecutivecoaching.com

Teachers are straight forward and honest, so no holds barred.



147 Francis Horn Dr., Kingston, RI 02881
401-742-1965
mary@encoreexecutivecoaching.com
www.encoreexecutivecoaching.com

Contact Your WGTA Executive Officers <http://www.wgta.net>

Michael Perkins, President
Email: perkinsforwgta@gmail.com
School: WGMS (315) 487-4618
Cell: (315) 243-1862

Mary Gotham, Treasurer
Email: megotham@gmail.com
School: WGHS (315) 487-4601

Dawn Personte, Vice President
Email: dpersonte@gmail.com
School: STG (315) 487-4631

Jeanine Stables, Secretary
Email: jstablesster@gmail.com
School: WGMS (315) 487-4618

Mary Beth Smith, VP Negotiations
Email: smithschneid@verizon.net
School: WGMS (315) 487-4618

Conor Murphy, VP Grievances
Email: cdmurphy84@gmail.com
School: WGHS (315) 487-4601

In Solidarity



HERCULEAN... TITANIC.... ARDUOUS... EXHAUSTING.... These are words our President Mike Perkins, and our Principals, and our Superintendent, have used to describe the efforts of our members over the last year. The demands exceed any we have endured before March 13, 2020. In the beginning of September 2020, John Mannion articulated that the Reopening Plan essentially ignored the numerous committee recommendations and we were left with the fallout.

All WGTA members want to do their jobs to the best of their ability. In response to the hardships placed upon us, it is tempting to disparage colleagues who may seem to have it easier than we do. Members whose work has been disrupted and even eliminated by the Reopening Plan did not choose this. Teachers who have had to create detailed "sub plans" for their TA co-teachers every single day since September did not choose this. Teachers at different grade levels did not choose to have different schedules. Teachers who had to pack up everything they used to teach, some for their entire career, in one building and move to another in less than three weeks did not choose this. Teachers who had to pack up almost everything in their classrooms in order to create space for as many desks 6 feet apart as possible did not choose this. Teachers who had to plan for, instruct, and assess the cohort in front of them and the cohort at home at the same time did not choose this. Teachers whose jobs require direct instruction, immediate observation and feedback of student performance (Art, Music, PE, Technology, etc.) did not choose this. Teachers who are fully remote and cannot see and guide their students' work until it is shared or turned in on the screen did not choose this.

It is beyond frustrating for teachers, known for their strengths in planning, organizing, and executing, to lack so much control over their lives and classrooms in a year where our very lives are at stake just by breathing! Kindly remember the prescient words of [then U.S. Senate nominee] Abraham Lincoln, that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." Our members, our colleagues, our fellow teachers, our representatives and union leaders are not the reason for the difficulties in our work lives. We are all doing our best in a horrible situation. The WGTA leaders are working day and night, in addition to our equally crazy teaching jobs, to support you and try to make our lives more manageable.

We cannot do this alone. Please communicate your concerns and frustrations to your elected building representatives and building leaders. We cannot help you if we do not know what the issue is. Please speak up to your administrators if you want immediate resolutions. Please speak to your colleagues who represent you on your building's Principal's Liaison Committee and the Superintendent's Liaison Committee. Please join your PLC or SLC. Please join us in representing yourself and colleagues by running for a building rep or leader position. Please attend some of the Board of Education bi-monthly meetings, so that they see more of us there asking the hard questions. Please be part of the solution.

"My friends, it is solidarity of labor we want. We do not want to find fault with each other, but to solidify our forces and say to each other: We must be together; our masters are joined together, and we must do the same thing." -Mother Jones (1988). "The speeches and writings of Mother Jones"

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SCAN ME

Financial Learning Center: We recently contracted with popular financial publisher Kiplinger's Personal Finance for our new Financial Learning Center. This interactive microsite offers numerous articles on a wide variety of financial topics, including selecting the best value in tax planning software and more. No matter your point in life or financial situation, you are sure to find something of interest.



SCAN ME

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SCAN ME

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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.