

The Member Ship



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

Livin' on the EDGE, By John Mannion WGTA President

My father always said, "if you're not living on the edge, you're taking up too much space." Well, Learners Edge has put many of our members and the district in an uncomfortable position. In the Fall of 2015, the district and the WGTA Negotiating Team agreed to a very favorable change in the contract. This change was ratified by our membership and approved by the Board of Education. The maximum number of graduate credit hours, that could be financially compensated, jumped from Masters +54 (or MA +60 in some scenarios) to Masters +90. The district bargained in good faith, as did we, however neither party expected the rate at which some of our members took online courses through Learners Edge. That rate, in some instances, was the equivalent of over 10 completed courses in a year. As you can imagine, if this continued, the district would not be able to overcome the financial impact that this dramatic increase would impose. The completion of such a massive amount of coursework over such a short period of time is why this issue was brought to us by the district. The district began to question the rigor of the courses and the impact that taking such a large number of courses at once might have on one's teaching. Before anyone jumps to a conclusion that I am not pro-Learners Edge, let me clarify a few things.



I am a supporter of Learners Edge because of the following reasons:

1. The courses are graduate level and have a graduate course number accordingly tied to them (500 or above).
2. The courses offered are relevant to our teaching.
3. The courses are offered through accredited universities (University of Colorado Pueblo and Augustana).
4. Many courses being tied to district initiatives that are explicitly stated in the Strategic Plan.
5. Some employees have acknowledged that the courses not only provide content and strategies that are helpful in their classroom, the pay increase is helpful in overcoming a loss in salary when the contract was opened and a 0% raise was taken. Contractually a 2% raise was expected to occur that year.
6. The WGTA/District contract states that graduate courses offered by accredited colleges shall be approved and compensated for the express purpose of strengthening the teacher's background in specific, identified areas.
7. Teachers completed these courses and still maintained high standards and practices in their classroom.

...Continued on Page 2

Dr. Brown recently communicated to our membership that the district was going to change their policy regarding approval and graduate credit compensation for these courses. The new policy states that teachers may take a total of just three courses through Augustana University and no courses through University of Colorado Pueblo. Employees don't lose the credits they have already earned, however, if you have already taken three Augustana courses, you have exhausted your ability to take any other future Learners Edge courses.

As a body that represents 400 teachers, we disagree with this change. This change in policy is not yet set in stone. This is a policy that must be negotiated and can be brought to arbitration if no agreement is reached, we are currently in that process. We are also conducting our own research and surveying teaching associations to see if any such restrictions on course offerings are present in other districts. Additionally, we are exploring other opportunities outside of Learners Edge, including courses offered through NYSUT's Education and Learning Trust. Teachers need affordable, easily accessible course offerings to continuously grow as a profession. It is our duty to assure that will always be the case. NYSUT, 3 credit, graduate VESi courses are offered at a cost of \$585 and are eligible for approval and reimbursement.



**Why science teachers
should not be given
playground duty.**

St. Baldrick's Day Update, *By WGTA Vice President for Grievances Mike Perkins*

West Genesee Teachers Association members along with other West Genesee staff and students participated in the 2017 St. Baldrick's Foundation Event at West Genesee Middle School on March 10th. Lead by Christine Savage, the team has collected close to \$15,000 for child cancer research. If you'd like to support the team, you can still donate at <https://www.stbaldricks.org/events/mypage/11110/2017>

St. Baldrick's 2017 - West Genesee Middle School Team



Christine Savage (WGTA Member), Nathan V., Ryan K., Daniel M., Dann Miller, Carmen Primiano (WGTA Member), Steve Dunham, Michael McGrath, Brian Ramsden (WGTA Member), Piper M., Joseph K., Joe Voll, Terry Sparks (WGTA Member), James Ciciarelli (WGTA Member), Jereme Davis (WGTA Member), Gene Bobby

Thank you to all who shaved their hair to support such a great cause!

Contact Your WGTA Executive Officers

<http://www.wgta.net>

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Simplifying your life insurance options

As an educated consumer, you realize the earlier in life that you purchase life insurance, the cheaper the premiums will likely be. You're also aware that life insurance offers financial protection for your dependents upon your death, helping to cover the costs of funeral and burial expenses; assistance to help with your children's education; and offering financial assistance with paying debts and other expenses.

It can be overwhelming, though, trying to determine the best type of life insurance policy. Let's take a look at some of the different types of life insurance options available.

#1: Whole Life Insurance

– This type of insurance is usually the most costly since policies are guaranteed to remain in force as long as premiums are paid. Whole life insurance offers permanent protection with premiums that never increase and builds cash

value you can borrow against while you are living (like a loan). **Important:** Understand that you will reduce your death benefit if you don't repay loans with interest and will no longer have coverage if you surrender the policy.

#2: Term Life Insurance – This type of insurance pays a benefit in the event of the death of the insured during a specified term, offering a fixed rate of payments during that time period. Once that period ends, coverage at the previous premium rate is not guaranteed and the insured would need to get

further coverage. Term life insurance (and its level term life cousin) is designed only to protect your dependents if you were to die prematurely -- offering NO cash value.

#3: Level Term Life Insurance – Like term life insurance, level term life insurance pays a benefit in the event of the death of the insured during a specific time period. Premiums may not be

increased during the time period due to change in your age or health status.

#4: Universal Life Insurance

– This type of insurance offers a way to protect your dependents while building tax-deferred cash value. While the cost of a universal life plan needs to be covered so the policy remains in force, the policyholder has the option to adjust how much he or she will pay in premiums each year. Policyholders can also access a portion of the balance without affecting the

guaranteed death benefit as the cash value accumulates over time.

Keep in mind that NYSUT members & their spouses/certified domestic partners can help protect their dependents from life's uncertainties with a variety of NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed life insurance plans. Many of these plans offer group rates not available to the general public along with additional convenience and savings opportunities.

“Term life and level term life policies are often popular options for those individuals with young families since there is a greater need for life insurance protection. They also tend to be much less expensive than their whole life counterparts. If you are considering a term or level term life policy, make sure to consider how long you would need the coverage.”

For more information about these plans, visit the Member Benefits website at memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101.



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.

Mar./Apr. '17

Public Education: Good News, Bad News and What We Can Do,

By WGTA Treasurer Mary Gotham

It is no surprise that public education is still under fire. Two months into the new regime and there are already rumblings of major changes. Here is a recap of bills recently introduced to the House and actions you can take to protect public education:

Good News: ESSA

While many people are still weighing in on the [questionable merits of ESSA](http://curmudgucation.blogspot.com/2017/03/essa-big-mess.html) <<http://curmudgucation.blogspot.com/2017/03/essa-big-mess.html>>, the Senate has voted to revoke the accountability provision John King had added to the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#). Removing this provision limits federal authority and gives more leeway to states. States are no longer required to rate schools with grades of A-F. It also leaves it up to the states to identify and intervene with struggling schools ([Ujifusa](#)).

Bad News: Devos

Betsy Devos, our new Secretary of Education, would like to replace public education with private and Christian schools (Rizka). She will work hard to increase voucher monies for charter and religious schools as well as erase or at least blur the lines between the separation of church and state.

Good News: Devos

Devos' nomination was the most contested and controversial of all Trump's candidates. She was confirmed only after Vice President Pence was forced to cast a tie-breaking vote. As a result, her position as Secretary of Education is weakened. Her ability to sway representatives in both houses is likely diminished. Her lack of competence was so evident during her nomination that a spotlight was focused on her inadequacies, on problems with privatizing education, and on the benefits of public schools. The amount of negative press given to the education reform agenda during her confirmation was a wakeup call for democratic representatives and a rallying cry for public education.

Bad News: H.R. 610

Education Bill [H.R. 610](#) has been introduced to the Senate. This bill would repeal the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which was part of Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" (Burris). H.R. 610 would provide block grants for vouchers, provide funds for homeschooling and repeal nutritional standards for students.

Good News: H.R. 610

H.R. 610 has only 3 co-sponsors out of 435 representatives in the House. This is not a lot of support. [This bill appears to have stalled](#) (Burris). So far, there is no sister bill in the Senate.

Bad News: H.R. 899

[Education Bill H.R. 899](#) has been introduced in the Senate. This bill terminates the Department of Education on December 31, 2018.

Good News: H.R. 899

I don't even know what to say about this bill; bizarro world. Would it be a good thing to terminate a department that wants to privatize public education? What would happen to the billions of dollars in the Department of Education's budget? What would happen to the thousands of schools across the country that rely on those monies to function?

...Continued on Page 6

What we can do

The assault on public education has not let up. These recent disruptions are likely just the beginning. We must remain vigilant as Trump, Devos and politicians push their agenda to dismantle public education. We are not powerless and we are not defeated. Here are some things we can do to fight back:

Stay informed: Set up alerts for Senate Bills

“A bill is created and sponsored in the House and generally sent to ‘committee’. In the case of H.R. 610, it was sent to the Committee on Education and Workforce. If a bill were to successfully come out of committee, it would go to the House Floor for a vote. The Senate would go through the same process with a sister bill. The bills would then be reconciled and agreed to before going to the president for signature or veto” (Walter-Terrinoni).

[Follow H.R. 610](https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/610) by clicking on “get alerts” <<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/610>>.

[Sign up to receive email alerts](http://edworkforce.house.gov/calendar/list.aspx?Subcommittee=&Year=2017&EventTypeID=) when bills are created on your topic of interest. You can select from a list, the topics you’re most concerned with, such as education or environment or health care. <<http://edworkforce.house.gov/calendar/list.aspx?Subcommittee=&Year=2017&EventTypeID=>>.

See what the House Committee on Education and the Workforce is working on [here](http://edworkforce.house.gov/calendar/list.aspx?Subcommittee=&Year=2017&EventTypeID=) <<http://edworkforce.house.gov/calendar/list.aspx?Subcommittee=&Year=2017&EventTypeID=>>

and [here](http://edworkforce.house.gov/) <<http://edworkforce.house.gov/>>.

Contact your Representatives: *Keep up the pressure* Continue to fight for children. As new bills are introduced let your representatives know your position. Be [persistent](#)!

[Find your senator](http://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/) <<http://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/>> [Find your representative](http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/) <<http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>>

For more information on contacting your representatives, visit [ContactTheCongress.org](http://physics.mnstate.edu/cabanela/contacting_the_congress_shutdown.php) <http://physics.mnstate.edu/cabanela/contacting_the_congress_shutdown.php>

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TO RECEIVE ONE OF THE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES IN THE CONTRACT, AND EMPLOYEE MUST INFORM THE DISTRICT OF THEIR INTENT TO RETIRE BY **MARCH 23**. You must file with NYSTRS with-
in three months of your retirement date.



ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY CLEANUP AND LUNCH

Tentative Date **SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 10AM – 12PM**



“DINNER OF 100” at Coleman’s.

WEDNESDAY , JUNE 21, 6PM - 9PM

FREE TO THE FIRST 100 WGTA MEMBERS AND THEIR SPOUSES OR SIGNIFICANT OTHERS! FREE DRINKS, FREE FOOD, FABULOUS DOOR PRIZES!



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• 60 Months @
2.74% APR

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4.49% APR

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4.99% APR

*Minimum loan amount of \$10,000. Westar FCU will only accept first or second position on the lien of your property. The property must be your primary residence and fixed to a foundation. Maximum loan amount of \$250,000. Westar FCU calculates the available equity on your home as so; assessed or appraised value multiplied by 80% minus the balance of any mortgages or home loans held against your home. Westar FCU reserves the right to charge you an appraisal fee, which will be determined on a case by case basis. The applicant(s) are responsible to pay any mortgage taxes and county filing fees, these fees may vary.

Approximate repayment terms are as follows:

• 60 monthly payments of
\$17.86 per \$1,000 financed

• 120 monthly payments of
\$10.37 per \$1,000 financed

• 180 monthly payments of
\$7.91 per \$1,000 financed

Variable Rate Home Equity Line of Credit**

• Introductory Rate of 1.99% APR for 12 Months, then reverts to Prime Rate plus 0%

**Minimum loan amount of \$10,000 and initial minimum advance of \$10,000. The current and minimum rate is 4.00% APR, as of March 17, 2017. The maximum rate is capped at 12.00% APR. Minimum advance of \$250 after initial minimum advance of \$10,000. You can take advances for the first 10 years of the loan and from that point after you have 15 years to satisfy the loan. Your minimum monthly payment will be established at the time of each advance in an amount equal to the interest due at the end of each billing cycle, subject to a minimum of \$100 or your account balance. Westar FCU will only accept first or second position on the lien of your property. The property must be your primary residence and fixed to a foundation. Maximum loan amount of \$250,000. Westar FCU calculates the available equity on your home as so; assessed or appraised value multiplied by 80% minus the balance of any mortgages or home loans held against your home. Westar FCU reserves the right to charge you an appraisal fee, which will be determined on a case by case basis. The applicant(s) are responsible to pay any mortgage taxes and county filing fees, these fees may vary.



APPLY ONLINE AT WESTARFCU.COM



Rate are subject to change without notice. Some restrictions may apply. Final approval and actual rate is subject to creditworthiness of each individual applicant. Westar FCU reserves the right to verify income. Westar FCU is federally insured by the NCUA, an agency of the United States Government. Westar FCU is an Equal Housing Lender and does business in accordance with the Federal Fair Housing Law and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act.



How About a Date? *By WGTA President John Mannion*

The WGTA is not an integral part of building the District calendar. The contract states that the tentative calendar will be presented to the WGTA which may make notations and suggestions, which shall be given to the Superintendent. A big problem with recent calendars including this one is that they are not extending Regents Exams into the final week of June. (No tests on June 25th and 26th) This gives us a long, 11 week summer but it provides little flexibility in creating a calendar.

In the past, the district has used our recommendations in building the final, approved district calendar. We were not as fortunate this time around.

Here are the rules we are playing by:

1. 186 total days
2. 183 instructional (student contact) days
3. 3 full professional development days, including an orientation day
4. 4 half days for professional development to help with district and state initiatives. These days also count as instructional, student contact days
5. Must have Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving off (our contract) Nov. 22
6. Must have Good Friday off (bus driver contract) March 30
7. Once a BOCES calendar is built, the district then begins to develop our calendar

The WGTA had two main suggestions. First, we offered changes to avoid a professional development, orientation day prior to Labor Day.

The WGTA also asked for a half day to begin the school year after the initial professional development, orientation day. The rationale behind this request was to help elementary students adjust to the length of a school day, particularly in Kindergarten.

The district was not willing to make either of these changes as it would affect the total number of days for the year, reducing it to 185. Also, in lieu of one full day and one half day professional development day to start the year, we begin with two full professional development days. This leaves students with a short, three day first week.

The four half days are Nov 7 and Mar 14. The other two have been pushed together to form a full day of professional development. Therefore, we have 4 full days and 2 half days vs 3 full days and 4 half days. This equates to the same amount of student contact and professional development time.

If you have any suggestions for the future, please email a WGTA Representative!

West Genesee Central School District

2017-2018 Calendar

	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
J U L Y 2017	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
	30	31					
A U G	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	27	28	29	30	31		
S E P T (18)	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
O C T (21)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	29	30	31				
N O V (18)	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	26	27	28	29	30		
D E C (16)	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	31						

	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
J A N (20) 2018	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22 _R	23 _R	24 _R	25 _R	26 _X	27
	28	29	30	31			
F E B (15)	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	18	19	20	21	22	23 _X	24
	25	26	27	28			
M A R (21)	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	25	26	27	28	29	30 _X	31
A P R (16)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	22	23	24	25	26	27 _X	28
	29	30					
M A Y (22)	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25 _X	26
	27	28	29	30	31		
J U N (15)	3	4	5 _R	6	7	8	9
	10	11	12 _R	13 _R	14 _R	15 _R	16
	17	18 _R	19 _R	20 _R	21 _R	22 _R	23
	24	25	26	27	28	29 _X	30

July 4Independence Day
 August 31Teacher Workshop Day
 September 4Labor Day
 September 5Teacher Workshop Day
 September 6School Begins
 October 9Columbus Day
 November 7Staff Development Half-Day
 November 10Veterans Day Observed
 November 22-24Thanksgiving Recess
 December 25-Jan 1Christmas/New Year's Recess
 January 15Martin Luther King Day

January 22-25Regents Days
 January 26Teacher Workshop Day
 January 30Second Semester Begins
 February 19-23Winter Recess
 March 14Staff Development Half-Day
 March 30Good Friday
 April 23-22Spring Recess
 May 28Memorial Day
 June 5, 12-22Regents Days
 June 17Graduation
 June 21Last Day School for Students
 June 22Last Day School for Staff

☐ 11-month employees not scheduled to work: July 10-August 8

☐ Schools not in session

☐ Half-Day for Students

☐ Teacher workshop days

☐ Attendance period ends

☐ School Begins

Days underlinedPay dates

Days marked RRegents days

Numbers in parentheses ()Student days

\$100s OF MILLIONS!

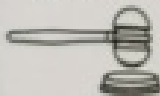


NYS Constitutional Convention

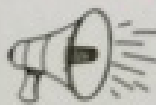
Yes, you read that right.

Albany wants to spend hundreds of millions of your taxpayer dollars on a constitutional convention, even as class sizes grow and educators

are asked to do more with less. And what will those millions buy? Return trips to Albany for state legislators, since most convention delegates will likely already hold office. And since double dipping is allowed, lawmakers can collect salaries as elected officials and as delegates.



New York's constitution protects the fundamental rights we enjoy as state citizens,



including **free public education,** the **right to unionize** and **retirement security.**



New York State
Constitution

Holding a constitutional convention gives delegates free rein to overhaul the entire document.

Your taxpayer

MONEY



100s of millions in tax dollars wasted, and our rights up for grabs?

Heck, NO.



On Nov. 7, remember to VOTE

www.NoNewYorkConvention.org

nysut
A Union of Professionals

The Back Page

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

We want to advertise for you!

Are you an artist, a carpenter, a house painter looking to advertise your services?

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.

The only other advertisements that are run in The Member Ship are those provided by NYSUT, AFT, or the AFL-CIO.

House Painting

Over 30 years experience...
we've been at it awhile!

Bob Deegan (315) 399-9537,
and Jim St. Croix (315) 256-2222, or
contact us at WGHS.

FREE ESTIMATES!

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.

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

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