



THE MEMBERSHIP

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

Openness as Opportunity by Keith Newwine, Guest Editor

I won't take up too much of your time. I know how busy you all are. In fact, I know that the stress of everyday teaching can be a lot, and when you couple that with the anxiety of budget concerns, contract worries, NYS Grades 3-8 testing, tenure recommendations, and all of the other items that come with teaching youth, it can be overwhelming.

There was a time when things got too much for me that I used to say to myself: Just close the door and teach. None of that other stuff matters if I close the door to the outside world and teach the scholars in my room. That is what I got into this for—to teach youth.

I don't think that way anymore. In fact, I try (emphasis on the word try) to do the exact opposite: Open your door and teach. Allow people—your colleagues, your students, and yourself--space to find peace and comfort in your classroom. Build networks of folks who can join you in lifting each other up.

One of my favorite words in the world is *ubuntu*. Loosely translated from the original Bantu, *ubuntu* means "I am because we are." Opening up your classroom to colleagues can provide you and your students with an opportunity to build new, healthy relationships that can help us all. Try it. You won't be disappointed.



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WHY TEACHERS NEED MORE RESPECT

By Jake Krajewski, *Reporter Magazine*, Rochester Institute of Technology

The Nobel Prize is considered one of the most prestigious awards it is possible to receive. It is awarded to people who spur significant change in the world, either by inspiring progress in the spread of peace or by advancing a scientific field. However, the Nobel Prize does not recognize one of the most elementary fields when it comes to progressing the world as a whole - education.



Without educators, we would not have nearly as many scientists or brilliant world leaders. It's hard to make scientific breakthroughs if you no one ever taught you high school chemistry, after all. Yet this field, which is so pivotal to the advancement of society, receives very little recognition, especially in the United States.

In the United States, around 50 percent of teachers quit their jobs by their fifth year of teaching. On the surface, teaching seems fairly easy, even glamorous. Summers and holidays off, days that end in the early afternoon and the opportunity to work with kids can make the

position seem very appealing. However, many people don't take other factors into account. Creating and grading homework and tests, writing lesson plans, after-school tutoring and dealing with parents are all done outside of classroom time and frequently on days "off."

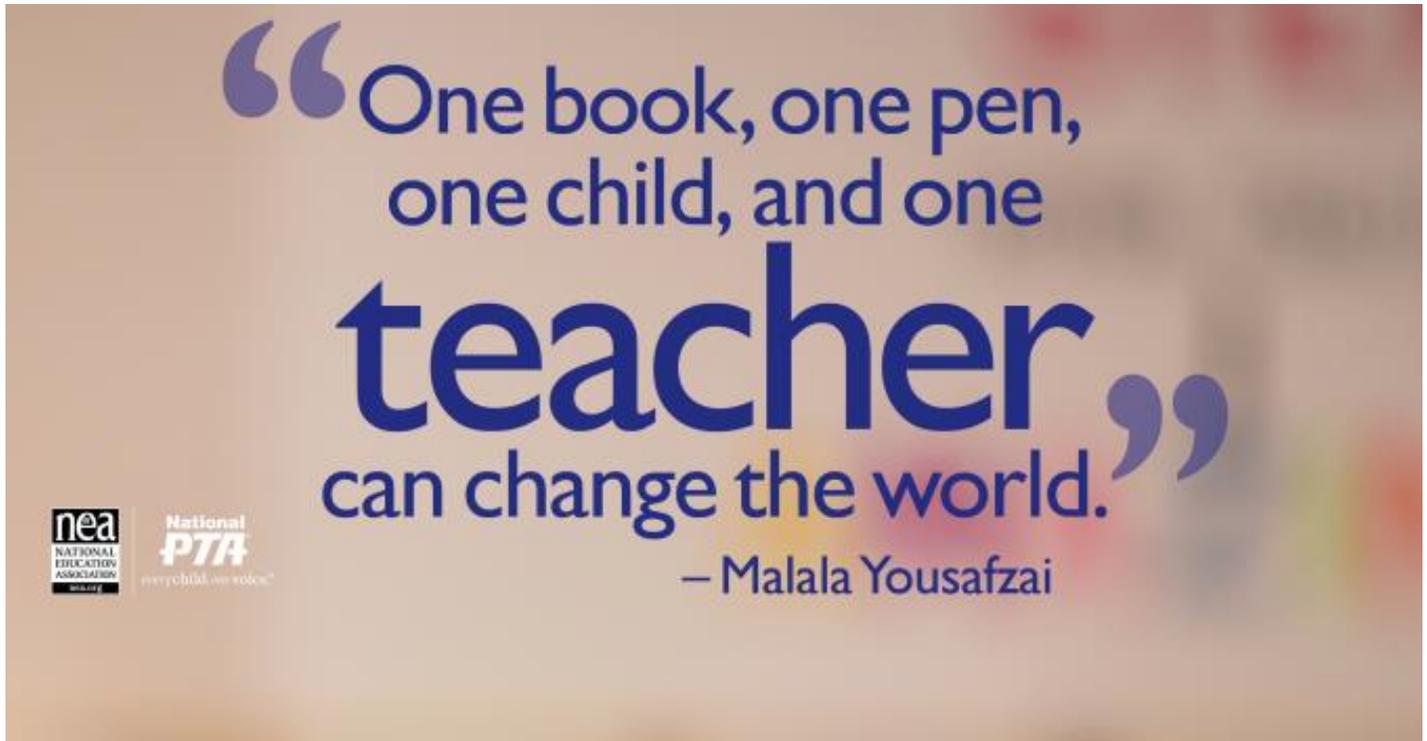
Worse yet, teachers don't garner the respect that they deserve. Rebellious students will always be present, but many parents are very quick to blame teachers for their children's failings. If their child receives a failing grade, they rarely look at their child or themselves as the root cause, no matter the circumstances. Teachers are an easy scapegoat and, worse yet, some parents will blame teachers for their child's lack of respect or attitude, despite that being their job as parents to foster.

This creates something of a paradox, as most teachers are left woefully powerless to discipline their students...Now we're left with children that don't want to learn and know that they won't get in trouble for blowing off their schoolwork.

This idea that teachers are always at fault may stem from the fact that many people, who have completed high school, think that they're smarter than the average grade-school teacher. Many people think they know what teaching is like just by having been in school at some point. However, ask a teacher, and they can tell you some harrowing stories about how taxing the profession is. There needs to be a massive shift in how we view teachers, because we're approaching a point where both students and teachers will be utterly apathetic, and in that situation, society as a whole loses.



A good starting point would be more ways for teachers to garner recognition. More awards for good teachers, more ways to let them know that their efforts are being seen and rewarded. Additionally, people need to be made aware of how difficult being a teacher really is. They need to learn that teachers work harder than a lot of other professions, and that all of their "extra" days off when school is closed are usually spent working at home. With a better understanding of the hell some teachers go through, we might be able to lessen the disrespect so many people show towards them.



While the educational system may not be able to do much about it, parents need to learn that a teacher's job is not to raise their child for them. Failing grades are not always the fault of a lousy teacher, but rather those of an unconcerned student. Teachers can try as hard as they want to reach out to them, but some students don't even want to try to raise their grades. At that point, it becomes the parents' job to make their child care.

More motivated teachers could do wonders for this country. Better teachers can make students feel more engaged and more excited to learn, which means more intelligent adults at the end of their 12 years of schooling. This could lead to more scientific breakthroughs and a lot more Nobel Prizes. Ultimately, those achievements can be traced back to the recipient's teachers — the ones who gave them the knowledge they needed to make a monumental change in the world.

WGTA Investigating Discounted Disability Insurance For You: Which is the most important type of insurance? by Mary Beth Smith, Vice President for Negotiations, and Dawn Personte, Vice President for Grievances

When protecting our future, **disability insurance** is often overlooked. Of the many types of insurance, **it may be the most necessary**. One in four Americans will experience a disabling illness at some point in their life according to the American Council for Disability Awareness. With those odds, taking chances with your income could have a devastating effect; imagine being both sick and without an income.



Provide for your family, protect your income, insure your paycheck. If you become too ill to work, you have your sick days and perhaps 90 Sick Bank days if you've donated. What will happen when you run out of sick days and sick bank? With disability insurance your income is ensured, if necessary, until age 62.

Purchasing disability insurance will ensure you receive up to 60% of your income for short or long term illness. Since disability payments are a tax-free benefit, this may make your 60% income seem more like 80 or

90%. Thus providing for you and your family if you are no longer able to work.

The average cost for individual disability insurance (through NYSUT) is about \$40 per month. **The WGTA is looking into a group disability plan**, offered by Unum Life Insurance Company, **available to our members for less**. The costs are based on your age and income (quotes available upon request). The only stipulation, **a minimum of 20% of our eligible members will have to enroll** in order for the coverage to be available for all. We need your input to determine if this offer is viable.

If you are interested in learning more about this plan, talk to a building representative. ***Stay tuned for an upcoming email with a specific date, time, and location for an informational meeting.***

Thinking of Retiring?

Beth Chetney, Baldwinsville teacher, union president, co-president of the Onondaga County Teachers' Association, and newly-elected Retirement Board member, will present a **Retirement Seminar right here at West Genesee at the WGHS LGI on Thursday, February 27, beginning promptly at 4:00pm.**

Beth has requested that you **kindly complete [this pre-workshop survey](#)**. This will allow her to know how many staff plan to attend, as well as allow her to tailor the program to the WG members in attendance.

WGTA Seeks Individuals Interested in Running for Board of Education



The WGTA wants you... to spread the word! Three of the nine Board of Education positions are up for election in May of 2019. The WGTA is recruiting, interviewing, and endorsing individuals that are interested in running for the Board of Education. Running for an elected office can be a bit intimidating. We are here to help guide potential candidates through the process, making it as painless as possible. Getting on the ballot is as simple as completing a short form and obtaining only 30-40 signatures. Many of our teachers live in the district and have children or grandchildren who attend West Genesee Schools. We all have a stake in the education of our children, some of us as both teacher and parent, so please consider serving.

If you know someone who lives in the district that is knowledgeable, professional, and most importantly passionate about the education in this community, please have them email me at mannonforwgta@gmail.com. Organizations prosper most when there is a triangular set of checks and balances in place. At West Genesee, this triangle includes District Administration, the Board of Education, and educators that work in the district. WG teachers, social workers, school psychologists, nurses and counselors have a great deal of perspective and information that we can provide to the Board of Education members when making critical decisions. We will continue to encourage board members to maintain open communication with West Genesee educators, especially when deliberating and determining board actions. We appreciate that BOE members dedicate their time and energy to ensure a sustainable future for the children of this district.

We continue to extend an invitation to all candidates and BOE members to meet directly with some of our teachers. To the current members we will not only show our appreciation for their service but will also provide insight on how policy or program changes can impact the classroom. Part of our responsibility as an organization is to help assure that concerns of our teachers reach the board members. Beyond meeting with our current board members, we know that building partnerships with new candidates can bring a fresh set of ideas and philosophies that are necessary considering the ongoing changes and challenges in education. If you are one of those folks or you know someone who is, please consider running for Board of Education. Your community needs you!

Superintendent's Liaison Committee Update, by Mike Perkins, Vice President

Thank you to all of you for sending your concerns for the Superintendent's Liaison Committee Meeting in January. To read the agenda items and notes, go to <http://bit.ly/31OEVOE>. Remember: for an item to go on the Superintendent's Liaison Committee Meeting Agenda it must: (1) be an item that affects an entire building and/or the entire membership, and (2) be an item that was previously discussed at the building level Principal's Liaison Committee Meeting that has gone unresolved/unanswered.

Kudos!

Congratulations to **Claire Schulz**, **Christina Castaldo**, **Denise Kaley**, and **Lindsay Spinks** for becoming **National Board Certified Teachers**! This is fantastic personal milestone that has a direct effect on student learning. Each teacher passed upon their first submission of components (which includes portfolios, videos, and evidence)—and this is, statistically, very rare. Well done!



The WGTA is very proud to help these members in this pursuit. Each teacher used the Albert Shanker Grant to fund the process, and three of the candidates used NYSUT ELT graduate credits throughout the process.



“DINNER OF 100”

at **Coleman's Authentic Irish Pub**

Wednesday, June 24, 2020, 6PM-9PM

FREE TO THE FIRST 100 WGTA MEMBERS AND SIGNIFICANT OTHERS!

FREE DRINKS 6PM-8PM, FREE FOOD, FABULOUS DOOR PRIZES!

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[Dinner of 100 RSVP](#)

If you have already sent in a request, you still need to RSVP using the link.



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Want to advertise here? Send your advertisement to Shana Michel (WGHS) at shanamccaffrey@gmail.com.

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