



Thankful

John Mannion, President

In a time that is so critical to the future of education, it is important to be informed. We, the Executive Officers, are trying to present all members with as much information as we can. This newsletter as well as our Facebook page, our Twitter feed, and our Member Email-list are meant to keep us connected, and we encourage you to like, follow, or sign up for all of these services.

We are also doing our very best to listen to your concerns. As I gain a greater understanding of all of the existing and new initiatives for the knowledgeable teachers of our district, I have come to realize that what you really need is time to work on what you have been doing and time to collaborate with your colleagues to make these initiatives more manageable. One of the ways we tried to hear your concerns and give you time to collaborate was through the Elementary Forum, which gave teachers an opportunity to voice their concerns and come up with potential solutions to those issues. We look forward to hosting other Forums at different levels and buildings in the future, but you are always encouraged to contact us via email with your concerns.

In order to keep ourselves informed and to give us a chance to collaborate with other Unions from across the state, the Executive Officers attended the NYSUT Leadership Conference in Cooperstown, NY from November 1 – 3. Workshops were held regarding APPR, Union Finances, Political Action, and several other topics. The intent of attendance was to provide the WGTA representatives, leaders, and officers with the knowledge to help our Association and District be successful. One of the ideas that I took away from the conference was that the APPR agreement is a living document, and the Association will be working to establish an APPR Committee in the future. Please stay tuned for more information on that very important topic.

On a different note, our Fall Fling at Bitterman's was well attended. Union members, past and present, got an opportunity to take a break, sit outside, listen to some pretty good music, and enjoy the fall scenery. It is so important to take the time to appreciate all the hard work we do, and social events like this are crucial to the morale of our Union. We all look forward to hosting other events in the coming months.

I personally want to thank the Executive Officers as well as Cabinet members for their tireless hours of dedication and service to this organization! I also want to thank the District Administration for listening to the concerns brought forth by members of this Union. Our communication and collaboration are what will help this District continue to be a successful one.

Lastly, and most importantly, we hope that everyone has a safe, harmonious, healthy, and relaxing holiday season! Take time to enjoy your family and the little things.

STAYING CONNECTED & GOING GREEN!

Do you want to stay up-to-date with all things Education? Please like our Facebook page @ West Genesee Teachers' Association and follow us on twitter @wildcatteachers! You can also sign up for the Member Email-list by going to <http://goo.gl/dBpXYF>.

Starting with the January/February edition, The Member Ship will be posted to the Union website (<http://www.wgta.net>) and a notification sent to all staff. Hard copies will still be made available at each building, but in limited supply.



THE
MEMBER
SHIP

Spotlight...

An Honor Well Received

Ellen Miller, Assistant Editor

Working at West Genesee is an amazing experience, not just because of the great buildings, students, and families who make up our community, but also because of the superstar teachers we are lucky to work beside.

Bob Elmer is one such superstar. Elmer was inducted into the Upstate New York Chapter of US Lacrosse Hall of Fame as part of its 2013 class. He has coached WG girls' varsity lacrosse for 14 years. During his tenure, Elmer has won 12 league titles, nine Section III championships, was crowned NYS Champion six times, and has coached 26 All-Americans.

"I feel very honored to be inducted into this hall of fame," Elmer said on November 12. "When you look at the quality people that have been inducted, people like Mike Messere, John Desko, Casey Powell, it is nice to be included in that list."

He has not only coached lacrosse, but also boys and girls soccer and wrestling. He switched to coaching girls' sports after he and his wife had four daughters. "My wife said to me: 'Why don't you coach sports your daughters can play?'"

Elmer, who teaches 9th grade Global Studies and 12th grade Participation in Government, is in his 21st year at West Genesee. "I love the interaction with the players and students," Elmer said.



What keeps his teaching fresh after 21 years? "It is not the x's and o's or the curriculum that keeps me at it," he said. "It is the ability to make a difference in young people's lives, helping them achieve success." Obviously, Elmer has had success on the field as well as in the classroom. We are all – teachers and students – fortunate to have him in our school district.

Kudos!

Congratulations go out to High School Science teachers, ***Kathy Annan & Sam Gervaise***, who were designated as New York State Master Teachers by a governor's commission. For an entire article on this prestigious award, go to http://www.westgenesee.org/District/News/DistrictNews_MasterTeachers.cfm.

Kudos to West Genesee High School Health teacher, ***Sandy Brown***, one of the Hope Honorees for being an amazing educator who promotes anti-bullying! Sandy was honored at the Hope Gala 2013. Way to go!!!

This year's Camillus Optimist Joseph A. Witowski Teacher of the Year Award winners are: High School Chemistry Teacher ***Leandra Kovalchik***, ***Kathy Byrne***, West Genesee Middle School Math Teacher, and ***Melanie Callahan***, Split Rock 5th Grade Teacher. Congratulations on this very well deserved award!

SEND US YOUR KUDOS! Email Keith Newvine at konewvine@gmail.com

Grievance Procedure

Keith Newvine, Vice-President for Grievances

Sometimes the concerns we have might very well have an easy solution--it just might not be a solution you want to hear. Take, for example, the common complaint that "There isn't enough time in the day to get everything done!" There is no doubt that that is a common concern amongst teachers, but the solution to such a grievance (and it is a grievance because, according to Article II, Section A of the Contract, it is a "claimed violation, misunderstanding, or inequitable application of the terms of this Agreement") is an easy one: Negotiate a longer school day and school year.

It's as easy as that! Problem solved, right?

In order to handle each grievance that comes our way, we need to be able to do two important things: 1. Differentiate between a concern and a grievance; and 2. Offer a viable solution with every claim, concern, or grievance.

There are certain criteria that must be met in order for a complaint to be grieved. In addition to the definition provided above, the claim can also be a violation of District or Board of Education Policy and/or State or Federal Law. As always, we encourage members to make every effort to handle the situation through open communication with the person or persons committing the violation or causing the concern. If you feel that you need representation while communicating the claim, or if you feel uncomfortable making the claim on your own, a building Leader or Representative will be happy to help!

If the concern or grievance can't be resolved through open communication, a formal complaint can be filed with Keith Newvine, Vice President for Grievances. At that time, it is important that a specific process and timeline is followed, the details of which are described below:

1. If the grievance is not resolved in Step 1 (Informal Stage), a written grievance must be filed with the District within forty (40) calendar days of the act, occurrence, or event giving rise to the grievance.
2. Within three (3) weeks after the submission of the written grievance, the Superintendent will hold an informal hearing at which time the interested parties will have an opportunity to be heard.
3. If a grievance is not resolved by the action of the Superintendent of Schools, within two (2) weeks of the hearing at this stage it may be appealed by the Association to the Board of Education. This will be done within two (2) weeks of the receipt of the Superintendent's decision.

That's enough for now...Please go to pages 6-8 of your contract for more information and stay tuned to our next edition for more information on the grievance process. In the meantime, please contact your Building Leader or Representative with your concern (and potential solution) or any of the Executive Officers at the information provided below.

Contact YOUR Executive Officers...

John Mannion, President
Email: mannionforwgta@gmail.com
School: 315-487-4601
Cell: 315-333-2094

Mary Weaver, Vice President
Email: mweave66@yahoo.com
School: 315-487-4615

Keith Newvine, Vice President for Grievances
Email: knewvine@gmail.com
School: 315-487-4601
Cell: 315-771-8928

Susan Marshall, Treasurer
Email: smarshall1@rocketmail.com
School: 315-487-4615

Katie Williams, Secretary
Email: kwilliams1126@hotmail.com
School: 315-487-4653



The Vice President's Report

Mary Weaver, Vice-President

The Superintendent's Liaison Committee (SLC) met on October 2, 2013. Thank you to all the members who submitted questions or concerns for the meeting. The conversation was professional and courteous, and Dr. Brown was more than willing to listen. We look forward to continued conversations about the issues from across the District. Please stay tuned for upcoming SLC dates and emails asking for topics to be addressed. For the minutes to October's SLC meeting, please go to <http://goo.gl/hNbEqw>.

The Mainstreaming Committee (soon to be renamed the Special Education Committee) met on September 20, 2013. Considering the new legislation and the new Response to Intervention plan in the District, this committee will become all the more important when it comes to making decision about how services are provided across the District. The conversation was professional and courteous, and Cheryl Saidel and Sue Murray were more than willing to listen. We look forward to continued conversations about the Special Education concerns from across the District so that all students can find success. Please contact Mary Weaver or Janine Stables for more information or to have your concern address at the next meeting. For the minutes to September's meeting, please go to <http://goo.gl/kkA5OF>.

The In-Service Training Committee (now referred to as the District-Wide Professional Development Committee) met in October as well. The committee becomes all the more important as building-wide Professional Development Committees continue to discuss their needs at the building level and then send those needs to this district wide committee. The conversation was collegial and informative, and Brian Kesel was open to any and all needs of the staff. Please stay tuned for upcoming Professional Development Committee meeting dates at your building and at the District level. For the minutes to October's meeting, please go to <http://goo.gl/ABfYzw>.

We also encourage members to join the Edmodo groups set up by the District to stay informed and up-to-date on all the happenings across the District. Please contact your Building Leader or Representative or any of your Executive Officers for information about how to join these committees or Edmodo groups.

Carol Baldwin Fundraiser

The WGTA donated over \$1000 to the Carol M. Baldwin Breast Cancer Research Fund! Thank you to all who dressed in denim and donated!



Leukemia & Lymphoma Fundraiser

The WGTA donated over \$800 to the Western & Central New York Chapter of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society! Thank you to all who dressed in denim and donated!



**someday
is today**

Advertisement

Vacation Rental in Eastwood

Small apartment in private home; full kitchen, bath, combined LR/BDR (queen bed), enclosed porch, separate entrance, easy access to highways; nonsmokers only please. \$75/night; \$500/wk. Contact: EKramer2@msn.com for more info.

<http://www.wgta.net>

New York Education Commissioner John King handles tough questions in polite WCNY forum

Paul Reide, preide@syracuse.com

Syracuse, NY -- New York Education Commissioner faced 20 questioners during a 90-minute forum at WCNY-TV headquarters during a live broadcast and webcast tonight.

One spoke up in support of the Common Core academic standards.

Almost all of the others expressed deep concerns about the way the standards, in conjunction with other policies, have been rolled out across the state. Those concerns ranged from high costs to excessive testing to the security of student data being managed by private companies.

One of the most poignant questions of the night came from Santina Scrimale, a senior at Westhill High School, who talked about the anxiety that children are feeling over the high-stakes tests, especially given the low passing rates on last year's new Common Core-aligned tests.

She said she sees her "very intelligent" third-grade sister already stressing out about this year's tests, fearing that she will fail them because she won't have time to finish them.

King responded that testing is part of the education process and helps inform instruction. But he also said he agrees that there has been an increase in local testing in some districts and in "rote test prep." He said the state is looking to help districts to cut the number of tests they give.

There were few audible reactions to the questions or answers from the orderly audience of about 200. A rare round of applause came when Greg McCrea, president of the Westhill District Teachers Association, which has called for King's resignation, asked why schools like Montessori are good and what the state has done to bring some of their ideas to public schools.

The applause was polite, but knowing. King sends his own children to a Montessori school, which is a sore point with his critics. He acknowledged that, and said he likes the way Montessori schools use the Common Core standards, including a heavy focus on writing supported by textual evidence.



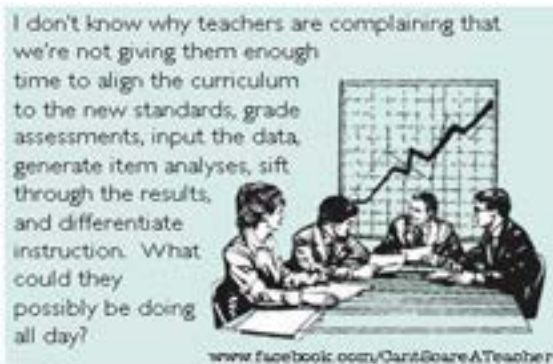
Demonstrators picket outside the WCNY studios on West Fayette Street in Syracuse, where a live TV forum was held with state Education Commissioner John King tonight. Photo by Mike Greenlar | mgreenlar@syracuse.com

To watch the first hour of questions and answers, go to <http://www.wcny.org/television/common-core-forum/>.

The conversation continued online and was later aired on the WCNY political show, *Insight*, with more questions and comments. WGTA Members Mike Petercsak, HS Social Studies teacher, and Keith Newwine, HS English teacher, were randomly selected to have their questions addressed by Dr. King and Regent Anthony Bottar.

To watch the second half-hour of questions and answers, go to <http://www.wcny.org/television/insight/>.

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<http://www.wgta.net>

The Happenings...

Keith Newvine, Editor

FROM THE TREASURER, SUE MARSHALL

After attending the NYSUT Conference in November, I am more confident than ever that our union is on the right track. We have been working to make improvements for current and future members in the teaching profession. Financially, we are dedicated to keeping costs down. This means minimal spending. We are frugal with your money and will continue to look for ways to cut costs and keep dues down.

I attended a financial workshop that clarified the position NYSUT takes on union finances while outlining pitfalls such as the use of credit cards by officers, the need for regulations in unions' by-laws, and the need for yearly audits done internally and externally. The workshop did provide a sample for financial regulations to adopt, and our auditors provided us with a list of weaknesses in our internal control system. The revisions to our by-laws to include specific procedures regarding the spending of union funds will be my major focus in the coming months as will improving the controls over our money. A committee will be formed to audit my work to ensure I am following the correct procedures (getting the proper approval for spending over \$500, making sure two signatures are on each check and original receipts are attached, looking over bank reconciliations, etc.). Having these checks and balances will assure that our money is safe and sound.

FROM THE SECRETARY, KATIE WILLIAMS

On November 1-3, Katie attended the NYSUT Conference in Cooperstown, New York. She attended the APPR Workshop in which school districts from all over central New York discussed how APPR is working in their school districts. She also attended the Internal Organizing Workshop in which NYSUT gave information on how to get more members involved in the Union. Information on how to become involved in the NYSUT Leadership Institute and the Local Action Project will be shared at the next cabinet meetings.

On November 5th, the WGTA had an elementary forum at Stonehedge Elementary for all elementary teachers that wanted to share their concerns and have their voices heard. It was a wonderful conversation that allowed teachers from different buildings to hear each others thoughts. Thank you for all of the teachers that came out!



A financial safety net for NYSUT members & their families

Long-term care insurance pays for services that aren't covered by Medicare or traditional health insurance but are important when you can't fully take care of yourself.

You may think it's unnecessary since you have no plans of ending up in a nursing home or requiring assistance for basic daily activities. The fact remains, though, that none of us can predict what's going to happen in the future.

This is where long-term care insurance comes into play – helping to pay the high cost of custodial care and other long-term care expenses that a long-term illness or injury can bring.

That's why the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust is excited to be back in the long-term care business with the endorsement of New York Long-Term Care Brokers.

With this endorsed program, NYSUT members and their eligible family members have the opportunity to receive a 5% to 10% discount on various plans.

With regional representatives throughout New York state and beyond, eligible individuals have access to long-term care insurance plans from multiple highly-rated insurance companies – including the New York State Partnership for Long-Term Care.

And with Americans living longer than ever today, the need for a financial safety net has never been greater. Through this endorsed program, eligible individuals can get a long-term care insurance plan designed with their specific needs in mind.



And don't automatically discount the cost of this type of insurance as it may be far more affordable than you may think.

If you or a loved one has been previously declined for long-term care insurance, you may still be insurable with a different company.

NYLTCB represents numerous long-term care insurance companies – all with different medical underwriting guidelines. Make sure to ask your long-term care insurance specialist for more details.

We encourage you to look into the cost of a long-term care plan tailored to your specific needs.

For more information about this endorsed offering, please contact NYLTCB toll-free at 888-884-0077. You can also contact Member Benefits with any questions at 800-626-8101 or visit memberbenefits.nysut.org.



Happy Holidays

L O V E P E A C E H O P E

*Wishing you and your family a joyous Holiday Season!
Your West Genesee Teachers' Family*