



President's Message

Colleagues,

This time of year always finds me a little frantic. Between holiday preparations, family obligations, and work for my classroom, I'm often a bit overwhelmed. In the past, the knowledge that winter break was imminent was enough to keep me going.

But I'm feeling a bit differently, this season.

For the first time, this year, I feel that the break may not be a fully restful one. I'm worried that the amount of extra paperwork and data and district obligations will only increase in the New Year. And the lion's share of that work has nothing to do with the work I do with and for my students every day. The forms and tallies and surveys and the act of endlessly revising how we deliver instruction is becoming exhausting. And while some of this work is a result of constantly changing state mandates, a great deal of it is not.

From what I've been hearing, I'm not alone. Many of you are also overwhelmed. In fact, the stress-level among our members seems to be increasing as the year progresses.

Ann Marie and I have spoken to the administration regarding this concern. We believe that a great deal of what we are being asked to do is fundamentally unnecessary.

Your PTEA has compiled a survey to measure the stress level of all of our members. We'd like you to consider filling out the survey. Please be as honest and specific as possible. If you wish the survey to be anonymous, please place it in a sealed envelope before you return it to your AR, who will forward it to Ann Marie and me.

Once we compile all of the information, we will encourage the administration to find a solution

that will reduce the superfluous paperwork and the constant changes to curriculum and programs.

Our members have always gone above and beyond. We've made every change in curriculum and programs go as smoothly and seamlessly as possible. It's not unreasonable for us to ask that we slow down, limit...or stop altogether...the amount of unnecessary program changes and paperwork.

Regardless of the outcome, it is my wish that all of you are able to take some time to simply relax over the break. I hope that you are able to spend time away from the rigors of Pequannock and to enjoy time with family and friends. You all certainly deserve it.

Happy holidays and best wishes for a healthy New Year.

Lee

Vice President's Message

Your PTEA Negotiations Team has been hard at work during this season, meeting after school and on Saturdays to craft a series of proposals to present to the BOE. We have taken into account the survey that the majority of you completed for us. I have reached out to the Board President and expect that we will have our first meeting early in the new year.

Once again, I'd like to remind all members to contact me or Denise Donch (PV) as soon as possible if you need to take a leave, either for your own medical condition or to care for a family member. We can help you maneuver through your various contractual and legal rights. Our NJEA consultant Vickie Walsh will also review requests of this nature.

Ann Marie



Denim Day Thank You!

Thank you to all members as well as several administrators who participated in our recent Denim Days to support our Philanthropic Fund. Your donations are greatly appreciated. Below are the totals collected from each school:

PTHS - \$115

PV - \$59

HV - \$87

NB - \$125

SJG - \$95

Thank you also to Elissa Scillieri, Susan Soroko (SJG) and Yvette Mc Bain (SJG) who recently made generous contributions. Our next event will be held at Sunset Pub and Grill on February 4. More information to follow.

PRIDE – Sue Flood (PV)

Due to limited monies available from NJEA to reimburse locals for their PRIDE activities, NJEA has requested all grant proposals covering the remaining 2015-16 year be submitted by December 15. I have submitted proposals for our winter and spring activities and am happy to report that all activities and funding requests were approved.

Please make note of the Friends of Education guidelines elsewhere in this newsletter and consider nominating a deserving community member.

Finally, I am proud to have been selected by NJEA to attend their first ever PRIDE in Public Education Conference in February. I hope to bring back to Pequannock many creative and community centered ideas.

Grievance – Diane Wolfe (HV)

The association has filed a grievance on behalf of all the elementary aides and secretaries in the district. There has been an established past practice in Pequannock which has allowed these staff members to leave at student dismissal the day after parent teacher evening conferences. This year these members have been required to remain for the remainder of the day in the absence of students. We believe that this established past practice should continue and will be meeting with the Superintendent to try to remedy the situation.

Membership – Jen Quinn (SJG)

If you have changed addresses over the years or recently, please update your changes by logging on to Members Only Area of NJEA.ORG. If you need any assistance please contact Jen Quinn Membership Chair.

Last call for Yankee Candles

If you are still interested in ordering candles or other gift items from Yankee Candles, please visit their website at www.yankeefundraising.com. You may place orders online until January. Make sure to enter our Group Number – 990064263. Our Philanthropic Fund will receive 40% of all sales, and 100% of proceeds will go directly to scholarships for PTHS Seniors.



Legislative – Dave Claeys (PTHS)

1. One of the key cases which is heading to the US Supreme Court this year is Friedrichs V. California. This case challenges the right for unions to take union fees from teachers automatically that are associated with the unions activities in negotiating contracts for all teachers in a district. In this case, 9 teachers in California that are part of a Christian Educators group, claim that it is a violation of their First Amendment rights to be forced to pay for the unions negotiations, even though they would benefit from the unions negotiated contract. If Friedrich's does win the case, it would deal a serious blow to unions and the power of unions as more individuals would potentially choose to opt out of dues, even though they too benefit from the negotiations.

2. Although PARCC results have been disseminated to school districts in the state, the state still has not released information that shows how many students chose to opt out of the testing. There is significant frustration among opponents of the PARCC standardized testing that 7 months after the test was administered, the state still hasn't released this data. There are also questions about how many students signed in for the tests but then completed it in too short a period of time to complete it seriously, in essence also opting out of the test. The state plans on releasing the formal opt out data in January, even though the scores for districts were released to the districts in November. There aren't any current plans for reporting the students who didn't actually take it even though they signed in on the day of the exam.

3. Massachusetts, which was the state that played a role in bringing about the idea of creating one standardized test for students in all states, and, was instrumental in the creation of the PARCC exam, has now joined the other states who have decided to walk away from PARCC. Originally, there were 24 states that signed up for PARCC. That is now down to 9 of the original 24 states, with New Jersey still one of the 9 remaining. This latest rejection of the test is a serious blow to the tests credibility.

4. New Jersey is toughening up its requirements for new teachers. The new standards include a full year of student teaching, going through a state evaluation system, being exposed to multiple types of classroom environment including at least one with students with disabilities, and, completion of a performance assessment.

5. A lawsuit, T.B., et al. V. NJ Department of Education, has been filed by several families against the NJ Department of Education. The suit claims that the NJ DOE issued new requirements for High School graduation. The new requirements do away with having to pass the HSPA and replaced it with successful passing of two of the PARCC exams. The suit contends that this is in direct violation of the NJ DOE's own regulations that require any changes to graduation requirements come through a process that allows for public comment.

6. Legislation has been introduced in the NJ Senate to place a constitutional amendment in the states constitution that would make it mandatory for the state to make its required pension contributions. The amendment would be put on the 2016 ballot for a public vote if it makes it through the senate.



Friends of Education

Awards will be given to outstanding local citizens who have made contributions to the educational system in Pequannock Township.

QUALIFICATIONS

1. Nominee may not be permanently employed by the Pequannock Township Board of Education at the time of nomination. Lunch aides are eligible for nomination.
2. Services performed must have been on a voluntary basis.
3. Recipients will be chosen from nominations by the Pequannock Township Education Association.
4. Nominees must have influenced a substantial number of children in Pequannock Township over a period of 2+ years.

Please be sure to include with your nominating letter an address and telephone number for your nominee. Portions of your letter will be read at the Friends of Education celebration in February. Please provide ample evidence of your candidate's service.

All nominations are due to Susan Flood no later than Friday, January 8, 2016.



Evaluations – Denise Donch (PV)

Just a reminder to reference the evaluation cheat sheet (found on our website) with any questions you may have about evaluation protocols. Please continue to also share questions with your building SCIP representatives.

County Report

Sue Flood (PV), Diane Wolfe (HV)

NJEA recommends that any member thinking about retirement start planning at least 5 years prior to the date. There are many details to understand and therefore do not wait until the last minute. Workshops are available for members to attend.

Upcoming Dates

Jan 7 – Rep Council meeting

Jan 8 & 9 – *County IPD Weekend

Feb 4 – PTEA Day at Sunset Pub and Grill

Feb 9 – *County ESP Survivor Workshop

Feb 17 – *XYZ's of Retirement
(Snow date Feb 18)

Feb 24 – *XYZ's of Retirement
(Snow date Feb 25)

To register for MCCEA, events simply go to <http://mccea.com/> and visit the Eventbrite RSVP page. Phone reservations are no longer accepted.