



CHALKBOARD

DECEMBER 2016

President's Message

Dear Colleagues,

It was my sincerest hope that I would be able to write you a holiday message full of good cheer. Unfortunately, that is not to be the case. With the news that Betsy DeVos will be the US Secretary of Education (pending confirmation), this message is anything but happy.

The appointment of billionaire Betsy DeVos is by far the most challenging obstacle we have had to face as a Union, and as Educators. I would say that fact that she has no experience in Public Education should be reason enough to make her unsuitable for the job, but experience never seems to be a prerequisite when it comes to appointing people in charge of public schools. I could also say that her continued effort to privatize public schools and replace them with dubiously successful charter schools is a strike against her. Certainly, her part in the destruction of the public schools in Detroit is also a mark against her, as is her push for vouchers. The tax money her charters have diverted from public schools has impacted the most financially and academically fragile of students.

Both the president of the American Federated Teachers, Randi Weingarten and the President of the NEA, Lily Eskelson Garcia have indicated that the appointment of DeVos is a direct attack on public education. The fact that many of her fellow "reformers" have distanced themselves from her is also certainly telling.

But my concern about Betsy DeVos goes even beyond these issues. As a member of the "Family Research Council" and "Focus on the Family", DeVos has been instrumental in attempting to destroy LGBT rights. These groups have contributed to the widely condemned pseudoscience of "Conversion Therapy," which is banned on LGBT minors in NJ.

The children we teach come from all walks of life and from all ranges of the academic and financial spectrums. Betsy DeVos is a danger to these children at all levels. It is our job to protect the children in our care from such a danger.

I hope you will take some time during the break to call or write your senator to tell them that you too are concerned about Betsy DeVos and her record of using her billions of dollars and her influence to damage our excellent public education system.

You can email your senator, here.

<http://networkforpubliceducation.org/2016/11/tell-your-senator-to-vote-no-for-betsy-devos/>

And after that, I hope you will take some well-deserved rest and take time to enjoy your family and friends. I wish you all the happiest of holidays and the most relaxing of breaks.

Lee Ann

Vice President's Message

During this season of celebrations and gift giving, I am grateful to you, our members, for your generosity toward our Philanthropic Account. The Denim Day collections from each school, your support of our Yankee Candle Sale and our PTEA Day at Sunset Pub and Grill, as well as the personal donations that several of you have made speak volumes.

This is especially true in light of the fact that we are all bringing home less pay than we were last year. I am aware that many of you have taken on second and even third jobs, in order to make ends meet. The negative net status of our salaries weighs heavily on my mind, and your Negotiations Team is approaching our upcoming mediation session on January 25 with deliberate and thorough preparation.



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We have requested an updated scattergram from the BOE in order to help argue our position that the Board does indeed have the ability to pay salary increases that will help to mitigate the rise in our health insurance contributions. Please reach out to me or any member of the team if you have questions. It is of paramount importance to us that you are confident in our commitment to do what is best for the majority of our membership. We thank you for your trust and your patience during this process.

Ann Marie

REMINDER

MCCEA Winter Fun Fest is tomorrow, December 10 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the Zeris Inn in Mountain Lakes. All Morris County families are invited to this event. Children will enjoy crafts, games, refreshments, free books and Santa! Please bring a non-perishable food item for the Interfaith Food Pantry. Thank you to HV, PTHS, SJG and the Board Office for your donations. We collected 20 bags!



Information about Sick Days and Personal Time

All members are reminded that sick days are to be taken for your own sickness or medical appointments only. You are permitted to put the sick day into Aesop ahead of time if you know in advance that you will be out due to a medical reason.

Some administrators have questioned members about sick days. Please know that you are not required to share any details about your medical condition or the nature of your appointment.

Similarly, you are not obligated to provide a reason for a personal day if you are taking one “without reason.” The administration does have the right to deny days “without reason” if they are requested before or after a school holiday or if 24 hours notice is not given. They cannot deny days “with reason” or sick days. NJ Education Statute allows the board to ask for a doctor’s note for any sick leave that is taken.

Our contract presumes professionalism. Certainly the membership has continuously demonstrated a willingness to go above and beyond their contractual requirements. Our negotiated language does allow for administrative discretion in approving days without reason, so in the event your personal day without reason is denied, we recommend you speak with your principal and/or the superintendent as soon as possible.



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Concerns about School Culture and our Students

Your Association leadership continues to hear concerns about morale. Many members report feeling respected by the administration in their building, but note that their experience and professionalism are often not valued as demonstrated by district initiatives and directives. Our leadership, consultative committees, AR's, ScIP members, and the Superintendent's Critical Few Committee have endeavored to convey the frustration and stress level that so many are experiencing. At a recent meeting, Mr. Charleston and Dr. Winning heard concerns about the amount of information emails we receive on a given day with links to follow and tasks to complete. For many, it has become impossible to keep up with the paperwork that is being asked of us. The Superintendent promised to discuss this with the administration.

We believe there is a correlation between this culture of stress, unreasonable mandates and various illogical administrative decisions and student engagement and achievement. Increasingly, we are hearing concerns that our students' achievement is suffering because of many of these administrative decisions. We would like to gather examples of this and communicate them to the district administration. We will be reaching out to all members about this in January, but in the meantime if you would like to share your thoughts or concerns about your students please contact Lee Ann or Ann Marie.

PTEA Friends of Education

Once again, the PTEA will recognize and honor community members as "PTEA Friends of Education." Any member may nominate an outstanding local citizen who has donated considerable time and effort to our schools and our students. Nominations are due to PTEA PRIDE Chair, Angela Kohle (PTHS) no later than December 20. In your nomination letter, please provide ample evidence of the individual's contributions, along with the person's address and phone number.

Every Thursday is Teacher Discount Day at Tiff's!

Tiff's of Pequannock now gives a 15% discount to all PTEA members every Thursday! Just show your school ID badge and request the discount. We will also be partnering with Tiff's in January for a Dine to Donate event to benefit our Scholarship Fund. More details to follow.

Raffle Tickets!

MCCEA is sponsoring a raffle to support the county scholarship fund. Tickets are \$5 each and the Grand Prize is \$2500! The drawing will be held at the County Friends of Education Celebration in March. Winner need not be present. Please contact Lee Ann if you'd like to purchase a ticket.





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MCCEA Annual ESP Celebration!



Aides and Secretaries from across the district attended the County's Annual ESP Celebration at the Birchwood Manor in Whippany on November 17. Many attendees won gift cards and other prizes, and Pequannock cleaned up when it came time to raffle off the snowmen centerpieces!

Upcoming Dates

- Dec 10** – MCCEA Winter Fun Fest
Zeris Inn, Mountain Lakes
- Dec 20** – PTEA Friends of Education
Nominations due to Angela Kohle (PTHS)
- Jan 5** – PTEA Rep Council
- Jan 11** – MCCEA Collective Bargaining
Workshop, Zeris Inn
- Jan 18** – PTEA Wellness Fair, PTHS
XYZ's of Retirement, Zeris Inn
- Jan 25** – MCCEA Rep Council, Zeris Inn
- Feb 3** – MCCEA Poster Contest entries
due to Janet Drashinsky (SJG)
- Feb 16** – MCCEA ESP Workshop: Stress
and Time Management, Zeris Inn

For more information on all county events,
please visit www.mccea.com
and register via EventBrite.



**PTEA PRIDE and
PTHS Green
Team Present the
First Annual
Wellness Fair!
Click [HERE](#) for
info.**



Colleagues celebrating a special occasion one Thursday afternoon at Tiff's, and enjoying a 15% discount!