



Pequannock Township Education Association



CHALKBOARD

February 2011

~President's Message~

"We, the members of the National Education Association of the United States, are the voice of education professionals. Our work is fundamental to the nation, and we accept the profound trust placed in us."

These words begin the Vision, Mission and Values Statements of the National Education Association.

As members of the NEA and of the NJEA, these words serve to inspire us to hold our heads up, and to be proud of our noble profession. On Saturday, February 5th, Senator Robert Menendez spoke to the NJEA Legislative Conference in East Brunswick. He told the assembled members that he was sick of the attacks that teachers and school employees have been enduring in the press and in Trenton. Instead, the Senator spent the better part of his speech listing all the reasons that we should be praised.

"...we accept the profound trust placed in us."

Colleagues, we have all accepted the trust placed in us by the students we serve. Be proud. Be strong. Be united in our calling to educate and to make a difference in the lives of the students - the future - of Pequannock.

Lee Ann Brensinger

~Teachers of the Year~

Congratulations to the following teachers for being named Pequannock Township's Teachers of the Year:

Jana Cohen - Pequannock Township High School

Phyllis O'Neal - Pequannock Valley Middle School

Kathleen Iraggi - Hillview Elementary School

Julie Budd - North Boulevard Elementary School

Amanda Schlesinger - Stephen J. Gerace Elementary School

Special congratulations to Pequannock Township's District Teacher of the Year, **Kathleen Iraggi**.

~Legislative~

Lillian Keating (PV)

If you think a bill is just too crazy or illogical to get passed as law, think again. Here's the latest on the School Voucher Bill from NJEA's Government Relations committee:

Voucher bill clears Assembly Committee by a unanimous vote

On Feb. 3, after a hearing that went past 8 p.m., the Assembly Commerce and Economic Development Committee voted 5-0 (Committee members were Assemblypersons Coutinho, Lampitt, Fuentes, Quigley, Bucco, and DiCiccio) to approve A-2810, its version of the so-called "Opportunity Scholarship Act." The voucher bill was released by the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee on Jan. 20 as S-1872. It would divert up to hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenue away from public schools and into the hands of private and parochial school operators.

The next stop for the bill is the Assembly Budget Committee. No date has been set for a hearing. Should it pass that committee, it would move to the Assembly floor for a vote. But there are signs that the anti-voucher lobbying effort by NJEA and a large coalition of pro-public education organizations is having an impact on rank-and-file legislators, so it's vitally important to keep up the pressure.

To take action and learn more go to: <http://www.njea.org/issues-and-political-action/vouchers>.

To see the bill go to: <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bills/BillView.asp>

When you hear politicians defending this bill, it sounds so reasonable because who wouldn't want a good school for their kids. Why would anyone be against it? Or, you may think this bill doesn't have anything to do with you since you do not work in a failing school; it's only the poor teachers in those benighted poor districts that have to worry. But please, take a minute to look more deeply and check out the websites so you can respond with assurance to false accusations of how your union blocks education reform. Did you know that parents with special education students who send their students to a voucher/private school have to sign away their rights to special education services? And if these students don't make it in their new schools and are sent back, that special education money is gone from the district. Think of those dollars and sense.

This bill is backed by both Democrats and Republicans alike. The consensus by Trenton politicians is that NJEA doesn't really represent teachers because they have not heard from you. If you don't agree with the voucher bill, this is your call to make.

~PRIDE~

Jamie Dean (NB) and Karen Schiffel (SJG)

Thank you to all who submitted posters for the MCCEA Poster Contest. Unfortunately we did not have any winners this year.

The MCCEA Mall Project is quickly approaching! It will begin on March 21st at the Rockaway Mall in Rockaway, NJ. We hope all of you are saving your class projects to be displayed. We have 3 tables and foam boards to use for display. Please see your AR with any questions.

~Insurance~

Laura Higley (PV/PTHS)

Family Leave information from the US Department of Labor

FMLA is Federal Family Leave. You may use this leave in the event of your own serious illness (as defined by the FMLA), to care for a newborn child, or to care for an ill family member, but not to care for an ill parent-in-law.

<http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28.htm> Family Leave Medical Act information sheet

<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?c=ecfr&sid=48d6ee3b99d3b3a97b1bf189e1757786&rgn=div5&view=text&node=29:3.1.1.3.53&idno=29> Family Leave Legal Code from the National Archives

Note that under the FMLA:

"Substitution of Paid Leave Employees may choose to use, or employers may require the employee to use, accrued paid leave to cover some or all of the FMLA leave taken. Employees may choose, or employers may require, the substitution of accrued paid vacation or personal leave for any of the situations covered by FMLA. The substitution of accrued sick or family leave is limited by the employer's policies governing the use of such leave."

New Jersey Family Leave information from the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights

NJFL is New Jersey Family Leave.

<http://www.state.nj.us/lps/dcr/law.html#FLA> NJ Family Leave Act Information

"The NJFLA provides for up to twelve weeks of leave in a 24-month period. The 24-month period begins on the first day of the employee's first NJFLA leave."

"...When an employee takes a leave for a purpose covered by both the FMLA and the NJFLA, the leave simultaneously counts against the employee's entitlement under both laws.

The FMLA provides time off from work due to an employee's own disability, while the NJFLA does not provide covered employees with leave for their own disabilities."

New Jersey Family Leave Insurance Act Information from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workplace Development

NJFLIA is New Jersey Family Leave Insurance

http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/forms_pdfs/tdi/WPR-119.pdf Your Guide to Family Leave Insurance in New Jersey

"Family Leave Insurance benefits are subject to federal income tax (FIT) and to federal rules on reporting income and paying taxes. They are not subject to New Jersey state income tax."

"There is another program that provides family leave insurance benefits if your family leave starts more than 14 days after your last day of work. This is called Family Leave During Unemployment."

~Important Information~

This March, we will be holding elections for PTEA Treasurer and Secretary. At its January meeting, your Representative Council nominated Jeri Asaro for Treasurer and Sue Berardinelli for Secretary. Nominations for these two positions will be taken from the floor at the General Membership meeting. If you are interested in running for either of these positions, please contact your AR.

Reminder: March 9th, 3:30 General Membership meeting at the High School Cafeteria. In addition to Officer Nominations, Vickie Walsh from NJEA will address the membership about negotiations. A great deal of other important information will be presented. Please plan on attending.

ARE YOU TAKING GRADUATE COURSES? IMPORTANT REMINDER!

If you are taking graduate courses, don't forget to fill out the necessary paperwork and submit it to the Board Office for approval. There are two reasons for this:

1. You may be eligible for tuition reimbursement. Even if you are initially denied approval for reimbursement, your request is kept on record at the Board Office and may be eligible for some reimbursement at a later date if funds become available.
2. Whether or not you are reimbursed, the course(s) ***must be approved by the Superintendent in order to move horizontally on the salary guide.***

You may hear that the reimbursement cap has been reached for a particular semester and incorrectly believe that you don't need to complete any paperwork. **WRONG!** Paperwork must be submitted, along with receipts and grades, to be considered for moving to another salary guide.

See your Association Representative if you have any questions.

Look for the Signs!

As you know, PTEA members recently began asking business owners in our community to post signs that show their support for our schools. If you know of a local business that would be willing to display a sign that says "This establishment proudly supports Pequannock Township Public Schools," contact your AR or PTEA Executive Board member for a sign. Thank you to the following establishments who have already posted a sign. Please keep them in mind when you are doing business in town.

Divine Cleaners
615 State Rt. 23
Pompton Plains

Pizza Man
574 Newark Pompton Turnpike
Pompton Plains

Golden China
235 Newark Pompton Turnpike
Pequannock

Instant Replay
599B Newark-Pompton Turnpike
Pompton Plains

King's Kid Delicatessen
235 Newark-Pompton Turnpike
Pequannock

Cosmo Bella Pizza
135 Newark Pompton Turnpike
Pequannock

Surveys

Your PTEA Association Reps are distributing a short survey to each member. We are interested in your opinions on three topics, as well as any other concerns or suggestions you may have. Please share your thoughts via this survey, so that we may become a stronger organization. If you have not yet received a survey, contact any AR or a member of the Executive Board. Your comments are always welcome and appreciated.

NEA Conference Update

On a cold January weekend, your PTEA President, Lee Ann Brensinger, and Vice President, Ann Marie Finnen, were privileged to attend the NEA's Northeast Leadership Conference in Philadelphia. Lee Ann was one of two NEA scholarship recipients from Morris County. The weekend was inspiring and empowering, with informative and motivational presentations given by NEA President, Dennis Van Roekel, Vice President, Lily Eskelsen, and Secretary/Treasurer Rebecca Pringle. Your PTEA representatives attended training workshops focused on Organizing, Leadership, Health Benefits, Bargaining Issues, and Ethics. They also attended the New Jersey Delegation meeting during which NJEA President Barbara Keshishian updated the attendees on the latest legislative news, and how NJEA is combating the numerous attacks on public schools, our pensions, tenure and bargaining rights. Rest assured our leaders at the state and national level are representing our interests and those of our students to our government leaders.

Morris County IPD Professional Development Weekend

Last month, the Morris County IPD Committee, chaired by your PTEA President, presented a weekend of professional development workshops. Teachers from all five Pequannock Schools were in attendance, so PTEA was well represented. On Friday night, Maud Dahme, former state Board of Education President, gave a keynote address which described her life as a "hidden child" during World War II and her efforts to teach NJ students and teachers about the Holocaust. PD sessions on Saturday included "Differentiated Lesson Planning," "Using Data To Enhance Student Learning," "Special Ed Today," Elementary Classroom Management," and "Succeeding With Difficult Students" for ESP's. The hotel accommodations, including bountiful buffet meals were superb and attendees left having enjoyed themselves while earning PD hours and gaining valuable knowledge to take back to their classrooms.

~Member News~

Kristin Zerden (HV) and her husband Dave welcomed a baby boy to their family on December 18, 2010. Matthew David Zerden weighed 7 pounds 12 ounces and was 22 inches long.