

LTA EXAMINER



Lynbrook Teachers Association

March 2013

The Official Newsletter of the Lynbrook Teachers Association

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION, COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

IN THIS ISSUE

Current Issues

Highlights from the President's Report and various NYSUT communications

Tax Cap

NYSUT filed a lawsuit on February 20th against the Governor and the Commissioner of Education to declare the Property Tax Cap unconstitutional. The case speaks to one person/one vote, equitable funding, local control, and the inordinate impact of the cap on low-wealth districts.

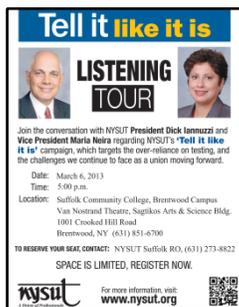
Tell It Like It Is

Go to NYSUT's online "**Tell It Like It Is**" and make your voice heard to the State Education Department, the commissioner of education, and the SBoard of Regents.

Additionally, NYSUT

President Dick Iannuzzi and Vice President Maria Neira are going on a "Tell It Like It Is" listening

tour. They will be on Long Island March 6, at 5pm, at the Suffolk community College Brentwood Campus. Space is



limited, so registration is necessary. RSVP to ltamailbox@lynbrooklta.org.

APPR

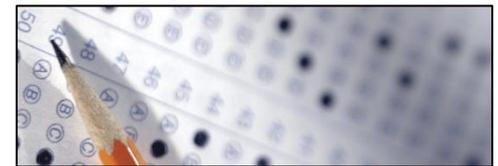
Most districts have settled their APPR. New York City did not and has lost state money. Most districts signed one to two year APPR agreements and will begin renegotiating those agreements next year.

Common Core

NYSUT Vice President Maria Neira said that she has been urging the State Education Department to slow down on assessments that will test the **Common Core standards**. She has been advocating for using this spring's assessments as a benchmark for gauging progress, not making high-stakes decisions.

Pensions

The good news is that the Teachers Retirement System is 95% funded right now. The bad news is that the contribution rate that districts need to pay is up to 16.25%, which equates to a lot of money. This puts further pressure on a school district's finances under the 2% tax cap.



Survey Results

Page 3



Union Benefits

Page 3



Political Action

Page 4



Colleague Corner

Page 4

YOUR LTA



<http://lynbrooklta.org/>



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LTA Building Reps

Your building reps are a great resource. Don't hesitate to contact them with any questions you may have.

High School (887-0200)

[Amy Ezagui](#), [Mary Kirby](#)
[Sue Moller](#), [Robyn Raleigh](#), [Jen Turner](#)

North Middle (887-0282)

[Roseanne Mitchell](#), [Regan Murphy](#)

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West End (887-0288)

[Dave Ajello](#), [Rita Callahan](#)

Waverly Park (887-6589)

[Amy Garfinkel](#), [Jackie Marino](#)

Kindergarten Center (887-8065)

[Kathy Freehill](#), [Joan Kocher](#)

South Middle (887-0266)

[Kristin Affrunti](#)
[Anne-Marie Calitri](#), [Jen Fusco](#)

From the President's Desk

by Craig Kirchenberg

I started my first draft of this issue's column on the day that a major labor dispute was resolved, and I could not be happier that we do have hockey this year!

I know that not everyone cares, but I'm a big hockey fan. I love the Islanders, and I'm a labor union guy. You may ask yourself: what does a labor union in a professional sport have in common with a labor union in education? You may ask yourself: what does a collective bargaining agreement in a professional sport have in common with a collective bargaining agreement in a school district?

The answer to both of those questions: more than you think.

Here's what all labor unions do:

They advocate for better working conditions, including safety issues. In professional sports, those conversations revolve around concussions. In education, those conversations currently revolve around preventing another Sandy Hook or Columbine.

They are directly involved in discussions that are aimed at improving the industry. In professional sports, those conversations revolve around trading deadlines, free agency, and community outreach. In education, those conversations revolve around teacher evaluations and the common core standards.

They negotiate salaries for everyone. Professional sports may seem like a different world in this regard, but like all labor contracts, there are industry minimums and maximums (team salary caps). In education, and other labor industries, salaries are considerably higher in states that have strong labor unions than in Right-To-Work states.

They negotiate better insurance packages and other benefits. In professional sports, a major part of negotiations generally revolves around long-term insurance and pensions. In education, they do as well. That's why our insurance benefits are considerably better and more secure than in non-union industries.

It killed me to lose half of the hockey season, but the labor union held its ground to stand up for what's right. The revenue sharing issue was a big issue in the negotiations; the players were getting 57% - the owners wanted that reduced to 47%. A friend of mine, who works in the business world said, "Why shouldn't the owners be able to make the lion's share and pay their employees [the players] whatever they want." I said, "And that's why we have labor unions."

Imagine if we didn't have a labor union. Imagine if your employer could just reduce your salary by 10% or increase your insurance contribution by 10%. Michigan, just became a Right-To-Work state. Michigan. The Detroit auto industry. Unbelievable. Where are they going to be a few years from now?

Right-To-Work is commonly referred to as employees having the right to work for less. Without a union, employees have to negotiate their own salaries. The work day and year could easily be altered. The insurance policy could easily be changed, as well as the percentage that employees contribute. Teachers wouldn't have a say regarding the direction of education, curriculum, evaluation procedures, safety issues, or anything for that matter. There would be no job security or any of the benefits that our contract contains.

Employers could force your hand into lower salaries or they could simply say, don't come back to work. That's what happened in the NHL. It wasn't a strike; it was a lockout. The owners told the employees that they may not report to work until they agree to a lower salary.

It can happen in any industry at any time. That's why unions started in the first place. Employers told the workers that if they don't report to work on Sunday, then they shouldn't bother to report to work on Monday.

That's why I'll always be a union guy.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Budget Work Sessions

The Board of Education will be holding its budget work sessions on **February 20, February 27, and March 6**. Please make an effort to attend.

Flex Plan Deadline

The deadline for claiming reimbursement under the Flex 125 plan is **March 31, 2013**. Only medical payments made through December 31, 2012 are eligible. Remember....use it or lose it.

LTA Gala

The LTA Gala has been booked for **June 13th** at the Coral House.

SURVEY

91%

Read the LTA Newsletter

83%

Read emails that come to personal email addresses

75%

Read the Executive Minutes and President's Report

55%

Do not have a Facebook or Twitter Account

61%

"Sometimes" read the NYSUT or AFT Newsletters

ANSWER THE POLL

Take the latest poll on our web site:
<http://lynbrooklta.org/>

Union Benefits

There are many benefits available to NYSUT members. There are four categories: Insurance, Legal, Financial, and Discounts.

The newest discounts include:

Discount Ski Tickets NYSUT members can now save on ski tickets at a variety of locations throughout the Northeast.

1800Flowers.com This new program offers the opportunity to save 20% on fresh flowers, gourmet gift baskets and much more.

VPI Pet Insurance This new program offers a variety of coverage options for dogs, cats, birds, and exotic pets. NYSUT members receive a 5% group discount on the base medical plan and up to a 15% discount if multiple pets in a household are enrolled.

There are so many benefits, that it can be hard to keep track of them all. The NYSUT Member Benefits MAP (Member Alert Program) email blast service keeps you informed through a brief email message every three weeks. You can join MAP on the NYSUT website, at <http://www.nysut.org/49.htm>

Endorsed Programs & Services:



Survey Says...

by Susan Ehrlich

In an effort to continue to improve communication with members, we asked you to complete a ten question survey. It was designed to inform us about what you want to hear from the LTA, and how you want to receive the information.

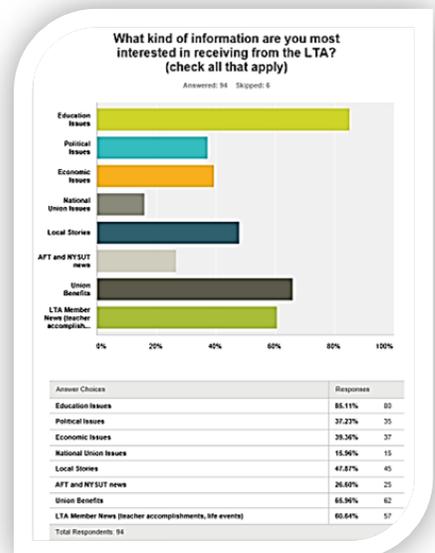
Over 100 of you took the survey. The results show that almost all of our members read the LTA Newsletter, and that more than half of you would prefer to receive it electronically. Another interesting result is that more than half of our members are not on Facebook or Twitter. Therefore, our members depend heavily on email communication. 83% of members always read the emails that come to personal email addresses (the rest responded that they read it "sometimes."), and 75% of members always read the monthly President's Report and Executive Minutes.

Clearly, our members want to know what is going on in the union. Which raises the question, what are members most interested in reading about? The final question on the survey gave us the answers. Members are most interested in education issues and union benefits. In third place, was LTA member news.

This information is helping us to better communicate with members. You'll notice the newsletter has been

redesigned with your interests in mind. The cover will have the most current education issues relevant to our union, highlighted from the President's Report. Inside, there will be announcements about new union benefits, the Colleague Corner with news about our teachers and class activities, and a Political Action news section. We hope that this provides more of what is relevant to our members in one, periodic, informative newsletter.

[View full survey results on the LTA web site.](#)



LTA Survey results "What kind of information are you most interested in receiving from the LTA?"

Colleague Corner

Founder's Day

Congratulations to the recipients of this year's PTA Founders' Day Award. They include:

Jeff Bernhardt, High School
Maureen McCartney, South Middle
Don Seibert, North Middle School
Danielle Marquardt, West End
Sandra Gettenberg, SEPTA.

Target Grant

LHS recently was awarded a \$700 grant from Target. It will be used by the Marine Science students towards their trip to Atlantis, The Long Island Aquarium and Exhibition Center this April. The grant was written and submitted by **Ellen Kannengieser**, science teacher at the high school. LHS is the first school in Lynbrook to receive this grant.

NEFCU Grant

Theresa D'Amato at West End School was awarded a \$250 grant from the Nassau Educators Federal Credit Union's "Funding Your Ideas" teacher grant program. The grant money will be used to purchase

materials for the West End Children's Vegetable Garden.

Karen Goulet at LHS was also awarded the NEFCU grant for a second year, for her fashion design class.

Sandy Relief

Susan Lindner's 3rd grade class teamed up with North Shore Animal League to come to the aid of pets who were left homeless after Superstorm Sandy. Students raised \$120 and Waverly Park staff members donated matching funds, bringing the total to \$240.

The Tri-M Music Honor Society, led by **Alyssa Panitch**, raised \$1,500 on Cabaret Night, which they donated to the East Rockaway High School Music Department to help with their rebuilding efforts.

West End School held an event called "Pajama Day" to raise money for Hurricane Sandy victims. Students and teachers donated \$1 to wear pajamas to school for the day. The money will be used to purchase school supplies for an Oceanside school through the Schools Adopting Schools Hurricane Sandy fundraiser.

West End third-graders collected money and gift cards to help the Little Red Wagon preschool in Breezy Point rebuild and restock their books.

The high school's Facing History and Ourselves Club, led by **Laura Devine**, teamed up with students at the Kindergarten Center to decorate colorful stockings filled with holiday candy. The stockings were personally delivered to families in Long Beach.

Retirees

Congratulations to the following teachers whose retirement was announced at the February Board of Education meeting: **Jane Colgan**, **Howard Gurr**, **Susan Lindner**, and **Alice Reichenberg**.

GET FEATURED!

Have you won an award? Are you doing an exciting lesson in your classroom? Did you take your students on a field trip? Want to share a personal milestone? Let us know so we can share the news!

Contact Sue Ehrlich
sehrlich@lynbrooklta.org

Political Action

by Kim Herrmann

There are a number of efforts being made to continue to educate our members as well as push legislators to change the financing for education. The tax cap continues to be a major concern, and to that end we are lobbying with local legislators this month in their local offices. Our talking points are to eliminate the supermajority requirement to exceed the tax cap and to allow reasonable adjustments to the tax cap for costs that are extraordinary or beyond the control of the school district (ex. Hurricane Sandy).

Additionally, we are asking legislators to stop the unfunded mandates such as APPR, Common Core, and PARCC. Our belief is that if something is important to education, it should be funded. The burden cannot continue to be put on districts and local tax payers.

What can you do?

[Contact your New York State Senator and Assemblyman](#). Let them know the burden they are putting on education, as well as the concerns this invariably brings to our kids with limitless testing.

[NYSUT action center](#) now has an app for smartphones that makes it very easy to take action. It is available in the app store for free.

