

LTA EXAMINER



Lynbrook Teachers Association

October 2013

The Official Newsletter of the Lynbrook Teachers Association

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION, COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

MEET YOUR NEWEST LTA REPS

A Vision for the District

by Susan Ehrlich

There is a message written across the white board on the wall in Dr. Burak's office:
"If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow."
 – John Dewey

Education is at a crossroads, making this a transition time for our schools. Dr. Burak is officially our new Superintendent, and with all the changes coming our way, it is an appropriate time to talk to her about her vision for our schools, about her top goals for this school year, and about her perspective on some of the things happening in education.

Common Core and the assessment system has been the biggest change for anyone working in education. Dr. Burak describes it as the most dramatic, challenging time since she has been in the Lynbrook district. One of her top goals is to handle these challenges and to help us, the teachers. She wants to elevate instruction to make our students critical thinkers in all areas. "We can choose to fight every step or embrace what we have to at this moment. Do our best to deliver, and see what happens. Use the strengths that we have and work together in delivering the Common Core. Participate in professional development and focus on instruction." Dr. Burak feels aware of concerns that people have, and looks forward to working with everyone to make the district stronger. She is open to constructive dialogue with teachers to find ways to succeed and make improvements.

The state imposes mandates, and then the Superintendents are on the front line, challenged with how to get the staff to follow the new models. Dr. Burak said, "People making the top decisions have not been in our roles. There is a disconnect between what's happening and what's right." As far as the students and testing, "Our teachers have done a great job with not treating the assessments as the end all and be all. They reassure the kids that it is just a test, it doesn't matter, just do your best." The parents put additional pressure, which also causes the kids anxiety. But teachers do a great job of saying, "it's just a test."

When Dr. Burak does walk-throughs in our school buildings, she is looking to see that the teacher has the students engaged, the information is relevant, and that the students are happy and excited about learning. "When kids are excited, so are the teachers." Overall, she wants to see a positive learning environment. There were two classes that she said she especially enjoyed during her recent visits. In a middle school English class, the students had a discussion comparing fiction and non-fiction. The teacher was asking high level questions and the students were actively engaged. There was also a high school social studies class, where the students were discussing the outcome of a court case. They connected the case to

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We welcome five new members to the LTA Executive Board: Michele Bergsohn (North), Liz Cardito (North), Kim Herrmann (High School), Carol-Ann Winans (High School), Annmarie Roth (West End).



Annmarie Roth, West End

"I became a union representative to answer any questions that arise and provide support to my colleagues throughout the year."



Carol-Ann Winans, LHS

"One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child."
 - Carl Jung.

This school has a long standing tradition of maintaining a caring and supportive culture. During this time of change, it is important that we work to make sure this culture is maintained.

YOUR LTA



<http://lynbrooklta.org/>



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LTA Executive Board (593-1929)

President

[Craig Kirchenberg](#) (HS)

Advocate Vice President

[Neil Giordano](#) (SM)

Educational Vice President (Secondary)

[Mike Spinella](#) (HS)

Educational Vice President (Elementary)

[Donna Smith](#) (WE)

Treasurer

[David Rabinowitz](#) (HS)

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)

[Mary Kirby](#), [Jen Turner](#), [Kim Herrmann](#),
[Carol Ann Winans](#)

North Middle (887-0282)

[Michelle Bergsohn](#), [Liz Cardito](#)

Marion Street (887-0295)

[Victoria Schiller](#), [Anthony Simone](#),
[Patricia Wierzbicki](#)

West End (887-0288)

[Dave Ajello](#), [Annmarie Roth](#)

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 don't do handshakes. I give hugs."

That's how AFT President Randi Weingarten introduced herself when she walked over to the LTA banner, as we stood among at least a thousand other teachers at the Carle Place rally. She then proceeded to give us all hugs.

It was very human gesture; education is all about human connections. Educators seem to be getting so tired and frustrated by the APPR, the ratings, the Common Core, the modules, et al., that it is becoming increasingly difficult to stay focused on what's really important: the kids.

This focus is clearly blurred when it comes to NYS education commissioner John King. He is clearly not a hugger. He is cold, stoic, and seemingly unfazed by anything, unless someone mentions that his children go to private school. He got rattled by this when he came to the NYSUT Representative Assembly last year, and he got rattled again by this at a Town Hall meeting in Poughkeepsie. King subsequently cancelled all of the other Town Hall meetings sponsored by the PTA, including the one in Garden City because he said, "The disruptions caused by the special interests have deprived parents of the opportunity to listen, ask questions and offer comments."

Unbelievable.

Last time I checked, the PTA is comprised of parents and teachers and administrators. It is possible to be both an educator and a parent. Do we have a special interest? Absolutely. We all have a special interest in every child's education and the success of every school.

King had a rough time in Poughkeepsie, but like any politician, he must continue to listen to the constituents, and it is our obligation to let King know how we feel

about the APPR and the Common Core and the general direction that public is heading in.

That's why I went to the meeting in Oyster Bay. He kept the less publicized meeting on his calendar but cancelled the Garden City meeting scheduled for the same day. Commissioner King sat with Board of Regents chancellor Meryl Tisch and local Regent Roger Tilles. The first hour and a half were public comments and questions. King said very little; I'm sure this was by design.

Parents spoke out about how their children hate going to school, how they struggle, how they cry every day. King just nodded like he was listening.

Teachers spoke out about the rush to implement the Common Core, the lack of time to understand the material before teaching it, the lack of professional development opportunities, and of course the high stakes testing. King's one response to this was that "there is a risk of losing the good stuff of the Common Core because of conflation with other issues." He did add that "we are worried about the climate of over-testing and too much test prep."

Administrators spoke out about the deleterious effects of the additional high stakes tests and the achievement gap that is being widened, not closed, by the implementation of the Common Core. In response to a comment by Dr. Lorna Lewis, superintendent of the Plainview Old Bethpage school district, King asked her how she would propose constructing an evaluation system to measure if kids are learning. She responded by saying, "the way we did it for the last 150 years." She added that education has experienced a number of changes over the course of history, but "we have never done to children what we did last year."

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Will Day

November 17

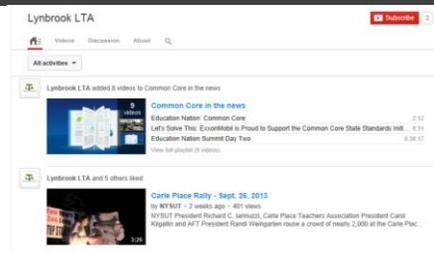
All full time Lynbrook Teachers Association members are part of the NYSUT Legal Plan and are eligible for a simple will each year.

SED Forums with King

SED has scheduled TWO forums with Commissioner King in Nassau County, the first on **Wednesday, November 13th** and the second on **Monday, December 9th**.

Find the latest information on the [nysed web site](#).

LTA YOUTUBE CHANNEL



The LTA YouTube Channel now has a playlist of videos from the news relating to Common Core.

From the President's Desk

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All of the speakers were firm but very respectful. It wasn't a blood-bath like the Poughkeepsie meeting. It was better that it wasn't this time; he's more likely to listen to sharp criticism when it's couched in a respectful tone than in an angry tone.

Chancellor Tisch seemed to listen more attentively than she usually does. Roger Tilles, who is always a good advocate for us, expressed his agreement with many of the comments that were made; although he is a supporter of the Common Core. And State Senator Carl Marcellino, who hosted the meeting, made it clear that he wants the Commissioner and Board of Regents to listen to us and take all of the comments to heart.

Ultimately, King and Cuomo and all of the members of the Board of Regents need to revisit their policies and think about what is happening in the classroom. All of our policy makers need to think about the children. They need to think about the fact that the core – the real common core – of education is all about human interaction.

So I ask you, will you help me let King and Tilles know how you feel? I sent a letter to the private emails that can be used as a basis for a letter to Roger Tilles. I think it is better if each person reworks the letter to communicate specifics of what is wrong with the Common Core and how the overreliance on high stakes tests has negatively impacted classroom instruction.

The time has come. They must hear from all of us.

In Solidarity,
Craig Kirchenberg

Quotes on the Common Core

"If Commissioner King doesn't understand that NYSUT's call for a moratorium is not a distraction but rather a genuine call for a course correction, then we need someone who does."

NYSUT President Richard Iannuzzi



"At the moment New York needs a caring pragmatist willing to address real concerns raised by caring parents and educators who see a system being manipulated from above to the detriment of their children. Unfortunately, we have John King. He should immediately reschedule these forums or he should immediately resign."

Senator Jack Martins

APPR Plan Passes

The new plan passed overwhelmingly. Thank you all for supporting it. The plan really takes the approach of everyone looking out for everyone else, which is what being union is all about.

An LTA APPR committee is being put together. A representative from every building is needed. This will be a standing committee that will help the union leadership address APPR concerns throughout the year, will help us improve communication regarding the many facets of APPR, and will help us at the end of the year when the APPR plan needs to be reevaluated and renegotiated. Any LTA member is welcome to serve on this committee; you do not need to be a building representative. Please email Craig at ckirchenberg@lynbrooklta.org if you are interested. Put APPR and your building in the subject line.

A Vision for the District continued from page 1

their own school life, asked some great, relevant questions, and it was an engaging conversation.

Dr. Burak expressed thoughts on APPR that reflect how many of us are feeling about it. She said, "How can we be perfect if the state changes the curriculum so frequently?" Teachers are on edge with all the changes in APPR. Even with our newly revised plan, there is much anxiety. Teacher morale has declined. Even our best teachers are second-guessing their approaches in the classroom. Some teachers who have been "Satisfactory" for years are now being told they are not. It seems like it can happen to

anyone. I asked her, "How can you help teachers get through this and still have some pride?" She replied that the state felt the need to label teachers. The district doesn't label that way. "Teacher success is our success. So when anyone comes in for evaluations and observations, it's hard to change perception of fear." It's her goal to support everyone to be the best teacher he or she can. "No one's perfect." She admitted that she even considers herself to be developing. Dr. Burak suggested that teachers "be open, view what administration is doing as a support and not an attack."

Dr. Burak wants teachers to know that she is doing everything she can to support teachers. She is hands on, and always hopes to be. She wants to be in the classroom and see what we're doing, to be able to say great things about our teachers and instruction. It's all for support.

That support, Dr. Burak says, will help us realize her vision for the district, which is "for Lynbrook to regain its prestige in the county as a district of excellence. One that embraces best practices. To raise the standards for students so that our students can be viewed as top quality, well-rounded, productive citizens for the next generation."

Colleague Corner

New Babies

Allison Goodman, teacher at the High School, and her husband, Mark, welcomed their second child, Sydney, in June.

Marisa Minicus and her husband, Kevin, welcomed their first baby, Matthew, in August.

High school teachers **Danielle and Bill Leighley** welcomed their fourth child, Reid, in September.

Brian Ferrara, math teacher at South, welcomed his first child, Eleanor Marie, in October.

Daniela Mahouski, special education teacher from Marion Street and her husband, Will, are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter Elena Brook in July.

Peter Toscano (North) and **Christina Toscano** (Marion Street) had a baby boy, Theodore Toscano, "Teddy," over the summer.

Engagements

Congratulations to **Alyssa Panitch** and **Brian White**, who got engaged over the summer.

Weddings

Best Wishes to **John Cornicello**, teacher at LHS, who got married October 5.

At South Middle School, **Robyn Bass**, 8th grade English teacher, married Justin Frieman in August.



*Mollie Traversa,
Trudy Amodeo, and
Christine Ketelsen*

*Sue Malizia,
Lisa Friedman,
Jessica Sanders,
Robyn Raleigh, and
Koren Pena*



Carle Place Rally

Our LTA Executive Board attended the Rally in Carle Place on September 26th.

The Carle Place BOE has proposed a salary schedule that would have all new hires making many thousands of dollars less down the line than their current counterparts.

Currently there are scores of unemployed teachers who would willingly work for less. Also, once it happens in one district, other districts follow suit. If a few districts sign on to such a deal, it begins to become a standard and hiring wouldn't be an issue. The last thing we want is for it to be a standard to set the professional back 40 years.

Many districts have made concessions like what we made. But this new proposal is outrageous. We all need to care about what's happening in other districts. In another year, we will be sitting back down at the negotiating table.

MAKING STRIDES AGAINST BREAST CANCER

The Making Strides Walk for Breast Cancer Research took place at Jones Beach on Sunday October 20th. Many of our staff attended as a team, led by **Mollie Traversa and Christine Ketelsen**.

On Lee National Denim Day, led by **Jackie Miller**, our staff raised \$1,776.00