

# IMPACT

The Official Publication of the Wallkill Teachers' Association

NYSUT Local # 13-265 AFT Local #3082  
affiliated with NEA \* AFL-CIO

Vol. 29 No. 2  
April 2016  
*Lisa Bender, Editor*

## *WTA Tenure Awards*

The Wallkill Central School District Board of Education accepted the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Kevin Castle, and awarded tenure to eleven WTA members on March 17, 2016.

Congratulations to our colleagues on achieving this important milestone in your careers here at Wallkill!

**Russell Alger** – Business effective September 1, 2016

**Karen Bayer** – Elementary Education effective September 1, 2016

**Vanessa Byrne** – Mathematics effective September 1, 2016

**Irina Gales** – Foreign Language effective September 23, 2016

**Joy Heeney** – School Social Worker effective September 1, 2016

**Marie Mazza** – Speech effective September 1, 2016

**Samrat Pathania** – Mathematics effective September 1, 2016

**John Shanley** – Social Studies effective September 1, 2016

**Kailen Stemmler** - Elementary Education effective September 1, 2016

**MaryKate Taliaferro** – Elementary Education effective September 1, 2016

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# *President's Letter to Kevin Cahill*

*By, Rich Shands*

Assemblyman Cahill,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with Kevin Castle and me last week. It was a pleasure to meet with you. While it is not the norm to meet with a union president and a superintendent together, it is clear that our goal is the same. It is our job to work constructively to create the best possible learning community for our students.



One important aspect of this job is to permanently fix the current flawed system of teacher evaluations. As always, I appreciate your direct approach and your knowledge of the issues that face public education today. Throughout these hard times you have stuck with teachers, parents and your local school districts to minimize the damage to our students and our profession. We thank you for your support and dedication!

I agree with your comments about the need for separation between politics and the NYSED. The Regents and NYSED need to be able to do their job free of political influence in order to best serve the students of New York State. We all want to get back to a place where the Board of Regents and NYSED have autonomy. The current reality is the Board of Regents and other stakeholders have to work within the constraints of the law (3012-d). The Board of Regents must make its recommendations and then the Legislature can act on the law.

Recently, there have been changes at the federal and state level which resulted from pressure by parents, educators, legislators and other stakeholders.

1. The passage of E.S.S.A. removes the federal mandate of linking student test scores to teacher evaluation.
2. The State Board of Regents Emergency actions place a four year moratorium on teacher evaluation being linked to student test scores.

These changes are a start, but don't be distracted from the facts:

1. In New York State, the law (3012-d) has not changed.
2. Our 3-8 grade students still have to take these flawed tests.
3. Students will be taking the same amount of high stakes tests if not more.
4. A parents' right to "opt out" of state testing will continue to grow.
5. The state will continue to collect data on all teachers, administrators and school districts based on flawed and invalid assessments.
6. School districts have to "collectively bargain" a new APPR also based on flawed testing and psychometrics that make no sense. (50% test based teacher evaluations)

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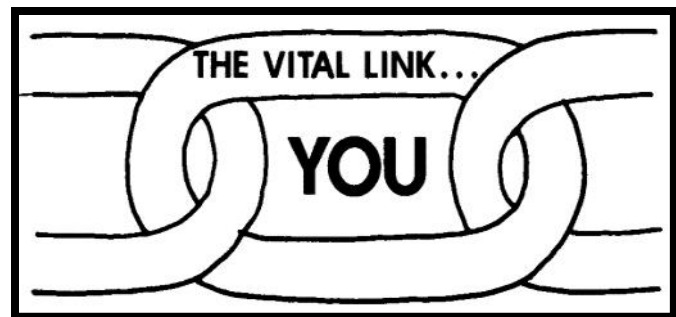
## *President's Letter to Kevin Cahill*

*(Continued from page 2)*

7. At this time, there is no amnesty for teachers who have previously received an Ineffective Rating based on these agreed upon flawed tests. They can lose their career starting next year!
8. Receivership (schools being taken over nullifying collective bargaining agreements) continues despite being based on flawed tests and faulty psychometrics.
9. Lastly, after the four year moratorium, we hope the state does not intend to return to the same flawed evaluation system.

We urge you, don't get out of the ring yet. Let's make it right. Follow the federal lead with the passage of E.S.S.A. Delink student test scores from teacher evaluation. We owe it to our students, our kids, our grandkids to do the right thing. Amend the law. If we don't, the same bad law that legislators were forced to sign onto last year will be just as bad when the moratorium ends in four years.

Thank you for your time and your continued advocacy for public education!



Become a **MAC e-activist** and take action:  
<http://mac.nysut.org/>



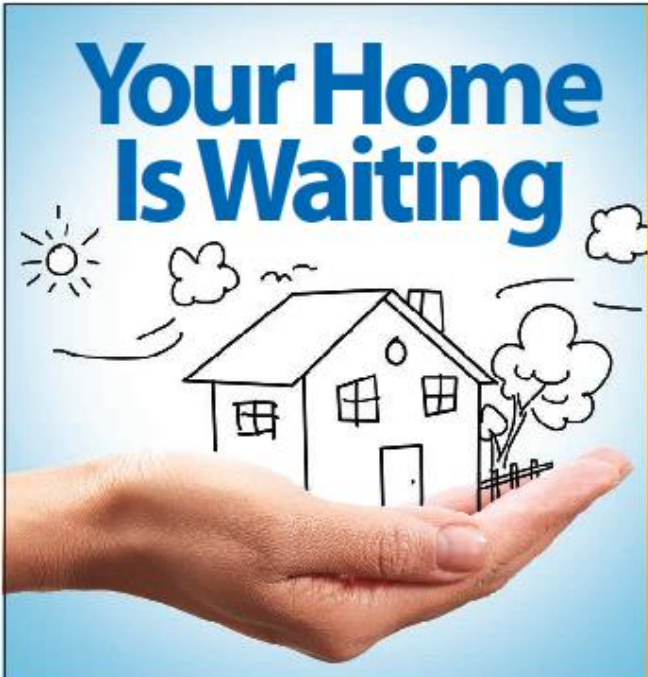
## With 4-4 decision, court protects workers' collective voice

*AFT Leadernet March 29, 2016*

In issuing a 4-4 opinion in *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, the U.S. Supreme Court on March 29 rejected an attempt by wealthy special interests to restrict opportunities for America's teachers, firefighters, police officers, nurses and others who provide our vital services for our communities to have a voice at work and join together to build a better future for their families.

"Millions of working people who understand the importance of their unions in bettering their lives and the well-being of their communities are breathing a sigh of relief," says AFT President Randi Weingarten. "Even so, we know this fight is far from over. Just as our opponents won't stop coming after us, we will continue full speed ahead in our effort to mobilize our members and their neighbors around a shared vision to reclaim the promise of America.


"While we wait for Senate Republicans to do their job and appoint a new justice to the court, we're working hard for the future we want to see—one with vibrant public education from pre-K through college; affordable, accessible healthcare; public services that support strong neighborhoods, and the right to organize and bargain for a fair wage and a voice on the job."



**Your Home Is Waiting**

The Union Plus Mortgage program is one of some 25 benefits available to help union members. The program is for union members, their parents and children. Benefits of the program include mortgage hardship assistance to help protect members' homes in the face of financial hardship. With Union Plus, a mortgage is more than a monthly payment. It's long-term protection for everything your home means to you.

[UnionPlus.org/AFTMortgage](http://UnionPlus.org/AFTMortgage)



A Union of Professionals  
**AFT+**  
Member Since 1900

AFT-MT-03-11-16

## **The problem with both 3012-d and Education Transformation Act of 2015**

*ST Caucus <http://stcaucus.nationbuilder.com/>*

Lobbying is a form of education. As educators, we will miss an important opportunity to make desperately needed changes to teacher evaluations in New York, if we do not educate the legislature about the impact 3012-d is having on schools. None of the regulatory changes proposed by the Regents will fix this fundamentally flawed law, as the over-reliance on unreliable, ever-changing student assessments continues to move us away from an authentic, meaningful teacher evaluation system.

The problems with both 3012-d and the Education Transformation Act of 2015 stem from a fundamental misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the success of New York's public schools. NYSED has not been transparent in defining what the tests actually measure. There is an erroneous assumption that the state's definition of "proficiency" means performing at grade level. It does not.

NYSED's definition of "college and career ready," aka "proficiency," is the same as the definition of proficiency on the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress), which correlates to a combined score of 1630 on the SAT. This is a score that only the top 1/3 of college bound students attain nationally. While all but the most severely handicapped students take our grades 3-8 Math and ELA tests, only students applying to competitive colleges take the SAT. Furthermore, the NAEP test is a flawed instrument which should not be used by NYSED as its gold standard benchmark. In fact, the General Accounting Office (GAO) has found

NAEP benchmarks to be "procedurally flawed", and of "doubtful validity", and federal law requires that all NAEP reports include the following disclaimer: "The National Center for Education Statistics has determined that NAEP achievement levels should continue to be used on a trial basis and should be interpreted with caution."

This is the flawed foundation of the argument that schools are failing and teacher evaluations need to be overhauled. The most glaring example of this was in Governor Cuomo's 2015 State of the State address, when he said:

"Now 38% of high school students are college ready. 38%. 98.7% of high school teachers are rated effective. How can that be? How can 38% of the students be ready, but 98% of the teachers effective? 31% of third to eighth graders are proficient in English, but 99% of the teachers are rated effective. 35% of third to eighth graders are proficient in math but 98% of the math teachers are rated effective. Who are we kidding, my friends? The problem is clear and the solution is clear. We need real, accurate, fair teacher evaluations".

If NYSED had made its testing terms clear or Governor Cuomo had understood the test results, the question would be fundamentally different. How can 38% of all New York students be doing as well as the top 34% of college bound students nationally? The answer to this question does not include a fundamental overhaul of teacher evaluation. In fact, Superintendents and School Boards across the state have said that they do not want to move forward with the requirements of 3012-d.

*(Continued on page 6)*

What are the fundamental issues with 3012-d and what is the solution?

There is a flawed, but understandable, desire to measure student growth and then attribute that growth (or lack thereof) to the student's teacher. A problem immediately arises when attempting to develop the mathematics to determine that value. Both the American Statistical Association (ASA) and the National Academy of Education Researchers (NAER) have investigated this problem, and issued reports cautioning against the formulas used to assign teacher evaluation scores based on student performance.

From ASA: "VAMs [Value-added measures] should be viewed within the context of quality improvement, which distinguishes aspects of quality that can be attributed to the system from those that can be attributed to individual teachers, teacher preparation programs, or schools. Most VAM studies find that teachers account for about 1% to 14% of the variability in test scores, and that the majority of opportunities for quality improvement are found in the system-level conditions. Ranking teachers by their VAM scores can have unintended consequences that reduce quality".

From NAER: "With respect to value-added measures of student achievement tied to individual teachers, current research suggests that high-stakes, individual-level decisions, or comparisons across highly dissimilar schools or student populations, should be avoided. Valid interpretations require aggregate-level data and should ensure that background factors – including overall classroom composition – are as

similar as possible across groups being compared. In general, such measures should be used only in a low-stakes fashion when they are part of an integrated analysis of what the teacher is doing and who is being taught".

These reports, issued in the last two years, highlight the fundamental problem with assigning student growth factors to individual teachers. This was acknowledged earlier this year when the federal government reauthorized ESSA, and removed any requirement to use student growth in teacher evaluations. Just as the state cannot produce meaningful, accurate metrics, hence the moratorium, local school districts will fare no better. The best we can hope for is to introduce noise in the system that allows us to be compliant, but is ultimately ignored because of its lack of both reliability and validity.

It is time for New York's lawmakers to acknowledge these findings and understand that teacher evaluation must be based solely on authentic, valid measures. New York State can no longer lead the nation in moving teacher evaluation in the wrong direction.

We are asking the legislature to either repeal the law, or minimally suspend the requirement to be compliant with 3012-d until the end of the NYSED moratorium in September 2020. If no action is taken local districts will be faced with the daunting task of negotiating new APPR agreements for this year, next year, and a third one in the following year that would incorporate any changes made as the Regents recommendations are adopted.

## ***Community Relations News... Opportunities to Volunteer and More!***

*By, Lisa Bender, Community Relations Chair*

The next few months are going to be very busy with opportunities to volunteer and to celebrate our members. The WTA's **Adopt-A-Highway program** will be held on Earth Day, Friday April 22 at 4:00pm. Plan to meet at the parking lot at Tantillo's Farm Market just before the intersection of 44/55 and 208 in Gardiner for the safety review and to collect gloves, trash bags and safety vests. Watch your school email for more information from Lisa Bender about the program.



On Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup> the WTA will be hosting our 17<sup>th</sup> annual **Senior Citizens' Springtime Breakfast** events at Ostrander Elementary School (8 to 10 am) and Plattekill Elementary School (9 to 11 am). The breakfast is a special thank you to our senior citizens for supporting our schools and programs. Baked breakfast items and

raffle items such as flowering plants and gift cards, and paper supplies are always welcome and needed. Additional information to volunteer to set up the events on Friday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, as well as volunteer to help at the breakfasts Saturday morning will be out soon in the school email from Lisa Bender and Christine Barritt.

Next the WTA will be gearing up for the School Budget Vote. Danielle Croce, Phone Banks Chair, is organizing the new computer data base system for our phone call lists. There will be an afternoon of **envelope stuffing** at the WTA offices beginning at 2:45 on May 9<sup>th</sup>. The **Phone Banks** to get out the positive votes will be held at the WTA offices on Monday, May 16<sup>th</sup> from 4 to 8 pm. Sign up for an hour to make phone calls with your building representatives.

Finally in June (*date to be determined so watch for information in the school email*) the WTA will celebrate our June 2016 retirees with a reception planned by our party planner guru WTA Recording Secretary Joe Zupan.

***Impact*** is your newsletter, highlighting our members' activities and contributions to the WCSD and school community: as well as informing the membership of important union and labor issues that impact our members and their lives.

## Coming Events... Save the date!

### WTA New Members Seminars

WTA Offices 4:00 to 5:30 pm  
April 12, 2016 *Contract, MLP*  
May 12, 2016 *Program Review*

### Stacey Braun Financial

WTA Offices 2:45 to 5:30 pm  
By appointment only  
April 7, 2016  
May 5, 2016  
June 2, 2016

### Adopt-A-Highway Clean Up

Meet at Tantillo's Farm Stand 4:00 pm  
April 22, 2016

### Seniors Springtime Breakfasts

Ostrander Elementary School 8:00 to 10 am  
Plattekill Elementary School 9:00 to 11:00 am  
May 7, 2016

### WTA Phone Banks

WTA Offices 4:00 to 8:00 pm  
May 17, 2016

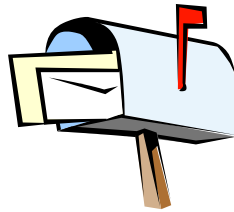
### WCSD High School Graduation

SUNY New Paltz  
June 24, 2016

### DeSol /Veltrie Golf Tournament

Rondout Golf Club, Accord  
June 2016

## WTA Benefit Trust



### WTA Benefit Trust

P. O. Box 305  
Gardiner, NY 12525

**Dental Benefits claims are now  
handled exclusively through Delta  
Dental. If you have any concerns  
contact a WTABT trustee**

The Wallkill Teachers' Association Benefit Trust office follows the school calendar and is open from 2:30 to 5:00 PM every Thursday afternoon (except during designated school vacations). A Trust employee is available to personally answer your benefits questions and to provide notary services to the membership. Please call ahead if you would like to schedule an appointment. Contact Lori Tunkel at 256-1234 (x104).

Information about  
WTA members benefits  
and the WTABT are  
just a few mouse clicks



<http://wallkillteachers.org/>

#### **WTA Impact**

#### **Wallkill Teachers' Association**

Richard Shands, President  
Melissa Servant, Vice President Labor Relations  
Teresa Custy, Vice President Member Relations  
Stephanie Barnes, Treasurer

**WTA Impact**, the official newsletter of the  
Wallkill Teachers' Association,  
is scheduled for bi-monthly distribution  
during the school year.

Address questions, comments or article suggestions to:  
Lisa Bender, Editor,  
email - lbender@wallkillcsd.k12.ny.us





# The Value of NYSUT Membership

You may not be aware that your NYSUT membership allows you to enjoy the benefits of the more than 40 programs & services endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits, including a variety of quality, competitive insurance plans.

Member Benefits strives to provide the highest-quality programs for NYSUT members and closely scrutinizes all proposals from reputable vendors before any endorsements are given.

While we work continuously to maintain quality benefit programs at competitive prices, you are encouraged to shop and compare before making any purchasing decisions.

## MetLife Auto & Home®



Call MetLife Auto & Home to learn about the special savings and discounts you may be eligible for.

**1-866-NYSUT-22**

If you are looking for potential savings on your auto or homeowners insurance, consider enrolling in the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed MetLife Auto & Home Insurance Program.

This program offers special group rates on personal property and liability coverage not available to individual MetLife policyholders. NYSUT members can choose from a variety of coverages that include auto, homeowners, boat, renter's, and much more.

Policyholders can earn extra discounts for good driving, multiple policies and anti-theft devices. MetLife Auto & Home recently raised the multi-policy discount on its homeowners insurance with auto from 7% to 15%. The multi-policy/multi-product discount on auto insurance with home remains at 8%.

Visit the NYSUT Member Benefits website at [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) or call **800-626-8101** for specific details about this program or other Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services.

MetLife Auto & Home is a NYSUT Member Benefits Trust (Member Benefits)-endorsed program. Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement of 5.5% of total premiums for this program. All such payments to Member Benefits are used solely to defray the costs of administering its various programs and, where appropriate, to enhance them. Member Benefits acts as your advocate; please contact Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 if you experience a problem with any endorsed program.

Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.