



RH TEACHER

President's Corner

By David Rose

Brothers and Sisters,

Welcome back to a new year of working hard to advance the learning of the children of the Rush-Henrietta school community.

There have been some developments over the summer about which you should know.

First- Negotiations. Having mutually declared negotiations to be at an impasse, we met (eventually) with a state-appointed mediator on two occasions to attempt to reach a settlement. The mediator seemed to see his role primarily as a simple messenger between the two sides. Very little came of this process. Both sides are now contemplating seeking a fact finder's report, which would take further months to complete. Our negotiating team met Friday, Sept. 5th and learned that the District is still interested in meeting with us at least one more time to try to effect a completed settlement. We can't share any details of the actual negotiations other than to say all items are still "on the table."

New Teacher Orientation – We learned (unofficially) that the District decided on its own to exclude the Association from participating in the orientation of new teachers by dropping the traditional union luncheon from the scheduled activities. There was no notification, no discussion, and no attempt at identifying and solving any perceived concerns.

Last year, important resolutions of understanding were reached with the District about some contractual issues:

- There are no contractually agreed upon forms to be filled out or turned in by teachers for the Beginning of Year Conference; for pre and post observations; or for end of year appraisals.
- Beginning of Year Conferences are to be scheduled with teachers individually. Teachers may request small group conferences.
- While many teachers appreciate the opportunity to participate in activities and committees, which affect school operations and the overall environment for our students and teachers, it is wrong for administrators to coerce teachers to volunteer. Non-mandated commitments are strictly voluntary and at the discretion of unit members according to their own individual circumstances and interests. Appeals to "professionalism", being a "team player", etc. are coercive in nature. Coerced "volunteering" is not voluntary, but rather, contractually duplicitous and bad faith.
- The opportunity to construct and maintain a teacher web page is strictly voluntary.
- There are no required meetings before or after the contractual workday, other than the contractually agreed upon, once a week meetings to be held after the school day on Wednesdays or Thursdays. No one may coerce teachers to "volunteer" to meet outside the contractual workday.
- Unscheduled "drop-in" classroom observations may not be scheduled and must be written up if lasting more than 25 minutes. Scheduled observations are to be scheduled and must follow the protocols as described in the contract.

These and other items will be reviewed at the first meeting of the Representative Assembly later this month.

There is a need to fill at least three positions on Executive Council. As some of you know, Amy DeBlase has taken a position in another district. As a result, we need a new Chair for the Special Events Committee. Last year, I informed Executive Council of my intention to form two new committees: New Teacher Induction and Human Rights and Social Responsibilities, each in need of Chairpersons. Please consider applying for these three important positions within our leadership structure. The process would entail sending a note to me indicating your interest in serving. I would then take the names before Executive Council for consideration. Executive Council would then make recommendations to Rep. Assembly for final approval.

A few members, both last year and so far this year, have expressed concern about the timeliness of Association communications. Please understand that we are structured as a voluntary, non-profit service organization. Although there are mechanisms for dealing with bureaucratic "crises," the Union is not formatted as a "rapid response" team with immediate "first responders" to anticipate and formulate communications at every members beck and call. Generally, communications occur within a monthly "feedback" loop involving members, building reps., Executive Council, standing committees, Rep. Assembly and the newsletter. The speediest way to "be in the know" is to volunteer to serve in a leadership position.

Please see attached flyer for information about the "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" walk on October 5th. Busses from RH will be provided. Contact Lea Theuer at x5213 or ltheuer@rhnet.org for more information.

YOU DON'T GET ME; I'M PART OF THE UNION; I'M A UNION MAN

RHEA Action Committee

Members,

No curriculum map, state standard, literacy or numeracy profile, common assessment, engagement log, or any local or state data can ever fully measure what teachers do in and out of the classroom. What we do is magic.

In June, colleagues joined on Tuesday mornings in celebration of the magic we do every day. Reminding ourselves we are not alone, whether we teach art or physics, kindergarten or 12th grade; whether we counsel or mend injuries, district RHEA members took time to honor and appreciate one another. The feedback I received from Reps and members was positive, uplifting and empowering.

On Wednesday and Thursdays, silent messages rang loudly with every black t-shirt worn on meeting days. No banners or bullhorn could relay our frustration clearer. As professionals we continue our commitment to education and our students, but we do so in mourning.

The Action Committee met this summer and is ready to continue the work we began in June. The following are just a few activities we have planned:

- As we continue to “mourn” the lack of a new contract, members were asked to wear black on Tuesday, September 2 and again on district meeting days. Buttons have been distributed that read “Proud to be a RHEA member”.
- In support of our local community we are asking members to contribute a box or canned good at their monthly building meeting, to be donated to the Henrietta food cupboard. (Building reps will be given more information as to collection and distribution.)
- The first School Board meeting of the school year was September 9. It is important that teachers attend these meetings whether a new contract is in place or not. The Action committee invites all members to attend scheduled Board meetings throughout the year, especially when new programs, schedules or information is being shared that has a direct impact on you.
- Tuesday morning gatherings continue. Beginning September 9, plan to meet in celebration and appreciation of one another. As is our nature, individual buildings have adopted this idea and have made it their own. Continue to support one another as we begin another year without a new contract.

As a proud RHEA leader, I raise my coffee mug to all of my 565 members on Tuesday, September 2 and wish you a safe, successful and inspiring new year.

Here's to the magic!

If anyone is interested in participating as an Action Committee Rep please contact me.

Nancy Kula
Action Committee Chair

Know Your Contract

“Teaching Without a Contract” by Jon DeVecchio

From the Preamble of the agreement, page 1:

“...the Rush-Henrietta Central School District...and the Rush-Henrietta Employees Association Teachers’ Chapter...recognize and declare that providing a quality education for the children of the School District is their mutual aim” and “harmonious working relationships” are encouraged.

According to a recent survey reported by NYSUT, only 60% of veteran teachers view contracts as vital to the teaching profession. That’s a little more than half of us. Why do so many teachers discount the value of a contract? It’s puzzling.

The Taylor Law passed in 1967 officially put an end to labor strikes by New York State employees. That’s a good thing, right? Our students will have qualified professionals teaching them even through turbulent times. The Taylor Law also requires that public employers negotiate contracts with employees. This is one law that makes good sense, as it forces the two parties to specify respective expectations.

Without a contract, we would all be ships pointing in different directions. How could we achieve any common goals? How would individual responsibilities be specified? We would all be drifting around wondering what was expected of us instead of focusing on our students. It would be chaos.

Our preamble goes a step further to acknowledge that there is real value in the language within. Words like “mutual” and “harmonious” encourage the district and teachers to embrace their roles and move forward in the universal pursuit of providing the best possible educational experience for our students. It does not imply the option of either accepting or rejecting the contract’s value.

When we grieve violations of the contract, regardless of how it impacts individual members, we are reminding the district of agreed upon conditions. That’s all it is. It’s not personal. It’s not us trying to obstruct school or district initiatives. And it’s certainly not us trying to impede student achievement. Violations happen often and it is our obligation to address them swiftly so teachers can do the job they signed up for.

Pull out your contract and celebrate its existence. It is a tangible symbol of our pledge to provide quality education to our students and community.

RHEA Social/Workshop/Tenure Recognition - October 3rd - 4pm

RHEA is sponsoring a multi-faceted event on October 3rd, 4pm at Hawthorne’s Restaurant on Jefferson Rd.

For new/non-tenured teachers, we will have a workshop on what the Rush-Henrietta Employees’ Association, Teachers’ Chapter can do for you. We will answer questions about receiving tenure, the teacher appraisal process, our Contract, and anything else to help you be successful at Rush-Henrietta.

We will be honoring all teachers that have received tenure in the past year.

Best of all, it is a time to socialize with your colleagues! RHEA will be providing munchies. Drinks are available at a cash bar. Come see the new Hawthorne’s at the Holiday Inn Express on Jefferson Rd. and enjoy the same quality food that their original Hawthorne’s on East Ave is famous for.



Grievance Report

By Jon DeVecchio and Linda Bilak

How can we be of service?

Welcome back revitalized educator! Your building reps and grievance committee are also alive and well, working out contract disputes with the district. Most contract violations we are resolving at this time include recurring frustrations over teacher scheduling errors, denied personal days, wrong payment for extra duties, and administrative assignments. Timeliness is of utmost importance in being able to resolve issues for you. If you have any questions, concerns or even positive comments, please contact your building representative. It is always best to err on the side of caution and ASK YOUR BUILDING REP! We are here to serve you.

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Executive Council

President	David Rose
1 st Vice Pres.	Linda Blake
2 nd Vice Pres.	Bob Graham
Secretary	Jan Widboom
Treasurer	Kathy Schlede
Special Events Ed. Committee	Gail Orione Maureen Tubridy
Political Action Grievance Com.	Nancy Kula Linda Bilak Jon DeVecchio
Admin. Assistant	Sue Peltzer

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.rhteachers.org

Teacher Center News

By Gail Orione **Welcome back from the Teacher Center!**

The 2007-08 school year was filled with colleague-to-colleague learning that the Teacher Center was able to support. We offered a wide variety of professional development in the form of workshops, study groups, conferences, and the collegial coaching program for new teachers. Following is the summary of the 2007 - 08 Teacher Center results: Participants:

Elementary Teachers	205
Secondary Teachers	246
Administrators	18
Support Staff	184

Total R-H Staff participants 2007-08 681

Look for the new fall catalog of Teacher Center Learning Opportunities in your mailbox and **please** contact us for any of your professional development needs!

Contract Scavenger Hunt!

Email Sue Peltzer (speltzer@rhnet.org) by September 18th with the answer to the following question and your name will be entered in a drawing to receive a special prize from the RHEA.

What Article number and section in the agreement (contract) specifies that *"The school principal shall establish a building advisory committee. The building advisory committee shall meet at least once a month."*



