



There are no greater advocates for children and education than teachers and teacher unions.



Valley Central Teachers' Association

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Happy New Year to the dedicated, professional, hard-working staff at Valley Central! We wish everyone all the best in 2017!

— VCTA Leadership



Technology in the Classroom

A Letter from the Orange-Ulster BOCES Technology Integration Specialist

Hello Valley Central Vikings! My name is Christine Dworetsky (pronounced Door-et-ski), and although I've done my best to informally introduce myself in each building, I'd like to take this opportunity to share more about how you can reach me, how I can work with you and your students, and what my journey in Valley Central looks like this year.

To better understand my role, I am to be thought of as "shared staff" with Valley Central, but my official job is with Model Schools at Orange-Ulster BOCES. In most cases, teachers refer to me as a TECH COACH, similar to your literacy coach and math coach roles in district, yet with the goal of integrating technology for the benefit of both you and your students. Although I share my services with multiple districts in the county, and also teach a handful of CTLE courses for Model Schools each season, this year I will be in VCSD the majority of my time; Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays each week.

Technology in the classroom means much more than using the SMARTboard and its software, or substituting tools within the Google Suite for pen and paper, or just sharing lesson information through Google Classroom and submitting digital assignments. Integrating technology should provide students overlapping opportunities for learning through process, strategies, and application.

For example, imagine students reading a novel, and rather than giving you their book summary in essay form, they create a book trailer which summarizes the story in movie format, providing all but the conclusion for its viewers....

Or what if while studying American History, students created a poster board surrounding their research about an American icon or event that they make come to life through augmented reality?....

And if students could travel to locations beyond the classroom walls, or just outside of their hometown, imagine the experiences they could globally communicate about while creating a website about their virtual travels to describe where they've been and what they've learned?...

The possibilities are endless for all teachers at all technology comfort levels, but if it's true that "you don't know, what you don't know", then I'm here to inform, assist, and instruct. Please feel free to reach out via email, subscribe to my website (currently under construction), or make an appointment on my calendar to meet during a time that you are most available.

Contact Information

christine.dworetsky@valleycentralschools.org

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— *Christine Dworetsky, Tech Coach*

Selfish Technology

I believe we can all agree that our students need to be technologically savvy, but in order for that to occur, the educators must keep up with changing technology. Thanks to some guidance from Jennifer Jackson I have implemented many changes in how I am teaching Social Studies, and I believe those changes are helping to prepare my students for the future of learning.

Two major changes I have made this year is moving my note taking and test taking to Chrome based programs. I have used Power Points to teach in Social Studies for several years, but I often felt that I didn't always keep the students' attention and that there was no accountability for the day. Now when students come to my room, they immediately log in to the Chromebooks and find guided notes through Google Classroom. As I teach, they fill in missing information and take notes through Google Docs. They have access to these notes at school and at home. I am also able to e-mail the Power Point to students who are absent, allowing them to complete the notes at home on their own devices.

A second change I have made is testing through Google Forms. Although there have been a few glitches along the way, the benefits have far outweighed the problems. For those of you not familiar with Google Forms, it is a program that allows you to ask a variety of types of questions, such as multiple choice, matching, short answer, long answer, and drop down. These questions can either be graded through the program, for questions with one correct answer, or graded manually, for questions such as short and long written response. Students take the quiz or test on-line, and teachers have the option of returning their grades upon submission or after a manual review. I have done both. When students took a vocabulary quiz in Science, I wanted them to know how they did immediately to help them prepare for their chapter test, so they were able to see their results as soon as they submitted the quiz. I have also returned grades later when I have needed to grade short answers or essays.

One tangible benefit to testing through the Chromebooks is the decrease in time needed to

grade assessments. With all that is required of teachers these days, anything that saves time is a must have. A second benefit is that I am able to review student answers as soon as their tests are submitted. I can look over the response to a document based question and send it back to the student if they have not understood the question or given insufficient evidence in an answer. This saves time later in tracking down students who may know the material but did poorly because of misunderstanding a question. A final benefit is that maps, pictures, and diagrams are all in full color. Students don't have to struggle to read a grainy black and white document.

While I have been thrilled with the way my teaching is evolving through technology, the truth is I was reluctant to share [my ideas]. Why? Our resources are already stretched too thin.

While I have been thrilled with the way my teaching is evolving through technology, the truth is I was reluctant to share what I have been doing. Why? Quite simply, because other people might want to start doing the same things. And while that seems like a great idea on the surface, our resources are already stretched too thin. I have access to 26 Chromebooks for 27 students, and that cart is shared with 4 other teachers on my team. If they decide to incorporate more technology, it cuts down on its availability for me. So, selfishly, I don't want to share what I am doing. Until our district is able to supply the resources that we need, we are going to continue to wage the inner war between sharing great ideas with our colleagues and looking out for ourselves.

— Carrie Burns, Teacher, MS

Tech and Teach

Our immediate educational history has been filled with promises for innovation. Standardized testing promised to give us data to inform instruction. “Just let the data drive the instruction... that will make us cutting edge.” But it didn’t, perhaps because there is not enough time to even consider the data and change the curriculum. Instead it was used as a way to judge and, often times, frame public schools as antiquated and failing. Merely testing kids did not improve instruction in real time, but gave us autopsy report on kids that were already out of our classrooms and on to new classrooms. And while the data may have been a little helpful it certainly was short of earth shattering news to any teachers who had the kid.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/12/19/the-new-standardized-testing-craze-to-hit-public-schools/?utm_term=.d126045d6452



Now the new push is standardized testing on a computer that leads to personalized work for the kid based on the standardized testing. It focuses on online learning. Online learning has its merits, but as in any situation when a teacher is removed - what keeps the student learning? It takes a lot focus to stay engaged with online learning and if the thought with the new push is that it would provide personalized learning right on the computer, thought must be given to getting that learning at the kid’s fingertips on the computer.



VCMS has been a pilot for Compass Learning which creates a folder of work based on the kids’ performances on the NWEA. One of our 6th grade teachers did her second year mentor project studying to see if she could help her students own their performance and track their progress to determine whether it would raise their RIT score. She concluded that it did, but that one of the drawbacks was engagement--she had to share the chrome cart with 11 other 6th grade teachers - it is not like she could get daily access to it. (Actually doing the math, she could only get the cart about 12 days a year since it was taken out of circulation for 45 days to accommodate the three testing cycles of NWEA.) But taking tests online is not the one size fits all answer for education just like standardized testing was not the answer.

As we are ring in the 17th year of the 21st century most people would probably think our classrooms aren’t too cutting edge. Funny thing is that cutting edge classrooms have been around for centuries! They depend less on technology and more on ideas and the educators who can spark creative thinking. Technology definitely assists in this and makes those ideas grow faster, but in the end a computer in a student’s hands will not guarantee innovation as much as the educator guiding that student’s search.

— Patti Behr, VCTA Vice-President, MS

The Fight of Our Lives

The 2016 Election Season has ended with public education and unions in jeopardy. Donald Trump claimed he was going to make America great again and many working men and women believed these sound bites. Donald Trump is starting to prove that he is merely a snake oil salesman. Who is he rewarding with high level positions? He is rewarding those to whom he is indebted, as well as his business partners and friends.

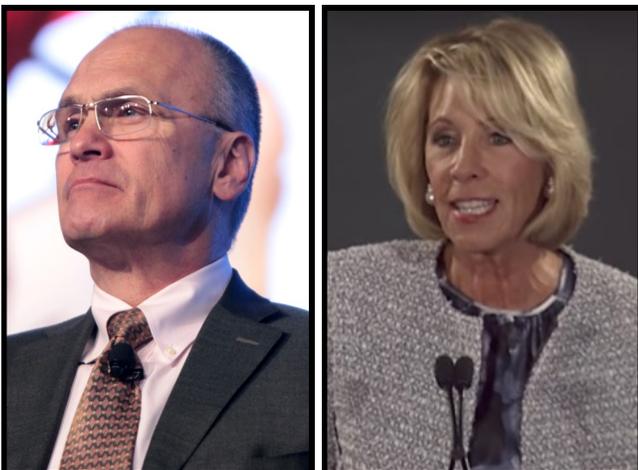
Donald Trump has proclaimed that he is a fan of "Right to Work." Announcing Andrew Puzder as Secretary of Labor is a slap in the face to all working people. Andrew Puzder opposes increasing the minimum wage and overtime pay. The very laws that provide for workplace safety and workers rights have been opposed by Andrew Puzder. Andrew Puzder is the CEO of CKE Restaurants, which generates \$1.3 billion in annual revenue. Andrew Puzder shipped key jobs overseas and believes that machines replacing workers is good business because machines don't require health care or lunch breaks. The Department of Labor is now controlled by Corporate America.

Donald Trump is a strong proponent of charter schools and vouchers. Since many of his friends, family, business partners, and Donald himself are investors in the charter school business, these areas are an untapped source of money. Donald is choosing Betsy Devos as his

Secretary of Education. Betsy has donated \$9.5 million to the Trump Campaign. Betsy has no teaching experience, no education degree, and has never worked in a school environment in any capacity. Betsy never attended public school nor did her children attend public school.

Betsy Devos believes that public school teachers are overpaid. Betsy Devos is a billionaire who has invested \$200 million in Christian schools and supports for-profit education. Betsy Devos is one of the designers of the Detroit Charter School System which resulted in the largest school reform disaster in the United States. When are we going to have someone in the position of Secretary of Education who has actually done the job in public schools?

When are we going to have someone in the position of Secretary of Education who has actually done the job in public schools?



Two "poor choices" by President-elect Trump: Andrew Puzder (left), Betsy Devos (right).

When Friedrichs vs California was presented to the US Supreme Court, a split decision of 4-4 was reached due to the death of Justice Scalia. The GOP failed to vote on a US Supreme Court Justice appointment by President Obama. If Donald Trump is able to get a US Supreme Court Justice appointment approved, any case similar to Friedrichs vs California will be decided against Union and Labor. The existence of union rights, Collective Bargaining Agreements and unions are in jeopardy.

The VCTA Leadership Team is asking for all of you to take action. Some of the actions may be out of your comfort zone. As you try to convince yourself that it is ok if you don't take part in an action because others will take care of it, ask yourself

The Fight of Our Lives

how comfortable will you be without a Collective Bargaining Agreement, health insurance, or a pension? We must mobilize our membership and our friends and families. We ask that you, your friends, and family please take action.

The first actions we need to ask are as follows:

1. Go to the VCTA Facebook page and/or webpage and sign the letter opposing the appointment of Andrew Puzder as Secretary of Labor.
2. Go to the VCTA Facebook page and/or webpage and sign the letter opposing the appointment of Betsy Devos as Secretary of Education.
3. Call your Legislators and tell them that you want them to oppose appointment of Andrew Puzder as Secretary of Labor.
4. Call your Legislators and tell them that you want them to oppose appointment of Betsy Devos as Secretary of Education.

I know that for some making the phone calls feels uncomfortable. Remember the call will most likely either go directly to voicemail or an aid will answer and simply take a message. Your phone calls count because that is exactly what the legislators are doing - they are counting your calls.

Legislators

Sean Patrick Maloney
(202)-225-5441

Chuck Schumer
(202) 224-6542

Kirsten Gillibrand
(202) 224-4451

Please take five minutes to make sure your voice is heard by those who are making the decisions that will directly impact your life. Now is the time to be an active participant in the fight for Public Education and Labor. We are stronger together!

— *Rich Steger, VCTA President, Berea*

Excellence Abounds at VC

On Thursday, October 13th four members of the Valley Central Community were honored as recipients of the Mid-Hudson School Study Council's Awards for Excellence. The dinner was held at Anthony's Pier 9 in Newburgh, with almost 500 educators in attendance.

Valley Central's honorees were Mike Bellarosa for Excellence in Administration, Christine Mello for Excellence in Pupil Personnel Services, Mary Pettine for Excellence in Support Staff, and Cheryl Terribile for Excellence in Community Service. Each recipient received a plaque and had excerpts of comments from their nomination packet read before the large audience.

Mike Bellarosa was recognized for his excellent skills in leadership, collaboration, and his outstanding dedication to our students and com-

munity. Chris Mello received acknowledgement for always going above and beyond to help students and providing wise counsel to all who need it. Mary Pettine's contribution to efficiency and attention to detail in her work was highlighted as crucial to the success of her department. Cheryl Terribile has been instrumental to forming and supporting the Valley Central Special Olympics Team that has provided incredible opportunities to students for the past several years.

Their work has improved life at Valley Central for so many and it was wonderful to witness them being officially rewarded for their hard work and dedication.

Congratulations to all!
Valley Central is proud of you!

— *Meghan Riley, VCTA Secretary, HS*

Through the Looking Glass

Hindsight is 2020. That should be the slogan for the 2020 Presidential Elections. After the Democratic National Committee chose Hillary Clinton over Bernie Sanders as their presidential candidate, and despite every indication from the 'experts' that there was no way Trump and his anti-women's rights running mate Mike Pence were going to win the election, the unimaginable happened. And while Trump supporters may read this and snicker at the thought that keeping another Clinton out of office was the loftiest of goals, the laugh is really on the them, at the expense of our country's livelihood.

In the weeks since his winning the November election, it has become quite clear that Donald Trump's allegiance is no longer to the working middle class who voted for him. Week-by-week, as the president – elect chooses his cabinet members to fall behind his southbound train set for derailling what eight years of an Obama administration has accomplished, we are seeing just a glimpse of how far in the past we will be spiraling. Not even twenty-four hours after Clinton seceded to Trump, videos spring up on the internet and in the news of high school and college students of Mexican and Muslim descent being taunted and targeted with racial slurs by Trump supporters, including a sit-in at Le Moyne College while being circled by trucks flying the confederate flag. Following this were rallies by white suprema-

cists chanting "Hail Trump" with their hands raised in the same manner as it was during WWII in Germany. Yet, Steve Bannon, the executive chair of far-right website Breitbart News and ties to the KKK, was quickly named Chief Strategist and Senior Counselor to Trump.

In denial that there is an environmental crisis, Trump has also appointed Oklahoma Attorney General and supporter of the fossil fuel industry, Scott Pruitt, to head the Environmental Protection Agency. This further signals a desire to dismantle the EPA, as a 2016 federal disclosure form released irrefutable evidence that Trump owns stock in the company building the disputed oil pipeline in North Dakota. But this could not even be the most damning of appointments. His choice for Secretary of Education is American billionaire and Chair of the Michigan Republican Party, Betsy DeVos. DeVos, having zero experience in Public Education, will be pushing hers and Trump's crippling agendas of school choice, vouchers, and self-interest of for-profit charter schools, and evangelical teachings in the classroom. With her track record, it should come to no surprise that DeVos needs to be educated on—not only the position she has been appointed to—but also the separation of church and state, as well as Pruitt, who—per news reports from last year—felt it was not against the constitution to distribute religious material to public school students.



Through the Looking Glass

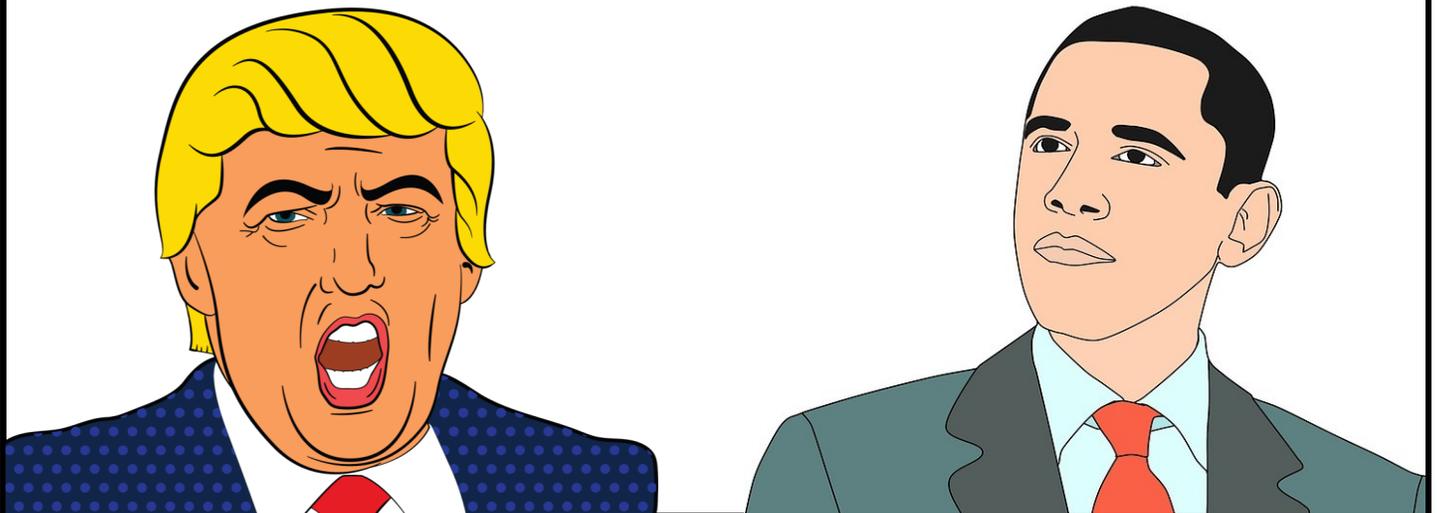
Every appointment has indicated his own self-interest, including the appointment of Ben Carson as the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, who like DeVos, has no experience in the position chosen for. If Trump's empty promises have not yet caused his working middle class supporters to feel that knife being dug a little deeper, their pocketbooks will feel this with the repealing Obamacare. It is ironic that so many of his supporters wish it to be repealed, as much of these same poor and working middle class citizens benefit from Obamacare. Now, close to 30 million Americans will be without coverage, including the protection from being denied coverage due to pre-existing conditions. Deepening that knife in the back, he no longer is pursuing the wall he wanted Mexico to pay for or putting Hillary Clinton behind bars. His staunchest of supporters rallied around labeling Clinton as a criminal due to Benghazi—even though Republicans refused to give her the additional embassy security funding she asked for the two years prior to the attacks—and their inability to get past her using the wrong e-mail account, which she admitted to and apologized for. Now, his promises have left his supporters in the dark with no turning back.

As Obama prepares to leave office with unemployment at a 9-year low and available healthcare without the red tape of being denied coverage due to pre-existing conditions, our coun-

try is more divided than ever. Policies aside, Obama's eight years in office brought our country together through his graceful manner and well-spoken desire to make us all prosperous. We could have had Clinton, a champion of women's rights who has inspired young women to follow their dreams. We could have another 4 years of closing the gap between the haves and have-nots and continuing access to planned parenthood. But now across the nation, as Trump prepares for his reign as president, individual states are following in his footsteps to tear down what Obama has accomplished. Protecting women rights are being thrown out the door in Ohio, as a paralyzing bill is set to pass that denies the ability for abortion in the case of incest or rape. The empowerment of America is being shifted from bringing races and genders together for one common goal to that of rich white males with no respect to women or minorities.

This is what happens when a candidate's entire platform was 'to make America great again', as if the country had somehow fallen into a fire-filled tailspin. Trump never had a clear outline as to how he was going to do this! His run to the White House was filled with xenophobia, slandering of women, mass deportations, and visions of a national registry reminiscent of Post-WWII. His unapologetic nature for refusing to release his tax returns and deflection from his own inadequacies created the perfect smoke screen to his ultimate purpose: protecting his own pocketbook and pleasing the top 1%.

— *Brian Ackley, Teacher, Walden*



99% + 1% = ?

Donald Trump as president seems to defy mathematics. $99 + 1 = 100$; but can 1% really represent the 99%? The math doesn't make sense. How can a man who has been part of the 1% understand the struggle of the 99%? For example, struggling to make ends meet, saving for college, or the frustrating amount of taxes we pay compared to the amount of taxes he doesn't pay through loopholes and write-offs?

What is so unfathomable about the election of President Donald Trump is how it occurred, although Michael Moore called it one week after the Republican National Convention! (<http://michaelmoore.com/trumpwillwin/>) In July 2016, Moore gave 5 reasons Trump would be elected President and his first one was "Angry, embittered working (and nonworking) people who were lied to by the trickle-down of Reagan and abandoned by Democrats". I listened to lots of middle class embittered working people talk about why they would rather have Trump because he was going to shake things up.

**WE ARE THE
99%**

What does make sense is the anger of a Middle Class. This group has had the short end of the stick on trickle down economics- which never did trickle down. The Middle Class who has had to bear a lion's share of the tax burden (<http://www.wearethedog.com/2012/07/22/how-reagan-destroyed-america/>) not in dollar and cents but comparably to percentage of income. Millionaires and billionaires are taxed overall at the same percentage as the Middle Class. Certainly the 32% total tax bore by the worker with a \$100,000 salary is a bigger bite than it is to the CEO with a \$100,000,000 salary.

Changing the direction of our country does not lie with pinning our hopes on any one individual. Instead we need to bang together and pin our hopes on us.

Changing the direction of our country does not lie with pinning our hopes on any one individual. Instead we need to band together and pin our hopes on us. Many things we take for granted as a foregone conclusion of working (a living wage, health insurance, a retirement, vacations, leave time) were not given to the Middle Class by one person, but by many as unions fought for these rights. These rights have shrunk as unions, and the Middle Class as a whole, have shrunk. Unions led the way on these issues of social justice in the past, and continue to today.

It is hard to imagine that Donald J. Trump will make good on any of his promises to the Middle Class and predictions early on say he will do the opposite of what he promised. (<http://billmovers.com/story/already-big-gap-trumps-promises-middle-class-policies/>)

The election of Trump may prove to be a pivotal political point in American history. How we will grow as a country will certainly be affected. Perhaps what will be gained from this presidency will be the realization that neighbor standing up with neighbor for what is good and right and in the best interest of the collective whole. If that is gained then perhaps unions will be able to lead this country back to a path where politicians (and proclaimed "non-politicians" alike) realize that they should be working for the good of the people and not for their own gain.

— Patti Behr, VCTA Vice-President, MS

A Tale of Two Companies

We have seen manufacturing jobs move out of the country in droves over the past decade. Recently two companies, Oreo and Carrier, have made the move and left many hard working people looking for work. Oreo's parent company is Mondelez Corporation. Carrier's parent company is United Technologies Corporation. Why did these companies need to move their manufacturing out of the United States?

The fact is that they didn't have to move their manufacturing at all. Chuck Jones is the president of United Steelworkers 1999. Chuck represents the workers who are losing their jobs. According to Chuck Jones the workers are producing a quality product, resulting in a healthy profit for the company. So why move the manufacturing overseas? The profit isn't large enough. Will the workers who remain in the United States receive raises commensurate with the profits? Not exactly.

The CEO of the Mondelez Corporation received a \$7 million dollar raise to bring her annual salary to \$21 million dollars this year. Her net worth is \$80 million dollars and she holds 3% of the shares in the company.

The CEO of United Technologies Corporation retired in 2014 with a \$172 million dollar pay package. He holds 572,480 shares in the company, which today is worth \$62,755,257.60.

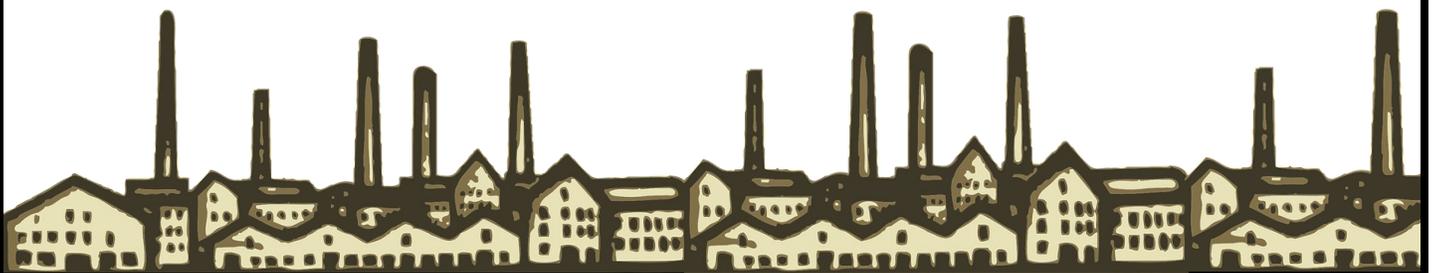
Both companies are making huge profits. The quality of the product produced is received extremely well in the respective industries. The CEO's of these companies and of most companies claim they need to move the manufacturing overseas to improve the profits to keep the shareholders happy. It looks to me that the CEO's are the shareholders. They are keeping themselves



happy. When one does a little more digging what you will find is that the CEO's are also major shareholders in their friends companies as well.

A Tale of Two companies is what we all must remember when we hear the CEO of a company explaining company "hardships". When we look at the Cabinet picks by Trump, what we see is that almost all are CEO's, former CEO's, or business leaders. According to FORBES, Trump's proposed cabinet's net worth is \$4.5 billion. This is a 60% increase from the current presidential cabinet. Who are these people concerned with making happy? Whose America are they looking to make great again?

— Rich Steger, VCTA President, Berea



District Snapshot

Berea

November saw Berea host the *Barnes and Noble Santa Event* and *Literacy Alive!*

December was a busy month! The 5th *Grade Band and Chorus Winter Concerts* were held on the 13th. Way to go, 5th graders! On Friday, December 16th the students and staff enjoyed a fun-filled *Ugly Sweater Day*.

On December 21st, Mrs. Carter's theatrical readers presented Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*— a dramatic reading performed for the three Kindergarten classes. December 22nd was Berea's fourth annual *Polar Express Day*.

Upcoming Events:

- ✓ *Book Bingo* (1/27)
- ✓ *Annie Jr. Drama Production* (2/3)

East Coldenham

EC enjoyed a *Barnes and Noble Harry Potter Night* (11/18) and *Parent Math Night* (11/30) in the month of November.

December was an eventful month! EC enjoyed three well received and performed musical events: *Winter Chorus and Band Concert* (12/8) and the *Kindergarten Show* (12/16)!

The students enjoyed *Community Reading Day*, (12/20) an event where they invited community members in to read to each class!

The month was capped off by a *Holiday Luncheon, Sing Along, and Pajama Day* (12/22)!

Upcoming Events:

- ✓ *EC Talent Show* (2/3)
- ✓ *Founder's Night* (2/22)

Montgomery

Students at Montgomery were treated to a *Fire and Bus Safety Day* in October.

Montgomery welcomed the Orange County water Authority in November. Students worked with professionals to learn about the importance of conservation.

Winter saw Montgomery Elementary create 22 baskets during its "Adopt a Family Program."

On December 8th, and 9th, the 5th graders performed the musical *Elf Jr.* to a "full house."

Upcoming Events:

- ✓ *Souper Bowl*
- ✓ *The Winter Concert* (1/25)

Walden

Fourth Grade had Dave Ruch perform for the students virtually on the topic of The Native Americans of New York State.

Third grade teacher Nancy Phelps arranged for Mr. Monk Rowe, a Jazz musician, to teach the third grade classes about writing Jazz music.

Second grade, along with many parents celebrated December holidays with a "Holiday Jingle" during our ½ day 12-23.

Student hard work paid off during the *Walden Winter Concert*, which was a well received event. Walden also hosted a *Holiday Food Drive, Operation Dalmatian Toy Drive, and Holiday Craft Fair*.

In January, *Walden Student News* was published! This web page is home to many student-written articles!

Upcoming Events:

- ✓ *K-3 Family Writing Night* (2/9)
- ✓ *Souper Bowl of Caring*
- ✓ *5th Grade Drama Production: Alice in Wonderland*

District Snapshot

Middle School

The National Junior Honor Society's "Stuff the Bus" event (10/15) raised \$5,000 for *Backpack Snack Attack*.

The *Fall Sports Season* concluded with the most students ever participating! *Winter Sports* began on November 14th.

All three 6th Grade Teams took a trip to the Palisades Mall to view a showing of *Queen of Katwe*, a film that connects our social studies culture unit with our ELA curriculum regarding the "Hero's Journey." The students were extremely well behaved!

The MS hosted a *Scholastic Book Fair*. Students were taken through the fair during their ELA classes (11/18-11/22).

In December, VC Spirit once gain sponsored the *Decorate-A-Door Contest*. The school building came to life thanks to the students' wonderful winter-themed door decorations! The MS hosted its *Second Annual Gingerbread Auction*, raising \$760 for *Backpack Snack Attack*.

The Middle School's *Winter Concerts* (12/6, 12/7) were well performed and positively received!

Mrs. Weiss and Mr. Fino transformed the library into a *World War II Holocaust Museum*, with memorabilia supplied by Ms. Wittman.

Upcoming Events:

- ✓ February MS Dance and Social (2/10)

High School

The HS had a very busy and successful start to the school year! In November, the Social Studies and English Honor Societies held their *Inductions*. Also in November, students and families helped host "Fur the Animals" in an effort to raise goods for the *Humane Society*. November also saw the start of *Winter Sports* tryouts.

Seniors took their "Big Picture" - class photograph. They also signed up for their *Senior Class Trip* to Disney and Universal!

The *Corinne Feller Memorial Basketball Tournament* took place in December, which the HS won!

This year's musical was chosen and announced in December: *42nd Street!* Official auditions and call-backs began. The *Winter Band and Chorus Concerts* were well performed and positively received!

The *Interact Club* held a coat drive (raising over 100 coats). There was a *Senior Class Food Drive* (filling over 6 cars with food). Science *Olympiad* sponsored a game night at the HS in December, as well. *The Giving Tree* event received many donations of hats, gloves, and scarves.

Upcoming Events:

- ✓ *Musical Rehearsals* continue/begin in January with performance weekend March 31st—April 2nd
- ✓ *Social Studies Honor Society Movie Night*
- ✓ *Mid-Terms / Regents Exams*

Alternative Learning Center

ALC kicked the year off with a *Welcome-Back Barbecue*. This Fall, the students engaged in *Fire Safety Day* with the Maybrook Fire Department. Students were also treated to a visit from Trish LaFronz's therapy pony, Buster!

ALC also had many festivities so far this school year. The *Halloween Bash* was a lot of fun for students and staff! There was a *Dia de los Muertos Celebration* as well. The high school cooking class provided the school with a wonderful *Thanksgiving Feast* in November.

December saw ALC hosting a *Holiday Gift Shop* and a *Holiday Ice-Cream Party*.

Mrs. Bacon's 5th grade students have been participating in Montgomery's DARE program.

The high school students were visited by guest speakers to discuss drug and alcohol awareness and safety, as well as college options. Students also visited colleges and went on a field trip to the Culinary Institute.

Walden Elementary Gets the Blues

The third graders at Walden Elementary became songwriters this fall. They wrote and performed blues songs with Monk Rowe, a Jazz musician and Director of the Fillius Jazz Archive at Hamilton College in Clinton, NY. Nancy Phelps brought Mr. Rowe and his blues program here from her hometown of Utica, NY. She was able to arrange funding for the program through the generosity of the Walden PTO, the VCEF grant program and WES building funds.

Nancy Phelps arranged for Mr. Rowe to introduce Walden’s third grade students to the structure of 12-bar blues in an interactive video lesson via Google Hangouts. Students then went to work writing poetry. They wrote about their school and classroom experiences to create three different songs: *The Everyday Blues*, *The Walden School Blues*, and *How to Lose Those Blues*.

The following is a verse from the Walden School Blues:

I get the blues when I’m walking up the Walden Stairs
 I get the blues when I’m walking up the Walden Stairs
 ‘Cause there’s ten billion stairs to get most anywheres!

This educational initiative culminated in an assembly by the students, in which they performed their songs for the entire school. Accompanying the students in their performance was a band comprised of Monk Rowe on saxophone and piano, music teacher Brian Ackley on trombone and two VCHS Jazz Band students, Andrew Demarest and Josh Doro, on drums and guitar.

This program is slated to expand at Walden Elementary through a collaborative effort by many of our wonderful teachers.

— Kathy Bordone, Teacher, Walden
 — Nancy Phelps, Teacher, Walden

Secretarial Update

The secretarial unit will be meeting shortly to start our negotiations. Unfortunately our meeting on December 12th was cancelled due to snow and we are working on finding a new date to meet. Please remember to e-mail me some of your thoughts prior so that we can compile a list and make this meeting go smoothly. I have to say that we are all blessed to have such a great unit of hard working caring women.

—Jo Ann Cassisi, Secretarial Representative

Paraprofessional Update

On the last Conference Day in November, fifteen paraprofessionals took part in the American Health and Safety Institute CPR and AED training and certification. Another fifteen paras were recertified as well. The training has been provided for the past 10 years by our own certified instructor, Diane Savage (and Patty Williams, at times). Thank you to their continuing effort in coordinating the training with Ms. Lease-Murphy!

—Kathy Lennon, Paraprofessional Representative



Under the new CTLE requirements, does a professional certificate holder have to complete 15% of their 100 hours of professional development in language acquisition (TESOL)?

Valley Central has received a waiver that, “exempts districts from the minimum number of professional development hours required by CR Part 154 (15% of total required for classroom pedagogues and 50% of total required for those with a certificate in ESOL or who hold a bilingual extension).”

This does not change/affect the 100 hour minimum.

You asked for it... and you got it!

Third Annual Member Appreciation Month set for February 2017



Don't miss out... join MAP!

NYSUT Member Benefits and our endorsed program providers will once again be teaming up for the Third Annual Member Appreciation Month set for February 2017 in recognition of all you do to make *NYSUT union strong*.

To be eligible for these drawings, you simply need to be a member of the voluntary MAP Alert email service or sign up before January 31, 2017.

MAP Alerts are a convenient way to learn about new endorsed programs; updates to current programs; and special offers unique to MAP Alert participants -- without being inundated with emails.

Prize drawings will be held each day, with the winners announced exclusively on the Member Benefits website throughout the month of February.



Win prizes such as Best Buy, Amazon or American Express gift cards; car rental certificates; wireless speakers; an i-Pad Mini; and many more.

Last's year Grand Prize winner received a free vacation to Orlando, FL!

We encourage you to spread the word to your colleagues about this special event. **So if you see a phone call or email from us, make sure you answer it!!!**

For more details about this exciting event, visit the Member Benefits website at memberbenefits.nysut.org or call **800-626-8101**.



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.

COMICS and VISUALS

— BETSY DEVOS —
STEERING MONEY AWAY FROM PUBLIC
EDUCATION...

