



Social Media & VC

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



Valley Central Teachers' Association

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Undoing the Testing Narrative

I write this article with the knowledge that a clean APPR bill will be passed by the Assembly and finally the Senate this week.

The reason I can be sure of this is because this last election cycle NYSUT and its membership held firm to its promise that if you didn't vote for the clean APPR bill then you would not receive our endorsement or our votes.



We now have a state assembly and a senate that is friendly to public school teachers and public education. This is due to the hard work by our members who spent countless hours volunteering for the campaigns of those candidates that are willing to stand with us when it comes to the issues that impact our members and our children.

Having a clean APPR bill that allows locals to have the ability to detach state test scores from teacher



evaluations is only the first step. We need to continue the fight to reduce the state and national testing requirements for students.

The Opt-Out movement must continue until we have fixed the testing obsession that creates an environment where our children are tested every year for a ridiculous amount of hours. We need to eliminate the use of those test scores being the basis for an anti public education narrative.

As we celebrate the successful passage of a clean APPR bill we must hold steady and keep the pressure on the state and national level to protect our children from the continued abuse of annual testing barrage. We need to continue to endorse and vote for state and national candidates that will change the narrative and protect our children.



- Rich Steger, President

*The Opt-Out movement **must continue** until we have fixed the **testing obsession** that creates an environment where our children are tested every year for a ridiculous amount of hours.*

Social Media & VC

Ah, social media and technology. Popularly looked upon as the scourge of the millennial and post-millennial generations. “Everyone is addicted to their phones,” “people are too distracted,” “nobody knows how to communicate anymore.”

Although these sentiments have value and a certain extent of truth to them, it’s important that we don’t lose the forest for the trees. These criticisms of social media and technology only paint a partial picture of the balanced influence these advancements have on our society. Using technology and social media provides us with many benefits, but specifically in the classroom and our community.

It’s apparent to educators that using technology and social media is a crucial part of modern day education. Students’ interest levels increase when they are allowed to utilize the tools they are most fond of. This is true of writing, art, math, and science...

Technology and social media also give us an opportunity to relay information to students in much more creative ways than we could have in the past: videos, Power Points, audiobooks, music, interactive games, and much more. This is a great thing for educators and students! What

has been a bit less apparent, however, is the usefulness of these tools within our union, school district, and in our relationship with our community.

Between this year and last, those living in the Valley Central School District will most likely have seen a marked increase in Facebook posts from the district page. Most of the posts showcase impressive lessons, commendable student achievements or behavior, and major events that took place on a particular day in each building. But they also include the simple greeting or holiday wish, and even updates on an emergency situations.

There are so many benefits to our community seeing what we do. It is so important for the district to have a public presence. Additionally, it is an invaluable and easily accessible avenue for our teachers to show the community the incredibly passionate and hard work they do every day. It’s also reaffirming for the community to witness the pure joy and genuine learning of our students. Finally, this social media presence will help to subtly and meaningfully facilitate the creation of a cohesive, positively minded, voting block when it comes time for the budget vote this year.

Nobody wants to go through

what our district endured last year around budget season. We owe it to our kids and our union and our community and our district to do better. When budget votes fail, major stakeholders are at risk. The most important and vulnerable stakeholder? It is the children of our district.

These social media posts work positively on so many levels and the district couldn’t make them without us telling them what is happening at the ground level in each building. Therefore, we encourage all VC staff members to continue the social media presence (through the district page) that we have been working on improving this year. The positive benefits are subtle, yet powerful.

*.. let us use social media in VC to be **proactive**...*

To put it simply: when budget votes go down, we’ve **reactively** attempted to highlight the value of a student’s education and the incredible work of our teachers and staff members; this time, let us use social media in VC to be **proactive** about how we uphold our local education as vital and special.

- Matt Gill, Secretary/Editor

It Takes a Community

Happy New Year. Some say it takes a community to raise a child, others may disagree... but in some ways we all touch a child's life in a community. Even with busy lives, people have been or still are involved with many different organizations doing many wonderful things.

Maybe you are a member of the PTA/PTO helping set up the book fair, or the Boy/Girl Scouts helping with a fundraiser, Little League working at the concession stand, or maybe you volunteer at the

fire department as a firefighter, ambulance corp as an EMT or driver, local library helping put away the books, a teacher or a para buying gifts to help a child have a nice holiday. No matter what you may do, you are helping the community or touching someone's life.

I know first hand what it is to live and work in such a community. When I had a fire and lost my son almost 12 years ago, all these people plus more offered help to my family and I. Whether it was to rebuild the house, bring us meals, or to offer comfort.

The community was there.

It shows how people in our community help one another no matter what the circumstances are. Please continue to do what ever it is you do for the children and people in our community. Without that we wouldn't have a community.

Thank you for all you do... whether it be volunteering or just helping some one when they need it.

- Diane Savage,
Paraprofessional Representative

SRP Appreciation



On November 20th, our school-related professionals were thanked for all of their hard work and dedication to the community with cake from the VCTA. This day and the cake provided are just a small gesture of this community's thanks... but how can one truly ever thank those that dedicate their lives

to the betterment of the children around them.

One of the themes present in this issue of the *Echoes* is community, our involvement, and how important it is that we work together for the greater good of kids. School-related professionals are the people at the ground level, with the teachers, meeting every basic need of our students.

The food a kid gets at school... the tissue given to a sick student... the hug given to a crying kid... the information shared with staff

about a student's emotional well-being... the efforts and time spent making sure that kids have a clean space to learn... the friendships forged with kids... the simple smile and "hello" to quiet students that don't often get attention.

The work our SRPs do for students is truly immeasurable. But it is valuable, crucial, and visible. We **know** the impact that you all make on our students. We **know** the sacrifices you make. And we **thank you** so very much.

- VCTA Officers

Math Pedagogy: Pendulum Swings or Whac-A-Mole?

Is Math Pedagogy Subject to Pendulum Swings, or are we Just Playing Whac-A-Mole?

Being a Math Consultant in the Valley Central School District frequently means putting off the latest novel I was starting to read and picking up articles or professional literature on current math pedagogy.

That is why it recently surprised me when a colleague suggested an excellent article and some related videos (links to be shared-so stay tuned) on Relational versus Instrumental Mathematics. The surprise was that the research, which I found to be extremely relevant in our current atmosphere of instructional math shifts, turned out to be from 1976!

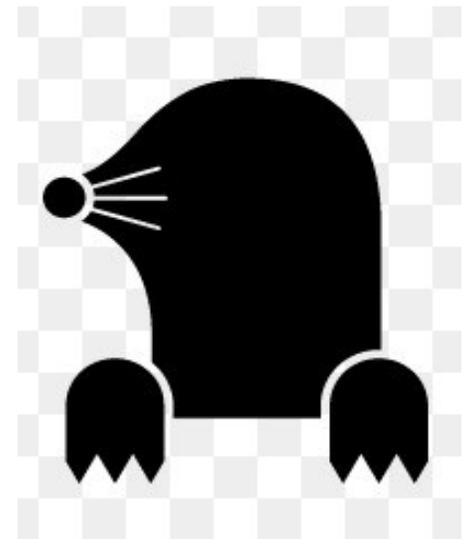


The research [Richard Skemp, *Mathematics Teaching*, 77, 20–26, (1976)], is an in depth look at teaching mathematics relationally, with a consistent emphasis on reasoning and understanding as the current shifts demand, versus teaching with procedures as the “instrument” of emphasis. A compelling and clear case is made for Relational Instruction leading to increasingly engaged students pursuing underlying mathematical connections and learning to build on those connections, ultimately broadening their understanding of this essentially creative and sometimes downright elegant subject. On the other hand, Skemp then plays “Devil’s Advocate” by defending procedural teaching. However, the necessity of memorizing an ever increasing number of mathematical rules is concluded to increase student confusion and/or dissatisfaction with mathematics as a discipline, ultimately leading to the dropping of mathematics by many students as soon as they are able to leave it behind.

A great summarizing of the work can be found at this link:

<https://alearningplace.com.au/2-ways-to-teach-and-learn-maths-2/>

I like the presentation style of



the first video better than the second video. See the Research Paper button for the full Skemp article to get all the details if you like. (The video comes to the internet by way of Australia so there are some connections made to their own education system but these are brief and in no way undermine the summary.)

My Pendulum to Whack-A-Mole epiphany is as follows: If this clear case for Relational Pedagogy has been around since at LEAST 1976, I suggest the only way these ideas were not put into widespread practice years ago is because the majority of educational stakeholders kept hammering the support for these ideas, if not back into the ground, then back into submission! Research based support for math investigations and consistent student discourse persistently come

Math Pedagogy: Pendulum Swings or Whac-A-Mole?

popping up only to be repeatedly met by a variety of hammers and into the background it goes, varying when and where the support comes popping up again.

But in the face of clear research, WHY would decades of stakeholders continue to place emphasis on procedural learning in math classrooms? More importantly, why do we think that this current wave of passion for Relational Math Instruction will take hold and lead to an increasing number of students understanding and pursuing mathematics? What will keep the Whac-A-Mole Hammers in check? I submit for consideration that in the past, the ideas were presented without the appropriate professional development for educators. Relational Mathematics was introduced and defended, but then handed over to teachers, many of whom had been both teaching and taught using rules and procedures. Students might ask for explanations of why mathematics works only to be met with the best explanation many teachers had at that juncture: A re-teach of the rules and procedures that did not meet the students' needs to understand "the why" behind the math they were learning.

Yet, I am hopeful that our current focus on Relational

Math Instruction as part of our curriculum shifts will this time take hold and improve mathematics instruction. An increasing number of districts, including our own, Valley Central, are placing a focus on Professional Collaboration. My position itself is an outcome of our district's supporting ongoing Math Professional Development, allowing for teacher discourse and collaboration of today's standards within the framework of Relational Math Instruction.



This year I have had the pleasure of facilitating Monthly PD/Planning sessions at MES while my Elementary Consultant Colleagues lead similar meetings across the elementary schools. These meetings allow for in-depth consideration of the mathematics underlying rich math tasks that encourage student investigations and increase student discourse. The related mathe-

matics is talked through with colleagues and subsequently brought into classrooms. The ongoing nature of this collaboration allows us to try out new ideas and figure out together how to best approach Relational Math. Our ongoing collaborative efforts keep the Relational Math ideas in play rather than hammered away.

This really can be an amazing and pivotal time for mathematics education. I submit for your consideration if you've been caught up in the game of Math Whac-A-Mole, put down your hammer and come join us Moles. We're moving above ground to stay!

- Linda Lettieri,
Math Consultant MES

APPR is Job One for New Legislature

In April, it looked like a slam dunk.

NYSUT-backed legislation to fix the broken test-and-punish teacher evaluation system had strong bipartisan support in both houses.

By the end of June, thanks to the cynical Republican leadership in the Senate, it rolled to a stop like a deflated basketball.

As we prepare for the 2019 legislative session in New York, the game has changed. Thanks in large part to the union's support, Democrats won enough state Senate races in November's general elections to secure a majority for the first time since 2010, and in the process gained control of the New York State Legislature. It's time for a reset.

"Now that we have a new Senate, we would hope that their first order of business would be to fix this broken testing and evaluation system," President Andy Pallotta told Newsday. The Annual Professional Performance Review law that was passed almost unanimously by the Assembly and blocked by the Republican leadership in the Senate last spring should be re-introduced when the 2019 session opens in January, he said.

Pallotta promised NYSUT will work with the Assembly and the Senate, now led by Democrats who owe their powerful majority to support from our union members, to pass a bill again.

"Our bill was derailed by senators who voted to enrich their anti-union, anti-public-education donors at the expense of students, parents and educators," Pallotta said. "We need to complete that legislative commitment to local control and collective bargaining."

What else does the change of power mean in the new legislative session?



Funding

For years, NYSUT has worked with Assembly Democrats to seek more equitable state aid for schools and public higher education. Virtually every progressive Democrat who ran for office campaigned on the need to provide more state funding for local districts. Advocates say the state's 2003 Foundation Aid Formula, which was supposed to ensure fairer, more predictable distribution of aid, has never been implemented and the state owes billions to districts.

NYSUT also will continue to work with the Assembly and the new Senate leadership to ensure adequate and equitable funding for our chronically underfunded public higher education systems.

Tax Cap

NYSUT has advocated many common-sense changes to the ill-conceived tax cap law that could make it more equitable and affordable for local institutions, including exemptions for certain capital expenses, mandatory costs and security investments. The union also seeks to eliminate the undemocratic 60 percent supermajority requirement to pass a local budget that exceeds the cap. NYSUT maintains the new Senate could remove many of the obstacles to these common-sense proposals.

Charter Schools

Thanks to campaign donations from wealthy, private supporters of the charter school industry, the publicly funded but privately operated schools have enjoyed benevolent backing from Senate Republicans. NYSUT supported numerous progressive Democrats who want to increase oversight, transparency and accountability of the schools. Proposals to regulate them more closely routinely failed in the GOP controlled Senate.

The state recently approved more charter school openings in New York City, moving closer to a legal limit on how many charters can operate in the state. The industry will be lobbying to raise that limit, and NYSUT will be working to cap it.

- Ned Hoskin, NYSUT
nhoskin@nysutmail.org

We Told You We Would Remember

Don't mess with NYSUT.

If you run for office and call dedicated, hard-working educators and health care workers “forces of evil” — as Republican Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan did a month before Election Day — our members will remember.

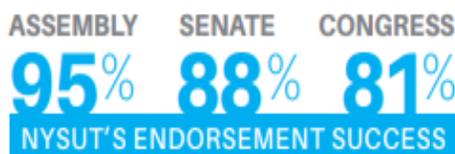
If you refuse to address the state's broken and unfair teacher evaluation and standardized testing system, our members will remember.

And if you insist on catering to the billionaire-backed charter industry at the expense of New York's students, our members will remember.

“If there is one takeaway from this election, it's that NYSUT members pay attention — and they vote,” NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said.

In the same way NYSUT members remembered who didn't

stand by students and educators, they also remembered those who did — staffing phone banks and working tirelessly on behalf of those candidates. In the end, the union's motivated membership was instrumental in flipping control of the state Senate, and electing a majority of pro-public education candidates. Consider:



- * 95 percent of the union's endorsed candidates for Assembly won (137 endorsements, 130 wins — including NYSUT's own Monica Wallace and Patrick Burke).
- * 88 percent of NYSUT's endorsed candidates for state Senate won (40 endorsements, 35 wins — including former member Monica Martinez).
- * 81 percent of NYSUT's endorsed candidates for Congress won (26 endorsements, 21 wins).

wide. This past spring, fed-up educators in West Virginia, Arizona, and Oklahoma walked off the job, leading successful strikes to force lawmakers in their respective states to raise their pay and invest more in public schools.

You'd think Sen. Flanagan would have remembered what happened to his fellow Long Islander, U.S. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato. More than 20 years earlier he attacked teacher tenure and was bounced from office by educators who had enough.

Flanagan didn't remember.

NYSUT members never forget.

- Matt Smith, NYSUT
msmith@nysutmail.org

THE VALUE OF ENDORSEMENT



Concentrating on more than 30 races, 2,000 volunteers handed out literature door-to-door and made nearly 250,000 phone calls from NYSUT's massive phone-bank operation. VOTE-COPE spent more than \$4 million in support of endorsed candidates, money raised through voluntary contributions to the VOTE-COPE political action fund. These individual donations, added together, help us to compete against the \$500,000 and \$1 million checks being written by billionaires.



The show of force by NYSUT members — proving they are a “force of good” — continues the trend of teacher activism nation-

Spotlight Series

Tell us a little about yourself.

We moved to the area in 1982. My daughter started kindergarten at East Coldenham in 1983, at which time I became involved with the PTO. I began working for Valley Central in April, 1990 as a Speech Paraprofessional in Walden and E.C. A few years later I was assigned to E.C. only. In 2004 I became a paraprofessional in kindergarten. I have been an officer and building rep for the Paraprofessional Unit for many years and I serve on the Sunshine committee at E.C.

What made you want to work with kids?

During the years that my daughter attended E.C. I was a room mom and a PTO member. When she moved on to the Middle School, I realized how much I missed helping out at school. I enjoyed watching the children learn and grow. I knew that I wanted to be involved with that learning.

What is a typical day like for you?

In the morning, it's journals, morning work, snack, centers, then specials. After special we go to lunch, then come back to the



Barbara Zupa
Paraprofessional (EC)
29 Years at Valley Central

room for math work and centers, then recess. After recess it's more work then pack up to go home. It's a great day in kindergarten!

What are the biggest challenges in your job?

Keeping up with the changes in education!

In what ways are you an asset to your building?

I try to be a team player. I am always willing to do extra duties when asked, and my desire to work with children hopefully makes me an asset to E.C.

What makes being part of the VC family special?

We have a very caring staff that is willing to go above and beyond for their colleagues and the students at VC!

What interests do you pursue outside of school?

I like to read, knit, do outdoor activities, shop, and spend time with family and friends.

Where do you see yourself in the future?

Working at East Coldenham!



Benefits designed exclusively for NYSUT members

NYSUT members and their loved ones have access to dozens of endorsed shopping, travel & personal programs available through NYSUT Member Benefits, including discounts on hotels & vacations; car & truck rentals; international group tours; sports & concert tickets; theme parks & attractions; and more.

Whether you are participating in one of our shopping/entertainment/travel offerings; auto, homeowners or life insurance plans; or financial or legal services, NYSUT members have the "Power of the Union" behind them ready to serve as their advocate.

The following is just a sample of the endorsed programs available to NYSUT members:

Bose -- NYSUT members receive special educator pricing on high-end, high-quality electronics such as music systems, headphones and bluetooth speakers. You must contact Bose toll-free at 877-709-2073 and mention "educator pricing" to receive this exclusive pricing.

Orlando Employee Discounts -- NYSUT members save up to 30% on unforgettable Orlando, FL excursions to Disney World, Universal Studios and many other attractions.

Grand Circle Travel -- NYSUT members can enjoy a number of unique travel deals on international river cruises and other travel opportunities with Grand Circle's small ship cruise tours, river cruises and land tours.

Member Appreciation Month is back!

One of our most popular annual events is set to return this February. The 2019 Member Appreciation Month celebration will be filled with a series of prize drawings for items donated by NYSUT Member Benefits and our endorsed program providers -- including gift cards, iPads, Echo Dots and more!

As a MAP Alert member, you are eligible to win prizes every single day throughout the month of February.

All MAP Alert members are already entered to win; if you have colleagues who would like to be eligible to win, they simply need to sign up for our MAP Alert service on the Member Benefits website. Prize winners will be listed daily on the Member Benefits website.



To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit memberbenefits.nysut.org or call **800-626-8101**.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.

CAMiGS and VISUALS

UNION HOUSEHOLD



#DoNotKnock

Report any **union busters** who knock on your door to **NYSUT's Member Relations Teams** at unionbusters@nysutmail.org.