



UNION-EYES

Newsletter of the East Ramapo Teachers Association
Looking out for you

In this issue:

- President's Message
- Dr. Klein Resigns
- Teacher Discounts
- Monitoring the Monitors
- Paycheck Notice
- CCLS
- Turkey Time
- APPR News
- Teachers Center Update
- Educate Yourself
- Member Benefits

Dr. Klein Resigns

Like many residents of East Ramapo, we at ERTA were very much surprised by the sudden resignation of our Superintendent, Dr. Klein. For teachers, Dr. Klein has provided a supportive and positive influence throughout a tenure that was filled with outside crisis and pressure.

You may recall his term of leadership began during contract negotiations. East Ramapo's history of hostile and protracted negotiations loomed large in the minds of ERTA's membership. More than once, our members had been forced to work as long as three years without a contract, while former administrations stalled and reneged at the negotiating table.

Such was not the case when we negotiated with Dr. Klein and his team. Of course there were many disagreements. Hard choices had to be made on both sides because of the desperate financial situation, but there was give and take. We never felt that we were "being played" or that the negotiation was not in good faith. Most of all there was an acknowledgement of the essential job that teachers do every day and an understanding that fair treatment is integral to maintaining a productive staff. The constructive environment resulted in a contract which is still in effect.

Financially, the recession hit East Ramapo hard. This was compounded by the vagaries of Albany's funding formula and the defeat of our school budgets on a regular basis. Harsh reality dictated many cuts in personnel and programs, particularly in non-mandated areas. We were frequently at odds with the administration over their choices of what to cut and what to keep, but to his credit, Dr. Klein invited ERTA to participate in the on-going meetings of the budget committee and encouraged us to present our points and ideas throughout the process. You may also recall Dr. Klein visiting the schools and having discussions with the staff about cuts and needs. Including ERTA in pre-budget discussions was an innovation Dr. Klein instituted. It reflected his genuine respect for the teachers' point-of-view.

APPR and Common Core followed on the heels of our fiscal crisis. Suddenly teachers who were being asked to do more with less, were now going to be rated on the numerical outcomes. ERTA spent long summer days discussing and working out our first APPR plan with Dr. Klein and his team. There was great trepidation as we all tried to project how the various methodologies we were adopting might impact ERTA members.

While we heard stories of how other Districts were trying to impose the approach to APPR, for the most part our plan was a joint effort that culminated with a handbook explaining the plan and the procedures that both parties still follow.

President's Message

Welcome to the 2015-2016 school year.

What should have been a smooth opening of school was instead a minor disaster. Identification of SLOs classes was confused and numerous pre-assessments were late arriving at schools as were the needed translations of pretests for ENL students. The same pages that were missing from the Algebra 2 pre-assessment last year were missing once again. Components of Wonders, the new elementary reading program, were not available, putting students and teachers at a disadvantage from day one.

Unfortunately our East Ramapo teachers are used to events such as these which should have been avoided by central administration's oversight and timely preparation and organization by the administration staff charged with these responsibilities.

As professionals you are skillful and experienced at working through such obstacles. You always manage to find ways to provide your students with the best educational opportunities possible in spite of the handicaps. Be assured that ERTA has been documenting and highlighting the problems and pressing administration for improvement in the future.

Wishing you much success, and a great school year.

In Solidarity,
Alan Teshler, President

"Blaming teachers for problems in education is like blaming doctors for people getting sick.
~ Wisdom from an e-card

APPR is an ongoing adventure. This year once again we are working with the administration in a productive and positive way to modify the APPR plan to meet the new State mandates while still providing an accurate and fair measurement for our teachers.

Dr. Klein's actions always seemed to be based on a belief that the classroom practitioner could provide unique insights into educational choices and should be included in making them. The best educational decisions are not made top-down. To this end Dr. Klein worked to restore a strong role for CPB and to build collaboration with our Teacher Center, keeping it independent and vibrant. He also called on ERTA to participate in the planning stages of innovative programs such as the Extended Learning Time Grant.

As you read this I am sure you detect the theme that has been the hallmark of Dr. Klein's relationship with ERTA. He has always shown us respect, acknowledged our professionalism and competence and has been above-board and truthful in dealings with us. We have not always been in agreement, but his door has been open and he genuinely listened to and considered what we had to say. We wish him the best in the future, and hope that his legacy of good relations with ERTA will be continued by the next administration.

Teacher Discount Link

Want to save some money? Check out links for discounts especially for teachers:

<http://www.giftcardgranny.com/blog/the-complete-list-of-66-teacher-discounts/>

<http://www.bestcollegesonline.com/blog/2012/12/18/100-stores-that-give-a-teacher-discount/>

Monitoring the Monitors

In mid-August, State Education Commissioner Elia appointed three monitors for the East Ramapo school district. The team includes Dennis Walcott, former NYC schools chancellor, Monic George-Fields, a former principal and educational consultant and John Sipple a professor at Cornell University whose focus is school finance.

The team arrived almost immediately after being appointed and has been in the district frequently, meeting with the public, the Board and the administration as well as visiting schools and classrooms. They are scheduled to present a report to the Regents in December.

The monitors have not contacted ERTA as a group, apparently because they do not perceive us to be a key constituency. We however will continue to monitor their activities and report to you on any issues or concerns that may impact ERTA members.

Paycheck Notice: Now that you have received a full paycheck, please make sure that your salary, deductions, and your name and address are correct as they appear on the check. The time to make the necessary corrections is now, before waiting too long into the year.

Thinking about posting Common Core Standards for your students?

After lengthy discussion the administration has agreed to print and distribute posters with a list of the anchor standards that teachers can post in their classrooms. This will provide a visual for you, if you need to clarify which standard you are working on.

Turkey Time

In just a few weeks it will be November and time for ERTA's annual Turkey Fund collection. This year we will be asking you to add \$1.00 to the usual \$5.00 contribution. The extra \$1.00 will go to the Tarrytown Regional Office of NYSUT to support its charity of the year, Autism Speaks. They are asking for \$1 from every NYSUT member in the county to benefit this worthwhile group. Your building reps will be collecting donations next month. Please plan to support this effort.

APPR News

In the wake of the 2015 NYS Budget fight, Governor Cuomo push through mandated changes to APPR. Under penalty of losing scheduled increases in state aid, districts must modify agreed upon APPR plans to include the new requirements. Districts that cannot meet the November 15 deadline for agreement between the union and the district on how to incorporate the changes must apply for and be granted a hardship waiver that allows them more time to work out the details. ERTA's APPR committee has been meeting with the administration APPR team and will be applying for a waiver. If it is granted and our new plan is not approved before March 1, 2016 our current APPR plan will remain in effect for this year.

Once approved the new APPR system will replace the three subcomponents (20% State growth or SLO, 20% locally selected measures and 60% evidence of teaching practice-Danielson rubric scores) with a two category matrix that includes only student performance and teacher observation. Under the new plan, the teacher observation component requires a minimum of two observations: one by a principal or other trained administrator and another by an impartial independent trained evaluator, not from the same school.

The state also moved to reduce testing in K-2, by limiting the type of assessments that may be used as pre-tests for SLOs in these grades. Recently ERTA held a meeting to inform K-2 teachers about the required changes and to discuss alternate methods for establishing student performance scores. Our APPR committee is researching the development of an evaluation system that will limit the amount of testing in these grades.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

Tony Stephens, Chairperson, Status and Ethics

Frequently, teachers contact their building reps or the ERTA office seeking information on issues involving the Contract, APPR or building policy. Remember, ERTA is here for you and we are always happy to help. We do recommend, however, that every teacher review our Contract and the APPR plan at the beginning of each year. This is important for your own protection.

Occasionally ERTA reps discover the Contract is being violated or compromised through second hand information. This is not necessarily the fault of the teacher involved, but simply due to a lack of familiarity with the intricacies of the Contract. To be fully aware of your rights, it is important for you to know your Contract. ERTA fights every day to maintain the integrity of the Contract, and the more information our Union members learn and understand, the stronger we are as a united front.

On a similar note, each teacher was emailed an update of the APPR timeline at the start of the school year. While rumors of APPR changes abound, the District is currently following the same plan that was in place last year. ERTA recommends that each teacher reviews last year's APPR Handbook. As the plan is changed or updated, we will let you know.

Lastly please know that ERTA considers the importance of all information it sends via email. We do our best to only send material that has a direct impact on your employment. Generally we send union-related information to your home e-mail address, so if you see something in your inbox from ERTA, please do not let it end up in your spam folder. We understand your time is valuable, but you need to review these electronic communications for your own benefit.

Teacher Center Update

Our Teacher Center Chair, Marilyn Aguayo-Fincken has sent the following update on Teacher Center activities:

Bi-Lingual Extension program: Oneonta has received a grant and is expecting to begin a bilingual extension program in the spring. Specifics will be provided as soon as the application process is available. Bi-lingual education is a growing area in East Ramapo, so keep an eye out for this information if you have an interest in getting a bi-lingual extension.

Mentoring: The District hired over 50 new teachers this year and they are being mentored through the TC program.

Workshops: Currently, the Teachers' Center is offering:

<i>Wednesday, October 14th</i>	<i>Google Classroom Basics for HS Teachers</i>	<i>Ramapo HS</i>	<i>2:30 – 5:00 pm</i>
<i>Wednesday, October 14th</i>	<i>Conversational Spanish</i>	<i>Teachers' Center</i>	<i>3:30 – 5:30 pm</i>
<i>Tuesday, October 20th</i>	<i>Conversational Spanish</i>	<i>Chestnut Ridge MS</i>	<i>4:00 – 6:00 pm</i>
<i>Wednesday, October 28th</i>	<i>Conversational Spanish</i>	<i>Spring Valley HS</i>	<i>2:15 – 4:15 pm</i>

For more information our Teachers' Center Director Vicki Linder can be reached at the Teacher Center by email vlinder@ercsd.org or by phone 577-6375.

We are all members of the East Ramapo Teachers Association. We are one of the busiest and most efficient unions in New York State. Our officers, committee chair and reps are here for you, to advise and assist.

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Identity theft protection available for NYSUT members



TRUE IDENTITY PROTECTION™

NYSUT Member Benefits is excited to announce that its newest endorsed program – ID Watchdog – is now available to all NYSUT members & their families looking for protection against the growing threat of identity and credit theft.

What Do I Get When I Sign Up for ID Watchdog?

- Credit & Cyber Monitoring
- Credit Reports & Scores
- Individual, Individual/Spouse or Family Coverage Available
- Monthly Credit Score Tracker
- High Risk Monitoring

According to Javelin Strategy & Research, an estimated 13.1 million Americans fall victim to identity theft each year. These individuals are hit with approximately \$7,000 in fraudulent charges per person and spend about 330 hours each trying to recover from the effects of identity theft.

ID Watchdog (founded in 2005 as a theft protection service) uses proprietary monitoring technology that alerts members as soon as new or updated information associated with their identity is detected -- allowing them to catch fraudulent activity immediately.

To learn more about ID Watchdog, call toll-free 866-513-0823
or visit memberbenefits.nysut.org.



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.