

The

Journal



OF THE EMPIRE STATE SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION

Long Island

Westchester
Putnam

Volume VI, Issue 2
March 2009

Spring Issue:
The Audacity
of Hope

President's Message:

Getting A Win-Win Contract In A Losing Economy



John Sullivan

Dear Colleagues,

As predicted, school districts across NY State are anticipating horrendous budget cuts as they lament the reductions in state aid and its impact upon local taxpayers. In many school districts, Central Office administrators are putting out their feelers to see if salary freezes and staffing cuts (for line administrators and teachers) are feasible as they wrestle with ostensibly impossible budget figures.

It is not surprising that Central Office salary cuts are not in the offing. Apparently reducing teacher or line administrator salaries and benefits is the cure for fiscal mismanagement of gigantic proportions. One would hope that while the Feds are *bailing out* incompetent corporate executives and their thieving cronies, they might find a few shekels for public education. Not a chance. Once again, we are on our own.

Prior to 9/11, many school districts became lax in terms of student discipline and a general lessening of standards and behavioral expectations. Many public schools, especially at the secondary level, became too *laissez faire* as students and community came and went as they pleased. School property and doors were wide open. Elementary schools became havens for doting parents as they escorted little Mary and Billy to their respective classrooms for emotional farewells.

After 9/11 there was a major crackdown, all under the umbrella of public safety. Police stations in school buildings, cameras in hallways, restricting of cell phones, backpacks, overcoats, and hats became common. Institutionally mandated changes that once would have been considered invasive became welcomed dictates because they *kept us safe*. School districts took actions that they should have taken, though they had lacked the courage to do so prior to 9/11. A public crisis provided them with the justification to finally do the right thing.

I worry now that school districts will again utilize a national financial crisis to take from bargaining units concessions that they could not have won at the bargaining table. If we are not cautious, our humanistic nature will cause us to make emotional decisions that lack a factual base. Before we give anything up, *show us the money* and give us a voice on how it is spent. The ESSAA attorneys are skilled in the art of representing the best interests of our membership. **Do not even consider making a concession without consulting them.** A salary concession is your decision; staff reductions is the school districts, not ours. We cannot confuse the two. Any thought of giving up a contractual right without getting something of equal or greater value in return is ludicrous. Our attorneys are excellent at helping you *cooperate*, while concurrently protecting your best interests. This is the service you pay your hard earned dues for. Use it! It is possible to have a *win-win scenario* for both you and your school district.

There are many lessons still to be learned from 9/11.

Regards,

John F. Sullivan

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Hasta La Vista, Thirsty Thursdays

By Bob Liftig



After two lifetimes teaching in public school, I have now retired to teaching in three colleges. One is a private, Jesuit university; the other is a private non-sectarian university, and the third is a state community college. One year at the community college costs \$3,000. Tuition at each of the other two is \$50,000.

Until last fall many parents had the resources to send their kids to the expensive schools and were willing to place Big Bets that catered dining halls, regular maid service in the dorms, and prestigious sweat shirts were worth the extra \$160,000 over four years; but a lot has changed since the maple leaves changed their colors a few months ago.

My community college enrollment is exploding; my private university courses are dwindling. Other adjunct “professors” like myself are being assigned fewer and fewer classes, and are starting to apply to teach courses at lower paying public colleges. Parents are pulling the plugs on their kids all across the nation, having lost tax shelters, college funds, and salaried positions, or being so afraid of the imminence of these possibilities that they are no longer willing to commit what they have to more expensive higher education.

The kids whose parents are still willing and able to place The Bet seem more serious and even guilt-driven. I feel sorry for them. Even so, there are always a few who are the last to get the message.

The second semester began on a Wednesday at the end of January, and some of my students mentioned that some of their friends had “gone home for a semester to community college.” I said these were hard times for all of us, and they should appreciate getting whatever educational experience their families can afford, and that it would all work out in the end. Then I went into my usual caution about “Thirsty Thursdays,” a recent national tradition. That’s when college weekends start – according to the students - and quite a few professors cancel their classes every week out of respect for the regular holiday. Briefly put, it involves going out to clubs and binge drinking.

I told my students I will never cancel Friday classes because of Thirsty Thursday and that I keep a regular attendance book and place a big red “F” in the attendance box if they don’t show up then.

“Besides,” I said. The way things are now, why would you want to waste your parents’ money?”

They nodded soberly as if they more than understood. Two days later it was Friday, and a few of my students looked a little green around the gills; but when the classroom clock hit 8:00 AM exactly, I started teaching.

Twenty minutes into the period, two male students stumbled into class in slippers and pajamas. One’s face was ashen; the other’s was the color of a ripe banana. I felt sorry for him too, but I couldn’t resist making an object lesson out of him, so I said something like, “Sorry we have to offer morning classes,” and then when the laughter died down, I added: “Why don’t you sleep in next week? Mom and Dad won’t miss the \$50,000.”

The yellow guy apologized to the class and said it wouldn’t happen again, and then I asked his friend why they had such a problem coming to class on time, and he said simply: “Thirsty Thursday.”

I reminded him I don’t recognize their holiday.

I noted their tardiness in my attendance book and began teaching again, but the rest of the class was staring at the banana kid as he closed his eyes, nodded and twitched a little, and then pitched forward, passing out across his desk.

I walked over and shook him.

“You want to go to the Infirmary?” I asked him.

“They went to the Sixth Sense last night,” one female Physical Therapy major said by way of explanation. “That’s one of the worst clubs in New Haven.”

“I’m sorry,” Banana Boy said.

“Tell that to your parents,” I said.

I worried for a moment that I was being mean to him – a boy in his condition, but I had wanted to make my point right at the beginning of the semester. Even so, I quickly glanced around the room to see how the other students were reacting to my kidding; but rather than siding with Banana Boy, they were nodding to me in quiet agreement.

“I guess it’s Hasta La Vista to Thirsty Thursdays for a while” I said, and once again, the class nodded soberly to me.

Their reaction would have been much different just a year ago. ❖

Regional News

CAS



Dear Colleagues:

The holidays are over and CAS is looking forward to a great second half of the school year. Our North Nassau Regional meeting at Westbury Manor was well attended. The members shared experiences they had with Central Office personnel in light of the economic downturn. Bob Saperstein reviewed negotiation advice. A number of districts have expressed an interest in give backs. Bob reviewed the best way to handle such communications. The first thing is always to contact counsel because every situation is unique.

However, in general units want to stress the need to wait for the new state budget so that each district's actual financial position is known before discussing possible contract concessions. Questions to consider asking should include:

- A) Are Central Office personnel giving back?
- B) Are teachers giving back?
- C) Are custodians and secretaries giving back?

Also to be considered is the difference between a salary deferral and a salary freeze, because the two have very different long term implications.

If anyone from Central Office contacts you regarding your contracts, you are urged to call Bob or Brad at 631-761-5451.

On January 20 units from the mid Suffolk area will meet at Café La Strada to discuss common issues in an informal setting while enjoying cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. Brad Stuhler and members of the Executive Board will be available for a Q&A session.

At the end of January I will spend a few days in Albany. Bob Ungar, our lobbyist, is co-hosting a party for the new Senate Majority on January 26th. While I'm there I'll meet with Senator Suzie Oppenheimer, the new Chair of the Education Committee, and Senator Diane Savino, the new Chair of the Civil Service and Pension Committee.

It does not look like the economy will be any better for the 2009-2010 session. We will be monitoring both the Federal and State budgets very carefully and urging our elected representative to protect the education of our children.

Very truly yours,

Anthony C. Laurino

Anthony C. Laurino, CAS President

IN MEMORIAM

Lynn D. Reney

The Central New York Supervisors and Administrators Association mourns the passing of one of its members, Lynn D. Reney. Lynn worked over 30 years as a teacher and administrator for BOCES. She also served as secretary for the CNY-SAA Regional Association.

Lynn attended Buffalo State and Oswego State and received a master's degree from Syracuse University. She is survived by her father, Donald E. Reney, relatives, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred J. Reney and Ms. Norma Reney, several cousins and nephews, and also a very good friend and companion, Jon Barber.

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Regional News

CNYSAA

The 1st annual CNYSAA Holiday Party was held on December 1, 2008 at the Double Tree Hotel in Syracuse, New York. Administrators from across the Central New York Region were in attendance. It was an evening filled with fellowship and an opportunity to network with colleagues, sharing ideas, issues and concerns common to all line administrators.

Guest speakers included President John F. Sullivan, ESSAA Attorney Kevin O’Haire and ESSAA Vice-President, Ed Keeler. The party was a huge success and there will be plans to continue future gatherings for the Central New York Regional administrators.

CNYSAA has 250 members representing 18 administrative bargaining units in the Central New York Region: Auburn, Baldwinsville, Canandaigua, Cato-Meridian, Clinton, East Syracuse-Minoa, Frankfort-Schuyler, Indian River, Jordan-Elbridge, Marcus-Whitman, Moravia, OCM BOCES, Onondaga Central, South Jefferson, Utica Vernon-Verona-Sherrill, Watertown and Waverly.



STSAA

An organizational meeting was held on November 18, 2008 in Binghamton, NY to begin the process of developing our Regional association now known as Region 6 (Southern Tier School Administrators Association; STSAA). The region is currently made up of 8 units with a total of 105 members. Officers were decided as well as preliminary discussions about the development of by-laws. The emphasis for the near future will be to enhance the great tradition of services provided by ESSAA as well as continued recruitment efforts in the area.

I would also like to thank those in attendance that evening for their help and guidance in this very important process. To Ed Keeler, Kevin O’Haire, Tom Vasilof, Bob Darcangelo, Tonja Thompson, Michael Holly, John Girton, and Tim Gracy...your assistance was greatly appreciated!

Rick Kimble, President; Region 6



ESM Administrators

MHAA

Ulster, Orange Dutchess,
Sullivan, Greene Counties

Officers

President – Raymond Palmer
Vice President – Roy Paisley
Secretary – Michael Rheume
Treasurer – Robert Rutigliano
Delegates – Steve Shuchat
Gordon Dean
Aldo Filippone

On Wednesday October 29, 2009 Region 4 held its first regional meeting of the year. The meeting was held at the Homewood Suites, Newburgh, New York. In attendance were eighteen members. On the agenda for the evening was a presentation by Robert Ungar, Esq., ESSAA lobbyist. Robert’s presentation covered a range of topics beginning with his affiliation with ESSAA, his lobbying efforts on behalf of ESSAA, and the importance of ESSAA having a lobbying presence in Albany. Robert also reported on the present state of the government and the state budget crisis. Robert also impressed upon the group the importance of ESSAA members supporting the PAC fund. The evening concluded with Robert fielding a number of questions from the members in attendance.

The next regional meeting for region 4 is tentatively scheduled for April at the Holiday Inn in Fishkill, New York.

Nassau Regional Meeting



ESSAA Welcomes Two New Districts

Hornell

Nestled in the Canisteo Valley, surrounded by tree covered hillsides, The City of Hornell offers a unique balance of rural beauty and a thriving business community. Located in the southwestern portion of Steuben County, known as the Southern Tier, Hornell's population is just under 10,000.



Hornell is situated at the intersection of Route 21 and 36, and Exit 34 of the Southern Tier Expressway (I-86). The city is in close proximity to some of the largest cities in New York State: 60 miles from Rochester, 40 miles from Corning and 93 miles from Buffalo.

Also nearby are a number of tourist attractions including the Finger Lakes Wineries, (art centers Corning, Rochester,) and educational facilities, including Alfred University and Alfred State College, SUNY-Geneseo and Corning Community College.

The "City of all Seasons" offers cool, clear springs, sunny summers, magnificent fall foliage and crisp winters with minimal snowfall. If you're looking to get away from big city congestion, we cordially invite you to visit the state's best kept secret! We're certain you will want to become a part of the "Hornell Spirit."

Voorheesville

Voorheesville was settled by farmers sent by the Rennselaer family. In the 19th Century, their descendants rebelled against the patroon system, fomenting a Rent War.

Voorheesville's high school was selected as a blue ribbon school of distinction in the early 90's. Since then, Newsweek has rated the local high school, Clayton A. Bouton Jr./Sr. High School, #395, out of the top 1300 in

the country. The school system is relatively small, with graduating classes ranging between 100-130 students, on average. Clayton A. Bouton Jr./Sr. High School contains grades 6-12, following an addition that was completed in 2003. The building renovation added a new middle school wing and an updated performing arts center. The Voorheesville Elementary School, which is about a five minute drive from the high school, provides education for grades K-5.

Voorheesville's two schools service the village itself, most parts of the Town of New Scotland and the Village of Slingerlands, with some students coming from the outskirts of the Town of Guelderland, Town of Bethlehem, and Village of Altamont.

Athletics at Voorheesville high school include boys and girls tennis, cross country, soccer, track, basketball, swimming (teamed together with neighboring Guelderland High School), and volleyball. Single sex sports include softball, baseball, and football. Co-ed sports are cheerleading, wrestling, bowling, and golf. The mascot is the Blackbird and they claim three NYSPHSAA titles with Boys Soccer in 1990, and Girls Basketball in 1998 and 2002.

Clayton A. Bouton offers a variety of clubs and activities including Model United Nations, Envirothon, Ski Club, Mock Trial, SADD, National History Club, Student Government, Torch (yearbook), The Helderbarker (school newspaper), Builders Club (affiliated with the New Scotland Kiwanis), Speech and Debate Club, and National Honor Society. Their fine arts department is also considered among the best in the capital region, with NY-SMA award winning band and chorus groups, male and female a capella choir groups, and a jazz band which requires admission through try-outs. The school also boasts a strong tradition in Drama Club; the Voorheesville Dionysians puts on an annual Shakespeare production in the fall and a musical in the spring, nearly always producing outstanding performances.



What About The Smart Kids?

By Bob Liftig

Despite all the trouble our country and the world is in, we know that students, teachers and administrators must soldier on, solving organizational and behavioral problems and citing Special Education law and managing disciplinary problems.

Of course, the government will keep saying that no child should be left behind, but they mean under-performing students. One irony of the current economic mess is that we may soon see an influx of very different students: you can call them the Honors, the truly above average, or the Gifted and Talented students.

With six years of editing the ESSAA Journal under my belt, I volunteered two years ago to be the Guest Editor of MENSA's International Research Journal, slated for publication this June. The Summer Issue is subtitled: "Barriers To Gifted and Talented Education," which, of course, concerns MENSA members and, they like to assume, any children that show up as a result of their matings.

Two years ago, when I first begged for, and then was burdened with this assignment, I set out to find "experts" in the field of Gifted and Talented education and then begged for and was burdened editing their articles. The result is an interesting and provocative issue that cobbles together input from an eclectic host of commentators, including: of a 96 year old psychiatrist who has seen it all, a lawyer, published philosopher, and commentator on public affairs who refuses to be fooled by anything; a distinguished professor who studies "Genius," for a living; a Chemistry Department chair who earned a doctorate from Oxford as part of a 1950's UK experiment in Gifted and Talented education and whose fellow graduates include one of the founders of Monty Python; a master mechanic who should have been G and T, but who "fell through the cracks" during high school and is happy about his life anyway; the founder of one of the foremost academies for the Gifted and Talented in New England which continues to thrive 40 years later; a Professor of Political Science who strips away the veneer of "inclusion" and "multicultural studies" to reveal what he believes is an education machine fueled by lies and distortions, and the voices of parents, teachers, and recent graduates of G and T programs who are very happy with public schools and their kids' access to G and T, AP, and Honors programs.

I thought I'd share with the ESSAA membership some of their conclusions for two reasons. The first is that high performing kids and their parents often complain (this may surprise you) that schools and teachers "don't really care" about them; the second is that, with the economy tanking, parents are pulling these kids out of private schools, and we'll be getting them.

Should this make us happier?

Not necessarily.

Everything comes with problems, and here are just a few of them:

- 1) There doesn't seem to be any generally recognized definition of Gifted and Talented, and, indeed, the funding that did exist for these programs has been "redirected" to inclusion and multicultural problems, if not cut out all together. And yet parents will be urging you to consider their kids for the special "elite" category. What will you do?
- 2) Many parents, administrators, and teachers note that the public also really doesn't seem to care what happens to these kids, believing that, if they're so gifted and talented, they can take care of themselves, or their wealthy parents can drive them to after school enrichment programs.
- 3) In most places these days most parents are convinced that any kid they present to their school district is gifted and talented by their own definitions, even if Beauregard or Chelsea is basically average; and many who are not afraid to go public with their grievances, say that this is compounded by minority, medical, linguistic, and political lobbying groups who advocate for their members' inclusion simply because they *are* members.
- 4) School systems now regularly encourage parents to take In District courses on how to identify their own kids as gifted and talented and how to get them accepted into these programs.
- 5) The end result, as you probably already guessed, seems to satisfy almost no one, and students are assigned to these programs just to silence the lobbyists, the parents, and the other advocates.

And, by the way, the "experts" I collected, came to some surprising conclusions

- 1) The concept of G and T (Honors, Enrichment, or AP) education is seen by the public as almost Un-American. Either every kid is gifted or none of them are, and if the schools and teachers don't see these special gifts it is only because the system and the people working in them don't know what they're doing. "Elitism" is out, in other words, unless everyone is included; and parents

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- expect schools to see the *potential* giftedness in their children and then develop it. Past performance is no longer seen as a proper selection criteria.
- 2) Most selection criteria have as their basis a model in which students who will become leaders are chosen: those who have the best potential for future earnings and achieving high professional positions. A passion for learning for learning's sake is rarely a consideration, and manually gifted students (think of Paul Revere the silversmith) are almost completely ignored (in the old days we called these people "artisans" and they were highly respected).
 - 3) Students sent to enrichment programs enjoy them, but mostly because they can mix with "good kids" and get away from the "bad kids" in their "normal" classes' but experts in child development think that complete separation (read, tracking) could also be socially harmful to them. Add to this that other experts think much of this supplementation should really be done by parents, and that more motivated students would do better if teachers and parents responded to kids on individual needs bases instead of dumping them into a one size fits all Honors program. In other words, if a motivated student wants to pursue an individual project, teachers and parents should respond by providing the necessary resources, but if there is no sincere request for a challenge, then they should be treated just like every other student (so much for "potentially" gifted students).
 - 4) Private schools or specialized public schools may in the end be the best answer for G and T students and their parents, though some of this is wish fulfillment. Parents and students often believe they have finally found "quality" when the kid gets admitted, and students often behave better when they realize family money and resources have been committed (read, vouchers).
 - 5) "Genius" alone is not enough to ensure success in most careers. In Science and Technology in particular, studies show that there must be advanced formal training, including graduate school. In the Arts, however, most successful writers, actors, and artists only have a year or two of college, though most have been voracious readers since elementary school. Poets seem to require the least formal education (I guess you have to consider songwriters and rappers).
 - 6) Back in the 1950's when the U.K. still had a heavy dose of the "class system," it tried an interesting experiment: it gave a free education to any student who passed a series of tough exams, from 11 years old through graduate school. One of these graduating classes at the UK equivalent of a Gifted and Talented high school has been tracked by one of my authors. At least half of the class did exceptionally well, and includes chemists, professors, media personalities, as well as one of the founders of Monty Python. The author, now a retired American professor, wonders whether so much should have depended on two or three exams, but doesn't regret being part of a program that is now accused of having been "elitist." The program, of course, has long since been discontinued.
 - 7) IQ tests really *are* the best indicators of high intelligence according to many of the experts who wrote for the MENSAs Journal, and it is almost certainly inherited -although there is a lot of pressure now to minimize their importance in favor of more "culturally sensitive" indicators. Even so, some programs and special schools for the Gifted and Talented rely on "performance based" criteria, and many of the experts also cite "ambition," "motivation," and "tenaciousness" as further indicators of being Gifted and Talented.
 - 8) Contrary to what the public might think, Gifted and Talented students do not avoid more serious mental illnesses (like psychosis); and they may even be more prone to neuroses. But, according to the 96 year old psychiatrist I interviewed, all bets are off when dealing with Physicists and Mathematicians, who seem to be very happy, thank you, living in their own worlds and puzzling over problems in their respective fields, 24/7. They don't seem to need personal interaction or family attachments as do most others people.
- So what does all this mean for you as an administrator if your school is suddenly flooded with smart kids? Tell parents that you are using IQ tests to track their kids' classes and stick to it. If you run into problems with parents who want their low scoring kid included, just say: "Dumb kids come from dumb parents."
- Require some performance based recommendations too, because genius without ambition and ambition without performance is a hopeless mixture. And avoid being

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What About The Smart Kids?...continued from previous page

pressured by clueless and powerful Central Office Administrators who may have been pressured themselves by clueless and powerful parents as well as by political, Special Ed, and minority lobbying groups.

Remember: it is not up to the school to “recognize and develop potential.” It’s up to the parents and (can you believe it?) the *students themselves* to actually take the initiative. Finally, understand that some of your students might do better in private schools, and you should

recommend this to any frustrated parents, because why should they expect public schools to provide all these extra services? And encourage your students to attend BOCES programs.

This is what the experts say. Do you think can get away with this?

I don’t think so.

Why Did Grandma Know So Much If She Only Had An Eighth Grade Education?

This is the eighth-grade final exam from 1895 in Salina, Kansas, USA, taken from the original document on file at the Smokey Valley Genealogical Society and Library in Salina, KS, and reprinted by the Salina Journal.

8th Grade Final Exam:
Salina, KS, 1895

Grammar (Time, one hour)

1. Give nine rules for the use of capital letters.
2. Name the parts of speech and define those that have no modifications.
3. Define verse, stanza and paragraph
4. What are the principal parts of a verb? Give principal parts of ‘lie’, ‘play’, and ‘run.’
5. Define case; illustrate each case.
6. What is punctuation? Give rules for principal marks of punctuation.
- 7 - 10. Write a composition of about 150 words and show therein that you understand the practical use of the rules of grammar.

Arithmetic (Time, 65 minutes)

1. Name and define the Fundamental Rules of Arithmetic.
2. A wagon box is 2 ft. Deep, 10 feet long, and 3 ft. Wide. How many bushels of wheat will it hold?
3. If a load of wheat weighs 3942 lbs., what is it worth at 50cts/bushel, deducting 1050 lbs. For tare?
4. District No 33 has a valuation of \$35,000. What is the necessary levy to carry on a school seven months at \$50 per month, and have \$104 for incidentals?
5. Find the cost of 6720 lbs. Coal at \$6.00 per ton.
6. Find the interest of \$512.60 for 8 months and 18 days at 7 percent.
7. What is the cost of 40 boards 12 inches wide and 16 ft. Long at \$20 per meter?
8. Find bank discount on \$300 for 90 days (no grace) at 10 percent.
9. What is the cost of a square farm at \$15 per acre, the distance of which is 640 rods?
10. Write a Bank Check, a Promissory Note, and a Receipt

U.S. History (Time, 45 minutes)

1. Give the epochs into which U.S. History is divided
2. Give an account of the discovery of America by Columbus .
3. Relate the causes and results of the Revolutionary War.
4. Show the territorial growth of the United States .
5. Tell what you can of the history of Kansas
6. Describe three of the most prominent battles of the Rebellion.
7. Who were the following: Morse, Whitney, Fulton, Bell, Lincoln, Penn, and Howe?
8. Name events connected with the following dates: 1607, 1620, 1800, 1849, and 1865.

Orthography (Time, one hour) (Do we even know what this is???)

1. What is meant by the following: alphabet, phonetic, orthography, etymology, and syllabication.
2. What are elementary sounds? How classified?
3. What are the following, and give examples of each: trigraph, sub vocal, diphthong, cognate letters, and lingual.
4. Give four substitutes for caret ‘u.’ (HUH?)
5. Give two rules for spelling words with final ‘e.’ Name two exceptions under each rule.
6. Give two uses of silent letters in spelling. Illustrate each.
7. Define the following prefixes and use in connection with a word: bi-, dis-, mis-, pre-, semi-, post-, non-, inter-, mono-, and sup-.
8. Mark diacritically and divide into syllables the following, and name the sign that indicates the sound: card, ball, mercy, sir, odd, cell, rise, blood, fare, last.
9. Use the following correctly in sentences: cite, site, sight, fane, fain, feign, vane, vain, vein, raze, raise, rays.
10. Write 10 words frequently mispronounced and indicate pronunciation by use of diacritical marks and by syllabication.

Geography (Time, one hour)

1. What is climate? Upon what does climate depend?
2. How do you account for the extremes of climate in Kansas ?
3. Of what use are rivers? Of what use is the ocean?
4. Describe the mountains of North America.
5. Name and describe the following: Monrovia, Odessa, Denver, Manitoba, Hecla, Yukon, St. Helena, Juan Fernandez, Aspinwall and Orinoco .
6. Name and locate the principal trade centers of the U.S.
7. Name all the republics of Europe and give the capital of each.
8. Why is the Atlantic Coast colder than the Pacific in the same latitude?
9. Describe the process by which the water of the ocean returns to the sources of rivers.
10. Describe the movements of the earth. Give the inclination of the earth.

Notice that the exam took FIVE HOURS to complete.

Feature:

Administrators Work Together to Create a First Response to RtI

Administrators Across Disciplines in the Blind Brook-Rye School District are Collaborating to Implement Response to Intervention Policy

by Harry Burg and Tracy Taylor



The nation and state are abuzz about Response to Intervention (RtI), a systematic means to identify, support, and monitor students at risk for academic dif-

ficulty. Or are they? According to *Education Week*, an informal online survey posted on the website of the RtI Action Network reported that more than 80 percent of the close to 800 people who responded, many of whom were professionals working in schools implementing RtI, rated their knowledge of RtI as “minimal to none.” (*Education Week*, 12/10/2008)

In response to this information gap, the administrators of the Blind Brook-Rye School District have been working together to facilitate the definition, discovery, and development of Response to Intervention in our District. The implementation process has included collaboration between administrators and teachers to organize the knowledge and materials needed to begin to make this educational framework an effective and meaningful part of our schools.

After the formal inclusion of RtI in the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEIA 2004), the Blind Brook-Rye School District began the process of raising awareness about it. In the spring of 2006, the Director of Pupil Services set up a High School RtI Steering Committee which included the High School Psychologist, English Coordinator, and Special Education Coordinator. The Committee performed a school-wide needs assessment that used the structure of RtI to recommend the re-implementation of a writing center and an Instructional Support Team at the High School.

The Director of Pupil Services also raised awareness by sending selected administrators and key staff members from both special and regular education to workshops and presentations by nationally known speakers on RtI and to state-wide training programs spring and summer conferences of the Council of New York Special Education Administrators (CNYSEA). Initial training of faculty members included a partnership with a neighboring district, Port Chester U.F.S.D., and attendance at workshops given by Southern Westchester BOCES and Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES and Elementary, Middle School, and High School Principals began restructuring Instructional Support Teams in their schools.

In February, 2008, upon the recommendation of the Director of Curriculum of Instruction and Technology, the Assistant Director of Pupil Services created a Reading, Writing, and Assessment Committee at the Elementary School and Middle School consisting of special education and regular education administrators, special education teachers, psychologists, and regular education teachers representing grade level teams. The first responsibilities of the Committee were to review currently used assessments, review current literature on RtI and possible progress monitoring programs, and to revisit grade level teams for collaborative input. After a four-month review process, the Committee recommended a more consistent use of the Developmental



Reading Assessment (DRA), the Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies (CARS), and grade level-created curriculum-based measurements for reading assessments. Current and previous administrators, with the support of the Blind Brook-Rye Board of Education, allocated funds to purchase these materials as well as research-based instructional materials for use both inside and outside of the mainstream classroom. These in-

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clude: the WILSON Reading System, the WILSON Foundations Program, and the Strategies to Achieve Reading Success (STARS) Series.

One important aspect of Response to Intervention is that it represents a framework, not just a specific class or program. RtI can allow assessment to drive instruction and to monitor the effectiveness of instruction with assessment. As our veteran Interim Elementary Principal states, "It is about good instruction."

In RtI, all students are screened and monitored for specific educational outcomes, and those needing additional assistance are given targeted intervention that is monitored systematically using scientifically based data recording procedures. In essence, RtI integrates high-quality teaching and assessment methods in a systematic way so that students who are not successful when presented with one set of instructional methods can be given the chance to succeed with the use of other practices.

-Brown-Chidsey and Steege, 2005

The specific components necessary for RtI as defined by New York State were presented in a memorandum from the State released in April 2008: appropriate instruction, screenings, instruction matched to student need with increasingly intensive levels of targeted intervention, repeated assessments including application of information to making educational decisions, and parent notification when students receive interventions beyond the general education classroom. New York State is also requiring districts to create a Response to Intervention policy modeled by Erie BOCES. In Blind Brook, we worked closely with our Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Facilities to edit the Erie BOCES policy and establish our own district policy based on our District's implementation plan and the required components. This was adopted as policy by our Board of Education in December, 2008.

The 2008-2009 school year has been a year of education, implementation, and reflection. Prior to September, our Superintendent made Response to Intervention a topic for review and discussion at our summer administrative retreat where he shared the April 2008 NYS memorandum and the recommendations of our District's Reading, Writing, and Assessment Committees. In September, the Elementary Assistant Principal led a collaborative review of Instructional Support Team (IST) procedures and forms to better meet the framework of RtI. Principals in all three school buildings carefully reviewed current Academic Intervention Services plans and continue to work with their staffs to create benchmarks for entrance and exit into AIS and programs that reflect the multi-tiered instruction required by RtI.



Our current plans include monitoring the response to our interventions to create our RtI framework. Regular and special education administrators continue to work closely with teachers to collaboratively review the implementation of the consistent use of systematic assessments and the functioning of the Instructional Support Teams in the Schools as they relate to interventions that occur before referral to the Committee on Special Education. Previously established special education consultant teachers work closely with regular education teachers to implement the WILSON Foundations program, as well as to support the identification and monitoring of struggling students. Our elementary and middle school principals have also committed time at faculty meetings to further support our definition of RtI and our review of our progress in meeting NYS requirements that are to be fully implemented by July, 2012. The process will require the classification of Learning Disabilities for students from kindergarten to grade four. Currently, a Committee on Special Education (CSE) may use lack of response to intervention as a criterion for classification, but RtI is not a mandated part of the CSE process.

Response to Intervention represents the intersection of the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (2000), NCLB (2001), and IDEIA (2004). The educational framework of RtI provides an exciting opportunity to establish a school culture that has broken down the walls between regular and special education and "focuses on student's progress, not labels." (Education Week, 12/10/2008). RtI can establish schools under a logical system that does not wait for students to fail, but rather provides high quality intervention for students in all disciplines when, where, and how they need it.

Though our school has begun with RtI in reading, we plan to expand to mathematics. Our current mathematics curriculum does not just focus on computation, but whether or not students can apply their computing skills

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Administrators Work Together...continued from previous page

when solving word problems. Reading comprehension and vocabulary, therefore, are very important parts of our mathematics curriculum, and may pose problems for some students when combined with their lack of proficiency with math operations. Jim Wright, school psychologist, administrator, and creator of Intervention Central, states:

“Deciding what specific math interventions might be appropriate for any student must therefore be a highly individualized process, one that is highly dependent upon the student’s developmental level and current math skills, the requirements of the school district’s math curriculum, and the degree to which the student possesses or lacks the necessary auxiliary skills for success in math.”

-interventioncentral.org

The process by which we will develop our math RtI framework will be very similar to the process we used for the formation of our reading RtI. We plan to administratively lead a collaborative review of our math curricular needs along with a review of current research and assessment tools. We will then choose specific assessments tools and establish a framework to screen and identify students at risk of having difficulty with math in order to deliver effective teaching practices in a multi-tiered support system, and to consistently monitor progress.

We have also begun to address the social-emotional aspect of RtI. Each school in our district has sent a team of administrators, teachers, and support staff to attend Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) workshops at Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES. PBIS uses a continuum of positive behavioral interventions for all students within a school in both classroom and non-classroom settings. There is an emphasis on school-wide systems of support instead of immediate use of individual behavioral management plans for students. This approach enhances the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective environments in which teaching and learning occurs.

We are also currently looking to weave PBIS into our existing Character Education Program and hope to use PBIS in a multi-tiered system with more intensive supports provided by school guidance counselors or psychologists.

The least cumbersome and most cost effective way for your district to proceed with the implementation of RtI could begin with a review of effective components of your current program that are part of the RtI policy. Administrators can further support the process by collaboratively developing a plan or a committee to support

and monitor the implementation of RtI. A key component has been, and continues to be, special education and regular education administrators modeling the systematic communication and multi-tiered collaboration necessary to define, discover, and develop an effective Response to Intervention framework.

Harry Burg is the Assistant Director of Pupil Services, Blind Brook-Rye U.F.S.D. in Rye Brook, NY. He is a curriculum specialist and an intensively Orton-Gillingham trained Certified Academic Language Therapist. He taught special education at the elementary and middle school levels for 17 years in the NYC Public Schools and the Pleasantville, NY U.F.S.D. Tracy Taylor is the Assistant Principal, Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street Elementary School, Blind Brook-Rye U.F.S.D. She is a math and curriculum specialist. She worked as a Math Staff Developer in the NYC Public Schools and taught at the elementary level for 10 years. Other Blind Brook administrators involved in the implementation of RtI are: William Stark, Superintendent; Jonathan Ross, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Facilities; Eugene Wolotsky, Director of Pupil Services; Dr. Stephen Young, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Joseph Rodriguez, Interim Elementary Principal; Karen Bronson, Middle School Principal; Scott Bersin, High School Principal; and Jane Wermuth, Assistant High School Principal. A special thank you to the members of the High School RtI Steering Committee, the Reading, Writing, and Assessment Committees, and to all of the dedicated administrators, Board of Education members, and faculty of the Blind Brook-Rye School District.

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websites:

- <http://www.rtinetwork.org/>
www.interventioncentral.org
<http://www.pbis.org/schoolwide.htm>

ESSAA Members Have A Lot To Say – And Publish!

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"Monday Morning Musings, Reflections from the Principal's Office"

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Viewing the school environment as a microcosm of society at large, the author challenges staff members of an urban elementary school to think of the every day opportunities each one of us has to contribute to the greater good. These writings encourage us to contemplate with purpose our brief travels on this path we call life.

Purchased at Borders and Barnes and Noble as well as directly from the author @ \$14.95 per copy by writing to PO Box 5013, Clifton Park, NY 12065

From The TC Record

Helping Teachers Learn: Principals as Professional Development Leaders

by Eleanor Drago-Severson

This qualitative study investigated how 25 principals from public, Catholic, and independent schools with varying financial resources understand the practices they use to support teacher learning. This research illuminates how these leaders understand the challenges (e.g., financial, human) they face in supporting teacher learning and highlights their creative responses to challenges across schools.

This paper offers insight into another way to accomplish important national goals and points toward a qualitatively different way of leadership in support of teacher learning and development.

The editors of TCR announce a call for proposals for future volumes of the NSSE Yearbooks.

Learning to Lead: What Gets Taught in Principal-Preparation Programs

by Frederick M. Hess & Andrew P. Kelly

The study examines the content of instruction at a stratified sample of the nation's principal-preparation programs. The findings suggest that these programs pay limited attention to considerations of accountability, aggressive personnel management, or the broader body of thinking on leadership.

Beyond the School Walls: A Case Study of Principal Leadership for School-Community Collaboration.

by Mavis Sanders & Adia Harvey

This case study describes how one urban elementary school in a high-reform district and state has been able to develop strong connections with community businesses and organizations as part of its program of school, family, and community partnerships. The case study identifies four factors that allowed the school to build successful bridges to its community. These factors are: a) the school's commitment to learning; b) the principal's support and vision for community involvement; c) the school's receptivity and openness to community involvement; and d) the school's willingness to engage in two-way communication with potential community partners about their level and kind of involvement.

2008 YEAR IN REVIEW: The Top 10 Stories as Selected by The Center for Safe and Healthy Schools

CHILDHOOD OBESITY EPIDEMIC PLATEAUS — According to a recent CDC study released in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the prevalence of U.S. children who are overweight or obese has leveled off after a continual increase over the past 25 years. Looking at data from 2003-04 and 2005-06, researchers found that the percentage of obese (16 percent), overweight (32 percent), and extremely obese children (11 percent) has remained steady. Several experts in the field believe the plateau is because schools and parents have worked harder to get their children to eat healthier and exercise more; however, many of the same experts caution that it's too soon to be celebrating. The study consisted of a nationally representative sample of 8,165 children between the ages of 2 and 19 who participated in government health surveys. CDC will release its analysis of the 2007-08 data next year, which will give a better idea of the true trend in childhood obesity. Source: Associated Press (5/27/08)

FLORIDA TIGHTENS, EXTENDS PHYSICAL EDUCATION MANDATE — Gov. Charlie Crist signed into law a measure that will extend the state's elementary and middle school physical education requirements. Elementary schools will be required to provide 30 minutes of continuous exercise for students daily, starting with the next school year, and middle schools will be required to have daily physical education classes starting in the 2009-10 school year. The new measure follows last year's adoption of a law requiring elementary schools to have 150 minutes of physical education every week, but officials discovered that many schools did not heed the law. Source: *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* (6/3/08)

STUDY FINDS BMI TESTING NOT LINKED TO MORE BULLYING — A study by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences has found that overweight children have not seen an increase in teasing or taunting since implementing mandatory BMI testing in Arkansas public schools. Potential increases in bullying behavior against overweight children has been an argument against mandatory BMI testing. The study also found that the percentage of parents recognizing their children as being overweight has increased, the number of parents promoting healthier lifestyles has increased, and students are reporting fewer vending machine purchases. Sources: *Arkansas News Bureau* (10/8/08); *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* (October 2008)

NEW LAW AGAINST CYBER-BULLYING IN MISSOURI — Gov. Matt Blunt signed a bill that modifies current legislation regarding harassment on the Internet by adding telephone and electronic communications. The new measure will make harassment a felony for adults who stalk or make plausible threats against victims and/or their family and also compels school personnel to report any harassment or stalking on school property to the police. The law was inspired by the suicide of Megan Meier, a 13-year-old Missouri girl who hung herself after receiving cruel messages on her MySpace page. An adult neighbor has been accused of the cyberbullying incident.

In other Missouri news, new legislation went into effect on July 1 that requires all public school children entering kindergarten (and new enrollees in first grade) to get a comprehensive eye examination by a state-licensed optometrist or physician; in addition, beginning with this school year, all public school districts are required to conduct "eye screening" for each child before the completion of first grade and again before completion of third grade. Sources: *St. Louis Post Dispatch* (7/1/08); Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education press release (7/8/08)

U.S. SCHOOLS FACE A NURSING SHORTAGE — A shortage of school nurses nationwide has teachers adding the task of medical care of students to their job descriptions. As more students deal with serious medical conditions, there are fewer nurses doing more work. According to the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), five states—Hawaii, Michigan, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Utah—have the lowest nurse-to-student ratio in the country, with one nurse to every 3,000 or more students. Federal guidelines suggest schools employ one nurse for every 750 students, but the national average is one nurse for every 1,151 students, according to NASN Executive Director Amy Garcia. Source: *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (7/16/08) and *Oklahoman* (7/16/08)

PHILADELPHIA STUDY FINDS OVERWEIGHT KIDS STRUGGLE IN SCHOOL — A study published in the journal *Obesity* has found that GPAs of overweight middle school students in a Philadelphia suburb were half a grade point lower than those students whose weight was normal. Overweight students also scored lower in reading comprehension on national standardized tests, were five times more likely to have six or more detentions, were absent more often, scored lower in physical fitness, and were less likely to participate in athletics than their normal-weight peers. Source: *Los Angeles Times* (7/28/08)

STUDY FINDS GREATER HIV RISK FOR YOUNG BLACK GAY/BISEXUAL MEN — A new study confirmed most new HIV cases in the United States occur among young black gay and bisexual males. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), black gay and bisexual men are more likely to be infected with HIV in their teens and 20s. Although black males were no more likely to engage in risky behaviors than their white counterparts, several hints in other studies suggest why young black men are at greater risk. "First, the fact that proportionally more blacks than whites are already infected would tend to produce higher transmission rates among blacks," said Dr. Richard Wolitski, acting director of the CDC's Division of HIV and AIDS Prevention. Dr. Wolitski also said, "young black gay and bisexual men also tended to have partners who were older than their white counterparts and thus were more likely to have already been infected." The study's findings were released in conjunction with the new HIV estimates that the CDC reported in August. Source: *New York Times* (9/11/2008); *Journal of the American Medical Association* (8/6/08)

RHODE ISLAND LAW REQUIRES ALL SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO LEARN ABOUT DATING VIOLENCE — Students in Rhode Island middle and high school health classes will learn about dating violence with the passage of the Lindsay Ann Burke Act, which mandates the subject be added to health class curricula. The initiative for lessons about dating violence was led by Ann and Chris Burke, parents of Lindsay Burke, a young woman murdered by an abusive ex-boyfriend. School districts are expected to implement the new law immediately, and policymakers are working on a plan to handle reports of dating violence. Source: *USA Today* (10/6/2008)

ST. LOUIS HIGH SCHOOL HIV THREAT LARGER THAN INITIALLY SUSPECTED — As many as 50 students at Normandy High School in St. Louis may have contracted HIV, according to St. Louis County Health Department officials. The health department called for wide-scale testing and hopes to open an on-campus clinic with free services as soon as possible. The announcement of the problem's scale was in response to an HIV-positive diagnosis of someone who either works or attends the school (officials will not identify which), who may have put a number of students at risk. Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (10/22/2008)

COLORADO BOARD BANS SODAS IN SCHOOLS — The Colorado State Board of Education unanimously passed a policy Wednesday that bans all sodas and sugary drinks from vending machines and cafeterias in schools starting July 1, 2009. While the policy allows high school students to purchase low-calorie sports drinks, diet sodas are explicitly barred from schools. Water, low-fat milk, USDA-approved milk substitutes, and juice are all that will be permitted to be served in elementary and middle schools. High schools may offer larger portions of those same options plus other low-calorie, non-soda beverages. The policy was developed in response to a law passed last spring directing the State Board to decide which beverages should and should not be allowed in schools in an effort to combat rising childhood obesity rates. The Board was aided by the work of its obesity prevention state team, assembled in partnership with NASBE's Safe and Healthy Schools Project. Source: *Rocky Mountain News* (12/11/08)

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And In Other News

NORTH CAROLINA BOARD DECIDES TO COUNT STUDENT RETESTS FOR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY — The State Board of Education in North Carolina voted unanimously yesterday to include the scores of students who retake standardized tests in the state's school rating system. Scores for third through eighth grade will be included this year, and retakes from high school end-of-course tests will be included next year. The change could give some schools a sizeable boost: at one Raleigh-area middle school, 76 percent of students passed the math test on the first try, but after a retest the figure jumped to 87 percent. The downside of the policy change, board members noted, was that in order to meet federal guidelines, once retests are counted, all students who barely fail will need to take the tests over, resulting in thousands of students spending more time on test preparation—just when the board is also concerned that schools spend too much time on assessments. Source: *Raleigh News and Observer* (1/8/09 and 1/9/09)

GEORGIA STATE BOARD APPROVES TEMPORARY CLASS SIZE INCREASE; AWARDS GWINNETT COUNTY MORE FLEXIBILITY TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE — In an effort to save local school systems money across the state, the Georgia State Board of Education granted districts permission to increase class size by up to two at the elementary and middle school levels for the 2009-2010 school year. Class size limits statewide will increase to 20 students at the kindergarten level, 21 students for grades 1-3, and 30 students for grades 4-8. High school core classes remain capped at 32 students. It is hoped that the increase will give districts the flexibility to forgo hiring new teachers to replace those departing or retiring, thereby saving as much as \$200 million in education spending. Source: *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (1/8/09)

The Board also approved Gwinnett County Schools' flexibility contract, allowing the district to determine optimal class sizes, teacher pay scales, and how to apply state funds. In return, Gwinnett promises greater student performance. The district will also be monitored annually by the Governor's Office of State Achievement and reviewed by the State Board of Education. Those schools that do not meet their accountability goals by the end of the contract period will be converted to charter schools. Sources: Associated Press, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (1/8/09)

KENTUCKY BOARD APPOINTS INTERIM COMMISSIONER — The Kentucky State Board of Education named Elaine Farris as its interim education commissioner while it embarks on a national search to find a permanent replacement for Jon Draud. Draud, whose resignation is effective Feb. 1, is leaving the job due to health concerns. Source: *Louisville Courier-Journal*, *Lexington Herald-Leader* (1/8/09)

COLORADO COURT RULES DISTRICTS MUST USE SAME FUNDING RULES FOR CHARTERS AND OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOLS — The Colorado Court of Appeals has decided that school districts must apply the same funding formulas for charter schools as they do for the rest of the schools in their respective jurisdictions. State law calls for funding to be based on Oct. 1 enrollments, even if students transfer out during the school year. The ruling arose from a case in which a charter school signed an agreement that allowed its district to remove funds as students left the school. The charter school then backed out of the deal, with its leaders claiming that if they had not signed, they would have had to close the school. The ruling, which is being appealed, also calls for refunds to the school of monies the district had taken during the prior two academic years. Source: *Rocky Mountain News* (12/22/08)

LOCAL BOARDS SUE VERMONT TO SET PROPOERTY TAX RATE — The continuing fight over what to do with a \$20 million surplus in education taxes took another turn when four school districts and the Vermont School Boards Association (SBA) filed a lawsuit that would require the state tax commissioner to make an education property tax recommendation for fiscal 2010. Tax Commissioner Thomas Pelham has refused to make a tax rate recommendation, believing that this gives more flexibility to the governor in the current difficult economic times. School officials have expressed concern that the education surplus may be used for purposes other than education to help close state the budget deficit. Vermont SBA Executive Director John Nelson said the surplus should be returned to taxpayers as a cut to the education tax rate. Pelham and a spokesman for the governor's office said the suit is "frivolous" and itself is a misallocation of funds. Source: *Burlington Free Press* (12/26/08)

NEW JERSEY PRESCHOOL VACCINATIONS REQUIREMENT DEADLINE EXTENDED — New Jersey has extended its deadline requiring all young children between 6 months and 5 years who attend licensed daycare and preschool programs to have flu shots. The original deadline was December 31, but parents now have until mid-January to either have their children vaccinated or show proof that they have an appointment to receive the shots by the end of the month. New Jersey is the first state to require flu and pneumonia shots for young children. Sources: Associated Press, *Newsday* (12/30/08); *New York Times* (1/2/09)

MICHIGAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ALLOWS VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROPOSALS FOR 12 SYSTEMS — Eleven Michigan school districts and one charter school will be allowed to have selected students take some or all of their required classes online and off campus. The state education department granted attendance waivers of its in-school requirements for students to the school systems. The waiver allows the districts—most of which are trying alternative methods to educate at-risk students and those in alternative schools—to bypass the state's nearly 1,100-hour in-class requirement for students each year. It was in 2006 that Michigan started to require students to take at least one online class as a condition of graduation. Source: *Crain's Detroit Business* (1/5/09)

JUDGE ORDERS TEXAS TO IMPROVE ESL PROGRAM BY START OF NEXT SCHOOL YEAR — A federal court judge threw out Texas' plea to put off improvements to its English as a Second Language (ESL) program, and demanded that new plans be in place by the start of the 2009-10 school year. In his ruling, U.S. District Judge William Justice said it is time to end the "failed secondary English as a Second Language program" that he originally ordered repaired in July. There are 140,000 secondary ESL students in Texas, and the estimated cost of the program, including remediation and an improved state monitoring of local and ESL programs, could exceed \$100 million. The state wanted to delay the improvements until its appeal of Justice's July ruling to a federal appeals court could be heard. Source: *Dallas Morning News* (12/20/08)

CALIFORNIA'S ALGEBRA FOR ALL 8TH GRADERS POLICY BLOCKED BY JUDGE — A Sacramento Superior Court judge ruled that the California State Board of Education overstepped its authority when it mandated algebra for 8th graders and blocked the plan. The judge also said the Board acted with insufficient public input when it mandated the math class, which was backed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, among others. The plan would require all eighth-graders to be tested in algebra by the end of the 2011-12 school year. Opponents, including the state schools superintendent and state school boards association, have said the state lacked the 3,000 teachers and additional resources needed to adequately teach algebra to all students. If the algebra plan moves forward, California would be the first state to require the class for 8th graders, but it would cost the state an additional \$3 billion. Source: *Sacramento Bee* (12/20/08)

SCHWARZENEGGER PROPOSES SHORTER SCHOOL YEAR TO SAVE MONEY — California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger wants to cut five school days from the state's 180-day school year to save the state \$1.1 billion. Educators roundly oppose such a move because existing time constraints already make it difficult to meet state-mandated standards. State Superintendent Jack O'Connell said such a move would be "devastating," especially to low-income and minority students. A spokesman for the governor said the suggestion is the less damaging than other options districts were considering, which included closing schools, laying off teachers, and eliminating sports and arts programs. Source: *Los Angeles Times* (1/8/09)

COURT ALLOWS L.A. MAGNET SCHOOLS TO USE RACE AS ADMISSIONS FACTOR — The California Second District Court of Appeals ruled that Los Angeles magnet schools can still use race as a factor in balancing the racial makeup of their schools. The ruling allows the magnet program to be exempt from Proposition 209 and as a result preserves the district's long-standing desegregation program. Proposition 209, which was approved by voters in 1996, banned race and sex preferences in employment, contracting, and education. There have only been a few cases addressing its application to schools. This ruling may also assist Berkeley's school integration program, which has a similar desegregation policy and is targeted for a suit before an appellate court in San Francisco. The decision also seems to contradict a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that school districts could not use race as a determining factor in school assignments to preserve racial diversity. Source: *San Francisco Chronicle* (12/22/08)

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Tear Off Form to be sent to:

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