



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

My President's column this month will review some recent meetings, present an overview of next year's calendar, offer a brief history of VOTE-COPE, and give you a look at what is coming up next month.

- **Joint Meeting:** Earlier in March, Jim Peiffer offered an invitation to Elementary Classroom and RtI teachers to attend a voluntary meeting on Monday, March 21, regarding topics such as Data Collection and Elementary Classroom and RtI Schedules. In conversations with the district where I relayed concerns of our elementary teachers, I asked to find a way to get all stakeholders in the same room to foster transparency and to ensure that all participants received the same information at the same time. I support a collaborative approach between PEA and the district, and I felt that having a joint meeting in this forum would be beneficial to all. The district set the meeting time and location in hopes of providing an opportunity when most elementary teachers would be able to attend.

Approximately 60 teachers attended the meeting, and Jim encouraged the teachers to share their concerns or ask questions. From my viewpoint, the district was receptive to what the teachers had to say. It was also apparent to me that although more discussion is necessary among all the elementary schools, this meeting was clearly a step in the right direction. I do not recall any other ASI offering to hold such a forum for the elementary teachers, and I applaud Jim for doing so. As the meeting came to a close, Jim invited teachers to email him with questions or concerns that they did not want to share publicly. He is also receptive to meeting with individual departments or grade-level teams.

- **APPR Update:** Our original TERT team completed a preliminary draft of Penfield's APPR application. The team will now open up discussions with a larger group of teachers representing the elementary schools, Bay Trail, and the high school. A meeting will be held in April at which time, the new teacher representatives will review the draft and present their suggestions and concerns. The TERT team will then revise the draft document and send it off to Albany for review by the state. Our goal is to have the

document in the hands of all teachers by June of this year. The consensus of the TERT team was that it would be better for teachers to have the document before leaving for the summer rather than receiving it the first day back in August. Of course, the actual roll-out date depends on when we receive approval from the state...but we can always hope for a speedy return.

- **District Calendar for 2016-17:** I have received a few questions regarding the district calendar for next year. Teachers report on Wednesday, August 31, for our first work day. Teachers also report on Thursday, September 1. We do not report on Friday, September 2, or Monday, September 5, giving teachers a long Labor Day weekend. Teachers report on Tuesday, September 6, but *students do not report until Wednesday*, September 7. It is important to note that in our discussions, Tom Putnam and I agree that teachers will have one entire working day to use as they see fit in preparation for the incoming students. We are also in agreement that district and building meetings will be essential in nature, and the duration of meetings will be planned to allow teachers to have as much individual or team time as possible.
- **VOTE-COPE:** Every year teachers receive information regarding VOTE-COPE donations, but we may not know where those donations go or even how VOTE-COPE originated. VOTE-COPE is NYSUT's non-partisan action fund that coordinates the voluntary contributions of its members. VOTE-COPE is actually a combination of two non-partisan political educational campaigns: Voice of Teachers for Education (VOTE) and Committee on Political Education (COPE). NYSUT combined these campaigns in 1973, and participation in VOTE-COPE has been growing ever since.

VOTE-COPE supports NYSUT-endorsed candidates and campaign committees that are pro-public education and pro-labor. Support is not determined by party affiliation, but instead by a politician's record of support for union members' issues. Money raised is used to strengthen political action on the national, state, and local levels. Decisions on the use of VOTE-COPE funds are made by a state-wide committee. Most recently, VOTE-COPE funds were used to help coordinate state-wide forums to address the Governor's budget cuts and state testing policies. Thousands of teachers, parents, and students participated in rallies and forums in support of public education in New York State.

NYSUT also sends rebates (up to 40%) to local unions based on the percentage of contributions from that local. These rebates can be used for local activities such as supporting the passage of proposed school budgets and endorsing selected candidates in school board races. VOTE-COPE funds benefit all active members as well as retirees. NYSUT Executive Vice President, Andy Pallotta, states, "The goal of VOTE-COPE is to

protect our professions, the institutions in which our members work, and the people our members serve, through grassroots lobbying.”

Through VOTE-COPE, a permanent COLA was established for retiree pensions, funding for teachers’ centers was enacted, overrides of vetoes that restored \$ 1 billion in education and health care funding were enabled, and tenure laws and legislation such as the Triborough Amendment were upheld.

It is important to note that **no** NYSUT dues are used to support candidates or campaign committees. VOTE-COPE contributions are not tax deductible. (If you have any questions concerning this contribution, please speak with your tax advisor.)

- **Coming in April:** Our April *Broadside* will contain important information regarding the upcoming BOE election and the candidates PEA will be endorsing.

This spring, our students have been involved in a variety of endeavors ranging from music festivals to Odyssey of the Mind and Robotic competitions to musical theater to academic honors. Students at every level have demonstrated incredible talent! Thank you to all who helped our young people soar to new heights and expand their horizons. Your dedication to embracing the “whole child” philosophy is inspiring.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I wish you all a restful and pleasant Spring Break. Enjoy this week off with family and friends.

In solidarity, we remain **Union Strong**.

Bob Young

