



Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day



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Between assignments

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 1

OCTOBER 2010

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer

Members of the Beacon Teachers Association showed their support for breast cancer research and survivors of the disease on October 17th at the Dutchess Stadium. Over 40 teachers participated and many made it a family affair. As a result, the BTA was able to raise more than \$3,000. This was a huge improvement in participation and fundraising from last year.

This was the first time that the event was held at Dutchess Stadium. Participants walked 2.2 miles around the outfield and parking lot of the stadium.

It was wonderful to see such a large number of people in their Making Strides BTA shirts, enjoying the brisk morning walk, chatting and laughing.

If you would like to make a donation, visit http://main.acsevents.org/site/TR/MakingStridesAgainstBreastCancer/MSABCFY11Eastern?team_id=767675&pg=team&fr_id=27993



Pictured are just some of the over 40 Beacon Teachers Association members who attended the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk at Dutchess Stadium

NYSUT Endorsements: Editorial

Ever since the BTA has gotten involved in VOTE/COPE (the political action arm of NYSUT), I have heard a lot of people comment that they don't want to contribute because they don't agree with the candidates that NYSUT endorses. I've heard people say that NYSUT only endorses Democrats or that their contributions would go toward issues that they don't agree with such as gay marriage or health care reform. Well, I think that those comments are at best short sighted and are often incorrect.

I had the opportunity to attend the NYSUT Endorsement Conference held in Albany on August 10th. Even though I knew that both Republicans and Democrats earned endorsements, I was ready to see a Democratic bias since the assumption is that labor tends to lean to the left of the political spectrum. I am here to report that there was no "Republican bashing" and no mention of gay marriage. The discussion centered on the candidates' platform, performance, and public statements about education and educators. In fact, the discussion rarely strayed from educational issues from pre-k to college, educator rights, and educator retirement. There was no "ode to Obama", no Nancy Pelosi sing-a-longs, no anti gun message----just education.

You may notice when reading the corresponding piece about endorsements in our area that two local Republican candidates did not earn NYSUT endorsements this year: State Assemblyman Joel Miller and State Senator Stephen Saland. These two legislators have received NYSUT's endorsement repeatedly and until recently, these two legislators have been supporters of teachers and education. Please do not think that these men lost their

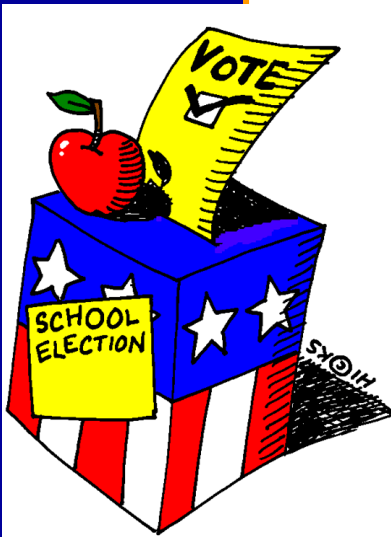
endorsement because of the political party they belong to; they lost their endorsements because they left us—the teachers. For example, both Miller and Saland voted against the 55/25 Retirement Option. Miller voted for Mayoral control of Rochester schools and Saland voted to approve a property tax cap. Although many of us may feel that property taxes are getting out of hand, we must remember that if a cap is created it will be the schools and the students who will suffer. NYSUT believes that instead of a tax cap, there should be a circuit breaker which would cap taxes based on income rather than a tax cap for everyone, regardless of how much they earn. Additionally, both candidates have been seen as stepping away from teachers based on their comments to the media about teachers being underworked and overpaid. These are not the people we should want representing us in Albany.

You may also notice that NYSUT is not endorsing a candidate in the governor's race. The Republican candidate, Carl Paladino has some views that are very anti-teacher. For example, he would like to freeze teachers' salaries until there is parity with private sector salaries. He would like to implement a consolidation of school districts so that they would be based on a county system rather than a town/city system. Paladino also supports the repeal of the Taylor Law, which allows school districts (and many other organizations) to unionize. And lastly, Paladino is opposed to retiree cost of living increases.

Andrew Cuomo does not have an education friendly platform either. He is in favor of a tax cap (as explained above) and increasing the cap on charter schools. Charter schools take away funding from regular public schools and are not held to the same standards in terms of special education and ESL students. Cuomo favors creating a Tier VI in the retirement system which would be disastrous to our future members. In terms of higher education, Cuomo would like to expand the privatization of SUNY and CUNY colleges. This will mean that it will be more difficult for our students to afford public college as well as your own children! Lastly, Cuomo supports having a Constitutional Convention. A Constitutional Convention is the only way that retiree pensions can be touched. Think of all of the people who are planning on retiring in the next few years (as well as all of our friends who have retired previously) and the uncertainty of having their pension reduced! A Constitutional Convention would be an apocalyptic event for people throughout the state.

I can tell you from my experience at the endorsement conference and in my interactions with NYSUT political action coordinators that the decisions as to who to endorse or not endorse were taken very seriously. There was quite a bit of debate as to the wisdom of not endorsing Cuomo when he has such a large lead in the polls and what that impact might be on educators. There was a heated discussion (and many follow-up discussions) about not endorsing Steve Saland. The feeling was that if NYSUT is going to endorse candidates, we need to endorse people who are willing to stand up for us in good times and in bad.

Whatever your political persuasion, please be sure to vote on Tuesday, November 2nd. As educators we serve as examples to our students and we should proudly take part in the democratic process.



NYSUT Endorsements: Overview

The following endorsement list reflects action taken at the September meeting of the NYSUT Board of Directors. The board withheld a NYSUT endorsement in the race for governor and lieutenant governor, as well as several seats in Congress, the state Assembly and Senate. (Source: NYSUT.org)

Key:

Position	Name	Party	District/Area
Governor	No endorsement		Statewide
Lt. Governor	No endorsement		Statewide
Comptroller	Thomas DiNapoli	D/WF	Statewide
Attorney General	Eric Schneiderman	D/I/WF	Statewide
United States Senate	Charles Schumer	D/I/WF	Statewide
	Kirsten Gillibrand	D/I/WF	Statewide
House of Representatives	John Hall	D/WF	19 th - Parts of Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Westchester, and Rockland counties
	Scott Murphy	D/I/WF	20 th - Parts of Dutchess, Columbia, Greene, Delaware, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Washington, and Essex counties
	Maurice Hinchey	D/I/WF	22 nd – Parts of Orange, Ulster, Sullivan, Broome, Tioga, and Tompkins counties
New York State Senate	No endorsement Currently- William Larkin (R)		39 th – Monroe, Highland Falls, New Windsor, Newburgh, Walkkill, Goshen, Montgomery, Plattekill, Marlboro, Lloyd, Esopus , Kingston
	Mike Kaplowitz	D/I	40 th – Beekman, Pawling, Dover, Amenia, Pine Plains, Cold Spring, Peekskill, Putnam Valley, Kent, Carmel, Somers, Yorktown, Southeast
	No endorsement Currently- Stephen Saland (R)		41 st – Beacon, Fishkill, Wappingers, Poughkeepsie, Lagrange, Unionvale, Hyde Park, Millbrook, Red Hood, Rhinebeck, Columbia County
	No endorsement Currently- John Bonacic (R)		42 nd – Western Orange, Sullivan, and Delaware counties, New Paltz, Gardiner, Ellenville, Hurley, Ulster, Woodstock, Saugerties
New York State Assembly	No endorsement Currently- Frank Skartados (D)		100 th – Beacon, Newburgh, City of Poughkeepsie, Marlboro, Lloyd, Shawangunk
	Kevin Cahill	D	101 st – Parts of Ulster county (eastern)- New Paltz, Gardiner, Kingston, Rhinebeck, Ulster, Hurley, Woodstock
	No endorsement Currently- Joel Miller (R/C/I)		102 nd – Parts of Dutchess county (western) but not including Beacon: Fishkill, Wappingers, town of Poughkeepsie, Lagrange, Hyde Park, Clinton
	Marcus Molinaro	R/I/C	103 rd – Parts of Dutchess and Columbia counties (eastern): East Fishkill, Beekman, Dover, Pleasant Valley, Millbrook

Education Reform

The times, they are a changin'...especially in the world of education. Over the next few years, teachers in New York State will experience new rules and regulations from both the national and state governments. There are a multitude of acronyms and initiatives that it is often difficult to keep them all straight. Throughout the process you can visit the NYSUT website for up-to-date information (www.nysut.org) and read articles in the BTA newsletter and on the BTA website (<http://beaconteachers.org/>).

ESEA- Elementary & Secondary Education Act

This law was originally enacted in 1965 as part of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and must be reauthorized every five years. Other names that it has taken on include: the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981, Improving America's Schools Act (1994), and No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The Obama Administration has reverted back to the original name of the act and this is the newest national educational initiative. A key idea of this reauthorization is to have states and school districts compete for twenty percent of all available education funding. There is also a focus on evaluation of teachers based on student performance including standardized test scores as well as expanding upon merit pay to reward high performing teachers.

NYSUT's stance on the ESEA is that the focus on competitive grants needs to be eliminated so that the playing field will be equal. They also believe that more options should be given for schools that are deemed in need of improvement. Reauthorization of this law is not likely to take place until 2011.

Race To The Top (RTTT)

In keeping with their theme of states competing for funding, the Obama Administration created the Race to the Top competition. This competition is funded as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The purpose of the competition is to encourage states to enact sweeping educational reforms. There were two rounds of winners of the funds. During the first round Delaware and Tennessee were the only winners and New York State finished fifteenth out of sixteen finalists. The second round had ten winners: the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island and New York. NYS finished second only to Massachusetts in this round and will be receiving a maximum of seven hundred million dollars. This money can only be used to enact educational reforms put forth in our application to the federal government and NYS will have up to four years to spend the money.

Not all schools in NYS will be eligible to receive these funds. Only districts who "signed on" to New York's application will receive funds (91% of districts did sign). As of this printing, many details are unknown. What is known is that the Beacon Teachers Association will have ninety days from the time the award is granted to complete a "final scope of work" between our union and the Beacon City School District. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

APPR- Teacher/Principal Evaluations

The Commission on Education adopted the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) in 1999 as part of education law 100.2. Although this law has been around for a while and was even updated in 2004, Beacon teachers were first impacted by it during the 2009-2010 school year. Basically, this document which was agreed to by both district administration and the BTA, has the purpose of outlining how teachers will be evaluated.

In the newest edition of the state regulations (signed by the Governor on June 1, 2010) a greater emphasis has been put on using student performance to evaluate teachers. This change is in large part due to New York's second application for RTTT funding. These new regulations will be phased in starting in September 2011 and during the 2011-2012 school year will only apply to classroom teachers in grades 4-8 in "common branch subjects and ELA and mathematics". During the 2012-2013 school year all classroom teachers will be evaluated in part based on student performance.

The new ratings for teachers will be: highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective. Teachers will be evaluated on a 100 point scale: 20%- student growth on state exams, 20%- local measures of student achievement, 60%- teacher effectiveness in eight criteria. The criteria are: content knowledge, pedagogical practices, instructional delivery, classroom management, knowledge of student development, use of assessment techniques/data, effective collaborative relationships, and reflection of teaching practices. These eight criteria are part of our current APPR.

There are a lot of questions about the use of student performance to determine teacher effectiveness. It is important to note that NYS initially wanted 51% of teacher evaluations to be based on student test



From the President



By Kim Atwell, President, BHS

Welcome Back! As we begin a new school year, it is important to remember that as a Union, we are organized to protect and uphold our Collective Bargaining Agreement, serve as a resource to our members, support our members and neighboring locals, and work towards improving and enhancing the educational process for our students and staff.

Each of you should know your building reps, attend monthly meetings held in each building, follow your contract and maintain open lines of communication with your building reps and officers. It is crucial that the BTA, along with the brothers and sisters of other locals, stand in unity and not waiver in the face of adversity. I am confident that united, we will meet the challenges that lie ahead and continue to deliver a quality education to each of our students.

There has and continues to be many changes that will alter the direction of Education as we know it. Race to the Top, new Teacher/Principal evaluation procedure (APPR- Chapter 103 of the laws of 2010), health insurance reform, social security, unemployment, anti-teacher media, State Education mandates, teacher pension scrutiny, and the list goes on.

As I stated on September 2nd, we must all pay close attention to the information surrounding us, Please be sure to read all of your emails, newsletters and memos and check the BTA website for important information. Refer to your contract and know your rights and obligations and be sure to always check your paystub. When you have a question make sure to ask your building rep. No question is too big or small!

Regardless of our challenges, we must strive to set high standards and levels of excellence for ourselves and the students we teach. We also have a duty and obligation to support, encourage and guide our new colleagues and help them to grow professionally as they strive for success. I welcome our new colleagues and invite them to become involved, to assume a role in the union, and partake in positive activities that will shape, influence, and improve our schools.

Have a successful and rewarding school year and remember we are the **Beacon** of light for the children we teach and the community we serve.

Reform Continued

scores and that NYSUT successfully negotiated to reduce that to 20%. Teachers who have state exams will have 20% of their evaluation based on their students' ability to **improve** their performance on said exams. Teachers who do not have state exams (eg. Physical education, art, music, health) will work with the district to create assessments for their curriculum. Additionally, personnel such as guidance councilors, school psychologists, librarians, social workers, etc. will also work with the district to create assessments to determine how they will be evaluated. The BTA negotiations team will work with the district to determine specific criteria through collective bargaining. Lastly, NYSUT states that if districts had alternate assessments in place for tenured teachers (which Beacon does) they will still be an option for evaluation in the 60% category of effectiveness.

Common Core Standards (CCSS)

The movement towards creating a set of common standards for core subjects (such as math, ELA, social studies, and science) throughout the nation has been ongoing. Luckily, New York is seen as a model for other states in terms of the thorough standards that we currently follow. States that do not meet our standards are looking to improve their curriculums. Thus, the movement towards Common Core Standards is being championed at the state level by governors rather than being required by the national government. The goal is to create standards which will align with college and work expectations and help students to be able to compete in a global marketplace.

The CCSS were developed over the past two years in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts in the field of education. There have been multiple rounds of feedback from states, teachers, and a validation committee. A draft of the standards was released in June of this year and was adopted by the NYS Board of Regents in July. Although the national government is not specifically requiring CCSS to be created or adopted, extra points were awarded in the RTTT competition for states who adopted the standards.

This fall the State Education Department (SED) will submit recommendations to the Board of Regents and will release the standards for public comment. The BTA will be sure to inform the membership when this occurs so that you as educators can join in the process.

The current goal is for NYS to implement the CCSS for the 2011-2012 school year. NYSUT fears that this will not allow enough time to create resources, curriculum, tools, and classroom practice to be able to effectively implement any changes to the standards. There is also concern about whether there would be enough time to create a full range of supports for English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

These new standards are being accompanied by a new set of assessments. The goal of SED is to offer assessments be computer-based by the 2014-2015 school year and require them by the 2016-2017 school year. It is unknown how this will be funded.

**Sources for this article include information received from the NYSUT leadership conference held in Cooperstown, NY in August as well as resources found on NYSUT.com and in NYSUT informational fliers.*

Reminders from the Vice President

By

Diane D'Uva, Vice President, RMS

I. Grievance Procedure:

First and foremost, you should read the contract. If you feel an action has been taken that is in violation of your contract your first course of action is to speak to your building representatives. They will discuss the situation with you to determine if in fact a contract violation has occurred. It is important to investigate in a timely manner as the first stage of a grievance must be filed within 30 school days (or calendar days if specified) of the infraction.

If it is a building issue, your building representative will hold an **informal meeting** with your unit head (administrator) to try to remedy the situation. Many times things are resolved at this level. If it cannot be resolved, you and your rep. will submit a **Stage 1** grievance using form 123A to your unit head who has five days to render a response. If the response does not resolve the issue, **Stage 2** is filed and the Grievance Committee gets involved. This is when the Superintendent is notified of the situation and a meeting may take place. Up to this point, Kim and I are not involved. Copies of all stages and responses are sent to me, but I do not get directly involved until Stage 2.

When the violation is a district issue (i.e. - payroll, sick time etc.), you first need to e-mail the administrator in charge of that particular area. It is your responsibility to make sure your paycheck is correct and again must be done in a timely manner. Anne Marie Quartironi will straighten out a payroll dispute if an error has occurred but can only do so if she is made aware of the mistake. If an acceptable resolution cannot be met, a Stage 1 grievance will be filed with the unit head responsible for that department (i.e. business office- Anne Marie Quartironi, Special Education- Frank Mulhern, etc.).

If the Superintendent denies the grievance, the procedure moves to **Stage 3**. This is when a meeting takes place with a committee of members from the Board Of Education. If the grievance is denied at this level, the case is presented to the Representative Assembly of the B.T.A. for approval to move to **Arbitration**. This cost for Arbitration is split equally between the district and the BTA. NYSUT contributes 50% of the union cost. The decision of the Arbitrator is final and binding.

II. Child Care Rights:

When you are having a baby, you are entitled to take 6 weeks of paid sick leave (8 weeks for a Cesarean) following the birth. The 6 or 8 weeks of sick leave are **calendar days**. So, if holidays or vacations occur during that time you will utilize less paid sick days. For example, if you delivered your child the first week in August the remaining weeks until school begins count towards your 6 to 8 week recovery time. Therefore, you are only entitled to be paid for 2 to 4 weeks of sick time. Or if you have your child before Spring break, that week is included in the recovery time; however, you will not utilize your sick days. There may be instances where your doctor determines you can no longer work before delivery. This time does not count towards your 6 to 8 week of recovery. Recovery time begins once you have the baby.

If you decide to take additional child rearing leave you must notify the district in writing at least 60 school days in advance. This is unpaid leave. The date of your return must be at the beginning of a semester. There's a sample letter on the BTA website that you may use as a guide when writing your letter. You must send me a copy of this letter as well as it will be recorded on the seniority list. You may take up to 4 semesters of unpaid child rearing leave. You will not move up in step during that time and must pay the district's contribution as well as your own to continue receiving health insurance (if desired). Child rearing leave may be used for adoption also but there is no recovery time so sick time may not be used.

III. Seniority Lists:

The seniority lists are continually being updated. A few things to remember are that the 'Date of Hire' is the date you were appointed by the Board of Education. The accuracy of this date is important. I don't have access to personnel files so if there's an error you need to let me know.

Leave Replacement and Permanent Substitute positions count towards seniority as long as they were full-time and there was no time lapse between those positions and your Probationary position. You need to let me know if this applies to you.

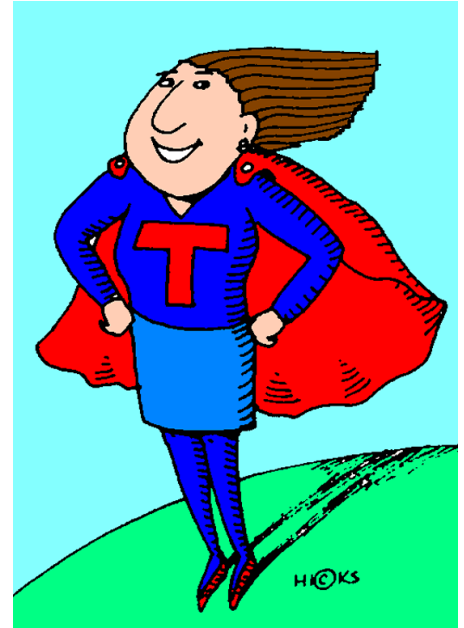
IV. New Teacher Certification:

Any Teaching Certificate issued 9/1/2004 or later falls under the Initial/Professional regulations. The requirements to retain this certification are that the holder must complete 175 hours of Professional Development every 5 years. This averages out to 35 hours each year. The District is responsible for providing the PD and reporting the completed hours by each certificate holder to the state. It is important that each teacher keep track of their own completed hours and it is recommended that you establish a TEACH account on the OTI (Office of Teaching Initiatives) website- www.highered.nysed.gov./tcert/

The BTA, along with our NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist (LRS) Steve Berman and NYSUT's Education and Learning Trust (ELT), will be offering workshops throughout the school year that will count towards the required PD hours. The first workshop, **Untenured Teacher Training**, facilitated by Steve Berman, will be held in the fall. He will answer all certification requirement questions. All non-tenured teachers are encouraged to attend. I will e-mail you the date as soon as possible. We will offer a **Mentoring** workshop in December as a follow-up. There will be 3 additional workshops throughout the school year. The topics and dates will be sent out as soon as they are scheduled.

Reminders Continued

As of July 1, 2008, according to regulations by the Commissioner of Education, all teachers holding an Initial/Professional Certification must submit a portfolio review to be granted Tenure. The portfolio may include but is not limited to: a video of teaching performance, a sample lesson plan, a sample of student work, student assessment instruments and the teacher's reflection on his or her classroom performance. The key to portfolio assessment is that the teacher is involved in the establishment of goals, the identification of evidence to demonstrate progress towards those goals, and reflections on the learning



Professional Development

There are a wide variety of Professional Development programs available to us in Dutchess County. Two of the biggest (and best) resources include the Mid Hudson Teacher Center (<http://www.mhtc.dcboces.org/>) and Dutchess County BOCES (<http://www.dcboces.org/>). Below is an overview of some of the courses that are being offered this fall.

MHTC

When Learning Comes Naturally- discussion on the importance of nature to children's development and ways to incorporate the local environment into classroom learning.

HRECOS: Using Real Time Data in the Classroom- hands-on river experience from the classroom and the applications of real-time Hudson River data to elementary and high school curricula.

4 E's of Energy- workshop promotes an understanding of energy's relationship with the environment, our economy, efficiency, and education.

Growing Up Wild: Exploring Nature with Young Children- Project WILD is an international environmental education program.

Content Learning through Multimedia Composing- Discussion and demonstrations of the use of multimedia composing in order to practice writing, teach within content areas, assess learning, and create field trips without leaving school.

Energy Sustainability- Engage in hands-on activities, and receive a teaching tool kit you can use with your class to explore sustainability practices in energy, water, transportation, food, and the consumption of goods.

DCBOCES

Free Internet Resources to Support RTI Initiatives- Workshop will introduce you to some of the free resources available online to help you understand RTI.

What is Moodle? An Introduction to Online Learning Communities- Workshop will explore the power of the open-source online conferencing/community tool Moodle.

New Special Education Forms & Notices- Overview of the new NYS Department of Education forms.

Scribe Training- Learn and practice proper Scribing procedures, understand different applications for Scribing, and learn to document Scribing on the IEP.

Test Accommodations- Detailed overview of Test Accommodations for Students With Disabilities

Understanding the Needs of Students with Autism: NYSED Autism Certification Course- Meets State requirement

IEP Development- Learn to use the new NYSED mandated IEP form and other valuable IEP skills

Developing Lessons with Google Earth Mapping Service- Integrate geography into any subject

Book Study: Using Technology with Classroom Instruction that Works- Online book study group using a free copy of the e-book: Using Technology with Classroom Instruction that Works.

Using Technology in the Elementary Math Classroom- Explore new technologies that can be used in elementary math instruction.

Is it Legit? - Participants will learn to make informed judgments about on-line sources.

Benefit Trust Fund: What, Why, and How It's Time!

By Kim Atwell, President, BHS

Since I began as President of the BTA, I continually find myself researching the questions; what is a trust fund, why have one and how can we establish a Benefit Trust for our union. Benefit Trust Funds or Welfare Trusts have been in existence for more than 100 years in the private sector of our economy. Trust Funds started to establish within local unions, mainly in New York City in the early 1960's and have since grown widespread throughout the State as many teachers unions from Albany to Long Island have established Benefit Trust Funds for their members. In fact, we are the only teachers union in Dutchess County without one.

My curiosity was initially triggered by constant inquiries from numerous, neighboring union leaders who would often ask me about the status of the BTA Trust Fund. I would respond by saying "what are you talking about", "what is a benefit trust" and "is this something we should have"? Needless to say, this type of dialogue only heightened my curiosity and led me to follow-up with numerous discussions and meetings with fellow colleagues, NYSUT, consultants and benefit plan providers. I now respond to inquiries regarding a Trust Fund for our union with, "Its time!"

There is still much to do to prepare our union and district for the establishment of a Benefit Trust, therefore, I have included some basic questions and answers to assist with understanding the What, Why and How of Benefit Trust Funds:

What is an Employee Benefit Trust Fund?

An Employee Benefit Fund is a collectively bargained program designed to provide a plan of benefits to members of the bargaining unit and their dependents. It's also a tax-exempt business.

What does a Benefit Trust Fund do?

A fund is an autonomous entity governed by union-appointed trustees. The trustees have the power to purchase insurances and/or to self fund employee benefits. Typical benefits that Funds provide are dental plans, optical/vision insurance, life insurance, legal plans, and riders or enhancements to employer-provided health insurance benefits. The funds trustees may invest moneys, employ consultants to assist in administering the benefit(s) program and provide benefits to the employees from different bargaining units.

How is a Benefit Trust Fund established?

A Benefit Fund must first be negotiated. The employer (district) must agree to contribute a sum of money to the fund, on a per capita or a lump sum basis, in order to establish the funds financial base. The next step involves preparing the Declaration of Trust, the document that will govern the fund. Trustees then must be chosen. The fund must apply for Tax-Exempt Status with the IRS and open an account with a credit union or bank. The trustees then begin preparing a program of benefits for the Funds beneficiaries.

What are the advantages of a Benefit Trust Fund?

The primary purpose of a fund is to make the most out of every available dollar. Trustees, having a vested interest in their benefits, can sometimes do a better job of shopping for benefits and negotiating with insurance carriers. Trustees have the power to change benefits without having to wait for the union contract to expire. This flexibility allows a Fund to tailor its program to the needs of the funds beneficiaries—a main advantage of operating a fund.

How much money must a Benefit Trust Fund have in order to operate?

In New York State, employer contributions to Employee Benefit Funds range from as little as \$75 per employee to well over \$1600 per employee. Obviously, the more money a Fund has, the better able it is to increase the number or the quality of its benefits. One NYSUT local provides 16 different benefits to its members and extends most of those benefits to dependents and to retirees. Other locals choose to provide fewer benefits, opting to offer a very comprehensive dental program and one or two other benefits. These decisions are predicated on the district contribution as well as what each local's needs and preferences are.

What benefits does a Fund usually provide?

Dental insurance is the most common benefit provided by Funds, followed in popularity by optical/vision care programs, life insurance and legal plans. Most Funds start with a limited number of dollars and benefits and grow steadily with each new union contract negotiated.

Is there much work involved in setting up and running a Benefit Trust Fund?

No Fund operates itself. Yes, there is work involved, particularly in getting it started. It takes time to establish the fund and get it off the ground and functioning. Once the fund is in operation, the trustees' time commitment eases. The biggest challenge for our union will be to negotiate a fund into our CBA during these very difficult economic times as well as getting invested, committed members to take on the responsibility.

There can be no promises as to whether a Benefit Trust will definitely be implemented into our next round of negotiations, but I am confident that we will pursue educating our leaders as well as our membership and the district on the importance of having these type benefit options become a reality at some point. I encourage your active participation in becoming knowledgeable in any and all of the information that I share and will continue to share. We will need to continue to aggressively educate ourselves on becoming financially aware of the opportunities that are available to us as a union and help ourselves gain as much financial stability and understanding as we look towards the future. I welcome any and all questions and look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Volunteers Needed

This is your chance to get involved with the BTA to help our members, our students, and our community. **Any** amount of time that you can volunteer will be greatly appreciated and will have a huge impact on our ability to continue giving back to those that we serve.

Activity/Event	Date(s)	What's Needed	Who to Contact
BTA Committees	Throughout the school year	See volunteer form	Dawn Clemens- BHS
BTA Newsletter	Throughout the school year	Write articles, take pictures of events, notify editor of important events, etc.	Dawn Clemens- BHS
Board of Education Meetings	Throughout the school year	Attend one or more BOE meetings throughout the school year, no speaking is required—just attendance	Diane D'Uva- RMS
NYSUT Delegate	Throughout the school year	Attend monthly BTA meetings, attend quarterly NYSUT ED 13 meetings in Kingston, attend NYSUT Representative Assembly annually (held on a rotational basis at NYC, Buffalo, and Washington DC)	Kim Atwell- BHS or Diane D'Uva- RMS
VOTE/COPE Coordinator	Throughout the school year	Organization skills, ability to coordinate with volunteers in buildings throughout the district, knowledge of Microsoft Excel, attend monthly BTA meetings, possibility of attending Committee of 100 lobby days in March and May	Kim Atwell- BHS
VOTE/COPE Building liaison	During the fall and spring VOTE/COPE drives (one month of work total)	Attend an informational meeting about the history of VOTE/COPE and how the funds are allocated, solicit members in your building to donate to VOTE/COPE twice a year	Kim Atwell-BHS

Mark Your Calendar: Important Dates

November

*Fall Get-Together

- 11/2- Election Day and Superintendent's Conference Day
- 11/5- Fall Get-together at Torches
- 11/8- Board of Education meeting at BHS
- 11/10- Negotiations Team Meeting
- 11/11- No School- Veterans' Day
- 11/14-11/15- NYS Teachers Retirement System Convention
(Delegates Gina Fontenot and Charlotte Sypher will be in attendance)
- 11/16- School Related Professionals Recognition Day
- 11/22- Board of Education meeting at JVF
- 11/24- Go Home Drill
- 11/25- No School- Thanksgiving
- 11/30- BTA Representative Assembly Meeting

December

*Bowling

- 12/3- Due date for newsletter items, First Friday (social)
- 12/13- Board of Education meeting at BHS
- 12/21- BTA Representative Assembly Meeting
- 12/23- Winter vacation begins

January

*Ski Trip

- 1/3- Schools reopen
- 1/7- First Friday
- 1/10- Board of Education meeting at Sargent
- 1/17- No School- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 1/24- Board of Education meeting at BHS
- 1/25- BTA Representative Assembly Meeting
- 1/29- Legislative Luncheon

February

*100th Night Celebration- Join your fellow teachers in toasting this year's retirees and teachers with 25 years of service

- 2/4- First Friday
- 2/7- ED 13 in Kingston
- 2/14- Board of Education meeting at Glenham
- 2/18-2/21- No School- Presidents Weekend
- 2/22- BTA Representative Assembly Meeting

March

*BTA Spring Apparel Sale

*BTA Book Swap (volunteers needed)

*Retirement presentation for NYSTRS members who are ten years or less away from retirement

*Foxwoods/Mohegan Sun

- 3/4- Due date for newsletter items, First Friday (social)
- 3/11- Superintendent's Conference Day
- 3/14- Board of Education meeting at Rombout
- 3/21-3/22- Committee of 100 (will be attended by members of the Political Action Committee)
- 3/28- Board of Education meeting at BHS
- 3/29- BTA Representative Assembly Meeting

April

*BTA Pancake Breakfast (volunteers needed)

*Hike up Mount Beacon

- 4/1- First Friday
- 4/7-4/9- NYSUT Representative Assembly (Delegates Kim Atwell and Alicia Tyra will be in attendance)
- 4/11- Board of Education meeting at BHS
- 4/18-4/22- No School- Spring Break
- 4/25- Board of Education meeting at BHS
- 4/26- BTA Representative Assembly Meeting