



SPEAK OUT

ISSUE 4

MAY 2011

From the President: Barbara Shapiro



Please Vote on May 17

To say this has been a difficult year for education funding would be a severe understatement.

Across our state, school districts have faced great challenges as they tried to balance their school budgets. Although we have been more fortunate than many, our Board of Education has had to make some difficult choices as well. We are saddened that a number of paraprofessional positions have been eliminated and the funds available for our standards leaders will be reduced. The position of District Grade Level Chair has been eliminated. It is our hope that attrition and new openings will allow all of our members to continue working in Pittsford next year. In times like this, it is more important than ever that we support our school budgets. Defeating a budget results in more cuts and reductions. Whether or not you live in Pittsford, please support the budget in your community. It really does matter!

Top Ten Reasons to Vote on May 17

10. Because you can (at least for now):

In many nations of the world, and in most states of our union, citizens do not have the right to vote on the spending plans developed by their school districts. In fact, some legislative proposals would seriously limit voter control of district budgets.

9. Because you should:

Since all of us have the right and responsibility to vote on our district budgets, you too are accountable for exercising your civic duty.

Defeating a budget results in more cuts and reductions

8. Because others will: There are some folks in every school district who vote for reasons other than our own reasons. By not voting, we allow their side to win.

7. Because you set an example: The students we serve notice whether or not the adults in their lives exercise their civic responsibilities. We set an example whether or not we vote.

6. Because you show respect for what educators do: Working with all the students that show up is a very difficult challenge. By taking the time to vote, you acknowledge this challenge.

5. Because this is when you help select your school board members:

Your school board members are elected concurrently with the budget vote. School boards set policy and goals for your district and select your district's superintendent. They represent your educational interests.

4. Because you control public education in your community:

You get to decide each year on the quantity and quality of educational programs and services provided in your community.

3. Because your response is needed:

Your school board has developed a spending plan based on input from district employees and community members of budget advisory committees. These folks spent hundreds of hours considering options and making spending decisions for your consideration. Respond by voting.

2. Because public education matters:

Our public schools educate by far the greatest number of our next generation—those to whom we will be turning over the reins of government and business, and those who will be caring for our generation as we get older.

1. Because your community and its children depend on you:

The folk wisdom that "it takes a whole community to raise a child" fits here. You share the responsibility to see that all children are educated. While you may not be actually involved with what occurs in your district's classrooms, you can make your opinion known on what happens there by voting.

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DON'T FORGET TO VOTE "YES" FOR YOUR SCHOOL BUDGET ON MAY 17

Know Your Contract: Susan Gager



Transfers and Reassignments

The list of open positions for the 2011-2012 school year has been posted, and is available in your building and on the district website (Employee Center).

Remember that the posting of openings is an on-going process and you should check the lists regularly until the end of July. Responding to an opening is also time-sensitive. You

must respond in writing within seven days of the posting.

More detailed information on this process is located in section 11 of our contract—Teacher Transfers . In the event of a reassignment, one day of paid summer work will be provided for employees who

- move from one school to another
- move grade levels within the

same elementary school

- change subject matter areas; i.e. Math to Science, English to Social Studies
- are notified of a change in room assignment after June 15, for the following year.

Teachers who work six-tenths or more will be paid on a pro-rated basis for this time.

Infinite Campus Upgrade

Jeff Cimmerer—Director of Technology

Infinite Campus will be introducing New Teacher Tools that will be available for the 2011-12 school year. Secondary teachers who use Infinite Campus will gain the most from these upgrades and will have access to these tools shortly after August 1st, 2011.

Some highlights of the enhancements include:

- New functionality of Daily Planner and Student Groups
- View the calendar-based daily planner offering daily, weekly and monthly views
- Drag and drop functionality to create student groups
- Lesson Planner has been replaced by Assignments Tool
- Improved ease of use when creating and entering assignments

- Ability to easily place assignments into multiple sections
- Accessibility to assignment management, teacher preferences, grading calculation options and category management from a single screen
- Options for sorting and filtering assignments by date, name, term, standards, tasks, categories and student groups
- Copy assignments forward from any calendar with ease

Additional information, and a short video summarizing the benefits of this upgrade, can be accessed via the following web link:

<http://www.pittsfordschools.org/departments.cfm?subpage=40340>

Support for Infinite Campus can be found within each of our schools through our Building-level Coaches

and Instructional Technology Specialists. The Pittsford Technology Services Help Desk may also be used for requesting assistance.

Professional learning opportunities will be made available this summer and into the fall through the Pittsford Teacher Center. Workshops that will be offered to support this Infinite Campus upgrade will be considered a “District Initiative” and will count towards contractual hours.

We hope that these planned upgrades will add value to the user experience. With this upgrade, it may be a perfect time to incorporate attributes of quality student assessment that reflect the work of your Instructional Leadership Team, your building’s Comprehensive Action Plan, or your personal targets.

Public Relations: Jill Drake

"Go Green!" Spring is coming, eventually, and you will want to look your best in a PDTA Short Sleeved Classic Knit Polo Shirt! On sale now for just \$18.00. Order forms are available in your building or at www.pdta.org. If you have any further questions, please check with your Building Representative.



In Memory of Molly

This past March, we lost one of our students, Molly Thomas, a sophomore at Mendon High School. Molly loved animals. Please honor her memory by making a donation in her name to Lollypop Farm.

Board of Education Candidate Statement



Alka Phatak

My involvement in Pittsford schools, first as a PTSA volunteer and currently a six year member of the Board of Education, has been a thoroughly rewarding

and gratifying experience. We in Pittsford are fortunate to have all the ingredients to make this a quality community to live in: a highly qualified staff, involved parents who place a strong emphasis on quality education and a community who recognizes and consistently supports our high performing schools. Also, the diversity of our board members helps in evaluating issues from a variety of angles.

As a board member, I have had several opportunities to advocate for our

students. I have been a member of the Monroe County School Boards Association Legislative Committee for the past five years allowing me the chance to discuss educational issues with our legislators at the State and Federal level. I am the Legislative Liaison for the board again this year. I have been a board representative with the PDTA negotiations twice and currently sit on the Teacher Center Policy Board.

In spite of dwindling financial resources over the past several years, the future holds a lot of promise for continued success of our schools. As our current strategic initiatives become operational, we are in the midst of identifying new initiatives that will continue to meet the educational needs of our students well into the 21st century. I am excited to be a part of this process. I am proud that we are a school district that others benchmark their success against. I look forward to serving our district

for another term.

Biography:

Holds a B.S. in nursing from SUNY Albany and is a Registered Nurse at Strong Memorial Hospital. Member of the Pittsford Board of Education since 2005, re-elected in 2008. Served as Vice President of the Board of Education during the 2008-2009 school year. Current Legislative liaison for the Board of Education. Member of and former co-chair of the Monroe County School Board Association's Legislative Committee. Member of the PCSD Negotiating Team. Member of the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency's HEALTHI KIDS Policy team. Meals on Wheels volunteer. Member and past delegate of the Chatham Woods Homeowners Association. Puppy raiser for Upstate Guide Dog Association 2002-2005. Odyssey of the Mind coach for six years. Past president of Pittsford QUEST. Active volunteer with several other school and community organizations.

PDTA Members Rallying in Support of the Rights of ALL Workers



Check out your state and national unions too (NYSUT & AFT)

Board of Education Candidate Statement



Kim McCluski

I am currently completing my 15th year on the Pittsford Board of Education; serving 3 years as president and 4 years as vice-president. I

am seeking re-election because I believe I can continue to make valuable contributions to the important issues facing our district.

During my board tenure, I've held leadership positions at the county, state and federal levels. I believe these experiences have given me a global view of today's educational issues. Over the years my accomplishments include: guiding the hiring process for our current superin-

tendent, playing a major role in the planning and implementation of our facilities project, working as part of the negotiations teams for several employee contracts, and serving on numerous committees related to strategic planning, curriculum management and budget development. I also continuously strive to maintain and improve the strong relationships we have between our stakeholder groups, which I believe is one of the most important strengths of our district.

We are living in difficult economic times that will continue to necessitate creative ways to approach and solve the challenges we face both now and in the future. In addition to the economic climate, other challenges requiring our attention include seeking relief from various state and federal mandates, rapidly changing testing and intervention regulations and a

more diverse and needy student population. I am looking forward to continuing our tradition of working collaboratively to ensure quality education in Pittsford schools.

Biography:

A 15-year veteran of the PCSD Board of Education who has served as president (2000-2003) and vice president (1997-2000 and 2007-2008) of the Board; past president of the Monroe County School Boards Association and past president of the PCSD PTSA. Current board member and executive committee member for Golisano Children's Hospital and Nazareth College; NYS Regents Advisory Committee; Chairperson of PCSD Audit Oversight Committee; PCSD Negotiations Team; and, leadership coaching consultant. Holds a B.S. in accounting from Ithaca College.



14 Years Experience	Dwayne Cerbone
Fully Insured	Math Teacher -SHS
Quality Workmanship	(585) 359-9419

What is Seniority?



In a nutshell, seniority is...

- A NYS mandated process for laying off teachers
- Threatened by those who argue that layoffs should occur strictly by “merit” - although the method is rarely well-defined
- A way to ensure that students have experienced, high quality teachers

What Critics Say:

Critics of seniority argue that it...

- Protects older, less effective teachers
- Discriminates against young teachers
- Drives up costs to local government by protecting more expensive teachers

What We Say:

We argue that seniority...

- Is the only way to objectively lay off teachers in tough times
- Protects teachers from arbitrary decision-making and administrative reprisal
- Allows for academic freedom
- Allows teachers to develop their craft over time

A History of Seniority

Seniority laws, often referred to as “LIFO” laws (last in, first out”), protect experienced teachers from layoffs when cuts are made. New York has had seniority laws for civil servants since 1909, and for teachers since 1940; our courts have affirmed that seniority laws are so important that they cannot be negotiated through collective bargaining.

When staffing cuts are made, districts must lay off those hired last. This protects teachers from layoff decisions made for capricious, vindictive, or political reasons. Prior to seniority laws, districts could dismiss teachers for any reason, including political affiliation, cost-savings, gender, religion, whistle-blowing, or any other bias they might have. Seniority was also designed to protect academic freedom - educators could teach as they deemed appropriate without fear of reprisal.

Critics argue that seniority laws allow ineffective educators to remain in classrooms for decades while new, often exceptional, young teachers are let go. Furthermore, they argue that districts could save money if they could fire highly-paid teachers and replace them with newer, less expensive teachers. Proponents of seniority argue that teaching is as much craft as it is science - time and experience make good educators better. Similarly, more experienced teachers can mentor those new to the profession and provide stability to a district.

Our society places a premium on professional experience. In our public schools, though, we don't want to pay for it. If seniority laws are threatened, districts will be able to replace higher-paid teachers with lower-paid teachers with little experience, which is a not-so-thinly-veiled form of age discrimination. Good education requires veteran teachers to lead the way, even in tough economic times.

The Bottom Line

Seniority protects teachers from age discrimination. Seniority protects teachers from arbitrary (and sometimes personal) layoff decisions.

Summer is the perfect time

Summer is the perfect time for so many things – gardening, vacationing, swimming, catching up on reading, and whatever else one wants to do but can't seem to find the time for during the school year. That's why summers seem to go so fast, because we're so busy!

But summer is also the perfect time to pay attention to those things that we don't have time for during the rest of the year, such as, (groan), our finances. It's so easy to go day-to-day without making any long-term financial plans, setting up a budget, saving for a rainy day, etc.

Fortunately, the **Financial Counseling Program** endorsed by *NYSUT Member Benefits Corporation* can be of great assistance in getting your financial house in order.

When you enroll in the plan, you'll receive toll-free access to certified financial planners and registered investment advisors who will address your various financial questions and situations. You'll also have options for in-person consultations. And you have the added comfort of knowing these professionals are there solely to help you, not to line their pockets by pushing you in one direction or another.

These financial professionals do not sell any financial products; hence, they receive no

commissions from mutual funds, brokerage firms, insurance companies or any other third party. These are the professionals of Stacey Braun Associates, Inc., the provider of the Financial Counseling Program.

Stacey Braun Associates is an investment advisory company established in 1977. It provides fee-based

professional financial counseling.

The plan also includes no-cost written summaries or reports upon request; access to Stacey Braun's password-protected website, which features all kinds of helpful information and calculators; an e-mail helpdesk; and free admission to regional educational workshops.

In addition to the plan described here, a

403(b) Limited Financial Counseling Program is available.

So why not take a little time out of your busy summer and see how you can benefit from the Financial Counseling Program?

For more information, call NYSUT Member Benefits at **800-626-8101** or visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.