

Schalmont Teachers' Association Union Newsletter

ST



ATIC

November/December 2010

Young Minds



Caring Hearts

~The Gift of Giving~

Erika Minehardt-Quick's Wuestina Elementary Students Donate Toys to Albany Medical Center's Children's Hospital



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The **STATIC** is the official publication of the Schalmont Teachers' Association and is published during the school year. The Schalmont Teachers' Association is affiliated with the New York State United Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers.

Mary Beth's Message

Lately, the news portrays teachers and public employees as greedy, self-serving individuals. Many people feel that our profession provides unfair and unjustified "perks," like a defined benefit pension, tenure, step increases and benefits while the rest of the real world suffers from pay cuts, increases in health insurance premiums and no protection from job layoffs. Our profession is always under the microscope and during challenging economic times, the lens magnifies to scrutinizing powers. We are in such times.

What can we do?

We can stick together. We can support our profession by contacting our legislators and expressing our concern over state and federal tax cuts, which will ultimately be passed down to us as our property and school tax increases. We can contribute to the VOTE-COPE campaign to help elect legislators who will further the agenda of teachers in general, and who seek to provide the BEST education for our children.

We are in the middle of contract negotiations, and our negotiation team continues to meet with administration to try to secure a fair contract for teachers and taxpayers. During this time, we can become involved in the STA Crisis Committee, thus providing cohesiveness and support for our members.

In the spirit of the holiday, consider giving a few minutes of your time to promote your profession, to show the public that we are their neighbors and friends. Let them know that we do work in a community that we love and that we value creating an environment that focuses on the betterment of its children.

As we enter the season of giving, let us be mindful of those less fortunate and remember to offer kindness and compassion in our daily lives. Make a donation to a local food bank or community organization. Volunteer for a local charity. Give a compliment to a colleague or child. Most of all cherish your friends and family and keep the season alive with love and kindness to all.

Have a wonderful holiday and a Happy and Healthy New Year!

In solidarity,
Mary Beth

Be sure to visit the STA website for helpful information and updates: www.schalmontta.org

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**NEXT STATIC SUBMISSION
DEADLINE IS
WEDNESDAY,
FEBRUARY 9, 2011**

Send news, ideas, comments, questions or suggestions to:
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Our Kindergarten Holiday Project

By: Erika Minehardt-Quick, Woestina Elementary



During this holiday season, I feel so blessed to be working with our young Schalmont children. Their smiling faces bring joy to my heart each and every day! In our classroom we often talk about helping each other and being kind to one another. I strive to implement a strong Character Education program into my curriculum. This year, we voted as a class and decided that instead of doing a "grab bag" or book exchange for the holidays, we would like to help other children, especially those who are not as healthy or happy as we are in our own room.

A children's charity that is near and dear to my heart is the Children's Hospital at Albany Medical Center. In 2009, my daughter, Emily, was diagnosed with Langerhan Cell Histiocytosis—a rare disease involving clonal proliferation of Langerhans cells, abnormal cells deriving from bone marrow capable of migrating from skin to lymph nodes. Emily underwent chemotherapy treatments for more than a year, and still visits the hospital monthly for port maintenance, exams and blood work.

For any person who has endured watching a loved one suffer, we recognize how imperative it is to receive help from others. The care and concern that the nurses, social workers, child life specialists and doctors provide to the ill children and their families is absolutely amazing. I have spoken to one of the Child Life Specialists, and she told me they are always in need of new, unused medium-sized teddy bears, new board games, craft supplies, (especially fabric markers and small plain white pillows that they can decorate), etc. Trust me, I know first-hand how important it is to keep the children busy with crafts as they lay helpless in a hospital bed. It keeps their minds occupied, and there is a very therapeutic component to creating something they can be proud of—something to show off to their doctors and nurses.

It doesn't matter what our personal beliefs are or our political preferences. What does matter, especially at this time of year, is that we teach our children and students what it means to possess compassion for others. On the inside, we are all the same in many ways. We have feelings; we hurt. We all want to make this world a better place. It would mean the world to these sick children knowing that other children—children that don't even know them—care so much about them and want them to get home to their families and to heal as they continue to undergo various treatment plans. Unfortunately, going home to their families doesn't happen for many of these beautiful children.

The gift of giving is always a great way to teach our students an important component of life, and it is sometimes the smallest act of kindness that can make the largest difference in others' lives.

**“UNLESS SOMEONE LIKE YOU CARES A
WHOLE AWFUL LOT, NOTHING IS GOING
TO GET BETTER. IT'S NOT.”
-DR. SEUSS**

VOTE-COPE
Why Should I Contribute?
By: Carol Carelli

**SUPPORT
VOTE COPE**

**DON'T
BE
THE
WEAK
LINK!**

VOTE-COPE is an acronym representing the **Voice Of Teachers in Education**, the **Committee On Political Education** which is the non-partisan political action arm of New York State United Teachers. Funded entirely by voluntary contributions from members, VOTE-COPE is used to help elect union-backed candidates and campaign committees that support education and labor. VOTE-COPE helps strengthen political action programs on all levels—national, state and local. Both Democrats and Republicans have been endorsed in the state legislature and in Congress. NYSUT's membership represents a wide spectrum of political views and to only endorse candidates representing a more liberal or more conservative view would be divisive and counterproductive.

You may be asking, "Why should I contribute to VOTE-COPE?" I contribute because my profession is under attack by the private sector, the legislators who are determining policy for the profession, the general public who feels that we "have it made" and are determined to change our pension system, our

health benefits, our contracts, and current laws protecting us (tenure, Taylor Law, Triborough Act). I contribute because I am worried that those entering the profession are entering the field whose future is controlled by politicians and big businesses, who forget about the children whose lives we impact regularly.

Those of us who have been around for awhile have seen the changes in education, both positively and negatively. While many of the changes are good (better technology in schools, more services to special education students, pre-school education, etc.), I am seeing a trend that trained teachers and administrators are being coerced to succumb to public opinion and move their schools in a direction that is not productive or conducive to what we were hired to do...that is, teach. For example, too much emphasis is placed on testing, with one-shot scores determining the fate of not only students and their progress in school, but also determining the fate of the teachers and administrators.

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Our profession is fortunate to have lobbyists who are paid to represent our best interests of the children and families that we teach every day. We are not a "special interest group". We are **teachers**, many of whom live in the communities in which we work. We pay our taxes, we spend our money in our communities, and we work hard to give our families good educations, inside and outside of the school walls.

Your VOTE-COPE contribution helps us elect legislators and local leaders who support education. As a profession, we have much more clout when we have the strength of many people working on our behalf.

We encourage STA members to donate \$3.00 per paycheck or \$1.50 per week to VOTE-COPE. Some donate more (\$10.00/paycheck or \$5.00 per week); many donate less (\$1.00/paycheck...50¢ per week). This year, my goal is to ask members to increase their donation to support our cause. If you are donating \$1.00/paycheck, consider raising it to \$3.00/paycheck. Increasing the donation by \$1.00 a week would only mean getting a medium Starbucks coffee one day per week instead of a large. It would mean getting a cheeseburger at McDonald's instead of a Big Mac once a week. Besides, you would also get a great STA sweatshirt for contributing \$3.00 per paycheck!

If you are already donating \$3.00 per paycheck, consider increasing your contribution to \$5.00. That is also only a \$1.00 per week increase. All of us can find an extra \$1.00 within our budget to support the teaching profession. It is the price of one pack of gum, or a candy bar, or a small soda.

For those who do not already contribute to VOTE-COPE, this is the time to join your colleagues! Our state and federal legislators, including the new governor and Congress are preparing to make major changes in our benefits, our tenure system and our pensions. Do not be fooled into thinking it will not happen to you or someone you know. Tier 5 is already a reality and Tier 6 may be right down the pike. A NYS Constitutional Convention, if convened, will give the state the power to change existing benefits, no matter what tier you are on! This is the reality.

We need to stand together to fight for decent salaries and benefits, which every American deserves. We must ensure that teaching remains a profession, which puts the needs of our students ahead of profits and tax cuts for the rich. It has taken over 40 years for the country to recognize the strength that we can collectively have, if we stand together.



I encourage all of our members to join together...to take a stand for our profession and to contribute or increase your contribution to VOTE-COPE.

Together we can make a difference, and the power to implement change must begin now.

Inquiry-Based Teaching Inspires Student Participation

By: Jessica Melchior

How often are we asked genuine questions by students? Sometimes it takes a special set of circumstances to foster inquiry in the classroom. First, it takes the question—a truly authentic expression from a student. Then, it takes an open mind to listen. Finally, it takes time.

This summer I attended the Literacy Institute at Farnsworth Middle School. Mary Jeanne Dicker, a librarian, facilitated a discussion about inquiry-based teaching. Initially, I thought I had a good grasp of inquiry-based teaching and I knew I could use more ideas for some of my current units. The workshop, however, focused on year-long inquiry projects. Rather than guiding students with essential questions and even vocabulary as I have done in the past, Mary Jeanne suggested that, in certain subjects/topics, we release a bit more control to the class. Through examples, she showed how classes of students could work throughout the year on “pet” projects based on their collective or individual interests. Projects can last a single unit or may even last for the entire year.

I struggled to visualize how this could be implemented in my class. How could I release even more control? How would we possibly have time for an inquiry project? I had such a hard time with the concept that I barely noticed when one of my students came up to me the second week of school and asked, “Why doesn’t the school recycle water bottles at lunch?” Even though I agreed with her concern, I kind of ignored the question and brushed it off by saying, “Maybe you could write a letter to Mr. Thompson, since Mr. Thompson is in charge of your lunch period.”

With most students, it probably would have ended there, but a week or so later, Mr. Thompson commented to me that it was nice to receive a letter from my students.

“What students?” I asked, completely forgetting the conversation.

Mr. Thompson showed me the well-composed letter written by my student, plus three others from my class. Our inquiry project had been chosen.

As the year progresses, we continue to develop this idea of an inquiry project. My students have taken on roles as recyclers in their lunch period. They’ve designed a set-up for recycling and a routine. We have found that there are not a lot of bottles handed in each day during their lunch period so my students are looking into expanding our recycling efforts to include other lunch periods.

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Jessica Melchior's students work on their recycling project.

A recent discussion occurred over how we can expand, while not missing recess or other class time. Students are working out answers to these issues and are learning how to communicate with authorities (i.e. custodial staff, principal, teacher & parents). They are also learning how to solve problems with little intervention from me, their teacher. For example, students noticed that many of the signs we had already hung around the school said "4th Grade Lunch" on them and decided that if we expanded operations, these would need to be taken down and replaced. During a few in-days at recess, students made new signs and replaced the old ones.

Over the past couple of years, I adopted some ideas from Responsive Classroom including the use of Morning Meeting as an opportunity to greet one another, and to share and enjoy a brief activity together. Many of our discussions about recycling have taken place during Morning Meeting. It's been very important for me to keep the students ultimately accountable for this project. They have been the ones making the signs, cleaning the bottles, writing the letters asking for parent volunteers (to redeem bottles), etc...

As our year-long inquiry project, we will be continuing to hold class discussions to make changes to the recycling program. For example, discussions have been and/or could be about any of the following topics:

- Is this worth doing? (for only 3 bottles a day)
- Why did I find a water bottle in our classroom garbage can?
- What about the water spilling on the floor near the faucet?
- What about the soap?
- What to do with the money? Will there even be any \$ to do anything with?
- How much responsibility should the teacher take on in this project?



Ultimately, I think our goal should be independence. Since this project was started as an inquiry project for my class, it would be incorrect to assume that it would be continued with my classes for the next several years. This project was dreamed up and implemented by *these* students; therefore, it is their responsibility for this year. Towards the end of the school year, my class will discuss the viability of this project in coming years. Will there be a way to sustain our efforts? Is this something other classes could continue? Was the program successful enough as a pilot to be adopted by the school and/or combined with paper recycling projects?

Inquiring minds want to know. They want to learn more about their world and see how they can make an impact on their small community. Next year's inquiry project could be entirely different, or quite similar. It will depend on the interests of my students and their efforts towards solving a problem. Perhaps next year another inquiry project will simply fall into my lap, as this one did. On the other hand, it may be necessary to host a discussion about possible projects based on students' interests. Whatever the challenges, I've found that students are eager to participate and work collaboratively on a common goal. I have found that they are interested in making a difference.

Most importantly, however, I have found that students, even at this young age, are capable of taking initiative to solve problems, especially when they are given the opportunity to do so.

Look at what your NYSUT membership brings you!

Your NYSUT membership gives you access to a variety of benefit programs and services endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits. Every endorsed program is monitored on a regular basis for participation, member satisfaction, utilization, financial health and product competitiveness.

Insurance plans include term life, disability, auto, home, boat, personal excess liability (umbrella), long-term care, catastrophe major medical, flexible premium adjustable life, vision and retiree dental.

Financial and legal services include a financial counseling program, online banking (money markets, savings and CDs), mortgages, credit monitoring service, consumer credit counseling services, and a legal service plan.

Discounts include TripMark.travel (hotels, flights, cruises and more), Wyndham Hotels & Endless Vacation Rentals, Motivano Online Marketplace, EPIC Hearing Service Plan, Powell's Books, OfficeMax, Bose, Barnes & Noble.com, Working Advantage (discount tickets and more), Philips Lifeline, car and truck rentals, Six Flags, Buyer's Edge Inc. (buying service), HEAT USA and Defensive Driving (online or classroom). Be sure to check the Member Benefits website, www.memberbenefits.nysut.org, for particulars on these discounts, because some you can only receive by linking off the Member Benefits site. Many have unique ID numbers.

Other services include MAP (Member Alert Program), an e-mail information service; payroll and pension deduction of Member Benefits-endorsed programs, which often yield reduced premiums or additional coverage; MPP (My Program Participation), an online look-up service on programs in which you participate; Consumer's Guides on Automobile Insurance, Homeowners and Renters Insurance, Legal Services, Long-Term Care Insurance, Long-Term

Disability Insurance and 403(b) Plans; and MetDESK (Division of Estate Planning for Special Kids).

Workshops include Identity Theft, 403(b) Basics, 403(b) Employer Contributions, Inside the 403(b), Unraveling the Mysteries of Credit and Credit Reports and The Financial Planning Puzzle. Workshops are scheduled by

your local president, chapter leader, retiree council leader or retiree chapter leader.

To request information, call Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 or visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org.

Some benefits may not be available in all local associations.



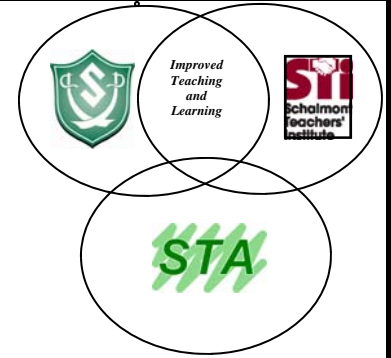
For information about these programs or about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits or refer to your NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description.

Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

Nov./Dec. '10

IDEA

INNOVATIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT



What is an IDEA Grant?

An IDEA Grant is a written proposal for an innovative approach to learning that strives to meet the NYS Standards and increase student performance and learning. IDEA Grants may also be awarded for an individual expression of educational expertise or learning experiences that renew a professional, thereby enhancing learning conditions and outcomes for students. The grant application is submitted to a committee of teachers and administrators for review, evaluation, and analysis.

There are two types of IDEA Grants:

Traditional Grants have a maximum award limit of \$10,000.

An interview with the IDEA Grant Committee is required.

Mini-Grants have a maximum award limit of \$2,500.

An interview with the IDEA Grant Committee is *not* required.

Who can apply for an IDEA Grant?

Individuals or groups of teachers who are members of the Schalom Teachers' Association bargaining unit are eligible to apply for **one** IDEA Grant each school year. Grant recipients, who do not successfully complete their IDEA Grant as per the IDEA Grant application procedures and guidelines, are not eligible for any future grants. There will be no deadline extensions.

Where can I get an application?

Grant applications are available online from the STA Website, www.schalomnta.org. Applicants must follow the steps outlined in the IDEA Grant Application and submit the application to the IDEA Grant Committee prior to application deadlines. Failure to follow guidelines as outlined could result in the application being returned or denied.

2011 Spring Grant Deadlines

Application Deadline: January 14, 2011

Interviews: January 24 & 25, 2011

Completed Grants Due: May 17, 2011

2010-2011
IDEA Grant Committee Members

Susan Cook, Jackie Gordon, Jason Thompson,
Elisa Pepe, Wendy Stearns, and
Kelly Healy (Chairperson)

Collette McKelvey Reflects Upon the National Board Process



A picture of Collette's worn keyboard upon completing her National Board Certification.

An anonymous person once said, "In every journey there is meaning. In every struggle there is growth. In every action there is purpose. In every moment of doubt remember to believe in yourself." It was through my National Board Certification process that I learned that the journey alone is the reward. I would have never challenged myself to undertake the most worthwhile professional experience if it hadn't been for the confidence and encouragement of my colleague and friend. She saw my inner strength and believed in me more than I did myself. Together, we made the first phone call. Thank you, Deb Carusone.

Then the "box" arrived. It was filled with all the portfolio instructions, the standards, the forms and mailing labels. More importantly, it was filled with guiding questions. These questions encouraged me to hold up a magnifying glass and look deeply at little details behind everything I do as a teacher. I learned to constantly and critically reflect on my own implementation, justification, and effectiveness of my instruction. I professionally stretched beyond what I could ever have imagined possible. It challenged me to intently reflect and analyze every aspect of my student interactions and responses. I learned that the deeper you reach within yourself and within your students, and the more you reach out to others, the more empowered you become.

How did I find the time for such a rigorous adventure? Did I have an extra 20-30+ hours per week to spare? To this day, I'm not quite sure how I did it. I do know for certain that each hour spent led me to think deeper, analyze, reflect, and revise everything I do. This became an addiction. I could hardly wait to hit the keyboard each day and face my challenge to improve what I do every day—that of teaching our children. Each hour spent became more meaningful and rewarding. The level of demanded intensity was at times overwhelming; however, it left me with a renewed confidence of what I do. I learned that continuous and meaningful reflection paired with assessment will lead my students' learning to the next level.



As I reflect on the National Board process, I am grateful I embarked upon the journey. Even though I grappled with my own feelings of self-doubt and cynicism, I overcame these emotions with the help of so many people: my family, Deb Carusone, Sarah Mattice, Amy Glick, the STI, Ann Schulman, Brian Hunt, Shari Lontrato and all my fellow teachers who

never failed to offer help or guidance when needed.

National Board Certification Déjà Vu

By: **Becky Remis**

CONGRATULATIONS!

**Becky Remis, HS science,
Achieves Renewal for her National
Board Certification.**

What is National Board Certification (NBC) renewal? And, why pursue it? Well, let's start with the end. Here's the Evaluation Rubric for Renewal Certification:

"The renewal candidate has provided sufficient evidence of the identification of important needs in his or her professional context; of professional growth in areas which address those needs in a variety of rich and powerful contexts, including areas of content and/or pedagogical knowledge; and has provided sufficient evidence of the application of professional growth in ways that have a meaningful impact on student learning. The renewal candidate has provided sufficient evidence of the acquisition of knowledge of current technology and/or effective and appropriate incorporation of technology into teaching and learning; and has drawn on and/or contributed to the resources of the school, district and/or community. The candidate has provided evidence of teaching practice in his or her certificate-specific area in ways that recognize the needs of students,

ensure equity of access and promote appreciation of diversity, and provide relevant and meaningful instruction for students. The candidate has provided evidence of professional growth that has evolved since certification and is varied and/or multifaceted. Although there may be unevenness in the level of evidence of professional growth presented, overall, there is sufficient evidence of professional growth since certification to support renewal of certification." NBPTS, 2009

It's no coincidence that the elements of this rubric mirror the Draft New York State Teaching Standards (which can be found at <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/resteachers/commentprocess.html>). The difference is that NBC offers teachers a process where they can demonstrate that they have met these standards. The NBC renewal process involves choosing four areas of your professional growth to describe, evaluate, provide evidence for, and reflect upon. Deciding what aspects of your own growth to highlight is the hardest part, and no two renewal portfolios will look alike. For me, landing on these "professional growth experiences" involved asking myself some tough questions: Since achieving National Board Certification, how has my teaching practice changed? How has my approach to my students and my content evolved? What am I doing every day that enhances learning for my students? What am I doing to share my insights and expertise with my colleagues?

All thoughtful teachers ask themselves these questions from time to time. But after the NBC process, asking yourself these kinds of questions become a daily exercise, and eventually a habit of mind. Read that Evaluation Rubric again. I'll bet that you address at least some, maybe even all of those things in your teaching, to some degree every day. The NBC process forces you to articulate and reflect on these elements of your teaching, in a way that a teacher's "normal" routine simply doesn't demand. And that is one of the reasons to pursue NBC. Another is this—we expect our students to do their very best in our classrooms. We challenge them to take risks and invite them to grow and change, to become more than they are right now. That is precisely what the National Board Certification process asks of a teacher, not just for one year, but over a career that spans decades. It is a process that encourages teachers to be life-long learners.

And what better role model could there be for our students?



Fundraiser Raises Hope and Awareness

By: Stephanie Lazzari



Schalmont is back at it again. Faculty, staff, administrators, students and families are joining forces to raise money for The Children's Hospital at Albany Medical Center, Thursday, February 3rd at 7:00 p.m. in the High School Gymnasium. The idea of a district-wide charity event transpired after the devastating earthquake in Haiti. We hear about natural disasters often, but it seemed that Haiti tugged at many peoples' hearts.

The night of the earthquake, my husband, then fiancé, was deployed to Haiti with the FDNY. While he was there we had a few opportunities to speak. After hearing the horrible stories about young children running through the streets searching for their parents and bodies trapped under rubble, I felt a strong desire to help.

It was a discussion I had with my students one day that planted the seed of a district-wide charity event for Haiti. "Hoops for Haiti" came together in only a few weeks. Our Schalmont family was excited and eager to help. Many faculty and staff volunteered to play basketball while others helped with raffles, selling tickets, tying ribbons and making posters. The STA designed and purchased t-shirts for the basketball players. The high school concession stand donated all of their proceeds. Local businesses gave generous donations for our raffles and the Jefferson PTO held a bake sale outside of the gymnasium. I can't begin to explain to you the feeling I got when I saw the line out the door and the bleachers packed with teachers, students, parents and grandparents! "Hoops for Haiti" raised more than \$5,500 and proved that Schalmont is truly a family.

The event was such a success that we have decided to make this an annual event for our district. This year we are teaming up with The Children's Hospital at Albany Medical Center. "Students Care for Kids," is a program that focuses on students helping sick children.

My ultimate goal is to encourage faculty, staff, administrators and parents to model the importance of coming together for a greater cause. We can talk about the importance of charities in our classrooms and at home, but if our children do not see us doing anything about it, then why should they?

This year, we will be gearing up for the event a few weeks in advance. Hospital heart icons will be sent home for students to sign and return for \$1.00. This is a great way to encourage children to donate their own money toward a charity. We are also teaming up with even more local businesses to help support our cause.

We have also created a Spirit Week committee. The committee has planned something for each day during game week. Students will have opportunities to win tickets to sit in the VIP section at the basketball game.

I encourage you to bring your family and friends to our second annual faculty basketball game. Let's set an example for our children and help create not only a place for learning, but a place that students feel empowered to make a difference in our world.



STA members pose during last year's fundraiser, "Hoops for Haiti." This year's proceeds go to The Children's Hospital at Albany Medical Center.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3rd
HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM
7 pm



STA CELEBRATIONS



*Congratulations to
Thom Borkowski (MS)
and wife, Liz, on the birth of
their daughter,
Madelyn Grace Borkowski,
born November 20, 2010.*



**STA MEMBERS EARN HIGHEST RECOGNITION AS
NATIONALLY BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS**

Collette McKelvey achieved
National Board Certification.

Deb Carusone, Amy Glick, Rose Hochmuth, and Becky Remis
all succeeded in renewing their National Board Certifications!



ART TEACHERS INTEGRATE CULTURE INTO CLASSROOMS

High School art teachers GERALYN Zink and Day Pinkham try to integrate the ninth grade social studies curriculum into their students' projects.

Studio in Art classes are completing a project based on the Hindi holiday in India called Diwali or Deepavali. They created clay diyas, which traditionally are oil lanterns that are lit during this holiday to attract good fortune.

Zink uses this project to teach warm and cool colors. Since most of the students, who are 9th graders, will be studying India this year, Zink thought this would be a suitable project. Pinkham does Chinese calligraphy with his classes.





The Program Committee is pleased to announce two new Professional Learning Communities. English and Science Chat, along with existing Math Chat, will provide an opportunity for discussion of current issues and instructional practice in their respective disciplines. Under our PDP goal "to develop and implement aligned K-12 curriculum and effective instruction that is data driven," these groups will allow educators to share best practices and develop common language that can be utilized across the grade levels. Our students often watch us re-teach material because they swear they have not ever heard of it before. Only later do we find out they were just watching us re-teach or the vocabulary we used to describe the concept was different from what they had learned. These groups will also strive toward our two remaining goals of "a culture of reflective teaching practice and improved instruction that advances teachers' professional growth and to establish positive and effective learning environments for all that raise expectation." We understand that this will be most effective with representation from all levels and we hope that you will be able to be a part of the dialogue.

For a complete list of our winter courses and the latest in professional development news, visit the STI website on a regular basis. A link to our site is on the STA webpage.



KOOKY CARTOON



From: <http://dentalinsider.files.wordpress.com>



Happy Holidays STA Members! You make a difference!

MORNING GLORY

The faces of the teachers
know we have failed and failed
yet they focus beyond, on the windowsill
the names of distant galaxies
and trees.

We have come in dragging.
If someone would give us
a needle and thread, or send us
on a mission to collect something
at a store, we could walk for twenty years
sorting it out. How do we open,
when we are so full?

The teachers have more faith than we do.
They have organized into units.
We would appreciate units
if we gave them a chance.
Nothing will ever again be so clear.

The teachers look at our papers
when they would rather be looking at
a fine scallop of bark
or their fathers and mothers thin as lace,
their own teachers remaining in front
of a class at the back of their minds.
So many seasons of rain, sun, wind
have crystallized their teachers.
They shine like something on a beach.
But we don't see that yet.

We're fat with binders and forgetting.
We're shaping the name of a new love
on the underside of our thumb.
We're diagnosing rumor and trouble
and fear. We hear the teachers
as if they were far off, speaking
down a tube. Sometimes
a whole sentence gets through.

But the teachers don't give up.
They rise, dress, appear before us
crisp and hopeful. They have a plan.
If cranes can fly 1,000 miles
or that hummingbird return from Mexico
to find, curled on its crooked fence, a new
vine, surely. We may dip into the sweet
together, if we hover long enough.

~Naomi Shihab Nye
from *Fuel*, 1998
Boa Editions, Ltd.

