



Patience, persistence and balance

Welcome back to another exciting, yet challenging, new year! Learning, using and understanding robust vocabulary is an essential skill that we strive to immerse our students in every year while incorporating them into our daily lives. The words patience, persistence, and balance are words very familiar to anyone associated with educational issues. Those are words we live by day after day in our classrooms whether it's working with students, communicating with parents, collaborating with colleagues and administrators, or complying with the ever elusive New York State mandates!

The FTA has also lived by the words patience, persistence, and balance throughout the years whether it was negotiating a new contract, fighting for better working conditions and health benefits, creating and implementing new and innovative curriculum for our students, or helping our members reach a high level of performance based on a fair evaluation system.

You see, if you take a look back in time, the FTA has been patient and persistent in achieving balanced contracts that are fair to its members and fair to the community it serves! In the last 20 years, we have only reached a contract one time and have had to go to fact finding twice! Negotiating these contracts took a lot of patience and persistence on the part of the FTA but with your support we feel that we have continued to bring you contracts that we can all be proud to support.

Our new agreement keeps us competitive with surrounding districts while maintaining our health insurance benefits. The new agreement also contains a 0% increase for 2011/2012 and provides a retirement health insurance ledger that is probably the only one of its kind in New York State! Financially, the health insurance ledger of \$100,000 provides a "defined" dollar amount as opposed to paying a percentage of our ever-escalating health insurance premiums. This is beneficial to the District and our community because the District can project its costs well into the future and plan its bud-

gets more effectively. It is evident that we are sensitive to the needs of our community and our school district, however we will continue to monitor this very important benefit as time progresses!

Trying to create and implement the new state-mandated teacher evaluation system is also another example of patience, persistence, and balance on the part of the FTA. With the Race To The Top agenda upon us, we have spent a large amount of time working to create a new teacher evaluation system to be compliant with the latest education reform agenda. I would like to thank Bob Morse, Penny Downing, Deb Farden and Terry Merrit for their time, expertise, and efforts in working towards this new system. This system, when completed, will be a work in progress perhaps for the next few years until all the bugs get worked out how-

ever, we will continue to update you as things unfold.

In closing, thank you for your support with the FTA in achieving our new contractual agreement and developing a new teacher evaluation system but more importantly the patience, persistence and balance you maintain each and every day while working with your students. My hope is that you maintain your patience as the education reform agenda continues to unfold, be persistent in having high standards for yourself and your students and strike a balance in your work-life and your home-life!

Dave Derouchie

FTA President

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FTA offers grants, scholarships

The FTA recognizes the necessity for promoting professional development and college educations. That is why for many years the FTA has supplied its members with grants and scholarships.

Any FTA member taking a three-hour credit (45 hrs.) from NYSUT's Education and Learning Trust Program may be reimbursed \$100 upon completion of the course. (One per calendar year) Also, any FTA member taking a three-hour graduate course may be reimbursed \$50 upon completion of the course. (One per calendar year). All you simply need to do is to mail the course grade report along with the receipt from the course to the treasurer (Doris Vickery at GRB) of the FTA.

The association also provides monies for FTA members who have an exceptional opportunity to attend national/international conferences or have obtained grants to broaden their professional base. A total of two grants will be awarded per year, if the need arises. Individuals (FTA members) may request monetary assistance to help fund special educational endeavors or opportunities. There is a cap of \$400 per individual.

Recipients of the FTA monies will have an obligation to share their experience with the membership by: Giving a brief presentation to the FTA Board of Directors within two months after completion of the educational activity. Sharing resources,

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Tax tips:

Deducting school-related expenses

By *Angela Ferlito-FTA Treasurer*

Here we are, at the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year with the Fulton City School District. To those new to the District, I say “Welcome!” and to those returning, “Welcome back!”

As the newly elected Treasurer of the FTA, I thought I might share some pertinent financial tips and resources throughout the year to help you make informed decisions regarding such issues as selecting a financial advisor, income tax planning, 403(b) accounts, flexible spending accounts, college savings accounts, as well as retirement/estate planning. In this issue, I want to start by making sure all teachers are planning for, and taking advantage of the tax deductions available to educators.

At this point, many of us have already begun to spend some of our own money to equip our classrooms with supplies, books and even equipment. Did you know that as a teacher, you can deduct up to \$250 per year from your taxable income (if your spouse is also a teacher, you can deduct up to \$500) by taking advantage of something called the Educator Expense Deduction? This deduction can be taken even if you don't itemize deductions. You can deduct any unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses for classroom supplies, equipment, and books.

The beginning of each calendar year or beginning of the school year, are good times to get organized to take advantage of this deduction. An easy way I've found to keep track of educational expenses is by creating a file labeled, “Educational Expenses-2011.” Keep this file in a handy location. Each time you purchase something for your students or classroom, place the receipt in the folder. This will not only help you keep track of the money you are spending, but you will also be surprised how much time you'll save at tax time, not having to sort through all of your receipts to find the ones that are eligible for the Educator Expense Deduction.

In addition to the Educator Expense Deduction, you can also deduct other unreimbursed expenses such as the cost of union dues, conferences, workshops, professional reference materials (for your personal professional library or materials for your

classroom library) when you itemize deductions. You can deduct the cost of subscriptions or magazines and newspapers that are used in your classroom or as part of your professional development. The IRS stipu-

paid during the year (important to first year teachers).

* Cost of attending professional development (travel parking, tolls, mileage, taxis, meals and lodging).

“Taking time to get organized and keep accurate records now, will not only keep you informed regarding your current expenses, but will also save you time and money at tax time!”

lates that these expenses be “common and accepted in your field of trade, business or profession” or “helpful and appropriate for your business.”

Additional items that may be deductible include:

* Software and computer equipment used for school planning purposes.

* Telephone and internet connection fees used in sending work-related e-mails or researching and lesson planning. (The amount deducted would be a percentage of the total costs, calculated from your records and receipts.)

* Interest paid on certain school loans or up to \$4000 of higher education expenses

* Mileage on a personal vehicle traveling to/from work-related obligations/meetings/events (must keep a log).

* A professional briefcase.

* Stationary supplies.

* Clothing with the school logo.

* Classroom prizes.

* Classroom decorations.

Taking time to get organized and keep accurate records now, will not only keep you informed regarding your current expenses, but will also save you time and money at tax time! Have a great 2011-2012 school year. If there are any particular financial or tax-related topics you would like me to address to the membership, please e-mail me at aferylito@fulton.cnyric.org. I look forward to serving you!

**Please send submissions for the next
Bits & Pieces**

to

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Bits & Pieces

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Please submit contributions to the editor at GRBHS or e-mail to: lсенecal@twcny.rr.com Views expressed in Bits & Pieces are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the FTA.

Contract Corner:

A true compromise: how unusual!

*Submitted by Terry Merritt
First Vice-President*

A true compromise in this day and age is highly unusual! The FTA and the Fulton City School District did what our leaders in Washington have been unable to do: we reached an agreement that both sides could live with. It took a while but we finally came to an agreement that met the needs of our members while being sensitive to our tax payers' demands. A true compromise is the settlement of differences in which each side makes concessions. Nobody gets everything that they want!

Our three (3) year agreement (2010-2013) includes:

* 2010/2011: Salary increase to be paid retro-actively of 2.5% salary only, inclusive of the \$850/\$425 for teachers/TAs already received. Also, \$5,000 shall be added to the retirement health insurance ledger totaling \$95,000.

* 2011/2012: Salary increase of 0%, however, all longevities, Masters, CAS, etc., stipends shall be awarded as traditionally done. Also, another \$5,000 shall be added to the retirement health insurance ledger increasing it to \$100,000.

* 2012/2013: Salary increase including all extra pay stipends, longevities, certifications, etc. shall be increased by 2.25%.

* In addition to our monthly faculty meetings, a second meeting will occur monthly, with a duration of 45 minutes but no longer than 60 minutes, as scheduled by the building principal with input from the leadership team.

* New wording will be added to the contract that addresses and clarifies a variety of things that reflect our current practices.

* New wording will be added to the contract addressing the new state-mandated annual teacher evaluations (APPR) once the FTA and the District agree on the process.

The FTA not only protects and advances the

rights and benefits of our members but, we are also strong advocates for our students and our community. During this turbulent financial crisis we feel very fortunate to have worked cooperatively with the Fulton Board of Education to resolve our differences and

come to this agreement. Now we can all work together to meet the many challenges facing us in the coming years. Let's get back to doing what we do best: teach!

Remember: United We Stand Stronger!

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FTA Summer short takes

Welcome back party is at Battle Island again this year! Come join us on the first Friday following labor day after school!

Stuff-A-Bus once again was an H-U-G-E success! A total of 74 Fulton families were provided 174 bags of school supplies for the coming school year! Thank you to Bob Morse, Terry Merritt and Karen Noel for all your efforts!

The New York State Fair NYSUT booth had familiar Fulton faces! Thank you to Bob McCaffrey and Carrie Coniski for promoting our union!

Take a moment and set up an account on the New York State Teachers Retirement System. You just need your NYSTRS member number to set up the account. WWW.NYSTRS.org

The next FTA meeting is September at 14 pm at the Jr. High. A light dinner will be provided.

Fulton, along with Geneva and Newburgh are finishing their second year in the Professional Learning Community grant. The grant supports Phase II of the Professional Learning Community project which works to closing the student achievement gap. Additional FREE courses will be offered in the fall and spring. More information forthcoming!

Did you know there will no longer be Social Security mailings to save money? You can log onto www.socialsecurity.gov to get

update information. Add to your favorites!

Summer salary advancement courses need to be turned in by the end of September.

The FTA constitution has been updated and approved at our June meeting. It is on line at www.Fultonteachers.org. Again... add to your favorites!

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk is Sunday October 2, 2011 at 10 am in Clinton Square. Take a morning and get involved!

FTA Grants (from page 1)

materials, ideas, and experiences with any interested FTA members for a period of two years.

Lastly, there are four FTA scholarships a year to graduating seniors at - \$1000.00 a piece. Also three of the four winners must be the children of FTA members, but of course, not necessarily GRB students. The fourth must be the student with the highest score who is a GRB student. This student may or may not be a member's child. There will be a committee this spring to review the existing criteria.

Applications will be available from senior representatives in each building in March. They are due May 15 to Francine Paracka, Guidance Secretary at GRB. They are reviewed and scored by a committee and after that the awards are presented at the annual Celebration of Education in June.

Submitted by Dave Derouchie

Helping others goes beyond the classroom

By Karen Noel

Barbara Bush once said, "Some people give time, some money, some their skills and connections, some literally give their life's blood. But everyone has something to give." You too as a member of the FTA can give back to something that is an important cause in your life.

The FTA sponsors teams for the Strides Walk on October 2 in Clinton Square in Syracuse, The MS Walk at Carousel Center, and the Relay for Life Cancer walk in June at Oswego. The FTA is also highly involved in the Oswego County Stuff a Bus campaign. This is run during the month of August and helps nearly 1,400 Oswego County youth.

Giving back to the community and the people that we work with is a crucial part to our brothers and sisters of the FTA. As a unified group we have dedicated our time and fundraising efforts to several causes that are near and dear to us. If you would like to be on one of these committees or become a part of any of these existing teams or sug-

gest a cause that you would like to support, please contact Karen Noel at the FJHS to



express your interest.

The FTA Student Recognition committee is also currently working on our annual Student Recognition ceremony in May of 2012. Start taking a look at the kids you have this September, and make note of students who are making a positive impact in your class-

room academically, overcoming obstacles and still being successful, or making Fulton a better community to live in. We honor around 50 students in our district each year and would welcome a nomination from you.

We will again be honoring people who are retiring, have 25 years of service, special rookies and those who go above and beyond at our annual Celebration of Education on June 14, 2012 in Hewitt Union at SUNY Oswego. This is truly a wonderful evening to be with colleagues and recognize people who keep doing great things for the children of our school district.

There should be no worry about what to wear to school the first Friday of each month. The FTA has dedicated the first Friday of each month as FTA Friday. Please wear an FTA shirt to show unity and support of all that your union is doing for you.

There will be a fall apparel sale September 22- October 6 if you are in need of any FTA items. We will have long and short sleeve shirts, sweatshirts and polar fleece to prepare for the winter months.

