

## What Dentists and Teachers Have in Common

by John S. Taylor

Last spring at the Project-Based Learning Conference: Kids Who Know and Do, keynote speaker Linda Darling-Hammond retold the following story by John S. Taylor, Superintendent of Schools in the Lancaster County School District in South Carolina. In a room full of 5,000 educators, you could have heard a pin drop. Of course, during the witty dialogue and the ironic parts, outbursts of laughter filled the room. But as soon as Darling-Hammond began speaking again, the audience fell silent.

My dentist is great! He sends me reminders so I don't forget checkups. He uses the latest techniques based on research. He never hurts me, and I've got all my teeth, so when I ran into him the other day, I was eager to see if he'd heard about the new state program. I knew he'd think it was great. "Did you hear about the new state program to measure the effectiveness of dentists with their young patients?" I said. "No," he said. He didn't seem too thrilled. "How will they do that?" "It's quite simple," I said. "They will just count the number of cavities each patient has at age 10, 14, and 18 and average that to determine a dentist's rating. Dentists will be rated as Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average, and Unsatisfactory. That way parents will know which are the best dentists. It will also encourage the less effective dentists to

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## OOPS!!

Boy are our faces red! We gave accolades to our very own STA member, **Jay Guss**, in the last newsletter and we placed him at McKinley school. To set the record straight, Jay works at Dr. King.

He also teaches fire prevention education to students in his home school with the permission of the Syracuse Fire Dept.

## In Memoriam Alissa Fulmer

Friend and Colleague  
McCarthy School

## Closing the Gap- Redesigning Low Performing Schools



Amy McMains, Theresa Harper, Marie Whelan, Anne Sykes joins other participants to develop strategies.

Educators believe that all children have the right to a "sound basic education." What they need are resources, parental/community engagement and involvement as well as school structures that support their work. Whole communities can accomplish this goal when everyone works together.

Children attending school in the 21st century need to develop skills and knowledge that will allow them to become responsible citizens and to contribute to their own and their community's well-being. Why then, are our public schools still structured and governed as they were at the beginning of the

20th century? What if we could redesign specific school programs tailored to the needs of that school population? How would educators structure learning environments to encompass national, state and local standards and prepare all of our students to graduate from our pre-K-12 schools prepared to succeed? What skills do we need to redesign or restructure our schools? Where would your school community begin?

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and our sister local, New York City's United Federation of Teachers (UFT) have developed an annual professional development confer-

ence -*Effective Leadership for Academic Achievement*- for teams of teachers, administrators and community members to develop the necessary skills to tackle these questions. For the past three years teams from five schools- Blodgett, Hughes, McKinley-Brighton, Seymour and Shea- have attended the AFT/UFT conference. Our state affiliate, the New York State United Teachers has provided assistance for our continued participation. Team members develop skills to conduct preliminary assessments of their schools. They then return to their respective school communities, share these tools and begin the whole school work of developing comprehensive plans specific to their schools' needs. The primary goal of every successful plan is improved student achievement.

The focus of these teams is two-fold: what can be accomplished in individual schools and how can the skills learned at the AFT/UFT conference provide resources to colleagues in our district? District labor/management teams will continue their work to provide opportunities that will help us answer these questions. Turning low performing schools around is truly the work of the whole community.

*"Progress results only from the fact that there are some men and women who refuse to believe that what they know to be right cannot be done."*

Russell W. Davenport

--McKenna



Back row: Marie Perkins, Janis Cantu, Cindy Lewis, Marilyn Cornell  
Front row: Marie Whelan, Theresa Harper, Kate McKenna, Stephen Jones



Left to right: Cindy Lewis, Janis Cantu, Marie Perkins and Marilyn Cornell

## Attention Unit 8 Members

Please plan on attending the Unit 8 General Membership Meeting on April 2. There will be nominations for election of officers. The election will take place on May 7 at 3:30 p.m. at the STA office.

If you wish to run for office or would like to nominate a candidate, you must be present at the meeting on the 2nd.

## Have You Heard About B.J. Pinchbeck?

He is a 14 year old with his own web site with more links that you can get to in one day! These sites are in every subject area. They are great for students and teachers alike.

Try:

[www.schooldiscovery.com/homeworkhelper/bjpinchbeck](http://www.schooldiscovery.com/homeworkhelper/bjpinchbeck)  
*You'll like it!*

## Update to AFT's Educational Web Site

The following links take you to new additions on the Ed Issues Website:

### Class Size

[www.aft.org/edissues/classsize/index.htm](http://www.aft.org/edissues/classsize/index.htm)

### Early Childhood

[www.aft.org/edissues/earlychildhood](http://www.aft.org/edissues/earlychildhood)

### Technology

[www.aft.org/edissues/technology](http://www.aft.org/edissues/technology)

### Resources for Parents

[www.aft.org/edissues/parents](http://www.aft.org/edissues/parents)

### Ed Issues Publications

[www.aft.org/edissues/Pubs](http://www.aft.org/edissues/Pubs)

## GOLF NEWS & NOTES

**Event:** The 9th Annual Counselor Open/Captain and Crew Format

**Date:** Saturday, June 1, Shot Gun Start at 1:30 p.m. Registration Begins at 12:30 p.m.

**Place:** Links at Sunset Ridge (Marcellus)

**Cost:** \$55.00/person which includes 18 holes of golf, golf cart, beer and soda on the course, hotdogs (before you tee off), BBQ chicken dinner and prizes at completion of golf.

Call **Mike Filipksi** at x4310, or **Chris Pelligra** at x4243. If you are interested in playing, send your name and the list of your golfing friends with your check to Chris Pelligra at Fowler. Only the first 144 **paid** golfers play!

## Inside...

- State Budget • Peace Corps • Unit 8
- FYI • LRS Update
- Westcott Community Center
- White Ribbon Campaign • Health Beat
- February/March Board Watch
- Across the Miles

## State Budget/School Budget

The governor's state budget has been proposed. The numbers indicate a decrease in funding in the neighborhood of \$300,000 for next year. That would be on top of a year when districts were left with the meager statewide increases in the



governor's budget last year! The Assembly and Senate budgets contain more funding for education but not enough to meet in our substantial needs.

All in all- we're in a pickle. The superintendent's budget has a bottom line of \$208 million. The revenue streams for that budget are currently \$14 million short. The Board of Education is facing the choice of cutting

the proposed budget so that it can present a balanced budget to the Common Council or going forward with a budget that the council will have to either fund or cut. The city has declared that they, too, have a \$14 million shortfall. What will the mayor and the councilors do to bridge both of these budget gaps?

Our needs in this district far exceed even the proposed \$208 budget. School districts serving children from communities plagued by poverty are chronically under funded through the state aid formula and we have had to contend with cuts in city funding that date back to 1996. (The only exception to that pattern was in this year's budget.) STA will continue its lobbying efforts through NYSUT. Representatives of our union have traveled to lobby Albany legislators to explain the dire predicament we are in here in Syracuse. Vigorous lobbying for increases in city funding are ongoing as are conversations with the superintendent and school board members.

Please write to the governor and

let him know that our kids deserve the same "sound basic education" guaranteed in our state constitution as students from middle and high wealth districts.

### STA Budget

The Executive Board has been meeting to prepare a budget for fiscal year 2002-03 to the Representative Assembly. Preliminary discussions will be conducted at the April 11th Representative Assembly. Please be sure to check with you building reps for details.

### School Calendar

The BOCES calendar has been revised moving the April recess to the week of April 14-18. No formal calendar meetings have been held to determine our district's calendar for next year. We are hoping to proposals ready for the April 11th RA. As soon as we know, you'll know. Be sure to add you name to the STA listserv so that you can be kept up-to-date.

### Tax Reform May Benefit Members and District

Recent IRS code revisions have made it possible for employees to contribute larger amounts into 403(b) accounts (see page 4). Additionally, employers may contribute directly to these retirement accounts with amounts up to \$41,000. this is a classic "win-win" situation for employees and the district. Retirement incentives and sick leave conservation payments could be sheltered saving em-

ployees thousands in taxes. the district would save hundreds of thousands in payroll taxes (Social Security, Medicaid, State and federal taxes, etc.). The STA has contacted the superintendent to develop language that is similar to Liverpool, Chittenango, Solvay and others so that we, too, might benefit from the tax code revision. We'll keep you posted.

--McKenna

## F Y I

### Mark Your Calendars

#### April

- 2 - Unit 8 General Membership Meeting - 3:30 p.m. Nominations
- 9 - Nurses Meeting (STA) - 2:30 p.m.
- 10 - Representative Assembly - 3:30 p.m.
- 15-19 - Spring Recess
- 30 - Unit 8 Executive Board - 3:30 p.m.



**Defensive Driving Course**  
Saturday, May 4 - 9:00 - 4:00 p.m.  
STA Office Building  
Call STA at x4526  
Class size is limited to 40 people

## CORCORAN HIGH SCHOOL / JOHN T. ROBERTS SCHOOL PEACE CORPS PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

[www.CorcoranPeaceCorpsPartnership.com](http://www.CorcoranPeaceCorpsPartnership.com)

The International Relations Club announces its 18th annual Corcoran / Roberts Peace Corps Partnership Project. This year's project is to raise \$3,000 to fund construction of a cemented water well for the villagers of Boure, Niger in West Africa. The project is being supervised by Peace Corps Volunteer Rosalynn Frederick of Copake, New York, a 1998 Ithaca College graduate. In addition to the well project, the students of John T. Roberts School collected 37,120 pennies to fund an adult literacy project for the villagers. Members of the Corcoran International Relations Club will be teaching lessons to the Roberts students this Spring.

The project is being funded through the sale of student drawn note cards. This year's edition is of birds of the Peace Corps world. They sell for \$8/set postpaid of 12 assorted note cards and matching envelopes printed on recycled paper.

The nation of Niger is ranked as the 2nd poorest country in the world. Most of the people are farmers who rely on the increasingly decertified savanna to eke out a living. Fortunately this year they had sufficient rainfall and the harvest is relatively abundant. The village is comprised of 46 different households with a total population of approximately 150 people.

It is situated at the top of a hill. It is a 10 minute walk to the present well which was constructed where water was close to the surface. There are no cemented wells in the village. Presently, water is pulled by the women from a traditional well. Traditional wells are dug by the men of the village using shovels.. When water is reached, they line the hole with the trunks of palm trees for support. Wells of this type have problems, They cave in frequently. The men are unable to dig deep into the water table so the wells run out of water quickly. The area immediately surrounding the well is always muddy with standing water which breeds mosquitoes, increasing the threat of malaria. Animals which are brought to the well for water contaminate the surface with their waste which inevitably makes its way into the level well opening.

The cemented well which we are funding will be more stable as it will be lined with cement rings. Well digging machinery will enable the villagers to dig into the side of the hill, just 20 meters from the village. They will be able to dig 5 meters into the water table thus assuring a steady supply of water. A cement bib and apron around the well opening will prevent pools of standing water and contamination with surface run-off.

There will also be a gravel filter at the base of the well which will greatly reduce the amount of sand and dirt particles entering the water from the ground.

The per capita GDP of Niger is \$250 per year. This level of poverty precludes construction by the villagers using their own resources. The women stand to gain the most from the new well. In the developing world, traditionally it is the women who gather the daily water. In Boure and throughout the Sahel region of Africa, this means additional strain on their malnourished bodies. Girls as young as 10 and women in their 70s make 2-4 trips up the hill balancing large ceramic jars on their heads which hold as much as 10 gallons.

Our new well will lessen fatigue, and free up tremendous amounts of time for other income generating activity (e.g.. weaving) or food preparation for their families. The well will significantly improve the level of health among the villagers as they enjoy access to clean water.

Since 1983-84, students at Corcoran have funded a variety of small scale development projects including 6 primary schools, 2 maternity wards, the first school for teaching the blind in all of Central Africa, a

community health center, 2 wells, a medicinal herb garden, and latrines for a large village.

The Roberts students have likewise supported these partnerships with penny drives. They have funded a braille writer for the school for the blind, soccer balls for several projects, school supplies, and books. This year, in keeping with the Syracuse City School District theme of literacy, the Roberts students collected 30,000 pennies in a 12 foot tall lucite tube installed in their atrium. This will fund an adult literacy project for the adults. At present none of the adults are literate in Hausa, their ethnic language. The village has a school but as yet none of the adults has a formal education. The money will fund 60 notebooks, 60 pens, and kerosene for 4 months use of lamps as well as chalk for the practice boards. The lamps will enable the men to take classes at night, when they are free. The women will have their classes at mid-day when they are most free.

A literacy teacher, trained by the government, will live in the village for 4 months and hold 2-3 one hour classes 5 times a week. Since most of the adults have never held a pen before, they begin with the basics. The adults are excited and grateful to be given the chance to learn to read and write. The men are enjoying writing letters to

Rosalynn and among themselves. The literacy rate of the nation is merely 15%. This project will help the village in many ways. Written communication will be more reliable than the current system of long word of mouth messages. They can also become better organized and keep records. They will also be able to learn information about the world and many other things that can benefit them, such as improved farming, health, and nutrition.

The first penny drive was so successful that the Roberts students, led by Ms. Joanne Webster's 6th graders, have undertaken a 2nd penny drive. Their goal is 70,000 pennies and they are already almost half way there. This money will fund construction of student desks for a primary school in another village in Niger. Peace Corps Volunteer Amy Hertz of Ohio is coordinating that drive.

At a time when the world needs more global interaction and understanding, our motto, "making a difference...one village at a time," underscores what the students of Corcoran High School and John T. Roberts School (K-8) of Syracuse, New York have been doing for 18 years. We invite you to visit our web site, developed by Sean Heuber, a senior at Corcoran. You can reach it through any search engine simply by searching:

Peace Corps Partnership

### Unit 8



Nancy Peluso, President  
Salem Hyde x4570

Some members have had questions regarding the Career Ladder program. I hope I am able to answer them here. However, if you have further questions, please call the STA office at 472-6374 or from your school, x4526. You may also contact Connie Palumb at x4358.

The Career Ladder Program pays for eligible employees to receive up to twelve (12) hours of paid tuition per calendar year. It pays at the SUNY rate by all state schools including Oswego, Cortland, Cazenovia, Columbia and Empire State College. Most of these colleges have satellite classes in or around Syracuse so that we can take advantage of the. Empire State college also gives credit for experiences and knowledge you have already obtained through life and work experience. Online classes are also available. With t Career Ladder Program, you do not owe anything to the district; you aren't obligated to pay back any time to the district and are able to leave for a job in another district. Employees with three (3) years of continuous service in the Unit and approved by the District shall be eligible for paid sabbatical leave.

--Sue Webb

## sta Open Line

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**Dentists and Teachers cont'd from page 1**



get better," I said. "Poor dentists who don't improve could lose their licenses to practice in South Carolina." "That's terrible" he said. "What? That's not a good attitude," I said. "Don't you think we should try to improve children's dental health in this state?" "Sure I do," he said, "but that's not a fair way to determine who is practicing good dentistry." "Why not?" I said. "It makes perfect sense to me." "Well, it's so obvious," he said. "Don't you see that dentists don't all work with

the same clientele; so much depends on things we can't control? "For example," he said, "I work in a rural area with a high percentage of patients from deprived homes, while some of my colleagues work in upper-middle-class neighborhoods. Many of the parents I work with don't bring their children to see me until there is some kind of problem and I don't get to do much preventative work. "Also," he said, "many of the parents I serve let their kids eat way too much candy from a young age, unlike more educated parents who understand the relationship between sugar and decay. "To top it all off," he added, "so many of my clients have well water which is untreated and has no fluoride in it. Do you have any idea how much difference early use of fluoride can make?" "It sounds like you're making excuses," I said. I couldn't believe my dentist would be so defensive. He does a great job. "I am not!" he said. "My best patients are as good as anyone's, my work is as good as anyone's, but my average cavity count is going to be higher than a lot of other dentists because I chose to work where I am needed most." "Don't get touchy," I said. "Touchy?" he said. His face had turned red, and from the way he was clenching and unclenching his jaws, I was afraid he was going to damage his teeth. "Try furious. In a system like this, I will end up being rated average, below average or worse. "My more educated patients who see these ratings may believe this so-called rating actually is a measure of my ability and proficiency as a dentist. They may leave me, and I'll be left with only the neediest patients. And my cavity average score will get even worse." "On top of that, how will I attract good dental hygienists and other excellent dentists to my practice if it is labeled below average?"

"I think you're overreacting," I said. "Complaining, excuse making, and stonewalling won't improve dental health." I am quoting that from a leading member of the DOC," I noted. "What's the DOC?" he said. "It's the Dental Oversight Committee," I said, "a group made up of mostly lay persons to make sure dentistry in this state gets improved." "Spare me," he said. "I can't believe this. Reasonable people won't buy it," he said hopefully. The program sounded reasonable to me, so I asked, "How else would you measure good dentistry?" "Come watch me work," he said. "Observe my processes."

"That's too complicated and time-consuming," I said. "Cavities are the bottom line, and you can't argue with the bottom line. It's an absolute measure." "That's what I'm afraid my patients and prospective patients will think. This can't be happening," he said despairingly. "Now, now," I said, "don't despair. The state will help you some." "How?" he said. "If you're rated poorly, they'll send a dentist who is rated excellent to help straighten you out," I said brightly. "You mean," he said, "they will send a dentist with a wealthy clientele to show me how to work on severe juvenile dental problems with which I have probably had much more experience? Big help." "There you go again," I said. "You aren't acting professionally at all." "You don't get it," he said. "Doing this would be like grading schools and teachers on an average score on a test of children's progress without regard to influences outside the school, the home, the community served, and stuff like that. Why would they do something so unfair to dentists? No one would ever think of doing that to schools." I just shook my head sadly, but he had brightened. "I'm going to write my representatives and senator," he said. "I'll use the school analogy, surely they'll see my point." He walked off with that look of hope mixed with fear and suppressed anger that I see in the mirror so often lately. John Taylor is Superintendent of Schools for the Lancaster County School District in South Carolina. He is a graduate of Davidson College with MEd and EdS degrees from University of South Carolina. He has served as a teacher or administrator in several of South Carolina's most economically challenged school districts, including Allendale, Clarendon, Colleton, and Dillon. He has also worked in Richland 2 and Rock Hill and served as an Education Consultant at the Department of Education.

--John S. Taylor, Superintendent  
Lancaster county School District



**White Ribbon Campaign**

The 2002 White Ribbon Campaign is slated for April 5-14. The primary goal of the campaign is to raise awareness about domestic violence and the ways our community is working to end that violence.. Call 425-0818 for more information.



**Labor Relations Update**

by Lin Ramsey Golash

**In Memory of Alissa Fulmer**

Alissa Fulmer was a tenured Teaching Assistant at McCarthy School. She recently passed away at 38 years of age. Alissa is survived by two sons, Quincy and Justin, both high school students in SCSD. McCarthy School has already raised funds for the family. If you wish to contribute funds for the family, please send your donation to the STA Office. (If you write out a check, make it out Mabel Newby.)

**Unit 4 Reaches Tentative Agreement**

The Unit 4 Negotiating Team reached a tentative agreement with the SCSD. The agreement will next be brought for ratification by Unit 4 members.

Unit 4 is the Adult Vocational Program Employees and is composed of vocational instructors, case managers, counselors and job developers. There programs operate out of the Johnson Center and multiple community locations providing services to adults. The funding for these programs comes from grants for adult education.

**Special Education Summer School Orientation**

The Syracuse Teachers Association has received the decision from the arbitrator regarding compensation for Special Education Summer School Orientation. The Arbitrator agreed with the STA that Special Education Teachers should be paid the summer school rate of \$30.00/hour for orientation. Teachers, who attended orientation in the summer of 2001, will be receiving the difference between what they were paid (\$20.45) and the summer school rate of (\$28.53).

**SCSD Agrees to Moving ABC Teachers Into Unit 1**

The ABC Learning Center teachers provide GED instruction at the Johnson Center and at Community Sites. Jim Matthews, the regional organizer from NYSUT and the STA filed a petition with PERB (The Public Employees Relations Board) requesting that the ABC teachers be placed in Unit 1. After appearing at PERB, the SCSD agreed. The STA has issued a Demand to Negotiate regarding these teachers.

**Hepatitis B Shots**

The STA and the SCSD met regarding the fact that a number of employees were not offered and did not know that they were eligible to receive Hepatitis B inoculations from the SCSD. Hepatitis B is a serious virus that can lead to chronic health problems including liver cancer. The vaccination is given to workers who have a high risk of being exposed to blood or other body fluids.

The Health Services Office now has available vaccine for Hepatitis B and has sent out letters to those employees at high risk of occupational exposure to blood. If you did not receive a letter, but feel you have a risk of exposure please call the health services office.

**Unit 1, 8 and 10 Negotiations**

Surveys have been sent out to members. The negotiation proposals will be based on information received from you as to what are the priorities. Please fill out and return the surveys.

**SCSD Agrees To Move Food Service Substitutes Into Unit 7**

The Food Service Department has been using substitutes for long periods of time in place of food service helpers. Jim Matthews, the regional organizer from NYSUT and the STA filed a petition with PERB (The Public Employees Relations Board) requesting that the food service substitutes be placed in Unit 7. After appearing at PERB, the SCSD agreed. The STA has issued a Demand to Negotiate regarding these substitutes.

**McCarthy Teaching Assistants**

The NYSUT Legal Department filed a case with the NYS Court of Appeals on behalf of the McCarthy TAs who were accused of striking during the last contract negotiations for Unit 8. The Court of Appeals declined to overturn the hearing officers ruling that the Teaching Assistants had been on strike and upheld the SCSD's penalty of two days' pay.

**Westcott Community Center  
Third Annual University Neighbors Lecture Series**

Thursday, April 4, 7:30 PM - "Vessels for the Human Spirit" Professor David Mac Donald, ceramist and SU Professor of Art will discuss the development and evolution of his creative work and the sources of inspiration that helped shape it... from the turbulent 60's to the present.

Following each lecture there will be an opportunity to meet with the speakers. Refreshments will be provided.

Ticket prices are: \$10 per lecture; \$20 for the remaining three lectures; patrons \$75; student tickets \$5 at door with student ID; limited scholarships available. All ticket sales are tax deductible. Checks should be made out to the Westcott Community Center, 826 Euclid Ave., Syracuse, NY 13210.

All lectures will take place at the Westcott Community Center, corner of Westcott and Euclid Ave. For ticket sales, sponsorship or information regarding dates and lectures call 478-8634.

## February/March Rep Assembly News

### February

Among the items discussed at the February 13, 2002 STA Representative Assembly were the following:

- There have been two reported cases of physical harassment incidents inflicted on staff by parents in the district. When this happens, **THE POLICE SHOULD BE CALLED.**
- The thirteen million dollar shortfall in

the SCSD budget may lead to a raising of city taxes.

- The latest retirement incentive, a month for every year of service, was defeated because it did not include SUNY and CUNY personnel and will now be resubmitted in a bill to include these groups.
- **MARK YOUR CALENDARS.** The CNY Education Conference will be held on March 8th. Bruce Coville will be the

speaker. There will be workshops for potential retirees and for SRPs, and a workshop on dealing with bullies. ALSO, there will be an STA Representative training session on March 27th.

- Elementary planning time is NOT planned by the administrator. If this is happening in your school, call the STA.
- The professional development offerings put out by the district recently violate the contract. They are actually one-shots in lieu of true staff development.

• Negotiations will commence shortly. Look for surveys coming to you to ask about staff priorities. With the current financial difficulties, there may be a contract extension in the 4% range.

When your school's STA Representatives attend the Representative Assembly every month, your school gets the news directly and on-time. Make sure your school is represented next month and every month.

### March

Among the things that your STA reps learned at the last March 13th representative assembly were:

- The VOTE/COPE drive for this year will begin at the April 11, 2002 representative assembly. Our goal is to get \$25 per union member to support our legislative agenda in Albany and to elect candidates favorable so schools and education.

• Teachers expressed their concerns that grade level changes are being made in some schools without discussions with the affected teachers. Elementary teachers have received four new curricula this year in addition to several new assessment tools. What are the educational benefits/drawbacks to students of moving teachers to a new grade level where they will have to learn new curricula and assessments **yet again?**

• The purpose of the proposed evaluation process is to help teachers take charge of their own professional growth process. Individual professional growth plans are the central focus of the evaluation. Exchange conferences would be centered around the goals selected by the practitioner. Members are being asked to complete a survey to assist the development team.

• A new attendance policy is being written. STA is seeking elementary, middle and high school teachers (two each) to represent practitioner concerns at the meetings. It is likely that matters related to promotional practices will be discussed and perhaps a committee to revisit that policy will be convened.

• The district has proposed the purchase of a new student information system in the budget. The outdated system has resulted in loss of revenue, poor access to student information (e.g. IEP data). A new system would be helpful in tracking Medicaid data and other needed information.

• Negotiations on new contracts for all but Unit 7 will be beginning soon. The questionnaires for the Unit 1 survey have been sent to the schools. Unit 4 is close to a contract, but it will run out in June, so they too will be negotiating soon.

• A meeting with STA and SCSD senior staff is scheduled soon to try to restore some sanity to the secondary testing schedule. Also, there is an effort to restrict that Fox from leaving the Box more than twice a year. Concerns center around the validity, reliability and usefulness of the data collected as well as the enormous paperwork added to teachers' already overflowing plates.

• The STA mourns the loss of Alissa Fulmer, a TA at McCarthy. Alissa is survived by two children who are Henninger students.

Remember, if your building reps come to the STA representative assemblies, your building gets district info while it is still fresh. Encourage them to attend, and consider participating in the May elections to become a rep for next year. Training for reps will be held this summer. Participants will be paid the summer hourly rate for their participation in the training (after the summer school sessions). Please e-mail your address to [mckenna@syrteach.org](mailto:mckenna@syrteach.org) to get additional information.

--Shults

### Across the Miles

**Linda Kenney** of Salem Hyde Elementary, visited Freeport Primary (government) School on the Grand Bahama Island during the February break.

She met with a third grade class that was curious about American schools. The children were interested in writing to students in Linda's classroom so they may learn more about our schools and our students. Linda is in the process of establishing correspondence between the third grade classes of both schools.

We hope Linda will share the outcome of this great endeavor!

## Pension Reform Bill Enacted



**"The Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001" passed both the House of Representatives and Senate in May and was signed into law by President Bush on June 7, 2001. This sweeping legislation, which will be phased in over time, intends to increase opportunities for workers to save more for their retirement.**

### Highlights of the Act Include:

☆ **Increased Contribution Limits for 403(b) Plans** - from the current \$10,500 for 403(b) plans to \$11,000 in 2002, indexed in \$1,000 increments per year, over a number of years, to \$15,000 in 2006 (and indexed @ \$500 per year increases thereafter).

☆ **Catchup Deferral to 403(b) Plans** - Beginning in 2002, individuals who are at least 50 before the end of the plan year can make an additional catch-up elective deferral to a 403(b). The catch-up amount is the lesser of the difference between the participant's compensation and any other elective deferrals made in that year (without taking into account this catch-up contribution) or the following:

<b>2002</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>
<b>2004</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>

☆ **Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs)** - contribution limits of \$2,000 will be increased to \$5,000 by 2008 and indexed for inflation after that. Taxpayers at or over age 50 will be allowed to contribute an additional \$500 to an IRA, beginning in 2002 through 2005. This supplemental contribution will increase to \$1,000 in 2006.

For the latest information regarding pension reform as it unfolds and how this legislation impacts your retirement or financial plan, please call **1-800-677-4636**.