

T.A. Times

Winter 2011

Guilderland Central Schools

Quarterly news for and by the Teaching Assistant
Unit of the Guilderland Teachers Association

Volume 3, Issue 2

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Candy Mitchell

*Teaching Assistant with
some of the toys from the
toy drive.*

Spotlight on a Pine Bush Teaching Assistant

By Linda Dagostino

As we welcome in the New Year of 2011, I would like to introduce one of our outstanding teaching assistants, named Candy Mitchell.

Many years ago Candy worked as a PTA volunteer at Lynnwood and Guilderland Elementary Schools where her own children attended. She would go into the classroom to help with anything that needed to be done. It was there that she got her first introduction to what classroom life was like.

In 1987 there was an opening for a teaching assistant in Guilderland Elementary so Candy applied for the position and got the job. She was thrilled and couldn't believe she got a job doing what she loved to do.

Candy has spent most of her years in kindergarten and first grade. Although one year, she was split between kindergarten and fourth grade, which was a very different experience. Candy moved to Pine Bush when it first opened and was split between kindergarten and first grade. She has been with the same teacher now for twelve years.

When asked what she enjoyed most about her job, she smiled and said, "The children: every experience is brand new to them. So you get to relive through them being a kid all over again." She enjoys watching them grow and learn each and every day.

Candy said, "They are like sponges; they are open and ready to learn." She also feels she learns something new every year—different ways to teach, relate to students, and help in many different ways. Every year is new and has different challenges; she feels that full day kindergarten is very beneficial to the children. They have more time to absorb and get more in-depth information

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Message from the President:

2011 will initially sound strange and feel odd to write. While it may take us a while to get used to it, the New Year will mean different things to each of us. For me, this is the year when my twin sons graduate high school. It may also be the year that one of us welcomes a grandchild to their family or the year that someone's child enters middle school. For our colleagues, the Guilderland teachers, this is the year when their contract expires. 2011 will be a year of negotiations for the GTA. In addition to a continued, unfavorable economy, the teachers will need to address the new Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) signed into law by the governor last June. This requires a locally negotiated evaluation system based on multiple measures, including student test scores. Each local union will have to define the specifics to meet the needs of their district.

We can all remember the frustrations and efforts and time that went into our current contract. While we can't directly impact the outcome for the GTA, we can and should offer them our support and solidarity. During our lengthy negotiations, many of the teachers wore our button, sported black on payday Friday and spoke of our value in a variety of forums. Let the teachers know that we are behind them and that we understand the increasing demands and challenges of their job. What affects one union or unit in our district affects us all ---- and 2012 (when our current contract expires) is not that far away.

Cheryl Ainspan

SRP Day Across the District

By
Cheryl Ainspan

The third Tuesday in November during American Education Week was School-Related Professionals Recognition Day. Guilderland SRPs were celebrated in each of our seven buildings. Food seemed to be the common theme in most schools with breakfast and other treats provided for part or all of the day. Pine Bush Elementary began the day with a message from Principal Chris Sanita and student-made invitations and paper flowers for all SRPs. Altamont Elementary had a unique and thoughtful approach to the day. Principal Peter Brabant assigned each classroom a list of SRPs. The students either wrote a note or drew a picture telling the individual how she/he has helped them in school and thanking them for their efforts. After the notes were collected, one from each classroom was selected for display on the front hallway bulletin board, which can be viewed by the community as well. The rest of the notes were given to each SRP in a special folder. Everyone involved was thrilled with the creativity and time devoted to this task.

SRPs are the dedicated support staff who help to make public schools run smoothly. In addition to Teaching Assistants, they include bus drivers and attendants, aides, cafeteria workers, secretaries, health service personnel and custodians. The bill creating a permanent SRP Recognition Day in New York State was signed into law in 2007.

ALTAMONT ELEMENTARY SRP DAY



(Continued from page 1)



Candy with sister, Holly Coy, at the Strides Walk. Holly is a Teaching Assistant at Lynnwood Elementary.

for all the academics they need to know.

I asked Candy if she had any advice she could give to other teaching assistants as they pursue their own career. She thought for a minute and said “You have to be flexible, understand other points of view, go with the flow, love working with children and be sure to be a team player for the classroom as well as the school.”

Through the years Candy has been involved in many different types of activities. Through the school she has served on Building Cabinet and some community service projects. Most recently she has been an active member of the T.A. Awareness Committee. She has been involved with the toy drive, walking for Breast Cancer, food collections, and working at Equinox to name just a few.

One of Candy’s favorite things to do in her spare time is to spend time with her family, especially all her wonderful grandchildren. She has even found time to pursue her education by taking courses through Hudson Valley Community College.

As I approached the end of my questions for Candy, I asked if she had any final words or comments she would like to say and she did.

“I would like to say that it has been my sincere pleasure to work with all the children and colleagues through the years. Everyone has taught me much more than I could have ever given anybody else. I’ve gotten much more than I could have given,” she stated.

Thank you for all your wonderful answers and advice. I enjoyed talking to you.

WE MADE A DIFFERENCE

"The donation of toys was down, and I would not have been able to keep my promise to the children, had it not been for your kindness." Georgianna Pennacchia, President of St. Vincent de Paul Society

PINE BUSH ELEMENTARY



Back left to right:

Jean Mosher, Sandy Ellwood,
Linda Dagostino, Diana McParlton,
Irene Nardelli, Eileen Mihok,
Janet Edmonds, Nancy Doyle,
Candy Mitchell, Gail Lamparski

Front Row:

Jeanne Sama, Sue Quaglieri, Elma Sprague

WESTMERE



Sitting: Germaine Rexford, Patty Fink, Kim Miller, Donna Barranca

Middle: Michelle Farison

Standing: Ginnie Zuspahn, Sharon Barcomb,
Joanne Capone, Sue Kircher, Lynne Haley

Not Pictured: Sandy Grant

Thank you to Donna and Sharon for co-chairing the Toy Drive!



PAYROLL TAX CUT ON SOCIAL SECURITY TAX

Starting with the 1/7/11 paycheck, you will see your take-home pay rise during 2011 due to the Tax Relief, Unemployment insurance Re-authorization and Job Creation Act of 2010. This Act will provide a 2% payroll tax cut for you, reducing your Social Security tax withholding rate from 6.2% to 4.2% of wages paid. This reduced Social Security withholding will have **no effect** on your future Social Security benefits. If you have any questions, please contact **Diane M. Tenenini** in the District Office at **456-6200, ext. 3107**

This issue of the TA Times published by FMS Computer Lab TA Martha Brew

Please forward ideas, articles and offers of help to your Building Rep.

BCW at GHS
By
Janet Fiederlein



The Behavior Consultant Workshop (BCW) classroom is a class of seventeen students with different types of disabilities ranging from learning disabled to being somewhere on the autism spectrum. The BCW program offers students an array of services from academic help to emotional support and social skills training. Mrs. Carrie Miller, the special education teacher of this program, does a great job in leading the students to better organization and to making the right decisions.

Mrs. Miller's class offers these students much guidance with the help of four teaching assistants in the room and by shadowing the student's schedules. They also offer remediation in this way, either by the teacher herself or the teaching assistants. There are two 1:1 assistants for the two neediest students in the class. These assistants specifically shadow these students' schedules, while the other two assistants have a mixed schedule between the freshmen and sophomores. During learning workshop the assistants help to re-teach or review the material, provide the teacher with updates on the student's day and progress of the student's work and study with the student before a test.

As it is called, the Behavior Consultants Workshop program provides academic remediation and social skills instruction to all of the students that are part of this program. Every other day, during advisory, Mrs. Miller brings the students together for their social skills instruction or a "mini lesson." An example of this was the topic, "interrupting appropriately." I thought this was a great idea as many do not think of this as a teachable topic. First, Mrs. Miller explains the lesson and hands out worksheets on the topic at hand. She then has a direct group discussion on what the students think is appropriate and inappropriate. This always ends up being an interesting conversation, especially with the freshmen. The teacher also includes role play into the lesson, which seems to be fun for the students. Different parts of this specific lesson included how to self improve, the discussion, and reasons to interrupt.

In order for the student to interrupt appropriately they must go through the following steps:

- Think about what you need to say
- Decide if the message is important or whether it can wait.
- Decide how to get the person's attention.
 - ◆ Raise hand
 - ◆ Say "excuse me" and/or the person's name
 - ◆ Touch the person
 - ◆ Stand by the person
- Wait for acknowledgement (verbal or nonverbal)
- Say what you have to say

Each student practiced their own scenario that was given to them by Mrs. Miller or they made up one on their own. This was a great lesson for these kids and it is only a small step in how to self monitor.

Mrs. Miller and the BCW program is part of a ninth grade team that collaborates together for the success of all of their students, not just the BCW students. Included in the program is co-teaching and teaming. The program is similar to a resource room only with a social skills component. Another benefit to this program is that there is a social work component attached. Each student has a social worker they have appointments with on at least a weekly basis or as needed. The social workers also join the classroom once in a while to check up on the student and to be part of the team.

As a teaching assistant in this program, I feel this is a wonderful example of a team that comes together for their students and I really like what this program stands for. Even though these are high school students, the concepts used and the strategies employed are relevant to all ages.

RA- Not Just another Acronym

By
Elma Sprague



Once a year NYSUT holds what is called "a Representative Assembly", or RA. It is here that "duly elected and reported delegates may debate and vote on proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws, proposed resolutions and other business that might be brought before the Representative Assembly according to NYSUT Constitution and Bylaw provisions or policy." In other words, according to NYSUT's President, Richard C. Iannuzzi, "The RA is our opportunity to directly affect the policies of NYSUT. The direction and continued democracy of NYSUT depend on this participation." NYSUT is a representative democracy. Members elect delegates to an annual state convention — the Representative Assembly — where they debate and vote on NYSUT's policies and priorities for the coming year. The RA is the highest policy-making body of NYSUT, with the exception of a membership referendum. Election District meetings, held by NYSUT Board members, offer delegates the chance to share concerns and information.

A prime example of delegates' involvement and actions making a difference: at the 2009 RA, a resolution was submitted to the delegates, presented on the floor and voted on asking

NYSUT to lobby the New York State Legislature to revise the law and give our members the ability to obtain health care under the Family Health Plus Program. As a result of this resolution and NYSUT taking this on as a priority, **the law was changed to allow public sector employees (that's us) access to Family Health Plus.**

As members of GTA, we are entitled to have representatives at the RA. Presently, every three years, GTA holds an election of NYSUT delegates. Based on the size of GTA, we can elect up to six delegates. Since Teaching Assistants are part of GTA, we are eligible to run for those spots.

Those six delegates represent GTA at area Election District (ED) meetings throughout the year. The Capital District is part of ED-10. These delegates also attend the RA to debate and vote on NYSUT's policies for the coming year.

The 39th Annual Representative Assembly of NYSUT will take place at the Hilton in New York, New York, April 7-9, 2011. This year GTA will send Maceo Dubose, President of GTA and Elma Sprague, duly elected GTA delegate. Also attending the Local Presidents Pre-RA Conference is our TA President, Cheryl Ainspan

Join us in celebrating with our colleagues as they are recognized for their years of service!

**GTA General Meeting & Service Recognition
BBQ**

Many colleagues will be receiving awards!

All new teachers will be recognized!

Come support your colleagues!

February 8th

(snow date Feb 10th)

FMS– Cafetorium

4:00

Giffy's BBQ will be served

\$5 per person

Dinner includes: 1/2 Chicken Dinner, Cole Slaw, Baked Potato, Roll, & Butter. (Veggie burger available to substitute for chicken.)



HEART'S

DESIRE

This year the GTA will offer one Heart's Desire Grant opportunity. Applications are available on the GTA website or from a Heart's Desire Committee member in your respective buildings (also listed on the GTA website).

Purpose: The Heart's Desire Professional Development Program is a competitive grants program sponsored by the Guilderland Teachers' Association that enables all GTA members to pursue creative professional development activities.

The program is designed to support the wealth of creativity, experiences, and knowledge that teachers and teaching assistants bring to their schools and to foster a spirit of continued growth and renewal within the GTA membership.

The deadline for all grant applications is:
April 11, 2011

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.