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Open Letter to Mayor Spano—

We have been encouraged by all the quality news coverage of “Who is Failing Yonkers” in the Journal News. The coverage has been honest and hard hitting. Previous mayors admitting to placing deficits on the school side at the cost to students and staff, waiting for the state to solve the problems.

In a recent article, Mayor Spano, you asked teacher unions, despite all the “blunders” of State Ed. and all the powers that be in state government, to acknowledge that we need “productivity improvements.” What does that mean? We don’t work on a production line. We have some of the highest class size figures in the county and we work more days than many districts. Pocantico has 18 students per class while Yonkers has 30+, with yearly grievances just to keep to the contractual class size in place.

“Productivity Improvements”- does that mean that we will get the needed training? Does that mean we will have the textbooks, curriculum and modules in September and not have to grieve about the lack of materials? Does “productivity improvements” mean teach more than 150 students a day, which is some of the highest amounts in the county? Does that mean Special Education students will be placed appropriately in a timely manner, as opposed to the sometimes 1½ year wait time? Does that mean that we should fight the 180 variances requested of the state to increase Special Education class size, affecting over 3,000 students?

Let us move on to your request that we stop “insisting on yesterday’s outmoded work rules and practices.” What are you talking about? Are you referring to a lunch period of 47 minutes? Or a one prep period of 47 minutes to prepare for 5 classes? We take work home, we stay late and we volunteer to give out books purchased with our dues. We run food drives yearly, run blood drives, buy our own supplies, bring in Halloween costumes for our students and have handed out backpacks for over 30 years. What “outmoded work rules”? To quote the Board of Education- Yonkers Federation of Teachers Contract-

“The Board of Education of the City of Yonkers and the Yonkers Federation of Teachers recognize that they have a common goal, that of working together towards providing the finest educational opportunities for the boys and girls of the Yonkers Public Schools System. This goal can best be achieved through the joint efforts of the Board and the Federation.

Both groups recognize their responsibilities in our increasingly complex society for working legally and constructively towards improving community structure, resources and law to provide maximum educational opportunities.”

The New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), our state union, extended their services and their personnel to bring together the finest effort put forth by our city to ask the state and Governor to add money to our school budget. We were all successful. If some of our schools, which are really our students, staff and community, go to outside “Receivership,” I ask why.

- Saunders High School and Yonkers Middle/High School- two of the top high schools, regionally and nationally
- Yonkers Montessori Academy- the only public Montessori PreK-12 school in the country.
- Pearls- out-performs the Yonkers Charter School.

All of these schools work under the same “work rules and practices.” The difference is adequate funding of our unequal schools. Fair is not everyone receiving the same. Fair is everyone getting what they need to succeed.

Please don’t use 19th century assembly line quotes, when we are struggling to educate 21st century students without the needed staff or supplies.

Respectfully,
Pat Puleo
YFT President

**RICHARD GAZZOLA TEACHER CENTER
NEWS**



**Samantha Rosado-Ciriello,
Director**

**Lia Council, Policy Board Chair
One Larkin Center
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RESOURCES

Please remember the Richard Gazzola Teacher Center has resources that you might find useful. In addition to a poster maker, we have a book binding machine, laminator and Ellison Die Cutter as well as a lending library that contains professional books. Our office hours are from 9:00 am – 4:30 pm. We welcome you to stop by or call if interested in utilizing our resources. We are located on the 3rd floor of One Larkin Center.

As an educator and a parent, I often come across websites, articles and resources that I find useful. Here are a few I thought you might find useful too.

Teacher Vision has a “Rubrics Library for Teachers” across disciplines and grade levels K-12 as well as for group work and oral presentations. It also offers information about how to create weighted rubric scores. This can be found at https://www.teachervision.com/rubrics/assessment/26773.html?utm_source=TV_Great_Stuff_2015-10-05&utm_medium=e-newsletter&utm_campaign=TV_Great_Stuff

The Center for Children and Families at the University of Buffalo has a document for “Creating a Daily Report Card for Home” and another for “Creating a Daily Report Card for School” at http://ccf.buffalo.edu/pdf/Home_Daily_Report_Card.pdf

Although it offers a tool that can be used to target and limit undesirable or negative behavior in ADHD children, it can be used with any child at home as well as in the educational setting.

CATALOGUE

We hope to have our catalogue in your school by sometime in November. Please take time to review all our courses and let us know how we can assist you in registering. Please take note, the maximum allowance per class is thirty (30) participants. A lottery will determine placement for all over-subscribed in-service courses.

The Richard Gazzola Teacher Center often partners with other entities to offer professional development opportunities. The Educational Learning Trust (ELT) a department of New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) offers sessions, workshops and college courses across all disciplines. Although some of these are advertised in the Richard Gazzola Teacher Center catalogue, ELT has a more extensive catalogue online at <http://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources-sites/education-learning-trust>.

As always, if you would like to teach a course for the Teacher Center, please find our course applications online at www.rgteachercenter.org

CANCELLATIONS

Please note, courses will be cancelled up to and including the first class if the course enrollment is insufficient. Scheduling conflicts may exist, so please choose your courses carefully.

Samantha Rosado-Ciriello, Director



Teachers Teaching Teachers

Comparing Traditional and Differentiated Classrooms

Traditional Classroom

- Student differences are masked or acted upon only when they present problems.
- Assessment is most common at the end of learning to see “who got it.”
- A relatively narrow sense of intelligence prevails.
- A single definition of excellence exists.
- Student interest is infrequently tapped.
- Relatively few learning profile options are taken into account.
- Whole-class instruction dominates.
- Coverage of texts and curriculum guides drives instruction.
- Mastery of facts and skills out of context are the focus of learning.
- Single-option assignments are the norm.
- Time is relatively inflexible.
- A single text prevails.
- Single interpretation of ideas and events may be sought.
- The teacher directs student behavior.
- The teacher solves problems.
- A single form of assessment is often used.

Differentiated Classroom

- Student differences are studied as a basis for planning.
- Assessment is ongoing and diagnostic to understand how to make instruction more responsive to learner need.
- Focus on multiple forms of intelligence is evident.
- Excellence is defined in large measure by individual growth from a starting point.
- Students are frequently guided in making interest based learning choices.
- Many learning profile options are provided for.
- Many instructional arrangements are used.
- Student readiness, interest, and learning profile shape instruction.
- Use of essential skills to make sense of and understand key concepts and principles is the focus of learning.
- Multi-option assignments are frequently used.
- Time is used flexibly in accordance with student need.
- Multiple materials are provided.
- Multiple perspectives on ideas and events are routinely sought.
- The teacher facilitates students’ skills at becoming more self-reliant learners.
- Students help other students and the teacher solve problems.
- Students work with the teacher to establish both whole-class and individual learning goals.
- Students are assessed in multiple ways.

Educational Issues

At Issue

The Teacher Interest Committee (TIC) provides an important and vital communicative link within the Yonkers Public Schools. With approximately 27,000 students, 1,800 teachers and 40 schools district wide, TIC provides a forum to address the various issues which arise daily within each individual building. Although TIC addresses topics such as contractual violations, it is not limited to those items only.

TIC is so important that it has been included in our contract; *“The Teacher Interest Committee (TIC) in each building, will have the right to meet with the building principal to discuss matters of mutual concern in that building on a regular once-a-month basis.”*

Matters of mutual concern should not be misconstrued as mutually agreeable agenda items; rather as issues that may affect or limit the productivity and effectiveness of teachers. Teacher productivity and effectiveness is a mutual concern.

All administrators should support and encourage TIC for their commitment and dedicated efforts to solve matters of mutual concern through this formal, negotiated process.

What is TIC?

TIC is an acronym for Teacher Interest Committee. Each school has its own TIC that meets with the building principal. Meetings are held monthly at a mutually agreeable time and the agenda is submitted to the building administrator three days prior to each meeting. Draft minutes are provided to the administrator at least two days prior to faculty distribution.

The Building Rep is responsible for gathering and preparing the agenda and reviewing it with TIC members prior to meeting with the administrator. An attempt to resolve issues with the administrator should be made prior to the TIC meeting. Any issues that are not resolved should be addressed during the TIC meeting, and the ones which were should be noted for the minutes.

Accurate TIC minutes should be taken because they provide an historical account of building level communications between the administration and the teacher representatives. Draft minutes are presented to the principal for review before being officially distributed to the faculty members. Principals do not need to approve or sign off on the minutes.

The importance of TIC

Each building has a contractual right to TIC. While it is always preferable for teachers to talk to their administrators directly, this is not always possible. Thus, a matter of concern can be noted by the teacher and brought to the attention of the Building Rep or any TIC member for resolution and/or inclusion on the TIC agenda.

Teachers should first try to find a solution to any issue that confronts them, and if unable to do so, bring it to a member of TIC or the Building Rep so that it can be addressed at the TIC meeting. Conflicts among teachers are inappropriate for TIC discussion.

Both the YFT and the Superintendent expect that building level issues be introduced through TIC and closely follow the TIC minutes submitted from each school. The issues and concerns of any one building could have a significant impact upon our contract, our workplace environment and our personal well-being.

A school without an active TIC is a school without a voice; potentially a building that could harbor an atmosphere of fear and reprisal. With this in mind, it is inappropriate for a principal to refuse to meet, to dictate what items are included on or excluded from the agenda, to decide what is discussed or how minutes are handled.

It is the goal of the YFT to rectify issues at the building level; however, any item that is consistently on the TIC agenda without resolution is brought to the Superintendent. Every building needs a TIC committee and should have regular monthly meetings regardless of the number of agenda items.

Teachers and principals must work collaboratively to improve our schools and increase our productivity, so that our students can be more successful.

Should Teachers Work For Free?

A Diane Ravitch Blog

I came home crushed today...my spirit shattered...my morale broken. Sometimes I feel like being a teacher in the public school system is like being in a dysfunctional relationship where you just keep finding reasons to justify the abuse you're accepting. It's like the battered woman that finds every reason to stay, because at the end of the day...it's for the kids, right? When is enough enough?

I am writing this because I was literally penalized on my teacher evaluation because my family duties and responsibilities prohibit me from working free overtime. And do I still work overtime? Oh yes! Absolutely! Perfect example...on Friday I stayed on campus til 7pm. But that was mainly organizing materials for Science and Math. Writing a Science Assessment, grading papers, setting up my small groups and lessons for the following week, and cleaning the room. Is that me being professional? I guess it depends on who you ask...

I pride myself in the level of engagement in my classroom, my ability to challenge students with higher order thinking questions, and my relationship with my students. It gives me chills to know that I have such power over these little minds...and I'm helping them grow and learn. But despite the fact that I'm engaging my students in rigorous lessons, and that I'm a teacher that is WITH my students (on my feet and engaged with them) the majority of the day, and involved with my school's committees and clubs...I still feel like it's never good enough. I've tried to sit behind my desk a few times to get "data entry" done...and it was impossible with the amount of students who continually came to me to ask questions. It's just not something that's feasible within a teacher's contracted hours. Furthermore, my job is to teach...not neglect my class and sit behind a desk all day. Well...today I got a big "slap in the face" when I opened my email first thing this morning. I received a bad evaluation for "Professionalism and Collegiality." Do I get such surprise emails when I've done something amazing???? Absolutely not!...My friends, I am the only one in the intermediate grades at my school that is teaching 5 subjects. I meet with all academic teams on a daily basis, I plan for the Science team on my own, and I run the Drama program with my colleague after school each week. Not to mention I'm involved in committees and other things that support our school. I walk the hallways making sure I smile and greet every person in the morning – kids AND staff. I carry a bag home with work every day and stay up for countless hours after my children have gone to sleep. Monday through Friday, I am guaranteed grading papers with feedback and notes so that I can review with my students in class. I am a dedicated teacher...and I pride myself in the fact that I am professional, and I am a team player! Is that someone you would call unprofessional?

But God forbid I told myself that on weekends I would be with my family. God forbid I don't sacrifice my family for free work. But with all that I do, at the end of the day...if I don't work weekends or until 1am every night...I will NEVER be caught up with data or work. Because without the new data and lesson plan requirements, grading papers is ALREADY cutting into my personal life. And while I don't mind the grading because I am passionate about my job...PLEASE tell me what a teacher with 3 kids who can't work free overtime needs to do in order to avoid a negative teacher evaluation???? I'm hurt! This is terrible!

Friends, this is why labor unions were created, to prevent the exploitation of teachers and other workers. The writer says that other teachers are afraid to speak up. This is why labor unions were created. And this is why the overlords of economy and efficiency are eager to crush public sector unions, so people can be compelled to work 50 and 60 hour weeks without overtime. This is why so much money is pouring into charter schools, because 90% or so are non-union. This is why Teach for America is the workforce for many charters, because they are right out of college, they don't have children, they have lots of energy, and they don't mind working 10-11 hour days.

If you/we let this continue, teaching will be a job for temps, not a profession.

Get your union to stand up for you. If you don't have a union, start to organize one. Join the Network for Public Education and let us magnify your voices. Join us at our annual convention in Raleigh, North Carolina, in April, and meet other teachers and allies from across the nation.

The YFT will be there!

2015 YFT Scholarship Winners



The 2015 YFT Scholarship Fund recipients were honored on June 11th at Roosevelt High School during Building Assembly.

Thank you to the YFT Scholarship Committee members who give their time every year to carefully review each candidate's application and select recipients: Jacqueline Davis (School 22), Michelle Macdonald (School 29), Brigid Murray (Cedar Place), Cathy O'Connor (DiCharo), Margaret Petty (School 29), Nikisha Scott (Palisade Prep), Deyanira Santana Smykowski (Lincoln), Ed Stowe (School 5), Claudia Wright-Henry (School 30), John Eshoo (retired) and Chairperson Roselyn Kendrick-Jones (Yonkers Middle High)

Recipients were selected based on their academic achievement, school and community service, and financial need. Certainly all of the applicants were deserving of the awards, and the YFT congratulates them and wishes them continued success.

Three of the awards were given to the children of YFT members.

Kimberly Kroupa, daughter of **Beth Kroupa**, a teacher at Yonkers Middle High School. Kimberly is majoring in Mechanical Engineering at Boston University.

Imani Lukunku, daughter of **Debra King-Lukunku**, a teacher at Yonkers Middle High School. Imani is majoring in Writing for Screen & TV at the University of Southern California.

Samantha Martocci, daughter of **Linda Martocci**, a teacher at Lincoln High School. Samantha attends the University of Maryland.

The six students named below attended a Yonkers Public School:

Rosemary Acosta graduated from Charles E. Gorton High School. She is the recipient of the Harriet Birnberg Scholarship, given in memory of a former YFT secretary. Rosemary is attending SUNY Albany.

Lianka Garcia Tejada graduated from Lincoln High School. She is the recipient of the Walter Tice Scholarship, given in honor of a former YFT President. Lianka is majoring in Spanish at Mercy College.

Danny Liu graduated from Yonkers Middle High School. He is the recipient of the Stella Goldstein Memorial Scholarship, given in memory of the first Scholarship Committee Chairperson. Danny is majoring in Biology & Nursing at Hunter College.

Yomairis Montes graduated from Lincoln High School. She is the recipient of the Ruth Dworkin Scholarship, given in honor of a former member of the YFT Executive Board.

Samantha Valente graduated from Yonkers Montessori Academy. She is the recipient of the Dan Sanders Scholarship, given in memory of a former NYSUT leader. Samantha is majoring in Biology at Barnard College.

Jennifer Yang graduated from Lincoln High School. She is the recipient of the Richard Gazzola Scholarship, given in memory of the Founder and first director of the Teacher Center. Jennifer is majoring in Physician Assistant at St. John's University.

In Memoriam....

It is with deep regret that we inform everyone that one of our retirees, Dorothy Picken, passed away on August 31, 2015. She suffered a long battle with cancer. Dottie taught Chemistry most recently at Roosevelt High School. She was the Department Rep of the science department and was always ready to help with any problems her Roosevelt colleagues had.

Dottie will be remembered as both an excellent teacher, diligent Department Rep and compassionate person. Dottie did not like pretense; she didn't consider awards or accolades as a measure of her ability as a teacher. Rather she found validation in the cards and letters sent to her from former students who had achieved success in their professions (especially in the medical field) and thanked her for having instructed them and giving them a chance to succeed in life.

Dottie taught all phases of biology from general to AP Biology and considered every student worthy of teaching. She was also in charge of the National Honor Society and worked tirelessly in nominating and assessing students for this honor as well as organizing ceremonies for their inductions.

Dottie retired in 2000 but remained a dedicated teacher and a union volunteer for as long as she was able. Her friends and colleagues are thankful for having known her and will miss her dearly.

(Information respectfully submitted by retiree Karen Ziccardi)



Committed to Excellence in Education

YFT Leadership Weekend

November 20-22, 2015 at the Heritage Hotel
in Southbury, CT

Open to Building Reps, Alternate Building Reps, TIC members, committee members & YFT volunteers who are in good standing and participate in Political Action at the YFT Office (through 11/3)

For more information call the YFT Office at (914)793-0200

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

3rd		ELECTION DAY– GET OUT AND VOTE!	
4th	3:45pm	Executive Board	YFT
12th	3:45pm	Building Assembly	Roosevelt
16th	7:00pm	YCPTA	School 22
18th	7:00pm	BOE Stated Meeting	Saunders
18th	3:45pm	Executive Board	YFT
20th-22nd		Leadership Conference	Southbury, CT

