Poll: Americans Want Less Standardized Testing and More School Funding  BY TIM WALKER

Whether it’s used as a tool to measure student progress or evaluate teachers, standardized testing continues to fall out of favor with the majority of the American public. According to the 2015 PDK/Gallup Survey of the Public’s Attitudes toward the Public Schools, 64 percent of Americans (and 67 percent of public school parents) say there is “too much emphasis on testing.” Only 14 percent rated standardized testing as a “very important” factor in measuring school effectiveness, and 55 percent (66 percent of parents) oppose test scores being used to evaluate teacher performance.

The results reflect the growing momentum in communities across the nation as parents and educators have joined forces to demand less testing and more time to learn. And lawmakers at every level of government are finally getting the message.

“The high stakes obsession of test and punish has only served to widen the gap between the schools in the wealthiest districts and those in the poorest,” says NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. “We must reduce the emphasis on standardized tests that have corrupted the quality of the education children receive. The pressure placed on students and educators is enormous.”

“When you send your child to school, your expectation is that the school is going to teach the whole child,” Chiquikta Fountain, a public school parent in Cleveland, MS, told PDK International. “But there’s so much funding attached to testing. If we don’t do well on testing, then we’re going to lose funding, which means we’re going to lose teachers. So teachers are being pressured to teach the children to pass the test. Everything has just spiraled out of control.”

One of the biggest education stories of 2015 has been the burgeoning “Opt-Out” movement of parents who want the right to pull their children out of state mandated standardized testing. It was recently reported, for example, that 200,000 grade 3-8 students in New York State refused to take statewide tests in Reading and Math for the 2014-15 school year. According to the PDK/Gallup survey, however, the public is split on this issue. Forty-one percent said parents should be allowed to excuse their child from standardized testing, while 44 percent said they should not be allowed. (Fifty-nine percent of Americans said they would not excuse their own child.)

“NEA fully supports parents and supports our affiliates who take a stand against tests that serve no educational purpose,” says García. “But making it easier for parents to opt out is not the end game. The end game is designing a system where parents and educators don’t even consider opting out of assessments because they trust that assessments make sense, guide instruction, and help children advance in learning.”

The public named lack of financial support as the biggest problem facing local public schools and rated school funding as “somewhat” or “very” important to their success. Lack of parental involvement and overcrowding were second and third, respectively.

What factors are very important in choosing a local public school? Americans identified teacher quality, curriculum, and maintaining student discipline as the most important factors, and proximity to the workplace, success of athletic programs, and student achievement on standardized tests as the least important factors.

Generally, people are very happy with their local schools but take a dim view of schools nationally. Fifty-one percent gave the schools in their community an ‘A’ or ‘B’; only 4 percent have them a failing grade. Seventy-two percent of parents rated the school their oldest child attends an ‘A’ or ‘B’. Only 20 percent, however, believe that schools nationwide deserve those high marks.  

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### Important Dates for 2016-2017

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<th>Exec Board NYSUT</th>
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**HANNUKKAH**

**Kwanzaa**

A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture

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### Capital Region BOCES Faculty Association Leadership

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<tr>
<td>President</td>
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www.crbfa.org
The PDK/Gallup survey also covered the public’s attitudes toward school choice. A majority of Americans (64 percent) continue to support charter schools—similar to 63 percent in 2014—but not voucher programs. 57 percent oppose using public taxpayer dollars for private school tuition. Regarding charter schools, it’s perhaps worth noting that the survey question asked about support or opposition to the “idea” of charter schools. To parent Lisa Litvin of New York, the original purpose behind charters ‘was’ a good idea.

“Charter schools have become something that wasn’t really intended. They were supposed to be incubators for new ideas in teaching, with successful ideas being brought back to the traditional schools,” Litvin told PDK International. “But, instead, in our state, they’re becoming a permanent alternative to public schools.”

PDK International is a global network of education professionals and has conducted a poll on attitudes toward public education with the Gallup organization every year since 1969. The 2015 PDK/Gallup survey results are based on a web survey of 3,499 adults plus telephone interviews with an additional 1,001 adults.

“The results make clear what the public wants; the question is whether policymakers and leaders will respond accordingly,” said Joshua Starr, CEO of PDK International.

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**News from the President**

**Dear Colleagues,**

Well, it’s December and the holiday season is upon us. It’s a great time of year, but also a challenging time. My students are having a lot of trouble settling down and focusing on the schoolwork. How are your students and/or your children doing this holiday season? Yet, I have to admit that deep down inside, I love this time of year. Sometimes it takes a while for the magic to grab me, but it always does.

All in all I know it is truly a time to take time to be with family and friends. It is a time to be thankful for all we have, the country we live in (with all our freedoms) and all the great opportunities we enjoy. Not everyone in the world has our benefits, nor even everyone in this country. Sometimes when I hear myself complaining, I stop to think how trivial my complaint is when compared to all I have that is good and plentiful.

Many of our students will not have as great a holiday as we will. They come from many different circumstances with far less than we have. It’s not their fault they are in such a situation. It’s probably not something they have any control over nor is there much they can do to improve it. Sometimes the adults in their lives are not able to change the situation for the better, for a number of reasons. Reasons such as education, ability, opportunity, pride or other responsibilities which also have to be managed. I always try to keep this in the back of my mind when I am teaching and also when addressing student behaviors.

The work we do is so important to our students. The skills we teach them and the behaviors we teach and model for them can make all the difference in the world as to what their future and their children’s futures might be. People complain about the youth today, but so many of them are unwilling to help them to be better. That’s where we and other folks who are willing to help come in. We’re the ones who do not blame and focus on blame, but focus on real solutions and work to make it better. That’s what we do.

The recent presidential election was a surprise to me. I did not believe Donald Trump would win, but he did. I am hopeful he will do things to make this country stronger, with more employment opportunities, without destroying all that has been accomplished over the last half century. Only time will tell.

This truly is a special time. In reflection and thanksgiving, I would like to thank all our members for being the hard working professionals that they are and for their continued support. The children we serve are so much better off because of the work you do every day and dedication you have to this work. You are the ones that make public education work, regardless of what your specific role is.

I would like to again thank all the members of Rep Council. I want to especially thank all chairs and members of committees, Triad/Website included. You do so much to handle all the important jobs we ask of you. I am always impressed with the way you take on a job and follow it through to its completion. The hard work each and every one of you is what keeps this Association alive and operational. Your judgment and wise decision making at our Rep Council meetings keeps us going forward.

I would also like to thank the members of our Executive Board for all of their hard work. These are the folks who often spend many hours a week doing Association business. I’m sure it seems, some nights that the phone doesn’t stop ringing. The dedication and work they do is immeasurable.

I hope that when you see any of these folks who work so hard for you and your Association, you thank them for the fine job(s) they do. What they do is more than a job, it’s a passion. Let them know you really appreciate it.

I wish all of you the very best for the holidays and hope all your wishes come true.

*Looking Forward, Doug*
Dear Constituents:

As we head into the holiday season, I want to take a moment to wish each of you a warm and festive yuletide. Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanzaa, my well wishes are meant for all. This time of year, can become extremely busy and often we may forget to take a deep breath to just relax our tired muscles. Please take a moment to look around and remember what this season is all about. Enjoy your friends and family and forget about any worries you may have for the moment.

With the election over, and we look to the years ahead, I know there will be many changes that some of us will not be happy about. As with all change we must face these challenges with courage and strength and hope the outcome is not too detrimental to our retirement, health insurance, women’s rights or our future in education. These are huge issues that will be explored in the next four years that have me personally very nervous. We are going into uncharted waters now but we should all stay very vigilant to the democratic foundation and principles our country was built on. The Faculty Association is going to have the NY-SUT Vote Cope Coordinator, Maureen Singer come to one of our Rep Council meetings to discuss the importance of Vote Cope and how the money is spent for political endeavors. Now more than ever, we must keep forging forward to make sure our pensions are secured and our political voice is heard. More information will be coming about which monthly meeting we will have Maureen speak.

Everyone is invited to attend the meeting when it is held. On our BOCES wide staff development day, a few people contacted me that they forgot to pick up their certificate of attendance. Since I reached out to those folks I want to make sure there isn’t anyone else left in need of a certificate of participation. For all Level III Teaching Assistants you will need to keep hard copies of all professional development you have attended to meet your 100-hour requirement. If anyone else who attended needs a copy of the certificate for Trauma Awareness, please let me know and I will send one to you.

On March 3rd and 4th, a NYSUT Health and Safety Conference will be held in Saratoga at the Hilton Hotel. If anyone is interested in attending this conference, please let me know. NYSUT will also be holding a CDRO Leadership Conference with Syracuse/Utica locals in March at the Otesaga Hotel in Cooperstown. We are limited to the number of attendees since this conference is paid for by NYSUT. More information on this conference will be arriving soon.

Enjoy your holiday break everyone! Remember to find some relaxation, laughter and most of all lots of rest. If anyone has concerns, or just wants to talk you can always reach me on my cell, or by email. Looking forward to hearing from you.

In Solidarity, Colleen Condolora

Capital Region BOCES Board Meeting
November 21, 2016 – notes by Susan Kusalonis

First presentation by Communications Group to the Board on BOCES Employee Resource Tool (BERT) by Deb Bush-Sulfida, Jill Aurora, Brooks Brown, Nicole Graf, Dale Breault, Director of NERIC and Carol Ratigan, HR Assistant Director, with each presenting different parts to BERT.

After the hour long presentation a question was presented by John Burgeon as a caveat: Community – Facebook are separate categories. Could this tend to separate interests and go back to direction of silos”? His personal concern.

Deb Bush-Sulfida responded that BOCES Rules of Engagement will prevent “Facebook” type of problem!

Second presentation by Lynn Wells for the Professional Development Plan (PDP). Our PDP proposal was one of the first that theSED had approved this year. Lynn indicated that she would try to get the power point to the Board Members.

Thanks to Thomas Baumgarter (Asst. Dir. – ES & MG Services) for handling the districts that were unhappy about our classrooms closing on Nov. 8th (Election Day) and students missing an academic day. This had been done to help staff get PD hours. We are already re-thinking this for next year.

John Yagielski, Chief Executive Officer
- Thanks to School Related Paraprofessionals for their help keeping the schools running so well.
- State Budget – not doing well collecting Income Tax Revenue.
- Tax Cap – Just a bit over 1 percent – State being held to a flat budget
- We need to recognize this when we do our budgets
- Three year average 1.5%. We need to hold our increase to this or less!!

Committee Reports:
Audit – Oct. 17 minutes accepted. Internal Audit up to date. Special Ed Billing procedure was reviewed. Pulled 45 student files and found instances where billings were not being completed in an appropriate way. We self-corrected this internally. IEP’s – need to tighten up and how they are operationnalized. (Not for Itinerate Providers.)

Executive Session held to discuss a Specific Legal Issue (8 minutes)

The addendum to the Agenda on Medicaid Settlement was moved by group and passed. (The next day John Yagielski sent a letter to all staff on the $2 million dollar Medicaid settlement that we had agreed to pay.)

The rest of the agenda was passed and meeting ended at 8 PM.
Just Relax & Breathe
By Kevin Rheden, BOCES TA, Iroquois Middle School

In as little as 5 - 10 minutes a day you can, after some dedicated and extended practice, center yourself and become peacefully and mindfully prepared for any situation that may arise during your day.

Optimum time for a meditative practice is 20 – 30 minutes a day but, for persons not yet used to this experience, a mindful technique that take less time to start up is preferred. Many people find it hard to sit still for longer than 5 minutes. In order to integrate this process into your life I find that short intervals of learning, increased over time, have sometimes proven to work well.

I also believe that some people are fearful of meditation as being some sort of mind control. Well … the only one that can control your mind is you. Whatever thought you put into your mind and only you are in control of.

Which is exactly what mindfulness is all about. If you take time to be truly conscious of your thoughts, you can recognize what thoughts are beneficial to you. You can weed out negative or destructive thoughts. You can encourage and foster positive, productive thoughts. Thoughts will always be floating through your mind. Attempting to, seemingly, slow them down to discourage negative and encourage positive thought is the first step in becoming more aware as a conscious being.

Today I would like you to explore, what I refer to as “person, place or thing recall”. This is where you think of a person, place or thing (teacher, vacation, pet) that makes you feel calm, happy, safe and or relaxed. Sit quietly, perhaps with some soothing music, and ponder your chosen thought to an extreme. I like to think of a warm, sunny beach with palm trees. I take it to the extreme by visualizing a walk along that beach and all the things, sensorial, that I might come across. Imagining palm trees, hearing the wave’s pound against the beach, feeling the sand between my toes and even the smell of exotic flowers.

Practice this once a day, preferably in the am before work, for at least two weeks. Set a timer for 5 minutes each time you start. See if at the end of that period you are surprised at how quickly the 5 minutes has gone by. Raise the time you spend with this exercise by one minute each week. Also, switch out your chosen relaxing thought as you progress in order to keep your experience pleasurable and interesting.

Enjoy!
Remember, always make time to take time for yourself.
Greetings of the Season,

The holidays are upon us and we greet them with mixed emotions. For many of us, in the 70 to 90 age group, the cohesive family unit of the past has become fragmented. Many have lost their life partner. The home that once was the center of life, may have been sold and the children who squealed with delight at Santa’s gifts, now have children and grandchildren of their own. Some are off into the world pursuing their dream. The little family you began may now include grandchildren, great grandchildren, in-laws, stepchildren and step grandchildren, significant others and special friends who have become a part of your life.

Air flights, connections and long drives are ahead, with a potential snow storm that could wreak havoc to the best-made plans. A schedule of visits must be made and there can be the anticipation of situations among those in the families with unresolved issues.

Some senior retirees will face the dilemma of whether to accept an invitation to spend the holiday with children who have moved away. Children who do not see their parents often may not be aware of difficulties their parents have and that the simple act of walking, may no longer be so simple. Parents can shelter children from their problems in spite of Skype and face book. That which once would have been an easy trip may require greater endurance than some seniors have. Sadly, some will await a holiday phone call that never comes. Our heart goes out to you.

Some who are reading this, particularly younger folks, are thinking it is very pessimistic. My reply is, “Do not judge the Native American (Indian) until you have walked in his/her moccasins. As I write each month, my thoughts are of those with whom I worked, those I call “senior retirees”. For many, the circle of longtime friends has diminished and there are fewer who are still with us, who shared our history of family, good times and work. Developing new friendships is not always easy and our media reminds us often of seniors who have been scammed through phone calls, repair people and hired care givers.

So many thoughts dance through our minds at this time of year that it can overwhelm us. It helps to list concerns, set priorities and discard the minutia, as a former Director called it. Since we are people who spent many years making life better for others, we know that relationships give meaning to life, whether family, friends or new people who enter our life. For many, that is what this holiday season is all about.

Currently our retiree membership is over 300. Within our group are those I have named “junior retirees”. We have probably never met, but you filled the ranks when our generation retired and now, you have joined us. For you, it is truly the time of golden years. You are young, healthy and fulfilling the dreams that carried you through the years of work. Traveling is an adventure, the holidays are an opportunity to decorate, entertain, shop, complete projects, experience a holiday cruise, enjoy grandchildren and savor the joy of waking up each morning knowing you do not have to go to work.

You are the generation that ushered in the age of technology into the classroom. How challenging it must have been. How many workshops you must have attended. How many hundreds of hours you must have spent mastering the programs and devices, now taken for granted. There were so many colleagues who shared your frustrations and successes. Have you wondered how or where many of them are?

Our TRIAD offers you the opportunity to reconnect with those from the past. The committee invites you to join us at our informal meetings held at Maywood. We meet once a month, on a Tuesday at 4 PM, and the dates are listed on page 2 of the TRIAD. Please consider joining us and sharing your experiences of travel, family, volunteering, hobbies that have become a business venture, winning the lottery, moving or letting us know how you are doing. If you cannot meet with us, please feel free to email or US mail any articles you would like us to print. I welcome calls (356-0137) or you can send an e-mail to me or Susan, addresses on the back page.

As 2016 draws to a close, we wish you the best and may 2017 bring you good health, peace, blessings and love.

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**RETIREE UPDATES**

**Fran Yankowski**’s usually quiet home was filled with laughter and cheer as 14 members of her family and extended family, including 5 grandchildren and one great grandchild came to celebrate Thanksgiving. Fran taught nursing at the Albany Center, served for many years on the negotiating committee and as Chapter Vice President for the VOTEC (CTE) division.

In contrast, **Anita Riccio**, Teacher, Sp. Ed., her Mom, Ann, who is 99 years old and I spent a quiet afternoon catching up and remembering times past. Our friendship began almost 60 years ago when we were undergraduates at Buffalo State.

**IN MEMORIUM FROM O.D. HECK AND MAYWOOD**

Mimi Mounteer, Eileen Rankey, Joan Hassell, Gyan Khanna, Lois Gross, Pat DiCristofaro, Jan Albertini, Cathy Picard, Pat Gordon, Linda Regan, Marie Colligan, Nadene Capuano, Pat Caulford, Norman Dent, Don Hart, Brian Kenney, Stanley Christoff
On the weekend of Oct 21-23, 2016 I was able to attend this very informative conference with Colleen Condolora.

The workshop I registered for was in three parts entitled: Communications: 1. Tech 101, 2. Internal Communications. 3. Public Relations and Media.

There was a different presenter for each part. First we reviewed the use of the Facebook Page (Public) vs Group (Private) or secret. Remember, not every member is happy with the Association, be thoughtful in what you post.

1. **Tech 101** - Bryan Thomas, NYSUT Webmaster; Dean Waters, Web/Digital Coordinator

   - One suggestion was to try out “Action Network” (contact your LRS) this is through AFT and is a one way communication out to members. – Survey – Petitions – etc.
   - How about a series of members speaking about the “early days” contract negotiations, etc.
   - NYSUT site has a link for shortcuts to possible sources for union values, SRP, voter guides, social media which would be great for newsletters. Use QR codes!
   - Secret Group (most secure) Personal invitation needed to see page. Use community room to meet in.
   - How private is a Closed Group. Participants names in the group can be seen, even if they cannot see the message.
   - Have a plan in place for asking someone to leave the group if they move to administration or become unprofessional.
   - Facebook event – tweet about it to boost attendance.
   - If we need help, go to the WebMaster.NYSUT
   - Community services by members – get picture and put on page.
   - “Group Me” send out texts to a group - possibly a need volunteers, etc.

2. **Internal Communications** – Clarisse Butler Banks, NYSUT Chief Copy Desk Editor; Lisa Frenette, Writer/Editor

   Essential questions to tap into SRP strengths.

   - Who? (Determine your Audience.)
   - Why? (News travels fast. Make sure your members are getting the right message)
   - What? (Is your message to members informational? Social? Is there an ask?)
   - How? (Many communications vehicles to choose from)
   - When? (How often do you need to reach out?)

**Tricks of the Trade:**

Planning Calendars; Using recurring columns to your advantage; Top Ten Things List; pictures of problems in/around school buildings

Resources – Communications Toolkit; NYSUT United; MAC/Facebook; Member Benefits, Social Services, Research and Educational Services; AFT/NEA; Locals on Line - check out websites (puts a face to a name).

3. **Public Relations and Media** – Frank Maurizio, NYSUT Manager of Media and Web; Kara “Missy” Smith, NYSUT Writer/Editor

   In this session we learned how to write a Press Release and why they are important to get out information about our Association.

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**CTE CRBFA REPRESENTATIVE LIST 2016-2017**

Erica Kane, Chapter VP, ericalynnkane@gmail.com, (518) 224-2896

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ken Bevan—Rep</th>
<th>Erica Kane—Chapter VP</th>
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<td>New Visions</td>
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<th>Tim Roberts—Rep</th>
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<td>Building C &amp; D</td>
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If you work in the buildings or program listed above, please feel free to contact your Rep with any questions or concerns.
The TRIAD is published monthly for the Capital Region BOCES Faculty Association Membership. We appreciate any comments or suggestions you may have.

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- Gretchen McDonough and Transition Class

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**YOU’RE INVITED TO A POST HOLIDAY PARTY ON JANUARY 20TH AT WOLFF 111 STARTING AT 3 PM. PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR AND COME ENJOY THE COMPANY OF YOUR CO-WORKERS.**

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**Useful Websites**

**Productivity booster:** Create to-do lists (for holiday needs, work projects, groceries, etc.), assign due dates, get reminders and share with others if you wish. Works across all major desktop and mobile devices. [WunderList.com](http://WunderList.com)

**Tech tricks:** Smart ways to speed up slow Macs or PCs...tax from a smartphone...lock kids out of tech devices...stay safe when using hotel WI-FI...improve Android battery life...edit iPhone photos...more. [HowToGeek.com](http://HowToGeek.com)

**Preserve digital memories:** How to archive and maintain digital photos, video, audio and e-mail. From the US Library of Congress. [DigitalPreservation.gov/personalarchiving](http://DigitalPreservation.gov/personalarchiving)

**Party games for the family:** “Honey, I Love You” smile game...King Elephant...photo/video scavenger hunts...relays...etc. [http://extension.illinois.edu/party/games.cfm](http://extension.illinois.edu/party/games.cfm)

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**Sunshine Chairperson**

If you know of someone who could use a little cheering up, our sympathy, or a get well card, please contact:
- Abby Fischer 518-221-1237, abby.fischer5@gmail.com

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