

# BTA Newsletter

MAY, 1968

No. 3, Vol. 2

## BTA Negotiates A Comprehensive 1968-1969 Agreement

by Harold Schwinger, North Jr. High School

After more than two months of arduous meetings between the B.T.A. and the School Board Negotiating Teams, a tentative contractual agreement encompassing terms and conditions of employment was reached and subsequently was approved by the Board of Education and ratified by the general membership of the Brentwood Teachers Association by a vote of 606 to 80. Good faith on both sides of the bargaining table, plenty of strong coffee, and a genuine desire to reach agreements which would enhance the quality of education in Brentwood proved to be the winning formula. The members of the B.T.A. Negotiating Team were Messrs. Martz, DiPietro, Shreckengost, Weitzman, Schwinger and Miss Seiden and representing the Board were Messrs. Smith, Hoff, Mauro, Mrowka and Saikin.

One of the significant outcomes of this agreement is the recognition of the teacher as a participant in decisions and policies which influence his professional effectiveness and the quality of education in the district. In virtually every area, from the classroom to the various administrative levels, the role of the teacher as a participating professional has been enhanced.

Because of the voluminous nature of the contract, space will permit only a brief summary of some of the new conditions effective as of July 1, 1968. All personnel will shortly receive a printing of the entire document.

The contract provides for total recognition of the Brentwood Teachers Association to act as the legally authorized representative of the faculty. It establishes a grievance procedure with binding arbitration as a final step when all other levels have failed to produce an equitable solution. At the present time, the Board is empowered to render a unilateral final decision.

The limits of the work year and work day have been defined in the contract. The work year of teachers shall begin no earlier than one day prior to the opening of school and shall end no later than the last student attendance day. The work day will not exceed six hours and forty-five minutes with certain exceptions as elaborated in Article 4.

In the areas of class size and pupil load, limitations have been set. Although these limitations fall short of our proposals, the basis for improvement in the near future has been promulgated. Every effort will

be made to keep the size of classes within the desired minimum and maximum range with a limit set for non-optimum conditions.

Among other gains registered was the increase from 1% to 1.5% in the number of teachers who may be granted sabbaticals in any one year. Teachers with seven years of service in Brentwood may qualify for 6-month or full year sabbaticals.

The sick leave policy of ten days per year accumulative to 150 days remains unchanged. However, in addition to the two personal days allowable per year, up to five personal days with full pay will be granted for death in the immediate family and one day will be allowed for death of relatives other than the immediate family. The new contract also provides some protection for the teacher stricken with an extended illness which is defined as an illness of more than 30 days duration. Compensation will be paid in proportion to the possible number of sick days accumulated less actual days taken. For example, a teacher with ten years of service in Brentwood could have accumulated 100 days of sick leave. Let us assume that he has taken a total of 10 days. In case of an extended illness, this teacher would be entitled to 90 days at full pay and then, if the disability should continue, he could receive up to 90 additional days at 90% of his current salary. The salary is determined by the percentage of unused sick leave. In this illustration only 10% was taken, resulting in the 90% figure.

The District will assume a larger proportion of health insurance payments. In most cases, the insurance for unmarried teachers will be paid in full by the District. In family-type policies, approximately 60% will be covered by the District, compared to the current 40% now being paid.

The salary schedule which has been adopted for the next school year compares favorably with most L. I. districts. A variable index has been applied to the schedule. The index increases from 5% to 5.25% at the 4th step and to 5.5% at the 8th step. In the horizontal column, the index moves from 5% to 5.25% at the M.A. 15 level. A twentieth year increment of \$500 has been added to the schedule.

The role of the teacher in such vital areas as curriculum, selection of textbooks, building facilities and supplies, vacancies and promotions, transfers, evaluations, and assignments has been defined and expanded. Teachers are urged to familiarize themselves with current district policies by carefully reading the total contract. The members of the Negotiating Committee wish to thank the membership of the B.T.A. for the confidence it has placed in it and it trusts that it has justified this confidence. An important step on the road to real professionalism has been taken which we hope will firmly establish the reputation of Brentwood as a leader in educational excellence.

HAROLD SCHWINGER,  
North Jr. High



Mr. James G. Lynch, President of the School Board, signs the Contract as Dr. Nannini and BTA President Dave Martz look on approvingly. The agreement was signed by the Board of Education and the Association on April 3, 1968, at approximately 11:00 p.m.



## New Grievance Procedure

The procedure for adjudicating a grievance with the Administration is detailed in the Contract which will be made available to the entire professional staff. Dr. Nannini has agreed that this procedure will go into effect immediately even though the Contract is not effective until July 1, 1968.

The organization of its Grievances Committees by the BTA has undergone a drastic change. This was necessary because, under the Taylor Law, the BTA has become the sole bargaining agent for all teachers.

The BTA Delegates in each school now constitute the School Grievance Committee in each building. Every effort should be made by this committee to settle grievances at the building level. If the grievance cannot be resolved at this level, it must be submitted in writing to the District Grievance Committee.

The District Grievance Committee consists of six members appointed by the BTA Executive Council. All grievances and/or questions should be addressed to the Chairman of this committee, Sam Weitzman, at West Jr. High School.

### Brentwood Teachers Association

P. O. Box 33

Brentwood, N. Y. 11717

President ..... David Martz  
 Vice President ..... Joseph Gerbino  
 Treasurer ..... Joseph Basso  
 Recording Secretary ..... Shirley Seiden  
 Financial Secretary ..... Marion Gray  
 Corresponding Secretary .... Anita Alleyne

BTA Newsletter Editor (Publicity  
 Chairman) — Lois Morella, Laurel Park  
 Co-Editor — Nick Siciliano, Ross  
 Building

(The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and are not necessarily those held by the Brentwood Teachers Association.)

## Editorial Comment

### "We Too, Should Have a Dream"

It has been several weeks since the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Yet, in spite of our nation's egress of sorrow, what has been done to bring his dream to reality? Perhaps, we should all examine our own consciences for the answer to this disturbing question which, nonetheless, must be asked.

We, as educators, are in a unique and prominent position as we can do much to change our society. The following statement by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York fittingly epitomizes my feelings:

"The elimination of racial prejudice, discrimination, and injustice is the great moral and social imperative of our time. The most powerful and effective means of achieving this objective is education."

On Tuesday, April 9, the day of Dr. King's burial, I attended a special memorial ceremony in the Walt Whitman High School auditorium. Huntington, which was sponsored by the Nassau and Suffolk Zones of NYSTA. Mrs. Catherine Barrett, President of NYSTA, spoke on the urgency of every teacher to rededicate himself to the elimination of racial prejudice. Mrs. Barrett's address had a profound effect on all when she concluded by saying:

"... let us with renewed vigor get about this task, bringing to bear the full strength of our profession in correcting the ills and injustices of today's society. This indeed will be building a true and lasting memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King, who believed so completely in the brotherhood and equality of mankind that he gave to it the last full measure of devotion—his life."

As we are all individuals involved in diverse situations, how we meet the challenge will vary greatly. Nevertheless, WE MUST TRY! Whether it be in our interactions with children or colleagues or in the expression of our attitudes and opinions, we must set an example for all that will be worthy of imitation.

In conclusion, I would like to share with you some ideas which John Dewey expressed in his educational treatise, **Democracy and Education**. Although published almost 25 years ago, perhaps today, these thoughts hold even a deeper meaning. Dewey viewed the school as a great "steadying and integrating" institution which has the prime task of eliminating, so far as possible, the "unworthy features of the existing environment..." In its role as an equalizing agent, the school also is to "balance the various elements in the social environment, and to see to it that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born..."

Reflect on Dewey's concept of education and sincerely rededicate yourself to a plan of action which will eradicate the "mental and moral hole" which has awaited filling too long!

LOIS MORELLA, Editor  
 Laurel Park School

## MR. SONDERLING RESIGNS AFTER 27 YEARS OF SERVICE

Mr. Edward Sonderling, a trustee of the Brentwood School District for the past 27 years, resigned on March 1.

Edward Sonderling was appointed a trustee on February 17, 1941. In 1952 he was elected President of the Board of Trustees. As president, Mr. Sonderling guided the District for fourteen years.

During his 27 years of service, Mr. Sonderling has seen Brentwood grow from a school district with two schools housing 216 students and nine teachers into the largest on Long Island and the seventh largest in New York State. Presently, the District has 20,016 students housed in nineteen schools, and taught by 1,200 teachers.

For his years of dedicated service, a testimonial dinner honoring Mr. Sonderling will be held on June 5th, at the Huntington Towne House. The cocktail hour will start at 7:30 p.m. The menu will be a full course prime rib dinner. Tickets are \$10.00 per person and are available by contacting:

Joe Gerbino, 273-6600 (BTA-South Jr.  
 High School)



After 27 years of service as a trustee of the Brentwood School District, Edward Sonderling resigned on Mar. 1.



## BTA Spotlights –

### The Laurel Park Language Arts Fair

#### “IT WAS A HAPPENING”



In the Instructional Media Center, many communications media were on display.

The time was 5:15 P. M. on the eve of the Easter vacation. The place was the Laurel Park teachers' room. A weary group of die hard staff members had just completed the last arrangements for the 'big night.' Low, weary, discouraged conversation barely could be heard above the hum of the coke machine.

“Well, we're ready for them.

Yeah, but who'll come out on the eve of Easter vacation?

You're right—all this work for nothing.

Oh, I wouldn't say that—the kids had a ball.

That's right. They really dug in and what ideas they came up with!

Whose crazy idea was this Language Arts Fair?

Oh, you know that nutty principal and G.I.S. get an idea and run around getting everybody all hopped up!

Yeah — when it started I didn't know what I was going to do.

Don't feel badly—they didn't either.

Well, it was fun and I believe the kids learned a lot. Besides they had a good time coming up with different ways of showing what this reading, writing and communicating are all about.

But nobody'll know.

Too bad we had to switch the night.”

Then it started to happen. Parents came; children came; grandparents, aunts and uncles came. It was early and yet they were arriving. People from the community who had no children in the school; teachers and supervisors from other schools; babies pushed in strollers; even an elderly gent on crutches—he was almost de-crutched.

Soon the halls were overflowing; the classes were overflowing; the cafeteria was jammed and a brisk business in coffee and began to develop.

The tired, weary teachers began to circulate; more teachers arrived; and the secretarial and custodial staff went into action. The classrooms, library, clinic, gym and every crook and cranny were manned by staff and parents and children hosts and hostesses. What a night to remember!

There was the Scandinavian Festival and Smorgasbord by a sixth grade class. The teacher was afraid the many non-parents would eat up all the goodies and she had to post a guard at the door.

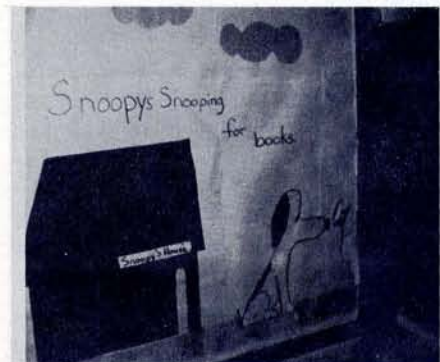
There was the first grade Jolly Circus playlet and dance and this time the lion trainer didn't whip the lions too hard.

There was the Instructional Media Center (I almost said Library) with the many communications media on display — This place got so crowded we had to hold up the ingress until we improved the egress.

There was the third grade play, *Sleeping Beauty*, being performed on stage in the gym. Oh, how the audience applauded when the Prince woke the young Princess with a kiss! You'd have thought Richard Burton bussed Elizabeth Taylor!

What consternation when the star of *Charlotte's Web* came down with the measles and the new, young fourth grade teacher had to rush in an understudy.

There was the ditto room serving as a Little Theater where slides of the children



Such a creative and contemporary bulletin board certainly would stimulate any child to explore the fascinating "world of books."



Wilbur the Pig is made ready for the presentation of A. A. Milne's children's classic, *CHARLOTTE'S WEB*.

preparing for the Fair were being shown to the accompaniment of taped selections from former musical programs.

There was classroom after classroom with the many wonderful, creative efforts of the children on display. In one room a diorama peep show with back-up lighting; in another the many authors' replies to the children's letters were posted on the bulletin boards. Some rooms had the taped voices of the children in choral reading, poetry recitation or plays.

It was all wonderful and rewarding and exciting and fun and most of all, a lot of learning for the children and the parents and all of us.

By eleven o'clock, after the last parent had been politely shoved out the door, the sound of a few of those same weary voices could be heard again over the same hum of the coke machine.

“Would you believe .....

What are you going to do on your vacation?

Me? I'm going to sleep for a week!

Now it was over and all that remained was the good feeling of a job well done and the knowledge that parents and children and teachers had had a chance to share in an exciting happening.

And the hum of the coke machine.

JOHN MEADE  
Principal  
Laurel Park



## Calendar For The School Year 1968-1969

As this issue is of interest to all, below is the 1968-1969 School Calendar:

### September

- 3 Orientation Day
- 4 First Day of School
- 23-24 Rosh Hashanah
- 27 First Attendance Period

### October

- 2 Yom Kippur
- 25 Second Attendance Period

### November

- 1 All Saints Day
- 5 Election Day
- 11 Veterans Day
- 28-29 Thanksgiving Recess
- 29 Third Attendance Period

### December

- 23-31 Christmas Recess
- 29 Fourth Attendance Period

### January

- 1 New Years Day
- 31 Fifth Attendance Period

### February

- 12 Lincoln's Birthday
- 28 Sixth Attendance Period

### March

- 24 Teachers Conference Day
- 28 Seventh Attendance Period

### April

- 3-11 Easter Recess
- 25 Eighth Attendance Period

### May

- 15 Ascension Thursday
- 30 Memorial Day
- 30 Ninth Attendance Period

### June

- 16-20 Regents Examinations
- 20 Last Day of Classes
- 27 Tenth Attendance Period

Total Days — 181 School Days — 1 Conference Day — Holidays

Emergency Days — There are two (2) allocated emergency days. If a third day is needed, it will be May 15, Ascension Thursday. Four or more days will be taken from the Easter Recess, starting with the last day and working backward.

## New Appointments Announced

The Board of Education of the Brentwood School District recently announced two new appointments.

Mr. Thomas Hastings was appointed to the position of Director of Personnel for the District effective July 1, 1968. Mr. Hastings has been with the District since

1955 and has been the Administrative Assistant for Pupil Personnel Services since July, 1956. In his new capacity Mr. Hastings will be responsible for the recruiting of teachers and the hiring of the non-professional staff. In addition, he will implement personnel policies for the Brentwood schools.

Appointed as principal of the 2,800 pupil high school is Mr. John Mrowka. Mr. Mrowka is presently the principal of the North Junior High School and has been with the District since September, 1956. The appointment takes effect July 1, 1968.

## SABBATICAL LEAVES FOR 1968-1969 ANNOUNCED

The Sabbatical Leave Committee has completed its screening of Sabbatical Leave requests for the school year 1968-1969. The committee consisted of John F. X. Finan—Administration; and Dave Martz, Ed Hardman, and Nick Siciliano—BTA. The committee based its recommendations on the current Sabbatical Leave Policy approved by the Board of Education on June 17, 1966. "Priorities for Sabbatical Leave are based upon seniority in the Brentwood Schools and the ultimate contribution to the educational program of the school district." In addition, the committee requested further information from the applicants, as well as supportive letters of recommendation from principals and/or supervisors.

The following teachers have been granted Sabbatical Leave:

- Mildred Tobias — Fall 1968 Semester; Reading Program; Adelphi
- Sidney Jones — 1968-1969 (Full Year); Mathematics Courses; Columbia
- James Crane — Fall 1968 Semester; Biological Sciences; Stonybrook
- John Riley — Spring 1969; Masters Degree; Queens College
- Joseph Gerbino — Spring 1969; Doctoral Studies, University of Florence
- Ambrose Hickey — Spring 1969; Spanish Language and Culture; University of Madrid
- Gilda Mantin — Spring 1969; Masters Program; Stonybrook
- Miriam Schoenbrun — 1968-1969 (Full Year); Masters Degree; Hofstra
- Richard Gell — Fall 1968; Speech Rehabilitation; University of Sorbonne
- Richard Horne — Spring 1969; Music Education; Columbia

## Retirement Board Submits Non-Contributory 25-Year, Half-Pay Retirement Plan

The Retirement Board has submitted a new basic retirement plan for the State's public school teachers to the State Legislature which would provide non-contributory, half-pay retirement after 25 years of teaching with additional benefits for longer service.

The new plan, if approved, will elimin-

ate the need for contributions by members and guarantee half-pay retirement with 25 years of service. It would go into effect on July 1, 1968. Under the plan, all members would be able to retire at age 55 or after 30 years of service at any age.

Included in the plan is an improved death benefit of up to three years of salary rather than the present maximum of two years.

In addition, the basic plan would be retroactive to 1959 and all contributions by members from that time until the new plan is effective would be used to purchase additional annuity for the member at the time of retirement.

"Death Gamble," disability, and vesting features of the present plan are retained in the proposed program and the latter two would be priority items for liberalization at the earliest possible time.

The proposed program is a result of a thorough study of the present plan, requested by the Board. In authorizing the study, the Board had specified it was most interested in accomplishing the following objectives in any new plan that was formulated: Simplicity and ease in understanding by members and administering by staff; non-contribution by members; improvement of benefits. These objectives are met in the proposal.

The proposed plan is called the "1/50th, 1/60th, 1/70th Service Retirement Plan." Specifically, it provides a wholly non-contributory retirement allowance of 1/50th of final average salary for each of a teacher's first 25 years of service, plus an allowance of 1/60th of final average salary for the 26th through 35th years, and 1/70th of final average salary for each year of service beyond 35 years. Final average salary at present is based upon a teacher's highest five consecutive years of salary. However, the Board also has submitted to the Legislature a bill which would establish Final Average Salary as any three consecutive years.

The retroactive features of the new plan were adopted to ensure that no member suffered any diminishment of benefits. However, in order to provide additional assurances that this will be so in all cases, the bill has a built-in "grandfather clause," which protects benefits earned under the present dual-contributory plan.

In approving the new plan, the Board noted the following:

1. For the first time in the history of the System, a retirement plan would be provided which is simple and readily understandable, and which would make it possible for every member to compute his own retirement allowance at any time.

2. The new program would provide, for the first time, a non-contributory plan, with uniform benefits, for the State's public school teachers, at the lowest possible cost to school boards.

3. The plan would achieve what has always been an implicit intention of the System, a uniform half-pay service retirement allowance.

4. The entire retirement allowance under the proposed plan would be based upon final average salary, rather than just the pension portion of the allowance as under the present plan, which has resulted in significant gaps between pension and annuity when teachers reach retirement age.



## On the Role of the Teacher—

(Part Two in  
a Series of Articles)

### “Member of the Teaching Profession”

The teacher depends on the help of others for a host of his requirements, from buildings and salaries to professional preparation and specialized assistance. Good teaching requires the ability to take advantage of the professional assistance that is available. A large part of good administration is the ability to mobilize the resources that support teachers and to assist teachers in putting them to good use.

To improve his competence a teacher can turn to workshops, courses, the constructive advice of colleagues, procedures for analyzing his own teaching, and a growing variety of teaching and learning technology. For attainment of the working conditions and salaries that good teaching requires and deserves, he must work with his professional organizations. For specialized assistance with classroom problems, he can turn to his curriculum specialists, principal, librarian, speech therapist, or psychiatrist. For new ideas and for refinement of his own, he can engage in discussions with other teachers.

As a member of the teaching profession, a teacher —

1. Shares his thinking and experience with his colleagues, recognizing in this regard a particular obligation to newcomers
2. Tries to benefit from the thinking and experience of his colleagues
3. Develops his own conception of where group efforts are appropriate and necessary
4. Belongs to local, state, and/or national organizations of teachers if he believes that they do or can promote the interests of education and of teachers
5. Plays an active role in shaping those organizations and in contributing to those activities which he considers beneficial to education and to teachers
6. Has a commitment to the achievement of the salaries, working conditions, and other policies he believes necessary for the improvement of education, motivating and moderating each action by an effort to make the interests of teachers consistent with the interests of pupils.

Some teachers lack the time or interest to participate in group activities that would advance the cause of education or even improve their own teaching. Historically, a teacher's role has largely been limited to direction of the learning process in the classroom. This remains a teacher's central role today. Although teachers are increasingly aware that they can play another important role in improvement of the learning process if they engage in professional activities outside the classroom as well, many teachers continue to show little awareness of this connection. They may ignore their colleagues and live an isolated professional life. They may fail to join any professional organization, not because they have thoughtfully evaluated the place of group effort but because they are basically uninterested. They may join a professional organization, but may limit

their participation to the paying of the annual dues. They may be interested in professional activities, but only for purposes of achieving publicity or personal power.

Teacher education should do more to make teachers aware of the impact that extra-classroom professional activities can have on their success in the classroom. School administrators should encourage the participation of teachers in such activities. But teacher educators and administrators must not dictate the organizational activities of teachers. They should encourage and help teachers to think seriously about the proper place of group activities and to draw their own conclusions.

School administrators should encourage classroom teachers to share ideas and to consider in particular what they might do to help newcomers to the faculty. Not only can teachers often profit from the specific ideas and suggestions of their colleagues, but also an atmosphere of fellowship in a school is conducive to good teaching.

Teachers could be most helpful in improving teacher education. In the matter of their preparation for teaching, many teachers tend more to complain to each other and to other citizens than to present their suggestions where they might do some good. This problem could be countered if teacher education institutions were to consider their alumni to be their best resources for improvement and were regularly to request both criticism and suggestions.

(Reprinted in part from a pamphlet distributed by the Educational Policies Commission).

## “So What's the Dance Program?”

by Marion Gray,

Dance Program Coordinator

Once again the BTA Dance Program draws to a successful close. This Program grows larger each year; now we have seven dance teachers. These teachers work under the direction of Mrs. Daurice Snyder. Mrs. Snyder and the teachers are all to be congratulated — this year over seven hundred children are completing a year's instruction and will be dancing in the spring recitals.

The Dance Program sponsored by the BTA has a two-fold value to Brentwood and its students. First, the children are given the opportunity to study under able teachers, near to their homes, at a reasonable price. Second, Brentwood graduates are granted scholarships toward their college education. Last year, these scholarships came to the impressive figure of \$5,000 — most of which was accumulated by the Dance Program and Recitals. Twenty-four scholarships were issued in June 1967; the face value of the scholarships ranged from \$100 to \$400.

The recitals are held in May and June. This is where assistance from faculty members is needed. The May recital, held the 18th and 19th at 1:30 P. M. in the Sonderling Auditorium, is danced by three hundred future ballerinas, ages four to seven. The June 8th and 9th recitals are at the same time and the same place. This is

when about four hundred children, ages seven and older, will dance. Adult supervision is needed. If you can spare three hours of your time to assist this noteworthy program, call the BTA Office (273-4402) and give your name, telephone number and choice of dates to the secretary. Or call Marion Gray at Laurel Park School (Ext. 465). Besides having spent a thoroughly enjoyable and delightful day, I can guarantee you that you will also have that proud feeling of “a job well done”

(Editor's Note — How about some well deserved praise for Marion Gray! As BTA Financial Secretary and Dance Program Coordinator, Mrs. Gray is once again to be commended for her proficient and experienced coordination of the Dance Program. Under her direction for the past six years, the BTA's contribution to student scholarships has soared from \$1,000 to more than \$5,000 a year.)

## Calendar for Educators

### MAY

- 2-4—New York State Association for Childhood Education—Tarrytown
- 3—State FTA Conference—Syracuse
- 3-4—Association of Mathematics Teachers of New York State—Syracuse
- 4—New York Association of Public School Adult Educators—Kiamasha Lake
- 5-7—New York State Attendance Teachers Association—Buffalo
- 9-11—New York State Association for Student Teaching—Albany
- 10-11—New York Association of FFA — Syracuse
- 16-19—New York State School Nurse Teachers Association—Lake Placid
- 16-19—FHA Meeting — Saratoga Springs
- 19-22—National Congress of Parents and Teachers—San Diego, California
- 24-25—New York State Educators of the Emotionally Disturbed — Columbia University, New York City
- 26-29—Association for Educational Data Systems—San Antonio, Texas

### JUNE

- 9-12—Annual Health Conference — Rochester
- 16-28—National Training Laboratories (9th Annual Laboratory for Leadership in Higher Education)—Bethel, Maine
- 16-28—National Training Laboratories (22nd Annual Summer Laboratory in Human Relations Training-Session I)—Bethel, Maine
- 16-Aug. 9—National Training Laboratories (Laboratory Internships on Educational Change) — Bethel, Maine
- 17-21—Regents Examinations
- 18-21—National Council of Teachers of Mathematics — Honolulu, Hawaii
- 23-29—American Association of School Librarians — Kansas City, Missouri
- 23-29—Students NEA Conference — Houston, Texas
- 24-28—American Home Economics Association — Minneapolis, Minnesota
- 24-July 3—Workshop on Value Clarification — Rochester
- 25-29—NCTEPS State TEPS Chairman and Consultants Meeting — St. Paul, Minnesota
- 30-July 5—National Education Association Convention — Dallas, Texas



## Role of the ATTENDANCE TEACHER

What sets the Attendance Teacher apart from the other school services? We speak of a lawyer practicing law; we will speak of the Attendance Teacher practicing attendance.

The primary role of the Attendance Teacher is found in the certification requirements where we are charged with the responsibility "of discovering, diagnosing and dealing with the causes of non-attendance."

"Cause" is the key word which differentiates the professional Attendance Teacher from the person who merely accepts excuse for school absence.

Once we have discovered the symptoms of school absence, we look for the cause and do something about it. This is where professional skill and experience play a large part. We have to be skilled in interviewing, counselling, and casework procedure. We have to have a good knowledge of child development. We must visit the home situation and become familiar with the problems and the people involved, so that all can work together for an effective solution.

Let us look at the variety of causes that may be involved.

Some may be physical: You discover a child is not really sick, but lacks clothing. Or the problem may center around a mother who keeps the child home to babysit while she goes out to work or to a social meeting.

Often marital difficulties affect the children. One or both parents may reject the child. Counselling can help resolve the problem or encourage referral.

Many times the cause lies in the child. Perhaps the family has just moved in and the child can't adjust to his new school or has some learning difficulty. We must find the cause of the problem and help correct it. We help recognize the problem and get the parents to solve it.

The real problems call for skills in counselling and casework.

I can give one of many examples of the Attendance Teacher in action.

This particular case involved a twelve year old, junior high school boy, who was truant three days a short time after the family had moved into the district. In an interview with the boy the Attendance Teacher noticed he was hostile to his stepfather. A visit to the home showed the basic problem was there.

The mother revealed that since her remarriage the boy and the stepfather were extremely hostile toward each other. That the boy resented the stepfather's strict discipline.

Clearly this family was in need of counselling. The Attendance Teacher saw the boy in school regularly and his parents weekly. Instead of being truant the child began to act out in classes with strict men teachers.

Pressure on the boy lessened so that he learned to live with his problem and his behavior and attendance improved.

Daily, the Attendance Teacher must supplement professional skill with patience and courage in the face of indifference and physical threat implementing certification requirements of "discovering, diagnosing and dealing with the causes of non-attendance."

RUDY PELUSO  
Attendance Supervisor

## 11 Month School Year— Boon or Boondoggle?

Much has been written, of late, about plans to extend the school year. The latest is to extend the school year from the present 10 months or about 180 days to 11 months or about 210 days. The state education department recommendation, sent to the legislature, was based on a four year study which suggested that such an innovation would help slow learners and disadvantaged children, as well as providing an opportunity to improve the quality of education. This latest plan is being tested by four Long Island school districts, including Syosset and Commack. The Wyandanch school district applied for funds from the state education department to conduct classes on both the elementary and secondary level. The program was approved, but school officials are not sure it will "get off the ground" because Albany has been quoted as saying that the state budget is "very tight." Wyandanch officials were interested in testing the theory that this program could help culturally disadvantaged children whose education comes to an "abrupt, complete and harmful halt in the summer." New York City plans to open an 11 month school program in September, 1968 in a new High School in Coney Island.

Whether the 11 month program is good, bad or indifferent; boon or boondoggle, seems to depend on very personal criteria and reactions. This reporter went a-cruising about town, and the district, asking—"What do you think of the 11 month school year?" Herewith is a sampling of the answers.

Administrator—I don't like the idea because it will produce more headaches than it can solve. Staffing alone will be havoc. Teachers aren't going to go for it after the fight they've put up for the 10 month year. Taxpayers will balk at the added expense.

H. S. Student—It sounds good when you first hear it, but to really do it—go to school for another month and in hot weather, for a full day—no thanks. Summer school was rough enough and I only had one subject.

Parent—It would be great, just great, really. This is one way to get the kids off the streets and into something worthwhile. Jobs are so hard to find today and activities are too few, too expensive and too far away for the most part.

Teacher—I like the idea. Think of all the extras that could be put in the course. Things there simply isn't time for now.

Administrator—I like the idea. The average child is too long away from books now. By the time he returns in September, he's forgotten everything he knew in June,—or darn near it.

Administrator—I'm ambivalent,—it sounds like it might be workable and educationally sound, but to tell the truth, I'd regret losing part of my summer activities with my own children.

Jr. H. S. Student—NO, NO, NO,—I like my vacation just like it is,—LONG.

Sr. H. S. Student — I'm not sure. It might

be good for the poorer students — if they'd go and if they'd study—but then, if they did that for 10 months would they need the extra one? Then too, if the better students use it like they say —for advancement—you could end up graduating from high school at 16. That's too young to go to work and the colleges are too full now. So, what would we do then?

Elementary School Students—I wouldn't mind; summer isn't so great unless you go away with your friend to camp. But the schools get awful hot in hot weather. They would have to get fans or air conditioners—maybe we could go in shorts?

Parent—I think the trimester is better—that way you use the schools all year round, like the colleges.

Parent—It might work and it would give me another month of freedom. Vacations are too long now.

Parent—I'm not sure how I feel about the idea. What I am sure of—is that like every other idea about school. It's going to cost me more money, and I never find out why!

Teacher—I don't believe in it. As with every other "Brainstorm," this one will only help the bright child. The poorer students and the so-called "disadvantaged" will end up in the corner doing nothing for another month. It will turn into a massive baby-sitting project. Let them come up with ideas about how to do a better job of teaching in the 10 months we have now.

Do you have any friends or relatives living in the districts now experimenting with the 11 month school year? How do they like it? What do their children think of it? What is your reaction to the idea? What do your students think about it? How do your neighbors feel? Let us know—we'll publish the feedback. Is it a Boon or a Boondoggle?

by Kathy Kruckel,  
North Jr. High

(Editor's Note — Why not use the BTA Newsletter as a "sounding-board!" Send your views on the 11 Month School Year to Lois Morella, Laurel Park School.)

### Tax-Sheltered Annuity Program

The opportunity to participate in the Tax-Sheltered Annuity Program for teachers starting this coming school year has been opened up again. The deadline for signing up for this program is June 15, 1968. For any information call Sam Weitzman at West Jr. High School.