

FOCUS

ON JERICHO TEACHERS AND THEIR ISSUES

March 2009

President's Message for March

By Maryann Risi

For 18 years, I have been a proud member of the Jericho Teachers Association. This weekend was the first time that I had my pride shaken to its roots. During the previous few weeks, I had sent out emails explaining the importance of attendance at a rally to be held in Farmingdale. This plea was echoed in an email from the Superintendent. When I arrived at Allen Park at 11am, I was amazed at the crowd of teachers from districts all over the island. Some had arrived in buses from eastern Suffolk. Most were gathered by district in groups of twenty or more. I also spied parents from the Jericho PTA who had read my email and arrived with their children. As I walked around the park looking for the Jericho "contingent," much to my surprise and disappointment, there was none. After a few trips around the perimeter, I was elated to meet up with Candy Barko (HS Guidance), John Russo (Jackson Music) and Jeff Shanzer (Cantiague Art). We all waited and watched for more JTA members but, alas, no one else joined us. I sincerely thank these three members for the

generous gift of their time on Saturday morning. I thank anyone else who may have been there but I missed in the large crowd. I wish I could say the same to many more. We, in Jericho, have always been known as a tight knit unit. I'd like to believe that is closer to the truth than what I saw on Saturday. Our history has proven that when push came to shove we were there to shove (politely and professionally, of course!). I am hopeful that the next time there is a call for our assistance we will be more willing to answer it.

On another not so positive theme, I received the final list of those who have opted into the Phase I portion of our R&D cycle. Out of 302 members, only 238 have signed up. Colleagues, these are your funds. Why are you giving them up?

I promise to try to find a silver lining and be more positive in the next issue of the Focus!

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Homework Online

by Denise Ryder

Beginning Monday, February 23 middle and high school teachers posted course outlines and

homework on *BlackBoard*. So far, no casualties. Why the word "casualties?" Because I really thought we'd

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Homework Online (*continued*)

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have had at least one heart attack from all the stress this has caused! After Mark Steinberger's little training sessions, I thought the anxiety level went down a bit. His handouts and his instructions could not have been more clear and concise - four steps to posting a course outline (a one-shot or once-per-year deal) and seven steps (really four steps) to posting homework (I say four steps because step 4 starts with "If needed," step 5 says "Ignore the options," and step 7 just says "The homework is posted." Did I just give a compliment? *Yes I did!*

At our Delegate Assembly meeting Wednesday I heard that some of our elementary teachers are still stressing.

You can do a lot with *BlackBoard*. You can also do very little. By contract, we are required to do very little. Do not lose sight of that! One of the issues, possibly, is that we (the faculty as a whole, elementary through high school) are not generally used to doing the bare minimum. As professionals we see the educational potential of *BlackBoard*, all the things we could do if we had time and training. We may see some of our colleagues doing really amazing things. Maybe fulfilling the minimum requirements doesn't sit well with us. Face it, we are all a bunch of overachievers!

We also don't like being told what to do, and that's what "Appendix A" ended up feeling like. But if you recall, we were advised by legal counsel that if we didn't allow them be more specific in the languaging of the contract, it wouldn't fly. It was necessary to let the District add the word "materials" before the word "homework" list *what they wanted that to mean* (note the italics).

Let's again examine the words in the contract, and break it down:

"The District will provide and the teachers will use technology that allows homework material (examples: worksheets, articles, reference materials), other than textbook materials, to be copied, emailed and attached to the District server."

The contract says homework material "other than textbook material" because textbook material is clearly copyrighted. That leaves "worksheets, articles, reference materials"). Worksheets, unless you made them yourself, articles, unless you wrote them yourself, and reference materials, unless you are a publishing company with a death wish, are also copyrighted. Just because we have the technology to do something, and they would like us to do it, doesn't mean its legal. I can scan an article but that does not give me the right to distribute it digitally. The fact that *BlackBoard* is a "closed system" only makes it less likely that *you* will be caught if *you* do distribute copyrighted materials (again, note the italics).

What does that leave you to post? Mostly page numbers. Maybe some reminders.

My daughter goes to a small private school in Suffolk county (she's in the second grade). Her teacher posts 15 words vocabulary words (which takes about a minute to type) and all the page numbers from the various workbooks for the week. Even if my daughter forgets her agenda, as long as she remembers

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Save the Date!
End of Year Celebration
Thursday, June 11th
Fox Hollow Country Club 4-7:30
\$50.00 Open Bar



Homework Online (*continued*)

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her books, we can still do the homework. If she forgets her book, well, that still involves phone calls (and faxing), but with the assignment posted on the Web, we at least have a fighting chance!

Remember, less is more. And worth 15 hours!

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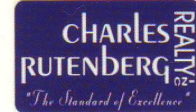


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got nanny?

ARE YOUR KIDS ALL GROWN UP?

DOES YOUR CHILDCARE PROVIDER NEED A JOB?

We are expecting our third child in July and are looking for a reliable caregiver to watch our kids at home beginning in September. (Ages 3.5 to newborn.)

Please call Jim & Stephanie Shotter. (631) 592-8022.

Email: sshotter@optonline.net