

## President's Message By, Rich Shands

I have been fortunate to work with many great teacher aides and assistants throughout my career. Our schools would not stand a chance without them. My true partner (work wife) though has been Regina Pope. Regina is retiring this year and will be sorely missed by all of us. She has worked in the district for 21 years, first as a part-time teacher aide and then as a teaching assistant. She received tenure in 2007. Regina has been in all kinds of different self-contained and integrated classrooms. She has worked with numerous teachers in her 21 years. She has been a big part of our high school community, serving as a club advisor and stepping up whenever something needed to be done.

We first met when she was the only consistent CSE Parent Member in the Walkkill School District. She was then hired as a teacher aide at Ostrander in 1998. After a one year stint at the Elementary level, she skipped middle school for her true calling at the high school. As a team, we did everything from pre-algebra and earth science to life skills program, behavior management program and a GED program. Regina always rolled with it whether we were working with power tools or diffusing power struggles. Regina played a huge role in the successes we had in these programs as well as reflecting on how to improve what we were doing.

Regina has a great ability to connect with all students. She is incredibly patient, caring, has a great sense of humor and can lay down the law when necessary. Students know they can put their trust in her and seek her out for advice. She can read a situation and knows how best to respond. Nothing rattles her!

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It is hard to imagine this building without Regina. As happy as I am for her, the selfish side of me wishes she would stay for 5 more years! She has helped so many students and teachers over the years and has had a lasting impact on their lives.

Lastly, I hope everyone has a great, well deserved Easter Break!



## WTA Adopt a Highway Cleanup

by Adam Seelig

**On Friday, April 26th** We as a union adopted a stretch of highway on Route 208. Every day, many commuters pass the sign that says, "Adopted by the Wallkill Teacher's Association." It is our duty, since we adopted it, to keep it clean. This is a great way to give back to the community, and it is actually pretty fun. Part of the fun is that we always go out for beverages after the event. Last year was the worst attended, so please consider helping us out. As a way to help with time schedules, last year we ran two different time slots which worked well, so we will try it again this year. One shift will start at 3:00, and the other shift will start at 4:00 to accommodate school district dismissal times. This literally only takes about an hour, so we hope to see you there!



## Welcome New Faculty

High School -

Middle School -

Margo Tucker

Ostrander-

Plattekill-





### Legal Service Plan

NYSUT members have access to dozens of endorsed programs available through NYSUT Member Benefits, including a variety of quality legal and financial planning assistance services that can help to protect their loved ones and provide them with peace of mind.



For an annual fee, the **Legal Service Plan** -- provided by Feldman, Kramer & Monaco, P.C. -- offers legal expertise on a variety of personal legal matters such as dealing with a speeding ticket or handling estate planning. With the base plan, you'll get access to unlimited, toll-free advice from plan attorneys.



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**Financial Planning Center**

To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) or call **800-626-8101**.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.

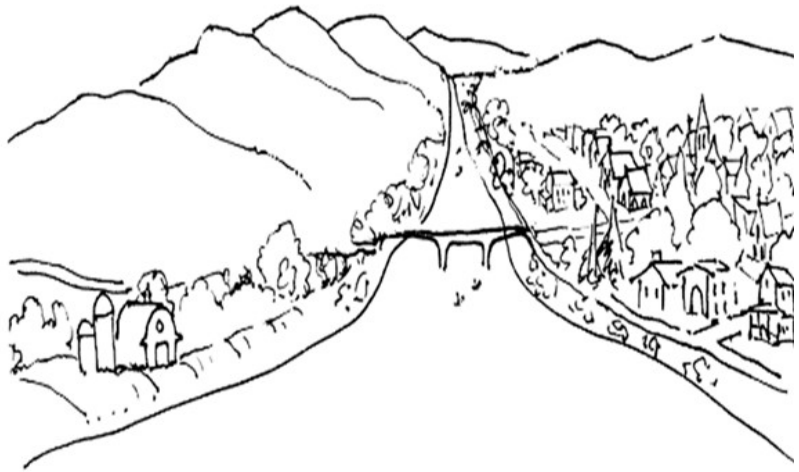
Mar./Apr. '19

### Clean Sweep Walkkill

by Adam Seelig

Currently set for Saturday, April 27th (rain date the 28th)

This is a grassroots event where the community comes out to clean the river and the roads in town. This will be our 9th year doing this great event. Please pass the info along to students. It's a great way to help out and an opportunity for community service hours. <https://cleansweepwalkill.weebly.com/>



### Epilepsy Awareness for a Cause

By Collen Keesler

John G. Borden Middle School's National Junior Honor Society hosted another fundraiser. If you did not know, March was Epilepsy awareness month, and March 26 was the day to "Go Purple" for Epilepsy Awareness. With that said, NJHS prepared and baked on March 25 for all the staff that donated \$10 or more to this cause. Muffins and coffee were distributed first period to those that did on so March 26. The initiative also asked that all staff and students wear purple and donate one dollar on March 26. Over \$ 1,000.00 dollars was raised! As always, thank you for your support!

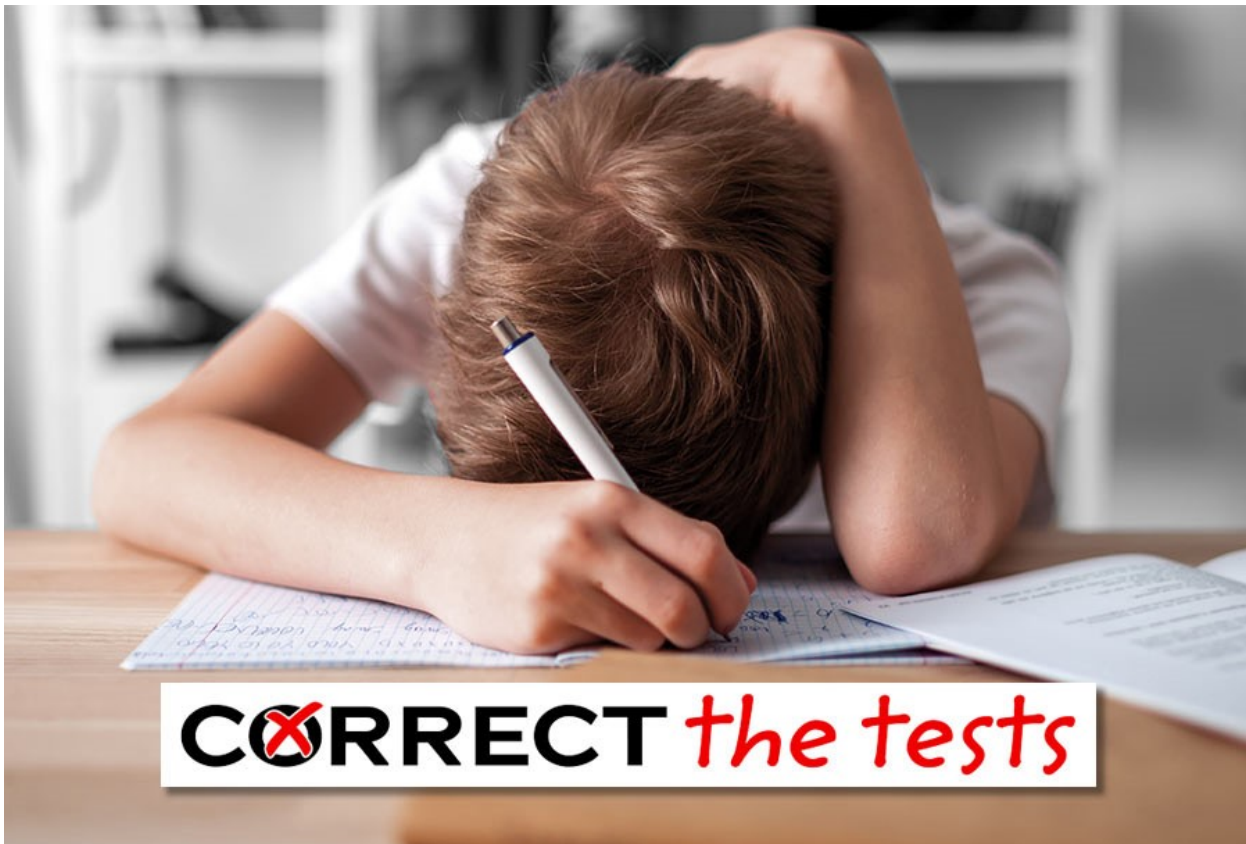




April 01, 2019

**NYSUT launches 'Correct the Tests' campaign to demand changes to flawed state exams**

Source: NYSUT Communications



**ALBANY, N.Y.** April 1, 2019 — New York State United Teachers today launched a new campaign demanding state action to fix flawed, invalid tests that are harmful to New York students. The [“Correct the Tests” campaign](#) will raise awareness of the serious issues with New York’s grade 3-8 ELA and math tests and provide parents and educators a platform to demand the State Education Department take significant steps to address the stress and anxiety created by these flawed exams.

“The state’s obsession with high-stakes testing is a failed experiment that needs to end,” NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said. “That is why teachers, parents and students around the state have been working for years to fix New York State’s broken testing system. If we are going to restore trust in the system, we need to fix these tests now.”

NYSUT repeatedly has called on the state to recognize the fundamental flaws in the state’s grade 3-8 testing system and to take corrective actions to address those flaws. The union is again drawing attention to the fact that:

- the state tests are flawed and invalid;
- invalid scoring benchmarks mislabel children;
- ELA and math tests are too long;
- untimed testing can be cruel and traumatic;
- the tests are developmentally inappropriate; and computer-based testing is problematic and has been rolled out too quickly.

Instead of correcting the tests, the state is creating a climate in which school administrators are attempting to intimidate parents into forcing their children to take these tests or isolating children who refuse to take them. It is imperative that the state takes immediate action to address reported intimidation that has occurred in some districts prior to this year’s tests.

To address the numerous testing concerns, NYSUT launched [CorrectTheTests.com](http://CorrectTheTests.com) to provide parents and educators with information about the flaws with these tests and about parents’ rights to opt their children out of taking the tests. The website also provides an outlet for parents and teachers to submit stories about testing issues in their schools. NYSUT has begun a public awareness campaign that includes digital advertisements drawing attention to testing flaws.

“New York’s state tests are failing our students,” NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango said. “This is an issue that demands a collective solution. The State Education Department needs to step up and engage with teachers and parents to end this disaster.”

Computer-based ELA tests, which were rolled out in disastrous fashion in nearly 300 schools last year, begin on Monday. Traditional paper testing begins Tuesday.

NYSUT is planning a series of regional events and actions across the state in April to further discussions about testing issues and potential fixes. More information about those events will be released in the near future.

*New York State United Teachers is a statewide union with more than 600,000 members in education, human services and health care. NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.*

## More Issues

- The state ELA and math tests are flawed and invalid.
- The tests are too long.
- The tests are developmentally inappropriate and the untimed tests are cruel and traumatic.
- Computer-based testing is problematic and has been rolled out too quickly.





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Steward Spotlight: Adam Seelig

by Megan

**This post is part of Little Free Library's [Steward Spotlight](#) series!**

Adam Seelig, a technology education teacher at John G. Borden Middle School in Wallkill, New York, found a creative way to bring five Little Free Libraries to his small community: make it a summer school project for students!

"I love to make things and I have a passion for reading," Adam said, "I first made a Little Free Library for the town's historical society and it was a huge hit, so I decided to make some for the five school districts in the area."

He started by making a Little Library for the nearest elementary school. He researched [Little Free Library plans](#) and created a traditional wooden box on a post. The design was popular, but he thought outside the box for his next Library. Inspired by a unique [design for a stand-up Library](#) from a New York Architectural firm, he decided to create a replica as his next project.

"I built that one for the high school as a project with my tech club students in our after-school program—and of course, it was a hit," Adam

shared, "This is a unique design where you actually stand up inside and your head is surrounded by circular book shelves! We also installed solar-powered lights, since there are always things going on at our high school and in the winter it gets dark early. Also, since there are users of all ages, this Library has four separate sections: teen, adult fiction, children's books, and non-fiction."

The next three Little Libraries were all built as part of a hands-on summer school program for middle schoolers, run by three teachers: Adam and his colleagues Ken Hall and Kevin Factor. The program focused on three subjects: English, math, and technology education. So how did it work?

Adam shared, "We broke students into three groups. Each one was tasked with designing a Little Library for a particular school in the district. The two groups assigned to elementary schools worked together and came up with a school bus design, while the middle school group came up with a barn design to reflect our rural community."

"Students had to handle every phase of design, from planning and materials to budgeting and final presentations. The math portion of the project involved material layout, estimates, and actual cost. For English work, students performed research (guided questions about Little Libraries and community), wrote proposals, and made presentations to parents, students, administrators, and school board members. The technology portion was the design process, selecting materials, and building the Libraries."





The result? A whole lot of learning and five adorable Little Free Library book-sharing boxes installed at schools in the Wallkill area. Congratulations to Adam and his students for completing such a wonderful project! Learn [how to start a Little Free Library](#), or read more stories in the [steward spotlight series](#)!



#### A Look into the “Canjo Project” by Adam Seelig



JGBMS’s Adam Seelig spearheaded a project that not only takes tech savvy but also works for those that are musically inclined.

What is a canjo? Canjos are one stringed, fretted instruments that use the diatonic musical scale and are played like a guitar. These instruments harken back to the beginnings of blues, country, and folk music. This folk instrument can be made out of almost anything laying around, but don’t let the one sting fool you –there are several songs that can be played on a canjo, so they are not that simple.

In order to make a canjo, Adam discussed its history (beginnings, why, how and what people made them out of), used math (measuring/marketing frets and budget cost), applied science/physics (how sound travels, different sounds produced by different sized cans), incorporated music (how the instrument works, musical timing and how to play it!).

Of course, the students who signed up for the project used technology to design and build the canjo. Canjos are a great way to get students interested in music and allows almost immediate success for the user. Anyone can simply pick up a canjo and within about 15 minutes be playing recognizable music.