



The Newspaper of Local 1776
The Association of Catholic Teachers

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From The
President's Desk

JOB THREATENING.COM

In October, 2006, I wrote an article warning all teachers about the potential problems connected with improper use of the Internet. Since the problems continue and, in some cases, have become more serious, I have reprinted the article for the December Spirit of '76. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY.

With this age of My Space.com and You Tube, there are certain issues of which teachers should be aware. Serious problems have already occurred. Sad to say, some have even been job-threatening.

Over the past several years, the Association has accompanied teachers who have been asked to meet with school and diocesan administrators concerning the use of the Internet both in school and at home.

Use of the Internet and e-mail at school brings its own set of caveats, since you are using your employer's computer, and workplace transactions

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FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

can be monitored. If you use e-mail to give or check assignments, always make sure that the message is class and curriculum related. Do not use a "chat room" approach and never place students on your personal e-mail list.

Outside of school, there is a separate area known as off-duty conduct, sometimes, misconduct. This is not about restricting your personal freedom. If you have created or are thinking about creating a personal web site, that is your decision. However, please remember who you are, what your occupation (vocation) is and by whom you are employed. Be extremely careful about the words that you use, the comments that you make and any photographs that you post.

When in doubt about any of the above, please think before you act. It might be helpful to ask a fellow teacher to look at what you intend to write, post, etc.

As you are reading this, I am sure that many of you are saying to yourselves, "She has got to be kidding! Who doesn't know this?" My answer is, "More people than you would imagine." In fact, this might be a good time for all teachers to review their computer files both in school and at home and, please, don't hesitate to use the "delete" key.

Finally, if you should be asked to attend a meeting with school or Archdiocesan administrators and the meeting concerns the use of computers, the Internet and/or e-mail, please make sure your Senior Delegate or other Association representation is present.



Seniority Lists Posted

Article V, Section 1a states "On or before October 31 of each school year, the Secondary School System shall supply to the Association and shall post in the individual schools a complete listing of all teachers in the Secondary School System including those on approved leaves of absence arranged according to system seniority and school seniority."

"Teachers shall have until December 15 to call attention in writing to errors or file grievances with the local school administration concerning their positions on the seniority roster."

A Sister's Tribute

On September 17, Maureen Eberle, my sister, confidante, and friend was whisked away and entered into eternal life. Undoubtedly a happy day for her but one of great loss for all who knew her. Maureen died as she lived her life, truly an inspiration to all who were with her.

Maureen taught in the Archdiocesan Secondary School System for about thirty-five years. Her first assignment was at Saint Maria Goretti High School, followed by Archbishop Kennedy, Roman Catholic, and Monsignor Bonner where she taught for the last twenty-five years.

Throughout her entire life Maureen was a caring, devoted, loving person who always put others before herself. She lived her life prepared for death, knowing that "at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come." (Mt 24:44)

The summer of '07 held great promise for Maureen and her husband, Bill. A two week cruise to Alaska had been in the planning since Christmas.

It was probably the first summer ever that Maureen was actually looking forward to the month of August! Yet, the month of August did not hold this promise. On July 6 Maureen's life changed. She went into the hospital for a simple procedure; however, the outcome was not simple. Maureen's diagnosis was not immediately known. All she was told was that she had a rare form of ovarian cancer. Later we would learn that it was called a *carcinosarcoma* - a cancer that quickly and quietly invades the body tissue and infiltrates every organ in its path.

Maureen's first thought was not about herself. It was about her husband and how he was looking forward to the Alaskan cruise. She was hoping that they would still be able to go and was determined that she would do everything possible to make it happen.

The next few weeks were filled with doctors' appointments, CAT Scans, PET Scans, and chemotherapy. Oftentimes she was so tired she could hardly even speak. Her lung cavity filled with fluid, making it difficult for her to breathe. Yet, in spite of this, because she had promised students that she would write their college recommendations over the summer, she struggled and managed to keep that promise.

Throughout all of this Maureen was most courageous. When she talked it seemed to me that she was speaking about someone else. I often told her I would just sit and cry with her but she told me she was offering up the pain, suffering, and mental torment for our mother, a 94 year old who has had Alzheimer's disease for the past 14 years, in the hope that she would not have to suffer.

Maureen was a prayerful person and toward the end of her life she told her husband that she did not want to die but that she was not afraid to die. Always prepared for everything, there is no doubt that she was spiritually ready for death. During her last weeks Maureen was anointed, blessed, and prayed over many times. The night before she died the family gathered at her bedside. Father Sam Veroni, a family friend, led us in prayer and anointed her. The following morning Father Esposito, the President of Monsignor Bonner and Archbishop Prendergast High School blessed her and prayed with us. He also left a packet of letters that students, past and present had written to her when they heard she was sick. As I paged through the letters, I read them aloud to her in the hope that she would be able to hear all of the wonderful things that had been written about her. I had always known Maureen was an excellent teacher but the students' letters captured the real essence of what she was about in the classroom and are a tribute to the teacher she was.



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"It was always so great to walk into your class or pass you in the halls and see you smiling... From being in your class...I learned to appreciate things more and not get mad at those insignificant troubles or inconveniences of life."

"You brought so much happiness and honor to our lives at Bonner...Your love for your students did not go unnoticed...I've come to realize that that's a truly rare quality to find in a teacher...Even after we had left the walls of your classroom behind, you still shared your warmth with us on Senior Retreat by sending us cookies. I truly hope you understand...how you have made each of our lives better by your love for your students."

"You are one of the most genuine and supportive people I have ever had the pleasure to know."

"I still remember and utilize what you taught me in junior year theology class. Sometimes I even directly quote the answers to questions as if you were present."

"Thanks to you, I began to respect the true meaning of being a Christian through service and example."

"You helped to prepare me spiritually for the rest of my life...keep fighting because there are hundreds of more boys that could still use your guidance."

"You taught me to push myself and gave me a deeper understanding of my roots academically."

"I think that the most valuable virtue you taught me was that of self-control."

"You were always kind and smiling and you could tell that you really cared about all of us individually."

"The education you gave us from the notes was minimal compared to what you showed through how you lived the Gospel everyday...Your lesson of patience was one of the greatest ever taught to me. It humbled me. It taught me to see Christ in everyone, not because of the good that they do, but because of the good that dwells within them."

Throughout Maureen's illness she received many packages, letters, and cards wishing her well and reminding her that she was in everyone's prayers. She delighted in the good wishes and read and reread them often and shared their sentiments with the family. It was apparent to us that Maureen was loved by just about anyone who ever met her.

In the days that followed her passing many kind sentiments were expressed. The one that best reflected who she was and what she was about was from Ralph Celidonio, former Assistant Principal of Academic Affairs at Monsignor Bonner and colleague of Maureen's for twenty-five years.

"(Maureen) possessed a humility in her many acts of kindness. Rarely would she ask a favor for herself, but she was always ready to help others. She had a wonderful sense of humor especially displaying an impish smile with the "Irish" twinkle in her eye."

With her passing there is much pain and sorrow but not for Maureen. The pain is ours and the sorrow is sadness for us who miss her terribly. Throughout her illness there were so many of us who prayed for a miracle. A miracle happened but not the one requested. Maureen was prepared to meet her Creator, and gently He called her Home.

*Eileen DeStefano
Monsignor Bonner and Archbishop Prendergast High School*

Remembering Maureen Eberle

Maureen Eberle is no longer with us; and we miss her deeply. Maureen taught in the System for twenty-five years, the last 15 or so at Monsignor Boner, now Bonner-Prendergast. In the all boy world of Bonner, Maureen was a paradigm of the Catholic laywoman, a great model for all of what it means to live a Catholic life. She was a superb teacher. Her ability to control a classroom of teenage boys and teach them the moral life, while constantly referencing the Saints as models for living, was astounding. Maureen was a skilled professional, dedicated to her craft. The American historian, Henry B. Adams, wrote that a teacher affects eternity. Maureen truly affected eternity. But most of all, Maureen was a great friend to her fellow teachers. Conversation, a sympathetic ear, whatever, Maureen was there for all. And so I conclude where I started: good bye Maureen, we miss you.

Jim Bielunas
Bonner-Prendergast

We do not know the day or the hour when God will call us home to render an account of ourselves--and so we must be vigilant and ever-prepared each day of our lives. This was surely true of Maureen Eberle. Maureen was my colleague and my dear friend. Her faith was strong and apparent. She was the consummate teacher: her lessons were clear, her examples were poignant, and her witness impeccable. She was my go-to person for everything and anything. I treasured her counsel and no-nonsense advice. Through thick and thin, she was even-tempered, hard working and pleasant. Her humility mirrored that of Mary herself. She was a devoted daughter and sister, a loving wife and mother. Perhaps with the passing of time and the power of good memories, our loss will be eased. Nonetheless, it is our faith in the Paschal Mystery that reassures us that Maureen is at rest and at peace.

Maureen, intercede for us before God's throne!

Rev. Francis X. Devlin, OSA
Theology Department Head
Bonner-Prendergast

NACST Convention 2007

The NACST Annual Convention was held in Boston on October 5-7, 2007. Irene Tori and I presented ACT's Report of Locals on Friday evening. Listening to the achievements and struggles of the various locals of NACST puts your local's progress in perspective.

Saturday morning found us gathering to hear from David L. Gregory, the Dorothy Day Professor of Law at St. John's University in New York. Knowing that David's talk was titled "Some Reflections on Labor and Employment Ramifications of Diocesan Bankruptcy Filings", we anxiously awaited to hear just what might lie ahead for us as members of NACST. David opened with "If you are not going West, at least look West." We knew he was referring to the five bankruptcy filings in the western part of the country. David went on to generate a lively discussion among those present. The presentation came down to two areas for NACST members to track. "One potential consequence may be a catalyst spurring employees of the Catholic dioceses, and in particular Catholic school teachers, to more aggressively pursue unionization to better secure their otherwise inherently unstable positions." The other area had to do with the church's reliance on Canon Law to secure its position with respect to unionization of its employees and now the Church's willingness to allow federal bankruptcy laws to help them in times of financial crises. David Gregory put it this way: "It may be much more difficult for a diocese to contend that it stands behind the inviolable curtain of canon law and is insulated from government regulation by the First Amendment, when, at the same time, it freely enters bankruptcy protection. The Church has become so interwoven in the legal system over the past half-decade, as evidenced through the five diocesan bankruptcies, that some courts may correctly perceive that the Church has acquiesced in allowing itself to be governed by more than just canon law. As it has allowed its liabilities to be regulated and determined by federal bankruptcy law, it is certainly plausible that the courts may, in the near future, determine that there is no compelling First Amendment prohibition of the labor law rights of Catholic school teachers."

Following David's presentation, Rita gave her State of the Union address. Rita was pleased with the progress that NACST had made over the last year. But, Rita cautioned that there is some concern with the consolidation and restructuring that is taking place in several of the dioceses. She mentioned that the afternoon session would address most of these concerns.

Mike Mitz, Executive Vice President of NACST, as well as President of the Scranton Diocese Association of Catholic Teachers, together with Bruce Endy, NACST Counsel, conducted the afternoon session entitled "Consolidation and Restructuring in Catholic Schools - The New Challenge for Our Unions." The presentation held every local's attention since this was a first hand account of what was taking place in the Scranton Diocese. Mike and Bruce went through the rationale, sense of urgency and sought-after outcomes of the diocese as well as the role of an independent consulting firm hired by the diocese. Questions and comments were numerous from those in attendance. Mike and Bruce emphasized that the bottom line for all locals is to be proactive. Be aware of any rumblings about change. Make yourself part of the process. Keep the media and your members informed. Develop an action plan. And insist on a role for the Union at every stage of the process.

We were definitely enriched by what we heard throughout all of the sessions. And we also knew there was much to be tuned to within the near future for both our locals and the National.

Irene and I discussed much of what we had experienced as we walked the Freedom Trail later Saturday afternoon. We did mutually agree that many of our younger teachers would have appreciated the heads-up that was presented at this year's convention.

Joe Schuler
Senior Delegate
Conwell-Egan Catholic

In Memory of Tom Nedelka

Sometimes, the most profound truth can be expressed in the simplest of statements. This is one of those times. Simply stated, Tom Nedelka was a good man. Tom loved his son. He loved his teaching and he loved life.

Tom was a "thinker, a planner, a man of action."

(Rudy Schatz)

Tom exuded a deep concern for and a love of his students. Tom possessed an ever-present "deep-seated respect for his colleagues."

(Allison Papantoniou)

His "expansive knowledge of and sensitivity towards literature and writing"

(Allison Papantoniou)

made Tom our conversational philosopher in whom we delighted.

Tom was a gentle teacher. He inspired his students to dream, to explore and to discover the world around them. He did these things quietly, gently and professionally.

Tom Nedelka was a good man. His own words proclaim, in his inimitable way, his goodness and his gentleness. We shall miss this colleague, this friend, this good man.

I am not angry about it. I do not feel cheated or despairing, even though I may not recover. My life has been exciting, wonderful and rich, with no regrets over things undone. Through health and through sickness, we have the ability to interpret God's plan for life, and we have the ability to find the goodness in it if we keep the courage and maintain our direction toward the Light. Even in this sickness, I am grateful. (Tom Nedelka)

**The English Department and Friends
Archbishop John Carroll High School**



In Memory of Tom Nedelka

Eloquence. How many individuals do you know who are truly eloquent-- both in speech and in writing? Tom was uniquely eloquent, perhaps among the most articulate speakers I've met. Even when on different sides of a position, I could be mesmerized by the delivery of his pithy sentiments. He would choose just the right words, combine them creatively and then position them carefully so as to craft an impassioned, persuasive and cogent argument. But of even greater impression than his eloquence, was Tom's sensitivity. In the heat of a disagreement, he never lost sight of another's humanity; he took special care to be tactful and respectful--a difficult task especially when speaking your mind.

Gentle and kind, thoughtful and unselfish, Tom often sought out the underdog and was generous with his time, money, compliments, talents and heart. He made a point of letting people know that they mattered to him; truly, a noble and enviable quality.

For thirty-five years at West Catholic, Bishop Kenrick and Archbishop Carroll, Tom was a teacher of literature, which is to say, that more than many of us, he taught "Life." He lived and taught the epic themes that we all experience--journeying and identity, loyalty and betrayal, compassion and honor, and eventually loss and redemption. His sudden death was a surprise ending that has left us stunned and mystified with a desire to re-write the final chapter.

Tom's students were privileged to witness a teacher who embraced life fully and found joy in each day. A love of history (Gettysburg, especially) and a respect for nature were paramount to him.

Tom adored being a father. How many parents of teenagers dare to make that proclamation--publicly and frequently? Tom did; he reveled in fatherhood. His final wish was to see his only son, Andrew, graduate from high school in June.

Even as Tom faced a grim and painful future, he did so with his trademark strength, courage, humility and optimism. I lament the loss of another dedicated, Catholic educator but even more selfishly, I grieve the loss of a kind and loyal friend. For all the times I neglected to say "thank you, Tom" I will remain forever grateful that your path first crossed mine many years ago. Find peace now, dear friend.

Helene Begetta
formerly of Abp. Carroll High School

Movie Tickets Are Great for Gift Giving

The ACT Office has a limited supply of AMC and Regal/United Artists Movie Tickets. The cost per ticket is \$6.00. If you would like to order tickets for the Christmas holidays, call the ACT Office as soon as possible so we can hold your tickets. Make a check payable to the Association of Catholic Teachers for the amount of tickets ordered. Your tickets will be mailed once payment is received.

IMPORTANT MEDICAL INFORMATION CONCERNING FLU SHOTS

GETTING A FLU SHOT AT THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Flu shots are covered under both the Personal Choice and Keystone Health Plans. The flu shot is covered at a 100%, however, the doctor may charge a co-pay for the office visit.

GETTING A FLU SHOT AT A LOCATION OTHER THAN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

If you get a flu shot outside of a doctor's office, such as the local supermarket or drug store or even at an area school, Blue Cross will reimburse you the amount paid up to \$25. To get reimbursed, you will need to submit a Flu Shot Reimbursement Form and include your receipt, (keep a copy for your records) You can get a Reimbursement Form from your Senior Delegate or by calling the ACT Office.

Please note: When submitting a claim for reimbursement, you may get an Explanation of Benefits stating that they applied the \$25 allowance towards your out-of-network deductible. If this happens, you will need to follow up with Blue Cross and ask them to reprocess the claim correctly since flu shots are covered without having to meet any deductible obligation.



**Merry
Christmas**

AND

**Happy
New
Year**



**From
Rita, Irene, Ginny, Katie and Natalie**