

EDITORIAL

Master Teacher program no 'magic bullet' to help kids

Public education in New York has another cure for what ails it — Master Teachers.

This newest prescription for our public schools was detailed in last weekend's in-depth look by reporters Matt Hayes, Bob Jamieson and Sara Tracey. The new program will select the best science and math teachers in New York for special duty as Master Teachers. Each of the super-teachers will get a \$16,000-a-year pay bump and will be deployed to improve the teaching skills of their peers.

We're all for making better teachers who make learning exciting and engaging.

But the public ought to be skeptical that the Master Teacher program is the magic bullet for raising classroom performance. In fact, the program has so many restrictions that it is more like a magic peashooter.

When the effort is fully launched, there will be about 700 Master Teachers in New York. That's a tiny effort. Less than 1 percent of the state's teachers will be attempting to raise the classroom performance of about 210,000 other teachers.

As the program is now planned, only teachers spending at least 60 percent of their time teaching grades 6 through 12 are eligible to apply to become Master Teachers. Parents of young children in kindergarten through fifth grade should be shouting: "What about my kid?"

It's a good question.

For decades, educators have been saying that focusing on the early years of schooling produces the greatest results for students. Those running the \$5.5 million Master Teacher program said there was not enough money in the \$60 billion New York will spend this school year on public education to include elementary school teachers in the Master Teacher program. The hope is the effort will be able to afford expanding into elementary schools in the future.

Hold on, kids! Albany is coming to the rescue — maybe.

Another restriction for Master Teachers is that only science and math teachers are eligible to apply. The rationale is those subject areas provide the skills that are expected to be in greatest demand by employers in the state's future workforce.

In a state as diverse as New York, it's a good bet its future will need artists, musicians, writers, lawyers, historians, cooks, sales people — and even a few politicians. Those future workers would also benefit from being educated by Master Teachers from a range of academic disciplines. But at the moment, those teachers need not apply to become Master Teachers.

Albany's education experts are good at promising new efforts to improve our schools. But too often that promise has not delivered in performance. With about 30 percent of children not graduating from high school, Albany's education wonks have a lot of performance to deliver.

Making better teachers who can improve student performance is an admirable goal, but the Master Teacher effort is too narrow to be effective.



KARTZMAN FAMILY PHOTO

Sophie Kartzman, center, is flanked by the Horseheads Central School District board of education and administrators on Thursday. The board and school administrators wrote and signed cards for the Holiday Mail for Heroes drive Sophie has organized.

Amazing local effort to thank troops, veterans

Troops and veterans are getting love and respect from the Twin Tiers this holiday season.

Sophie Kartzman, an 11-year-old from Horseheads Intermediate School, is on her way to collecting 8,000 holiday cards — made or store-bought and signed with names or touching messages — to be sent to troops serving overseas in a project called Holiday Mail for Heroes.

Many of you have helped in this effort. We at the Star-Gazette have had a front-row seat to the community outpouring, as we have been a drop-off point for the cards. A wire basket in our lobby has been filled several times over the past few weeks, and there's still time to help.

Cards can be dropped off until the end of the day Tuesday at 201 Baldwin St. in Elmira. The lobby opens at 8:30 a.m. and closes at 5 p.m. on weekdays.

After that the cards will join thousands of others that the Red Cross will send to Virginia so they can be loaded onto a military ship bound for Afghanistan.

Staff writer Jennifer Kingsley, who has been writing about Sophie's project since it had a goal of a mere 1,000 cards, said what has been written in the cards has been amazing. The outpouring of support for troops has also been cathartic for some Vietnam-era veterans, Jennifer learned, who didn't always feel support from the homefront.

Cards can also be dropped off at Corning Chiropractic Associates, 75 W. Pulteney St. in Corning and the Corning Country Club in East Corning. (Please remember the cards should be



Lois Wilson

Editor's Corner

signed; don't drop off blank store-bought cards.)

While Sophie is closing in on 8,000 cards, the folks at Cameron Manufacturing & Design in Horseheads are hoping you can help them reach 8,600 in order to place a wreath on all veterans' grave at Woodlawn National Cemetery in Elmira in December.

The effort is part of Wreaths Across America and has been done nationally at Arlington and locally at Bath National Cemetery.

You can help in two ways: Order wreaths or help place them (or both).

To ordering wreaths for Woodlawn, you must do so online by Dec. 1 at wreathscrossamerica.org. Cost is \$15 for one, \$30 for two, \$75 for five and up. A third wreath will be provided free for every two purchased.

To make sure you are buying for Woodlawn, under "Honor Fallen Heroes in Your Community," click on "sponsor locally." On the next page, under "Find A Fundraising Group," enter "NY0069." Hit search and click on the result (which will pop up on the same page). Then click "donate."

The wreaths will be placed on Dec. 13, and you can volunteer for that by emailing msharpe@camfab.com by Dec. 1.

Both of these effort are beautiful — a child leads us to remember troops and a business reminds us to honor veterans. What a lovely sentiment of giving on this Thanksgiving week.

Wilson is the Star-Gazette senior editor. Reach her at (607) 271-8284 or lwilson@stargazette.com or on Twitter @SGLoisWilson.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, Nov. 23, 2014. On this date:

» In 1765, Frederick County, Md., repudiated the British Stamp Act.

» In 1889, the first jukebox made its debut in San Francisco. The contraption consisted of an Edison tinfoil phonograph with four listening tubes and a coin slot for each tube.

» In 1903, singer Enrico Caruso made his American debut at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, appearing in "Rigoletto."

» In 1936, Life, the magazine created by Henry R. Luce, was first published.

» In 1943, during World War II, U.S. forces seized control of the Tarawa and Makin atolls from the Japanese.

» In 1945, most U.S. wartime rationing of foods, including meat and butter, ended.

» In 1971, the People's Republic of China was seated in the U.N. Security Council.

» In 1980, some 4,800 people were killed by a series of earthquakes that devastated southern Italy.

» In 1985, retired CIA analyst Larry Wu-tai Chin was arrested and accused of spying for China. He committed suicide a year after his conviction.

» In 1987, two days after a riot by Cuban inmates erupted at a detention center in Oakdale, La., Cuban detainees at a federal prison in Atlanta also rioted, seizing hostages in a drama that was not resolved until Dec. 4.

» In 1992, in Germany, three Turks were killed when rightist militants firebombed their homes in Moelln; in Berlin, hundreds of demonstrators protested in solidarity with foreigners. Also, the first smartphone, the IBM Simon, is introduced at COMDEX in Las Vegas, Nevada.

» In 1996, a hijacked Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 767 crashed into the waves off Comoros Islands, killing 125 of the 175 people on board. Forty-four people were injured when an Amtrak train derailed on a Secaucus, N.J., bridge.

» In 2011, after 11 months of protests in Yemen, Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh signs a deal to transfer power to the vice president, in exchange for legal immunity.