

“American Teacher” Begins the Conversation at Skidmore

by Daniel Schechtman
Saratoga TODAY

SARATOGA SPRINGS - Out of 3.2 million teachers currently employed in the United States, 1.8 million - over half - will be eligible for retirement over the next 10 years. Across New York State, school budgets have taken a beating, with many local districts cutting positions and staff in response to shrinking revenues and a two percent property tax cap. Hundreds if not thousands of college graduates trying to break into the profession are being turned down and turned away, fresh young talent left unused and disillusioned after years of college

training and heavy coursework. For those who do manage to break into the system, 46 percent find themselves with no other choice but to leave the profession after five years, due in large part to crippling college debt, poor wages and numerous other challenges.

"I think right now our culture has accepted the fact that going into teaching assumes people are going to take a vow of poverty," said Ninive Calegari, a producer for the documentary, "American Teacher." "But I think given that we're about to have more than half of the teaching force eligible for retirement in the near future, it means we have an opportunity to change some of those expecta-

tions and norms. I think we should ask - what do we want for this profession moving forward?"

It's a question that the new documentary, "American Teacher," tries to tackle head on. Following the lives of four teachers from different backgrounds working in vastly different environments, the movie, directed by Vanessa Roth, examines some of the challenges America's educators face, and encourages the public to start redefining the way we think about the profession.

"The Education Department [at Skidmore] is hosting a screening of this film to contribute to the conversation about the work of teachers, and what it means to be a teacher," said Hope Casto, an assistant professor of education studies at Skidmore. Skidmore will be hosting a screening of the movie Wednesday, October 12 at 7 p.m. at the Tang Museum. Held in the Payne Room, all are welcome to attend this free event.

One of the themes of the film,

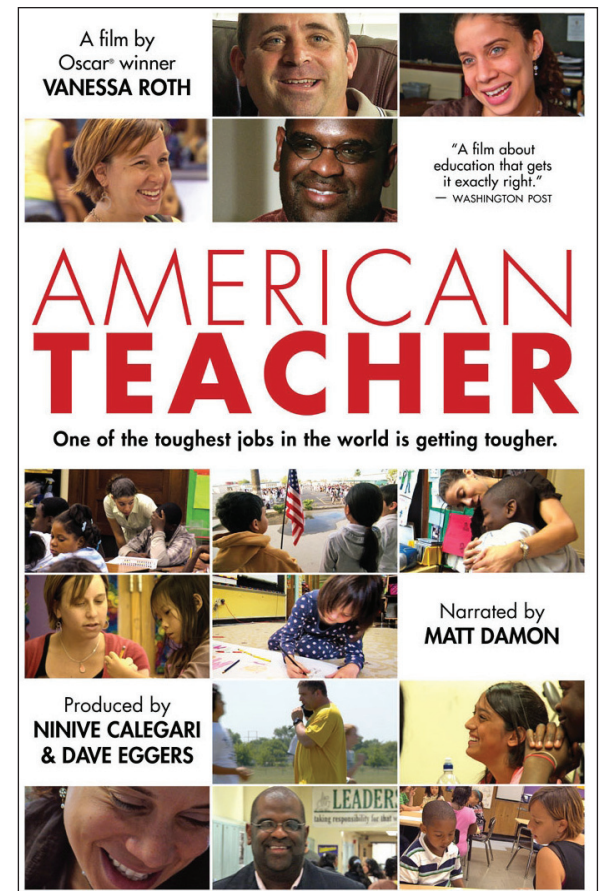
and certainly one of the greatest challenges facing the teaching profession, is closely tied to how the public perceives educators. By intimately following the struggles of four teachers across the country, Calegari hopes the public will get a better understanding of just how difficult a teacher's job is, as well as how undervalued the profession has become.

"I think one of the first things that you have to do is you change the salary," said Calegari. "The reason you do that is, as an American society, we care very much about what people earn. I think as long as 62 percent of teachers have second jobs, we are eroding the prestige that the profession deserves. I want people to have a better understanding of the complexity of the work, and the people who are doing that complex work need to be free from financial stress so that they can bring that magic into the classroom and build their connections with kids."

While there are many challenges facing teachers in the current educational system, especially financial challenges, Casto sees hope for the future of the

profession.

"We have a chance to shift the way we think about the teaching force, and we have a great opportunity to send a lot of young people into schools and to reform our schools for the better," Casto said. "You often hear of the first hired, first fired standard - so at the same time we're talking about a shifting labor market, we're not seeing that right now. How many young people are we turning away from the profession instead of welcoming them in the door? But I have to be optimistic," she added. "I think it benefits us all to have a conversation about what we think our schools are for, and we need to discuss how we're going to help them out."



Skidmore is hosting a screening of "American Teacher" Wednesday, October 12 at 7 p.m. Held at the Tang Museum in the Payne Room, the screening is open to the public and free for all to attend.

LAKE DENTAL
28 CLINTON ST., SARATOGA SPRINGS • 935-0068

Now accepting Patients with CIGNA PPO or Medicaid Insurance

CALL FOR APPOINTMENT

HPV (Human Papillomaviruses) and Cancer: Know the Facts

HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases, and can also be one of the most dangerous. Learn about prevention options, symptoms, and treatments, as well as how you can be your best defense against developing cervical cancer. Our gynecologist will also be available for questions pertaining to other popular women's health issues.

Presenter: Stefanie Allison, DO, gynecologist

Date & Time: Tuesday, October 18—12pm

Location: Saratoga Hospital Board Room

Registration is required. For more information or to register, visit www.saratogahospital.org or call 580-2450 (toll free at 1-866-580-2450).



saratogahospital.org

A Closer Look
Magnified Medium Format

Photography Exhibition by **Mark Bolles**

Show Dates: Sept. 16 - Oct. 14

See the exhibition online: MarkBolles.com

Empire State College
111 West Ave, Saratoga Springs NY