

OCTA Advocate

A newsletter for members and friends of the Oswego Classroom Teachers Association



OCTOBER 2025

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Meet your 2025-2026 OCTA Officers!



Carrie Patane:
OCTA President



Kim LeRoy:
OCTA VP Grievance



Jess Burridge: OCTA
VP Negotiations



Jenn Cahill:
OCTA VP PA



Mike Patane:
OCTA VP
Treasurer



Michelle McManus:
OCTA VP Secretary



Dan Rose: OCTA VP
PR

Message from your OCTA President - Carrie Patane

Every day, we show up for students who are navigating a world that feels heavier than it once did. Families are working harder to afford basic necessities; young people entering adulthood often feel unsure about their future; and many of us sense that the idea of each generation doing better than the last isn't as certain as it used to be.



These challenges don't exist somewhere "out there." They're present in our classrooms, in the stories students carry with them, and in the quiet conversations we have with parents in hallways and parking lots. They remind us that schools are not just places of learning — they are anchors of stability, hope, and community. And when our schools work well, when they are focused, safe, and supportive, students thrive.

We are already seeing what is possible when we act together for the well-being of children. The new [bell-to-bell cellphone policy](#) is a powerful example. According to the recent statewide educator survey: Nearly 90% of educators report [positive changes](#) and

More than 75% see students engaging more with each other. Over half report increased academic participation while most educators say they now spend more time teaching and less time redirecting. But as with any real change, all of this progress starts in the elementary classrooms - the talk, the guidance, and the discussion from pre-K - sixth grade, our elementary teachers lay the groundwork for any change we wish to make in our district, and so it goes with the cell phone policy. A change this immediate and long-lasting only comes about with the support and enforcement of all. We educate our students about content, but learning appropriate social behaviors, how to interact face to face with others, and maintaining a focus on educationally rich opportunities is a win-win for educators, our students, our community, and our future..

This is what happens when we work collectively for what is best for students — not for convenience, not for optics, but for genuine growth and learning. And yet, we know our work is far from done. Many students still carry stress tied to financial insecurity, family pressures, or uncertainty about the future. Improving focus in school is only one piece of helping them build meaningful, stable lives. Our role as educators has always been larger than content delivery — we nurture resilience, curiosity, empathy, and possibility.

So we will continue to show up with patience, skill, and determination. We will continue to advocate for learning environments where children can flourish. We will continue to look out for one another — because the work is hard, and none of us should have to do it alone.

Our strength has always come from our shared commitment: to students, to each other, and to the communities we serve. Thank you for the work you do — the visible work and the invisible work. Thank you for believing in young people even when the world feels uncertain. Thank you for being the steady place our students return to, day after day. And of course, thank you for being an important part of our union!

In solidarity, and with pride in our profession, Carrie Patane
President Oswego Classroom Teachers Association
[CLICK HERE TO TAKE PHONE-FREE SURVEY!](#)



Your Voice Matters: Phone-free schools update

Congratulations to our most recent OCTA Spotlight Recipients!

We are pleased to welcome **Caroline Wallace** to the Oswego City School District! Caroline is originally from Oswego and is a proud graduate of Oswego High School (Class of 2018). She continued her education at SUNY Fredonia, where she earned her undergraduate degree, and later completed her master's degree at SUNY Oswego.

This is Caroline's first year with OCSD, and she is currently teaching **4th grade at Riley Elementary**. One of her favorite parts of being an educator is watching her students grow—both academically and personally—and building meaningful relationships with each of them. Outside of school, Caroline enjoys spending quality time with her family. Looking ahead, she is excited for continued growth, both personally and as a member of our school community. Welcome, Caroline! We are happy to have you at Riley Elementary!



KPS is proud to shine this month's spotlight on **Christine**

Oleyourryk, who has been dedicated to supporting students in grades 1–5 as a Teaching Assistant for the past five years. Chris especially loved her time working with 3rd graders, sharing that *“their curiosity and love of learning was infectious. At that age, they are still loving school and are so sweet.”*



Throughout her time at KPS, Chris has enjoyed working alongside a variety of teachers and appreciates the unique strengths each one brings to their classroom. She said, *“The teachers I have worked with have all been great, and you really learn to love how different each teacher manages their classroom. KPS is such a great place to work. You feel like you are part of a team that all works together.”*

The heart of her work comes from the relationships she builds with students. One of her favorite moments is when she helps a student through a tough day and, despite the challenge, that student still returns at the end of the day with a hug. *“It means everything,”* she shared.

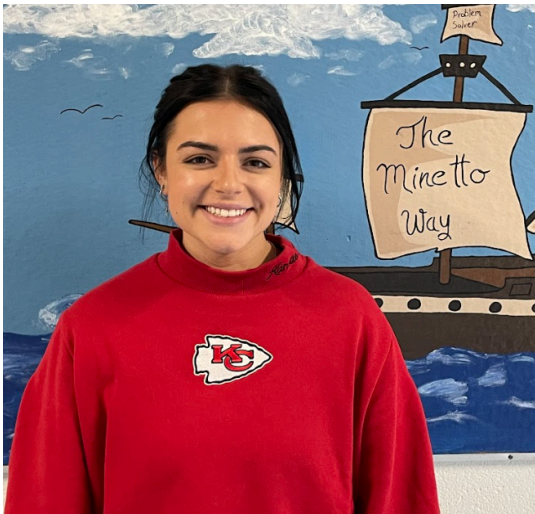
Outside of school, Chris enjoys the simple joys of life—landscaping, being in nature, listening to live music, snowshoeing, kayaking, and spending time with her family. She shares her life with her husband Dave, her sons Jake and Sam, and her two beloved Chipoo pups, Olive and Lucy. Thank you, Chris, for your compassion, patience, and dedication. **KPS is a better place because of you!**

FPS would like to recognize our school psychologist, **Kristina Goodman** and all of the hard work she puts in for the students and staff here at FPS! This is Kristina's 13th year as a school psychologist and her 4th year at FPS. Previously, she worked in the Syracuse City School District. Kristina has always had an interest in education, psychology, and child development and knew she wanted to be in a position to advocate for children and have a positive impact. She feels like being a school psychologist is a great combination of all of those things.

For Kristina, she says the students are easily the best part of her job and she loves to see their progress whether it's academic, social, or emotional growth. She also enjoys the opportunities to work with different teams in her building to help students be successful. Outside of school, Kristina likes to spend time with her family and friends, watch her two boys play sports and stay active with them. Twenty years from now Kristina says she will be right at Fitzhugh Park working away since she's in Tier 6! We look forward to working alongside Kristina for many years to come!



This month's OCTA Spotlight shines on **Hannah Nolf**, a first-year teacher who is bringing



enthusiasm and creativity to sixth-grade science and social studies in a co-taught classroom at **Minetto Elementary!** After earning a bachelor's degree in an unrelated field, Hannah decided to try substitute teaching to stay busy and take a break from the service industry. From the very first day in the classroom, it was clear teaching was the right path—she instantly fell in love with the profession and knew it was where she was meant to be. What Hannah loves most about her job is building relationships and making meaningful connections with students. There's no greater joy than supporting them as they grow, learn, and succeed. Outside of school, she enjoys spending time with family and friends,

playing with her cats, reading, and working on her canvas paintings. Twenty years from now, Hannah hopes to still be teaching and continuing to make a lasting and positive impact on children's lives every day. We're so lucky to have **Hannah Nolf** as part of our Minetto family!

OMS Staff Spotlight: Alecia Ascenzi

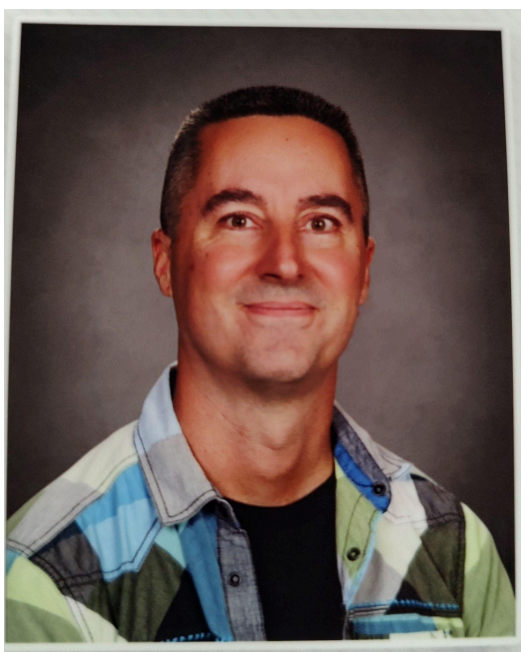
We are excited to welcome **Alecia Ascenzi** to Oswego Middle School! A native of Oswego, Alecia graduated in 2015 and earned her degrees from Brockport and, most recently, her master's from Nazareth this past May. This is her first year as a teacher, and she is bringing her creativity to the **middle school art classroom**.

Alecia loves building relationships with her students and being their biggest cheerleader. She says it brings her joy when students ask to come to her room and share their art creations. Outside of school, Alecia enjoys crafting miniature houses and shops, as well as spending time with her large family.

Looking ahead, Alecia is excited to get her classroom fully organized and put her big ideas into action. With her enthusiasm and creativity, her students are sure to have a fun and inspiring year in art!



This month, we're excited to feature **Tim Bishop**, a dedicated Spanish teacher at **OHS**, in the OCTA Spotlight! With an impressive 27 years of teaching Spanish, Señor Bishop's passion for language and culture shines through in his lessons. Inspired by childhood games of playing school with friends, he always knew teaching was his calling.



Tim loves seeing students' enthusiasm for learning a world language. Beyond the classroom, Tim is a true world traveler, having explored 72 countries and even lived in Ecuador for seven months during college. His favorite destinations are Portugal, and the vibrant city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he savors the delicious food, rich culture, and friendly people. Looking ahead, Tim dreams of visiting over 100 countries. ¡Gracias, Tim, for inspiring our students!

This month, Leighton is proud to spotlight **Jim Hartmann**, a dedicated educator with 20 years of experience. After many years teaching 5th and 6th grade, Jim now serves as our **building substitute here at Leighton Elementary**—and will soon step into his new role as **AIS Math Specialist!**

Nominated by a colleague for his reliability and kindness, Jim has made a big impact across grade levels, especially in kindergarten. Inspired by his father, also a teacher, Jim found his calling in education and continues to find joy in working with so many talented colleagues and seeing the variety of teaching styles in action.

Outside of school, Jim can often be found cheering on his children, Avella and Cooper, at their dance and sporting events. Looking ahead, he hopes to one day enjoy retirement while still sharing his passion for teaching through coaching.



THANK YOU, VOTE-COPE Contributors!

Thank you to all OCTA Members who contributed to this year's Vote Cope Campaign and continue to make contributions every year. Thanks to all building leaders who helped organize and collect.



Saturday was the first day of early voting! You can visit your early voting polling place now through November 2nd; or you can vote on Election Day, November 4th. Working people deserve representation at every level of government. That's why it is so important that we get out and vote in every election. Don't give up your voice, make a plan to vote!

Jenn Cahill, OCTA VP / VOTE-COPE Coordinator



SRP Recognition Day: Our Work Makes Schools Run

SRP Recognition Day is **Nov. 18, 2025**, in New York State. It is a well-deserved honor for the hard-working women and men who help educate,

feed and transport students, monitor their health, administer school offices, and maintain school facilities — providing a safe and nurturing environment for student-centered learning. SRPs Rise to the Challenge, making a difference in our schools, workplaces and communities, every single day. **Be on the lookout for teachers and staff wearing pins**

and stickers in support of our SRP brothers and sister!





Where do you want to be when retirement comes around?

You don't need to be an expert to get the most from your New York State Deferred Compensation Plan. You have access to trained professionals to provide you with support.

Our Account Executives are here to answer your questions and help you:

- Enroll in your plan
- Determine your contribution level
- Determine your risk tolerance
- Keep track of your plan over time

Remember it's your plan. Don't hesitate to call if you have any questions. We'll help you every step of the way.

Jason Dixon, Senior Retirement Specialist
518-203-0244
dixo8@nationwide.com



Have questions? Your Nationwide Retirement Specialist is here to help.

Please join us for an overview of the NYS Deferred Compensation Plan (457b)

Wednesday, November 12th at 5pm

Microsoft Teams invite will be shared separately



To schedule an individual appointment, scan this code.

NYSTRS Fall 2025 PREP Seminar Schedule

Many retirees tell us they wish they began focusing on financial and retirement planning much earlier in their lives. NYSTRS designed the Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP) to help active members take a proactive approach to retirement planning. Each half-day session covers NYSTRS benefits, financial planning, Social Security, estate planning and the retirement process.

The fall 2025 PREP Seminar schedule, as well as reservation and attendance information, are available on the [Retirement Planning/Pension & Retirement Education Program page at nystrs.org](#). The information also appears on the second page of this [Delegate News](#).

Reservation and Attendance Information

- **Make a reservation** online in [MyNYSTRS at nystrs.org](#) or call 800-348-7298, ext. 6180 during our business hours.
- **Sessions run from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.** Registration begins at 8 a.m.
- **Slots fill quickly**, so we recommend making a reservation early.
- **Bring your latest *Benefit Profile*** with you (you can print it from MyNYSTRS).
- **Not going to attend?** Cancel through MyNYSTRS or by phone so others may register.

The PREP seminar is offered throughout the year. Reservations open in mid-September (fall schedule), mid-December (winter/spring), and mid-May (summer). Encourage members to check [nystrs.org/prep](#) often for the latest seminar schedule.

The PREP seminar is not intended for individual benefits counseling. To schedule a one-on-one consultation, members should visit the [Retirement Planning/Benefits Consultations page of nystrs.org](#).



Dental insurance from the nation's leading provider

We make it easy to protect your smile and keep it healthy, with the largest network of dentists nationwide, quick answers and personalized service.

Need a dentist?

Delta Dental has the largest network of dentists nationwide. Find the one that's right for you.

Delta Dental Patient Direct coverage is not available in all 50 states.

Specialty:

 x ✓

Plan network:

 ✓

Dentist last name:

Search by current location:

☒ Yes ☐ No

Cost matters

How much is it going to cost? Want to know before you set foot in the dentist's office? Get started here. Our Dental Care Cost Estimator tool provides estimated cost ranges for common dental care needs.

Sign in to get a more accurate range that includes in-network savings.

Treatment type:

 ✓

Zip code:

The Dental Care Cost Estimator provides an estimate and does not guarantee the exact fees for dental procedures, what services your dental benefits plan will cover or your out-of-pocket costs. Estimates should not be construed as financial or medical advice. For more detailed information on your actual dental care costs, please consult your dentist or your Delta Dental.



MEMBER
BENEFITS
nysut
Working to Benefit You

**GET
FREE
ACCESS**

SCAN ME



Learn more about these along with several other free benefits by scanning the QR code, visiting mb-nysut.org/nocostbenefits, or calling 800-626-8101.

TO THE PREMIUM CALM APP, PEER SUPPORT LINE & MORE!

NYSUT Member Benefits understands the importance of providing support, resources, and tools to help NYSUT members with all aspects of their lives. In light of that, we have negotiated with our endorsed program providers to offer members several benefits free of charge.



Premium

Calm Service –

All in-service and retiree members receive

unlimited access to the full Calm library of sleep, meditation, and relaxation content. The popular Calm app includes specialized playlists dealing with stress and focus, mindful movement video and audio, nature scenes and sounds, children's content, and more. Members can add up to five dependents (age 16 or older) to receive their own premium Calm subscription. Note: You will need your NYSUT ID number (which can

be found at nysut.org/memberid) to create your Calm account.

Peer Support

Line – Life can throw lots of curveballs at us, and sometimes we don't readily know where to turn for help. The Peer Support Line is a confidential helpline that is available to all NYSUT members and their loved ones for answers, resources, and support when it's needed most. Chat, email, or call toll-free **844-444-0152** to connect with a peer today.



AD&D Insurance &

Travel Assistance Services –

All in-service and retiree members are automatically provided with a \$5,000 accidental death & dismemberment insurance benefit, along with free travel assistance services.

New Member Life Insurance

– All new NYSUT members are eligible to receive a free term life insurance policy providing coverage for up to \$25,000 for one year, guaranteed renewable at the end of the year.

NYSUT NEWS!

October 24, 2025

Community schools like PS 399 embrace children's "whole selves"



The most recent data reports that there are over 154,000 unhoused students in New York City. For many of our school communities, this means educating a transient population – students who may arrive at school unfed, underslept, inadequately

dressed, and dealing with the trauma that goes with being unhoused.

[One in five children live in poverty in New York](#), and that stat is front of mind for teachers at PS 399 Stanley Eugene Clark in Brooklyn. Fortunately, PS 399 is part of UFT's United Community Schools, a network of 39 community schools that work to ensure students' basic needs are met, so they are able to learn.

STUDENT
LOAN DEBT
WEBINARS



Student Loan Debt Webinars

Explore live webinars available for NYSUT members — and get straight answers to your student loan questions.

[LEARN MORE](#)



OCTA Blast October 2025

Highlights from our October OCTA Meeting

What has VOTE COPE done for me?

Vote Cope -

Our Vote Cope Campaign for 2025 is now underway. **It will run through Thursday, October 23rd.** Consider giving **\$6 for tier 6** by updating your form to \$6 per pay period if you haven't increased your contribution recently. Your OCTA representative will give you your donation form (blank ones are available if needed). Please make sure that you fill out the **BOTTOM** third of the form front & back. If you do not wish to make any changes, then nothing needs to be done with the form.

Labor Walk-

There will be a Labor Walk for Ryan Taylor on Saturday, October 25th. Meet at the CSEA office on Cayuga Street in Fulton at 10:00 a.m. that morning. Here's the link to sign up: <https://mobilize.us/s/3bynDX>

Retirement Meeting- Please join us for a Retirement Seminar presented by the New York State Teachers' Retirement System (NYSTRS) on Tuesday, October 28, 2025, from 5:00 – 6:15 p.m. at the OCTA office. If you plan to attend, please let Dan Rose know by emailing drose@oswego.org.

New Hires- The OCTA Officers would like to invite you to an informal conversation on

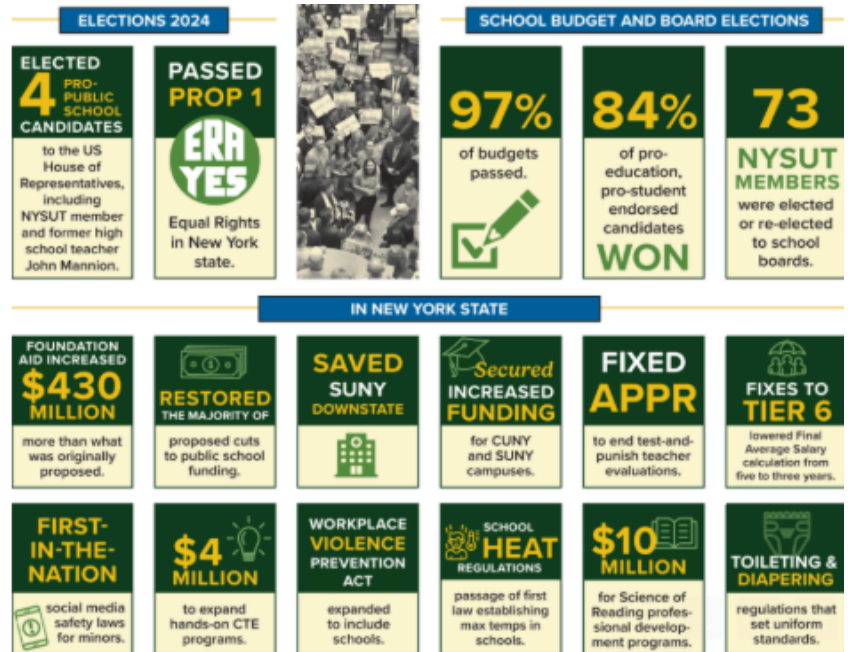
Tuesday, October 28th

4:00 – 4:45 PM

OCTA Office – 122 A West 2nd Street

This gathering will take place just before the NYSTRS Retirement Presentation, which runs from 5:00 – 6:15 PM. If you plan to stay for the presentation, dinner will be provided.

To help us plan accordingly, please email Dan Rose if you intend to stay for the presentation so we can order enough food.



The goal of this informal chat is to check in, hear how things are going, offer support, and answer any questions you may have. We hope you can join us! Please reply to let Michelle McManus know if you'll be attending our chat. 😊

NYS 457 Plan Meeting-

Want to learn more about the tax-advantaged retirement savings plan known as the 457 plan specially offered to state and government employees? As teachers in NY State we are given the opportunity to defer a portion of our salary which grows tax-deferred until withdrawal. How is this different from a 403b? How much can I defer? When can I make withdrawals? All questions will be answered during this webinar happening on NOVEMBER 12 @ 5PM. The invite for the meeting will be forwarded to anyone interested ahead of time. [ENROLL NOW!](#)

Legal Plan- OCTA continues its membership with the NYSUT Legal Plan for all Association members for another year! We will be holding an informational meeting on Monday, October 27, at 4:00 p.m. via Google Meet for anyone who is new or has questions. There will also be additional opportunities to participate in Will Days this spring. However, you may schedule a private appointment with a local lawyer at your convenience at any time.

Remember — the plan is available all year. Please print and complete the NYSUT Access Form below, then mail it to the address listed on the form so you're ready for signing in the spring or to meet with your own lawyer. If you have any questions, please reach out via email at wills@fkmlaw.com or by phone at (800) 832-5182. [Legal Plan Paperwork](#)

Blessings- You're Invited!

Join us for Blessings in a Backpack Trivia Night

 Saturday, November 8th

 Elk's Lodge

 Registration at 6:30 PM | Trivia starts at 7:00 PM

[Registration Form](#)

Enjoy an evening of fun, friendly competition, and light refreshments — all in support of a great cause!

We're also accepting donations of gift cards, raffle items, or raffle baskets. Please let me know if you would like to donate.

Professional Development Update-

External professional development is capped at 45 hours per participant until January 1st. After January 1st, if additional funding becomes available, staff who have already completed 45 hours may be eligible to register for additional courses.

Additional Course Offerings-

NYSUT ELT Courses: <https://elt.nysut.org/register/elt-academy>

ELT: Sci of Reading: <https://www.nysut.org/members/elt-academy/science-of-reading>

Safety- Classroom doors should be locked at all times. Discuss this with your building safety committees, however, if your door is locked when it is shut, no one can get in without a key and you are better protected from unforeseen threats.

Share safety concerns with your union Safety Representatives:

OHS- Gina Iorio
 MIN- Don Fronk
 OMS- Dan Rogers
 CER- T. Lagoe
 KPS- Carolyn Slobodian
 FLS- Kate Bowman
 FPS- Cari Joyce

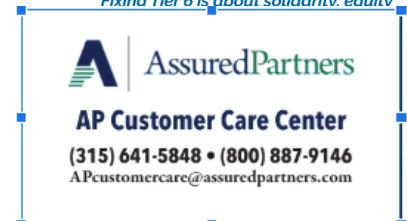
EMAIL THEM THE FOLLOWING:

- Location of incident
- Describe concern (threat or building issue)
- Was anyone injured?
- Describe injury
- Did the employee fill out the Employee's [Accident Report for Workers' Compensation](#) and return it to the nurse

Insurance- If you are having difficulties with MVP be sure to reach out to Assured Partners (was ENV) at (315) 641-5848. They can help you with Benefit questions, claims issues, finding providers, etc. You should also inform Amanda Hamilton at the EDC and Carrie Patane of claim issues so they can pass the information on to the members of the Healthcare Committee. IF you have reached out to Assured Partners and you still have concerns, please let us know that too. **Make sure you are using Teladoc, ask for GENERIC RX, and use Express Scripts when possible to help reduce plan costs and to lower our premiums.**

Join the Fix Tier 6 Team

Fixing Tier 6 is about solidarity. equity.



FIX TIER 6 - [How bad is it?](#) [Get involved!!](#) [Watch a Video](#)

[Visit Fixtier6.org](#)- Visit this website to learn more about supporting fixing tier 6. Make sure you write out the Oswego Classroom Teachers Association.

NYSUT Legal Plan-

ALL OCTA MEMBERS HAVE ACCESS TO THE LEGAL PLAN as a gift of membership! If you want to know more information about what is included in our NYSUT Legal Plan [click here](#).

Employee Assistance Program (EAP): To contact them call (315-470-7447).

The district provides members with services to help with stress management, family stress, anxiety and panic, workplace issues, communication barriers and more. The service is provided by Help People. It is a free and confidential service! Offices are located in Fulton, Liverpool and Syracuse.

Member Benefits Teacher Discounts- Click on this [link](#) to view teacher discounts.

OCTA RESOURCE GUIDE- [2025-2026 OCTA Resource Guide](#)

Jeans Weeks-

OCTA Scholarship- Oct. 27-31, Feb. 9-13
 Stuff A Bus- January 5-9, May 18-22
 Blessings- Dec. 15-19, March 23-27
 Prom- April 6-10

New members, and anyone who hasn't completed it yet or needs to update their email or name, please take a moment to fill out the [OCTA Contact Form](#).

Know Your Paycheck Deductions- [Document from Meghan Wilson](#)

Check your stub to make sure you are receiving the appropriate deductions for each paycheck:

FICA is social security

MEDI is Medicare

FEDERAL is federal tax

STATE is state tax

D/I OCTA is disability insurance

HI10F15% is 10 month family/single health

INSREIMB = Insurance Reimbursement (in Dec) for those off step

TRS= money you pay into NYS Teachers Retirement

MED/DENT is your flex spending account

DFBOCTIN is your OCTA Dental Insurance

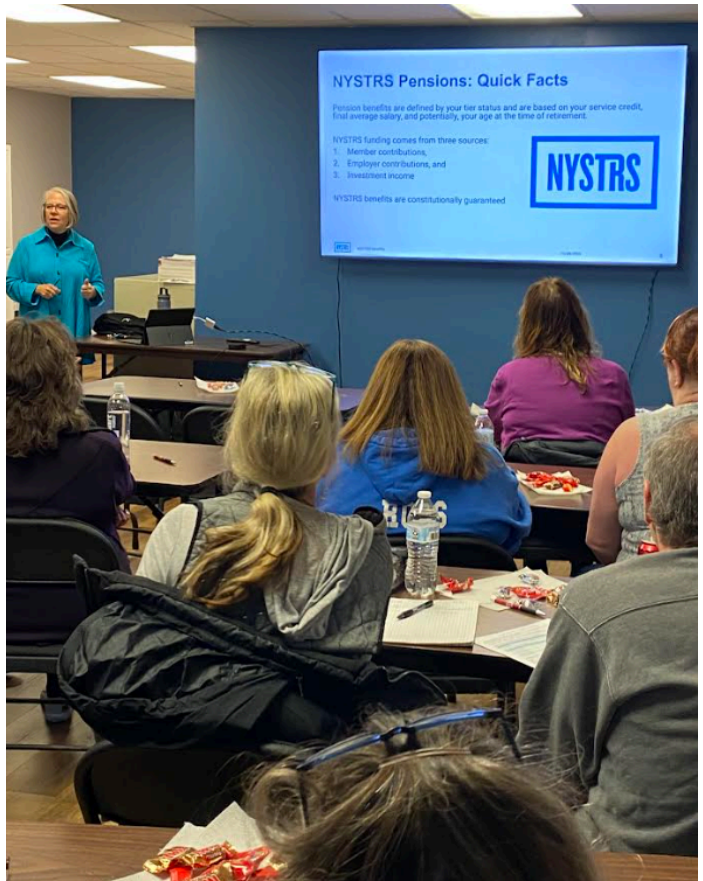
VISFIND = Vision individual

OCTA28+ is your union dues

OPL is city library contribution

NYSUT = member benefits (Life ins, legal, etc.)

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this month's retirement seminar!



Have you visited the OCTA website yet? What are you waiting for!!!??

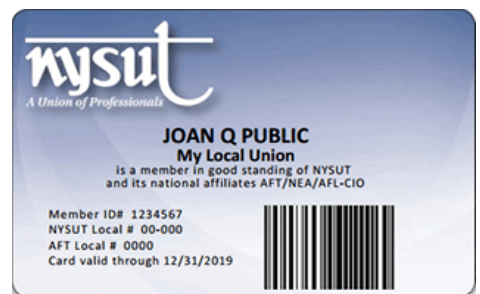
Click on the screenshot of the image below to explore the site! Find quick links to important union documents like the new OCTA Contract, the OCTA building officer list, and the new OCTA resources guide! Click on the image below to link to the [website](#)! **Many of your questions can also be found in the [2024-2025 Resource Guide](#).** **The link to this is ALSO posted on our OCTA Webpage!**



Need A Quick NYSUT Membership Card?

[Login here and download a PDF of your membership card.](#)

To request a replacement for this card, call NYSUT at 1-800-342-9810
ext. 6224



OCTA Advocate is published by the Oswego Classroom Teachers Association, West 1st Street, Oswego, NY. **President:** Carrie Patane, **VP Grievance:** Kim LeRoy **VP Negotiations:** Jessica Burrige **VP Political Action:** Jenn Cahill, **VP Newsletter:** Dan Rose, **Secretary:** Michelle McManus, **Treasurer:** Mike Patane. Affiliated with the New York State United Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.

