

OCTA Advocate

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



DECEMBER/JANUARY 2022

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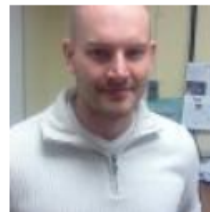
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Meet your 2020-2021 OCTA Officers!



Carrie Patane
OCTA President

Kim LeRoy
VP Grievance

Gretchen Coakley
VP Negotiations

Jenn Cahill
VP Pol. Action

Mike Patane
Treasurer

Michelle McManus
Secretary

Dan Rose
VP Newsletter

Season's greetings and holiday thanks from your OCTA Executive Board:

In the spirit of this holiday season, your OCTA Executive Board would like to take this opportunity to offer a heartfelt 'thanks' to all of our members who continue to work so hard to ensure that the students in the Oswego City School District receive an exemplary educational experience. We are honored to be among you and stand together with you in admiration of all you do each and every day.

Despite the challenging teaching conditions which have arisen over the past two school years, we are so proud to say that our union remains strong, just as strong as your continued commitment to providing rich educational experiences and safe learning environments for our educators and students.

You have not only risen to the challenges created amidst this pandemic, you have far surpassed and exceeded all expectations of providing challenging and joyful learning experiences for the students of the Oswego City School District, and you did this with grace, dignity and an unwavering commitment to the faces (both virtual and in person) that came before you each day.

As your union leaders, however, we understand and acknowledge that these exceptional and extraordinary results continue to come at a cost. Though your faces may project joy, love and excitement each day in front of your students, we know, too, there is pain and suffering hidden away, worry and anxiety that surfaces after the last students have left for the day. We realize these two years have taken their toll.

There's no concealing it; we hear it in your voices at virtual meetings after school, we see it in your eyes between classes in the hallways and during lunch and planning periods; we sense it in the way you walk to and from your cars each morning and each night. We know this worry goes home with you at night. You are weary. You are worn.

But remember; we are one.

One voice. One mind. One goal. One heart.

We are united, navigating this often perilous sea, plank by plank, slowly, precariously, knowing that although we are being challenged now, this experience will only make us stronger. We are brave, determined, and resolute because we stand together as a union, aiding one another as we persevere on this arduous journey.

As your executive leaders, we will continue to fight for what is just and what is right, and we will continue to marvel at the gracious way in which you, the members of the Oswego Classroom Teachers Association, go about your business each and every day, imparting the gift of knowledge to the children of our district, the children of our city.

So at this time of end-of-year reflection, we give thanks, and say again:

Thank you for all that you have done, and all that you will do.

In solidarity,

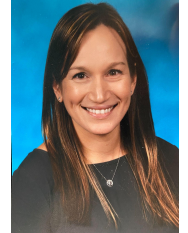
The OCTA Board of Directors



OCSD School Psychologists in the December OCTA Spotlight!

Michele Hager is a 16 year veteran psychologist at OHS. Of her position, Michele says “I enjoy helping high school students improve their problem-solving skills and learn to better advocate for themselves. As a parent of a child with special needs, I have discovered that I particularly enjoy helping students and their families to understand their educational needs as well as obtain services that are available within the community.”

Erin Fitzgerald is in her 11th year at OHS. Erin’s favorite part about her role as a school psychologist is being able to directly impact students and support positive change. Erin says that she is “blessed with the opportunity to be able to help students who are at-risk make changes which enable them to earn their diploma.” Erin appreciates that her job allows for so much collaboration and she is thankful to be surrounded by an incredible team.



Ashley Darling is in her third year as a school psychologist at Leighton Elementary. She advocates for students and works together with teachers, parents, administrators, and service providers. Ashley enjoys working with students in a small group with the focus on identifying/managing feelings and social skills.

Sheena Hall works at Charles E. Riley Elementary and is in her 13th year as the school psychologist. Her favorite thing about the job is being able to play a part in helping children succeed. Sometimes that might mean helping them to solve a problem with a friend while other times it involves figuring out which supports are necessary to push them toward success.



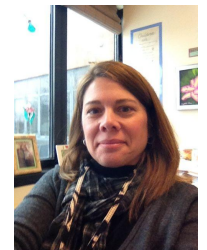
As an elementary school psychologist at Fitzhugh Park, what Rebecca James likes most is connecting with students. She also enjoys assisting children and families with educational and social emotional supportive interventions. Rebecca is in her 20th year in the Oswego City School District.

John Garruto has been a school psychologist for the Oswego City School District since 1997. Right now, John works as a school psychologist at Kingsford Park Elementary School and, prior to that, worked at Frederick Leighton Elementary School. He is active in his state and national organizations, adjuncts at SUNY Oswego, and also maintains a private practice. His favorite part of his work is direct counseling with students. John loves seeing students learn coping skills to deal with emotional and behavioral challenges.



Liz Heckert is the school psychologist at Minetto Elementary and has been since 2015. Liz has enjoyed becoming a part of the school community and fostering an inclusive environment for all staff and students.

Rachel Baker This is working her 29th year as a school psychologist. Rachel worked for CiTi BOCES then at Minetto Elementary prior to transitioning to OMS. Her favorite thing about the job is being able to work directly with students, their families and teachers/school staff.



Ryan Raflowski works as a school psychologist in the district. Formerly, Ryan worked at both FPS and FLS. Ryan feels privileged to be working with staff from every building through CSE meetings or in a coaching role. Ryan’s wife Kdee is a mental health counselor and play therapist who has also worked on site at Leighton Elementary providing mental health support to the students there through Integrative Counseling Services.

Congratulations to ALL of our wonderful school psychologists! You deserve the spotlight! If you happen to see one of these hard-working OCTA members out and about (or in your virtual travels), please congratulate them and thank them for a job well done!

Do you know an OCTA member who works hard at what they do? Someone whose efforts seem to go unnoticed?

Someone who always seems to have positive energy? Do you know an OCTA member who deserves to be in the SPOTLIGHT? Then nominate them to be cast in the monthly OCTA spotlight! This section of the newsletter and website will highlight one (or more) OCTA member(s) per month. Send the candidates name, along with a brief description of what makes them special to drose@oswego.org. All nominees and nominators will receive a SPECIAL GIFT from OCTA! Send your nomination today!



December 21, 2021

COVID-19 Booster Shots: What You Need to Know

Source: AFT



We are experiencing a new wave of COVID-19 infections driven by both the delta and omicron variants.

Increases in delta infections can be traced to waning vaccine immunity six months after injection, as well as the onset of colder weather, holiday activities, and travel. As of Dec 20, the number of omicron cases is doubling every two to four days. omicron infects bronchial tubes 70 times faster than delta, which may explain why it spreads so quickly. Omicron appears to infect bronchial tubes efficiently, but the variant is less infectious in the lungs.¹ omicron may supplant delta soon, but the two variants are driving surges

simultaneously in Europe.

At the same time, we have growing evidence that vaccine-induced immunity drops precipitously after six months, BUT Pfizer and Moderna booster shots provide protection against omicron and stronger protection against delta. ^{2, 3} These mRNA vaccines and Johnson & Johnson protect against severe illness. Pfizer and Moderna boosters do offer protection from infection from omicron.⁴

Multiple reports of immune response in lab studies and longitudinal studies of booster recipients in Israel all agree—two doses of mRNA (Pfizer and Moderna) vaccines produce high, short-term protection that wanes significantly after six months, but neutralizing antibodies are boosted for omicron, with a stronger immune response for delta.⁵

[READ THE REST: CLICK HERE](#)

Check out all your union membership has to offer!

Legal Service Plan

Plan benefits include:

- Crucial estate planning documents (a Simple Will, Health Care Proxy, Living Will & Durable Power of Attorney)
- Free telephone consultations
- Guaranteed maximum fees for specific legal matters

Financial Counseling Program

Plan benefits include:

- Unbiased objective advice
- Free telephone and virtual consultations
- Assistance with retirement planning, 403(b) savings, college savings, tax planning and more

NYSUT Member Benefits

Every Dollar Counts!

These are just two of the dozens of endorsed programs & services available to union members and their families.

Whether it's insurance products, financial or legal services, or discounts, shopping or travel, NYSUT Member Benefits offers numerous programs that can help you save time and money while protecting those you care about most. Many of these programs can be purchased through payroll or pension deduction for greater convenience and savings opportunities.

Member Benefits also provides the advocacy role that is so important should an issue or concern arise. We encourage you to take the time to explore the Member Benefits website to find out how we can help you make every dollar count!



Learn more by scanning the QR code to the left,
visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org
or calling 800-626-8101.



NYS Deferred Compensation Information!

Want to know more about the savings vehicle called the 457 Plan?

1. You can enroll via the website: <https://www.nysdcp.com/iApp/tcm/nysdcp/enroll/index.jsp>
2. For help deciding which funds you would like to invest in, you can use this tool: <https://www.nysdcp.com/iApp/rsc/myInvestmentPlannerDecisionEntry.x>
3. To evaluate how your contribution amount will affect your paycheck, you can use this tool: https://www.nysdcp.com/iApp/tcm/nysdcp/learning/tools/paycheck_impact_calculator.jsp
4. If you'd like to meet with one of our local Account Executives to discuss all your options in person, you can find your rep here: https://www.nysdcp.com/iApp/tcm/nysdcp/support/contact/meet_your_account_executives.jsp
(Choose by the County you work in, not where you live)

If you need live assistance, please contact a HELPLINE Counselor at 1-800-422-8463 Monday through Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 11:00 P.M. or Saturdays, 9:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. (ET) and we will be happy to assist you.

Chris

Administrative Services Agency



We want to know: What's your priority, and why?

Add your voice to the hundreds who have already committed to champion [NYSUT's Future Forward](#) priorities. We need your help to push lawmakers to act now. [Tell us](#) what is most important to you: Public schools as the centers of our communities; Support students' social-emotional needs; Fight for racial justice; De-emphasize high-stakes testing; and Adopt best practices for instruction and technology.

- Explaining the Future Forward initiative, President Pallotta says in his [monthly radio commentary](#) on WAMC-FM, "If the COVID-19 pandemic taught us anything, it's that public schools are the centers of our communities." Amber Chandler of Frontier Central TA and Robert Wood of Rome TA also spoke on the [Capitol Pressroom](#) about the challenges ahead.

OCTA December Donations

The OCTA donates money every year to various causes and charities across the county and region. The OCTA is proud of his long history of giving back. December donations are listed below:

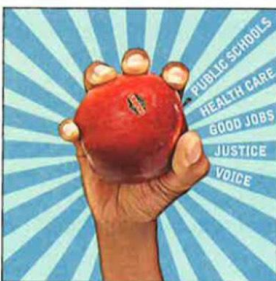
\$250 to Oswego County Labor Council for Holiday giving (food and toys)

\$100 to the United Way

\$250 to the Anthony House



**OUR VOICE,
OUR VALUES**



OUR VOTE-COPE

Thank you to one and all that donated during our Vote-Cope campaign this year!

Our donations will help NYSUT with fair funding for schools, COVID -19 safety protections, higher staffing levels, tenure protection, collective bargaining rights, pension protection, and a fair evaluation process. These battles cost millions of dollars to wage. Your voluntary contribution to Vote-Cope is the only way for all of us to ensure that the people in power hear our voices and understand what we need to succeed in our work and our lives.

Vote-Cope Coordinator and OCTA VP, Jenn Cahill

2021 Dues Withholdings



Submitted by Mike Patane, OCTA Treasurer

Hold onto your last pay stubs of the 2021 tax year. The last pay for the 2021 year will be December 31st, which will have your dues withholdings. This amount will also be on your w-2 forms you'll be receiving from the district in January.

[December is OCTA Scholarship Payroll Deduction Month](#)

*** New employees please read attached forms ***

Several years ago the Representative Assembly of OCTA introduced and passed a resolution allowing interested OCTA members the opportunity to contribute to the OCTA Scholarship Fund via payroll deduction. This contribution is the choice of each individual member. Your donation would automatically be deducted from **one of your paychecks** and be placed in the OCTA Scholarship Fund. If you have contributed in the past, you will see the deduction made from your **December 31st** paycheck. For additional information, or to sign up, please [click HERE](#).

Thank you for supporting the OCTA Scholarship Fund -
The OCTA Scholarship Committee

OCTA Newsblast December 2021

Highlights from our December 2021 OCTA Meeting



***Diagnostic COVID Testing is available Monday- Friday. Contact our covid hotline to get a spot. OCSD has 48 spots per day.**

OCSD Employee COVID Hotline: 315-341-2055

OCSD Student COVID Hotline: 315-341-2050

***A potential agreement to use "approved absences" during in person learning.**

Heidi Sweeney is putting together a memo that states if someone is out on quarantine (waiting for Covid results) and able to stream, you may contact Heidi Sweeney to ask if you can use an approved absence and live stream to your classroom. These will be approved on a case by case basis. If you are approved, you still need to provide access to your meet to the sub who will manage the room while you teach remotely.

***Teaching Assistants**

If teaching assistants sub for a teacher during data meetings, TAs should put in for sub pay - UNLESS they are working with groups in their own classroom, in the traditional function of their regular role as a TA.

***Streaming MOA** - A new streaming MOA was signed. This MOA is in effect until February 28, 2022. TAs are now able to be paid for live streaming. This is retroactive back to the beginning of the school year. The full MOA was provided in an email from Carrie Patane.

***Student Loan Debt Assistance Presentations-** sign up below if you are interested in attending

- [Tues., Jan. 11 - 4:30 - 6 p.m. - REGISTER NOW](#)
- [Thur., Jan. 20 - 4:30 - 6 p.m. - REGISTER NOW](#)

***Loan Forgiveness Info:** AFT will help navigate Student Loan Forgiveness. Please go to this website for help. <https://www.aft.org/news/spreading-word-student-debt-relief-here> In a hard fought victory for public employee unions, the Biden administration has announced an overhaul of the broken Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. The changes will mean an estimated 550,000 public service workers will move closer to loan forgiveness and 22,000 will become immediately eligible. PSLF was created to ease the burden of student loan debt for a generation of workers who have dedicated their lives to serving the public and who were on the frontlines of our pandemic response. <https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/pslf-limited-waiver>

Information on the steps for loan forgiveness:

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/how-to-take-advantage-of-the-biden-administrations-changes-to-public-service-loan-forgiveness-and-make-a-successful-claim-11633703342>

Buc Strong Fundraiser: Buc Strong Apparel sales have ended for 2021. We raised \$1,549.61. This money was divided up among the 7 schools to help students during the holiday season.

***NEA Grant for Teacher Recruitment** - 50% drop in enrollment in Teaching degree programs in the last 10 years. 1/3 of the current teaching staff can retire in the next 5 years. How can we “grow our own” to help reduce this crisis? Take a look at the GYO (Grow Your Own) Grant. This grant provides funding for a new course or club for future educators. There are over 35 lesson plans available in the TALAT resources tab that could be used for this course or club.

<https://takealookatteaching.org/k12grant>

***Building hours:** The buildings are now open on Sundays. You may go in up until 7:00pm.

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

Click on the screenshot of the homepage 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!

Oswego Classroom Teachers' Association

Home Officer Updates Benefits Newsletter Photo Gallery Helpful Information

Educating Everyone Takes Everyone QUICK LINKS!! OCTA CONTRACT BUILDING OFFICER LIST Questions? Email Contact Us

Welcome to The Oswego Classroom Teachers' Association.

This Association has been established to promote the best interests of the teachers and other members of the professional staff within the district.

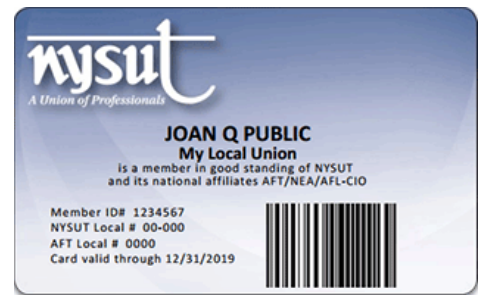
Welcome to new, current, and retired members!

To the right, you will find the brand new OCTA Resource Guide full of useful information related to your union and your contract! Feel free to browse and read at your leisure. Have a question and don't know who to ask? Use the yellow 'Contact Us' tab (in the upper right hand corner of this screen) to get in touch with your OCTA officers.

OCTA MEMBER RESOURCE GUIDE

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.

