

# OCTA Advocate

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



## February 2025

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**Meet your 2024-2025 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

Hello All and Happy February!

As we try to outlast another brutal Oswego winter, I would like to remind our membership about healthcare costs and the importance of [utilizing generic drugs whenever possible](#). Many of us may not realize that when it comes to healthcare, there is a direct correlation between usage and our premiums, and we should all be cognizant and proactive in trying to keep our overall costs down.

For example, from July through December 2024 our plan has paid over three million dollars for prescriptions ordered and used by members of our plan. There are plenty of generic brands that give the same benefits as the name brand drugs that are advertised on television. If you are on a name brand, the cost to our plan could be hundreds of dollars more than the generic equivalent, and those costs come right back to us in next year's premium rates!!

Please consider lower-priced medicines as we work to save our plan (and members!) money. [\(HOW CAN I FIND OUT WHAT DRUGS MAY BE LESS EXPENSIVE BUT STILL EFFECTIVE FOR MY TREATMENT?\)](#)

Drug lists include thousands of drugs. In some cases, there may be a less expensive brand or generic drug than the one you take now for your condition. Generic drugs have the same active ingredients in the same strength as the brand-name drug, but they can cost a lot less. Feel free to talk to your doctor about your treatment options. They can help you make sure you're taking the best medicines for both your health needs and your budget. Together you can decide if you want to choose to change medicines. If you do, your doctor will need to provide you with a new prescription.

Also, any recurring prescriptions used as a maintenance drug can be ordered as a 3 month supply. When ordering generic prescriptions through [Express Scripts](#) the member pays a **zero dollar copay**, and the program STILL saves our plan money. When we save our plan money, we lower our premiums. If you are unsure how to get started with [Express Scripts](#), please [CLICK HERE to take the first step toward home delivered meds!](#)

### **Please wear RED for ED on Tuesday, March 4th!**

March 4th is a COUNTRY wide Day of Action to show support for Education funding and the Department of Education. This is for ALL Americans... Educators, SRPs, CSEA, Administrators, parents, businesses, board members and ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS. Spread the word.

MANY VOICES -TOGETHER- send a strong message! **RED FOR ED ON MARCH 4!**

### **Defending public education: A national call to action**

### **Protect—don't wreck—our children's futures**

In solidarity,  
Carrie

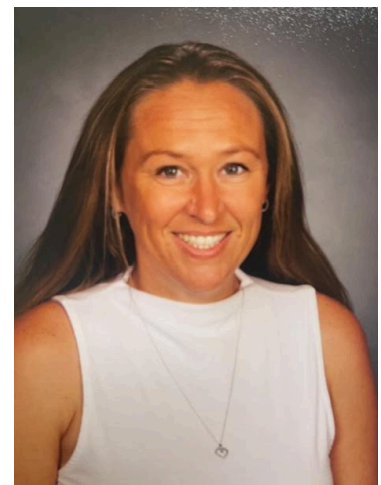
**CONGRATS TO ALL WHO SHARE THE FEBRUARY OCTA SPOTLIGHT!**

**Lisa Ryder (OHS)** attended SUNY Oswego as a secondary ed major (French concentrate) and a theater minor. Oswego offered a summertime study abroad program while she was a student there so she completed a summer in Paris/St. Malo. After graduation Lisa covered several maternity leaves for schools in the area and was employed by Sandy Creek Central School for 11 years teaching French 7-12. When they phased out the French program, Lisa found employment at Drivers Village as a title clerk before subbing for a year in Pulaski and Sandy Creek. For the last eight years she was employed by the North Syracuse Central School District teaching 7th grade French at both their middle schools. Outside of school, Lisa enjoys reading, playing games on her iPad and spending time with her 16 year old daughter. She has a cat, a dog and a 6 month old kitten and also likes to ride motorcycles with her husband.



This month's OCTA spotlight for **Kingsford Park School** is our very own **Shannon Kane**. Shannon was hired in 2018 and has been teaching 3rd grade at KPS ever since. Before coming to the Oswego City School District, Shannon taught in several different positions in Maryland and New York State ranging from pre-k to middle school special education. Of all the positions in which she's taught, 3rd grade is by far her favorite. "I enjoy this age and appreciate the students' love of learning and willingness to grow in the classroom community. Students' passion and excitement to learn about everything and anything makes it easy to show up everyday." Outside of school Shannon enjoys spending time with her family and friends. "You can find me on the sidelines of different sporting events, mainly soccer and basketball. I love to watch my family and cheer them on wherever they are. I really look forward to the summer months when my husband and I both have time off from work. We enjoy spending time with our kids, visiting family, and spending time outside in the sunshine."

**Danielle Ruggio (CER)** is an Oswego resident who attended Oswego State University. She is currently in her third year with the Oswego City School District. Danielle is currently teaching 3rd grade at Riley and loves being able to form meaningful relationships with her students and their families. She also loves that she can have a positive impact on student lives through education. In her free time, Danielle loves spending time with my family and friends and says that this year she is looking forward to watching her students continue to grow academically. Danielle is impressed and truly amazed to see how far they have come this year.



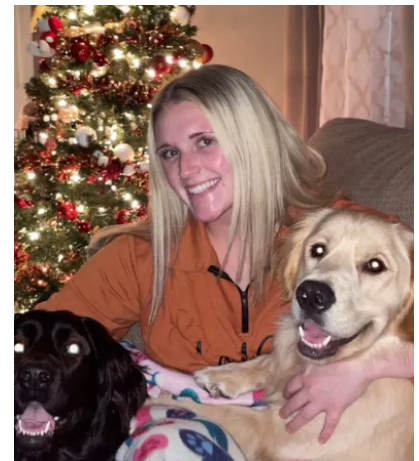


Congratulations to **Christina Eiss**, one of this month's OCTA spotlight recipients at **Minetto Elementary**



**School!** Christina was inspired to become a teaching assistant by her grandmother (a former teacher) and a strong personal passion for working with children. She has been married for almost four years and has two daughters, ages 18 and 19. Christina is motivated by a desire to continually improve herself, believing that personal growth helps her better understand others. A graduate of G. Ray Bodley High School, she enjoys playing video games during the winter and spending time outdoors hiking, fishing, and swimming in warmer months. We are so excited to have Christina here at Minetto and wish her the best!

Congratulations to **Alyssa Searor**, one of this month's OCTA Spotlight recipients at **Minetto Elementary School!** Alyssa has always had a passion for working with kids, and she finds it incredibly rewarding to witness their growth in such a short period of time. She lives with her fiancé and two dogs, and together they enjoy staying active with family walks. Alyssa is motivated by the drive to be successful and graduated from Oswego High School. Outside of work, she enjoys going to the gym, playing pickleball, and spending time with her dogs. Her favorite hobbies include reading and playing pickleball. We're thrilled to have Alyssa here at Minetto and wish her continued success!

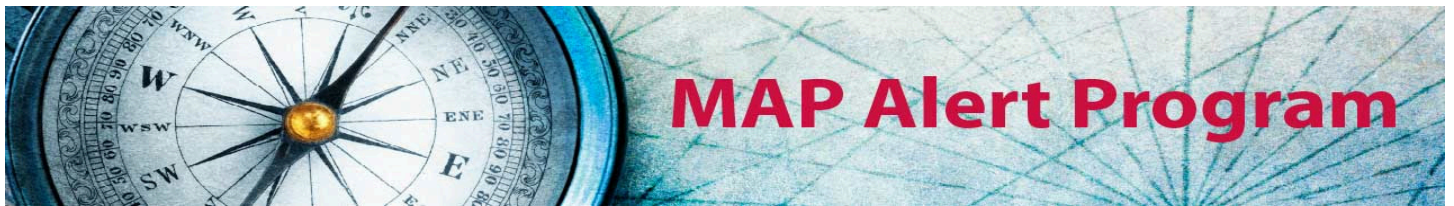
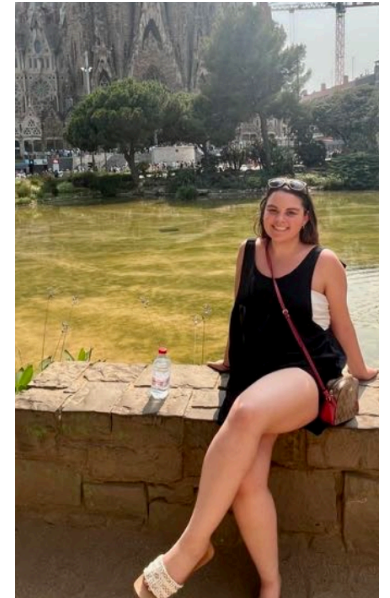


**FPS** welcomes **Devin Flynn** this year as a long term substitute!

Devin has been a substitute teacher in the Oswego City District since 2019. He went back to school and got his master's in 2021 to make it official. The best part of the job to Devin is feeling like he makes a difference each day. Making connections to students and staff has been very rewarding to Devin. Devin states his duties and responsibilities pretty much begin and end with the school day, although this year he's had a few long-term positions that let him do some planning and looking-ahead after hours, as well as taking more ownership of a classroom overall, and which he says has been really exciting for him! Devin enjoys that he has been able to work with a few great teams at different grade levels and says that everyone has been really helpful and supportive, making this a great year for him. Outside of work Devin enjoys music, books, and movies; great hobbies to have when you're snowed in!



**Megan Delong (OMS)** grew up in Oswego, NY and attended school through the OCSD, graduating in 2020. Ms. Delong continued her education at SUNY Oswego with a dual major in Adolescent Education and Spanish, as well as a minor in French. During her college career, she also had the opportunity to take part in a summer study abroad program in Spain at the University of Barcelona. Megan says she wouldn't have gone on the path to be an educator if it weren't for the teachers she had during her time as a student in the Oswego City School District, and that it's so rewarding to be teaching in her home district that did so much for her. Megan loves teaching middle school Spanish because she gets to be students' first exposure to a new language and culture and discovers that they're usually very excited to learn! She loves seeing students build their language toolbox throughout the year and enjoys hearing about them using Spanish for communicative purposes. Outside of work, Megan enjoys reading, going to the gym, and traveling (she's looking forward to her next trip to NYC during spring break).



Supplies for your classroom  
shouldn't break the bank.

**HELP US SECURE A NEW  
EDUCATOR TAX CREDIT!**



# TAKE ACTION!

Tell lawmakers it's time:  
Increase the educator tax  
credit!

Send email 



## OCTA Blast February 2025

*Highlights from our February 2025 OCTA Meeting*

**NYSUT Legal Plan-** If you are wanting to know more information about what is included in our NYSUT Legal Plan [click here](#). **Stay tuned for Will Signing Days! Appointments will be offered in April, however, if you have a spouse or other family member who took advantage of this opportunity, you should call your lawyer on page one of the packet you received to make an appointment to get your will signed and notarized. Family members will not be able to come into the building to meet with the lawyers during the school day.**

**Safety:** Carrie is working to ensure that each building is represented at the upcoming District Safety Meeting. It is important that we gather information on any injuries—whether minor or major—that have occurred. Dr. Kilmer needs to be aware of these incidents, as we've noticed that they are sometimes underreported. ([Employee's Accident Report for Workers' Compensation](#))

Please make sure that if you or someone in your building has experienced an injury, it is reported to your building's safety representative (see below) The safety rep will then pass the information along for review.

Thank you for your cooperation in helping us maintain a safe environment for everyone.

CER- Ted Beers  
FLS- Kate Bowman  
KPS- Carolyn Slobodian  
MIN- Don Fronk  
FPS-Cari Joyce

OMS-Dan Rogers  
OMS- Gina Iorio

**SAVE THE DATE: Solidarity Events**  
**Volleyball: June 20, 2025**

**Don't Forget NYS Mandated Reporter Training:** - REQUIRED for **ALL** members by April 2025. Many people are stating that it is taking months for their certificate to appear in their TEACH Account.

### NYS Mandated Reporter Training

For those of you who are looking to see if your certificate is updated on the Teach account:

1. Complete course. Give it a few months to show up.
2. Go to <https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/teach/>
3. Login in
4. See pictures below. Inquiry links> Account information> Workshops

### Join the Fix Tier 6 Team

*Fixing Tier 6 is about solidarity, equity and dignity. Our work is important. Our pensions should reflect that.*



**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.

**Health Insurance:** If you are having difficulties with Aetna 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.**



**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.

**\*OCTA RESOURCE GUIDE:** [2024-2025 Resource Guide](#)

**Know Your Paycheck Deductions:**

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

**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.)

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

**TRS**= money you pay into NYS Teachers Retirement

**THANK YOU to our OCTA Building Leadership 24-25**

**CER**

Ted Beers  
Holly Babcock

**FPS**

Julie Tubolino  
Cari Joyce

**KPS**

Mary Lynne  
Maxwell  
Hope Mazuroski

**FLS**

Meghan Harrison  
Amy Armet

**MIN**

Keri Hunter  
Stacie Waterhouse-  
Roberts

**OHS**

Gina Iorio  
Heather Sugar  
Robert Dumas

**OMS**

Jeff Brown  
Clare Donovan

**Substitutes**

Ed Stacy



## OCTA Officer Elections Taking Place In May



**Want to get actively involved in the OCTA? Feel like you could make a difference? Get on this year's BALLOT!**

Eligible, active OCTA members can run for building president and vice president positions. Elections are held in even years for all building positions, and three OCTA officer positions, including OCTA 1st VP, 3rd Vice President, 5th Vice President (Newsletter Editor), and Treasurer. Elections will take place during the month of May.

All positions are filled for a two-year term (September 2025-June 2027). [CLICK HERE TO MEET YOUR CURRENT OCTA OFFICERS.](#)

Please see your [building president](#) if interested in running or email [drose@oswego.org](mailto:drose@oswego.org) for more information. What are the responsibilities of a building officer or rep? [Click here for a list of responsibilities.](#)

### **RETIREMENT Seminar for OCTA Members (and families) in APRIL!**

Whether you are thinking about retiring in the next 5 years or just starting out your journey to retirement, this seminar is for you!



**Join us for a one-hour NYSTRS Retirement Benefits session (date to be announced soon) in the OCTA Office when a NYSTRS Information Representative will discuss key topics you need to know.**

The session will include an overview of pension calculation rules by tier, as well as:

- How to be sure you receive all the service credit for which you are eligible.
- Important service milestones and their impact on your pension calculation.
- The various pension payment options.
- Death benefits and their continuation into retirement.
- The steps to take to file for retirement.

*Questions will be encouraged during this hour-long presentation. Specific questions concerning your individual retirement situation can also be discussed during a separate benefits' consultation or by calling the Retirement System at (800) 348-7298.*

*PLEASE email Dan Rose ([drose@oswego.org](mailto:drose@oswego.org)) if you are interested in attending this seminar. Food and beverages will be provided by OCTA on the night of this meeting! Mr. Rose will then forward you the information for the meeting!! Thank you!*

## Questions about the retirement system of which you are a part (New York State Teachers' Retirement System aka NYSTRS)?

Read the NYSTRS Active Members' Handbook! This Active Members' Handbook is intended to help working and vested NYSTRS members better understand their retirement benefits. It's an important part of our commitment to help you make informed decisions about your future at each stage of your teaching career. Information in this important book includes: benefit options available in retirement, navigating the retirement process, transitioning to retirement, and information about contributions, loans and service credit. [CLICK HERE TO START READING!!!!](#)



### ***Q: Where can I find the OCTA Contract?***

*We have uploaded the searchable PDF version of the new OCTA contract to the Personnel Shared Drive folder, '[Contracts](#)', and then select '[OCTA](#)'. You can click on the Table of Contents to go to that section and then click on the outer edge of a contract page to go back to the TOC. This works best after downloading the document but may work in the browser, depending on the platform used when viewing.*

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## **What is a 457 Savings Plan?**



**Want to know more about the retirement savings vehicle called the [New York State Deferred Compensation Plan](#) (AKA 457 Plan)?**

This Plan is a voluntary retirement savings plan offered by New York State and your employer, to allow public employees like you to put aside money from each paycheck toward retirement. The Plan can help bridge the gap

between what you have in your pension and Social Security, and how much you'll need in retirement. The Plan offers both traditional pre-tax and Roth 457(b) accounts to provide you with retirement savings choices.

[Click here](#) to visit the plans website to enroll, read more, or explore:

*How a 457 differs from a 403B*

*Top reasons to participate in a 457 plan*

*Income tax benefits of the 457 plan*

*Investment options offered through the plan*

*Flexible distribution options*

*Lower costs*

*Frequently asked questions*



Interested or curious? [Follow this link to explore or enroll today!](#)



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Grand Circle Travel, or Grand Circle Cruise Line**



Call 1-800-955-1925 and mention code: **G5-25614** to reserve today

[www.oattravel.com](http://www.oattravel.com) | [www.gct.com](http://www.gct.com)





## Dental Information

### Submitted by your OCTA Dental Administrator, Lindsay Voigt

We know now more than ever before how connected oral health is to our overall health and wellness. Delta Dental is passionate about spreading the word via our wellness webinars for members.

According to our post-webinar survey 99.3% of attendees said they learned something new that impacted their commitment to improving their oral health habits. Curious? [FOLLOW THIS LINK FOR MORE INFORMATION!](#)

[Share](#)

#### Oral Health & Wellness Education

2-1-2. Delta Dental recommends that everyone brush twice a day, floss once per day, and visit their dentist twice a year. But did you ever wonder why?

Our educational webinars will give you the education and information you need to feel motivated now and in the future to take better care of your teeth and gums.

[About our webinars](#)[Member testimonials](#)

#### Webinar topics

##### Oral Health and Wellness: The whole *tooth* about a healthy smile

In this information packed and engaging webinar we explore:

- The mouth-body connection
- Understanding the drivers of tooth decay and how to prevent it
- Gum health: the foundation of your smile
- The science of dentistry and why oral health care matters
- Oral health care tips for the whole family

##### Upcoming dates for The Whole *Tooth* About a Healthy Smile

[Mar 26 - 11am PT/2pm ET](#)[May 14 - 9am PT/Noon ET](#)

## Defending public education: A national call to action

AFT President Randi Weingarten gathered AFT leaders and national organizers in a virtual town hall Feb.19 to deliver an urgent call to action: On March 4, [stand up for our schools](#). Fight for our communities. Protect our

kids. The call to action is part of the AFT's new nationwide campaign, "Protect Our Kids," mounted in response to the Trump administration's threat to cut the Department of Education and the funds that go with it. Read about the town hall and [how you can get involved on March 4](#).



Attention Seniors ...

OCTA Scholarship

Application Now  
Available

[www.oswego.org](http://www.oswego.org)

OHS Counseling Services  
Page

**April 1st Deadline**



### Protect—don't wreck—our children's futures

As President Donald Trump and Elon Musk swing a wrecking ball at the U.S. Department of Education, AFT President Randi Weingarten wonders if it's due to a lack of understanding of the department's vital functions, or because funding tax cuts for the wealthy is more important to them than building our future, or because they simply don't care about the collateral damage to our students, public schools and country. [Read her latest column](#)

### Attend an Upcoming Board of Education meeting!

The Oswego City School District Board of Education will hold their **Regular Meetings** on **Tuesday, March 4, 2025 and March 18, 2025 both at 5:00 PM.** These Regular Meetings will be held in the High School Library. The public is welcome to attend.

Meeting attendees should use the Main High School entrance. These meetings will be recorded and live streamed on [Youtube.com/@BUC](https://www.youtube.com/@BUC).

The agenda for these meetings will be available on BoardDocs (<https://go.boarddocs.com/ny/oswego/Board.nsf/Public>) after 4:00 PM Friday, February 28, 2025 and Friday, March 14, 2025.

02/16/25

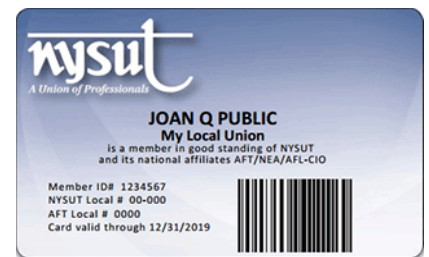
## Protect—don't wreck—our children's futures

by Randi Weingarten  
President, AFT

As President Donald Trump and Elon Musk swing a wrecking ball at the U.S. Department of Education, I'm wondering if it's due to a lack of understanding of the department's vital functions, or because funding tax cuts for the wealthy is more important to them than building our future, or because they simply don't care about the collateral damage to our students, public schools and country. As a civics teacher, I want to use this teachable moment to describe what the Education Department does (and doesn't do)—and what's at risk if Trump and Musk succeed. [READ THE REST: CLICK HERE](#)

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

Click [HERE](#) 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!



## 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

