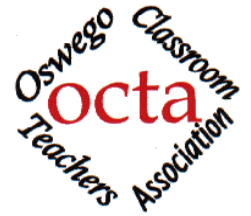


OCTA Advocate

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



JANUARY 2024

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Meet your 2022-2023 OCTA Officers!



Carrie Patane
OCTA President



Kim LeRoy
VP Grievance



Jess Burridge
VP Negotiations



Jenn Cahill
VP Pol. Action



Mike Patane
Treasurer



Michelle McManus
Secretary



Dan Rose
VP Newsletter

Message from your OCTA President - Carrie Patane

Your union officers value your input and appreciate the contributions you make every day to improve our schools, our district, and our profession. We are grateful for all the responses we received to our recent request for contract proposals, and our negotiations team will be meeting at length to formalize your requests into a package that will be shared with Dr. Kilmer and the district's negotiations team at the end of February. We will also be seeking your input on next year's instructional calendar. With the state mandate of 180 instructional days, required state testing days, the need to schedule up to 6 snow days, and additional required vacation days (Juneteenth and Lunar New Year), the calendar is tight. Dr. Kilmer has proposed a calendar that would require us to sign a Memorandum of Agreement to authorize the district to schedule our opening day conference before Labor Day. You should have received a survey that was sent to your email address today. Kindly respond to this survey by 4pm Monday, February 5th. Thank you for your insight and wisdom as we navigate the ever-changing landscape of our district's future.



In addition to our local union activism, we all have an obligation to our students and profession to stay involved, informed, and well-versed on the topics and conversations surrounding education on a national level, including the challenges we must overcome on our way to better serving our unique populations and communities.

I hope you have an opportunity to read one or more of the articles from our affiliates' publications including an article in the most recent edition of the [NEA Today](#) entitled: [Educators Fight Book Bans Through Their Union](#). You might also browse the recent edition of the [NYSUT United Magazine](#) where you will find [an article recounting the positive legislative package](#) that will strengthen the rights of SRPs and public sector workers.

Whatever goals and aspirations you have, remember that you are not alone on this evolving journey! It is through relationships and togetherness that we will begin to reap the fruits of our labor. **I wish you all a happy and fulfilling new year!**

In solidarity,
Carrie

Congratulations to January OCTA Spotlight Recipients!



Denise Evans (FPS) says that she has always loved children and initially wanted to become a pediatrician (teaching was her backup plan!). Denise is proud to now be in her 16th year as a special education teacher for the Oswego City School District! Denise truly looks forward to coming to work every day, and loves ‘showing up’ for her students and her entire FPS community. She sees her job as a relationship-building ministry. Ms. Evans once felt like many of the students here: overlooked and hurting, and so she makes it a point to remind her students that no matter their background, they can rise above. If you can’t find Ms. Evans in the early morning, just listen and you are sure to hear her greeting every FPS community member with smiles, warm welcomes, and hugs. Thank you for all you do, Denise, to show you care for our students, our staff, and our district!

Lilly DeCaire (OMS) has been teaching French for 25 years now (most of that in the OCSD), and is in her second year as Co-team leader for the World Language Department. As far as inspiration, Lilly credits her family, saying that they motivate her to be at her best ‘every single day of the year.’ Madame DeCaire also loves to travel to new and old places including beaches. Lilly is a voracious reader and finds great joy in cooking, baking and feeding friends and family (although she despises onions!). DeCaire also loves music and singing and was once a part of a vocal jazz group which toured nationally including places like Canada, Ohio and Colorado. Lilly is a big sports fan (including SU) and had the pleasure of becoming a Special Olympics swim coach and working with local athletes.



(Amy) Jessica Leonard and Michelle Dunn have been teaching together at FLS for six years now. Both Amy and Michelle feel a strong level of comfort with each other and feel that their collaboration yields a great deal of student success. Both Ms. Leonard and Ms. Dunn love the flexibility they are provided and state that “the best part of teaching fourth grade is that it’s the sweet spot. Students in fourth grade are getting old enough to be a bit more independent, but still enjoy the fun stuff.” Another great part of their job is witnessing the tremendous growth that students make through the year. Amy and Michelle collaborate on a variety of projects including the Middle Ages Castle project, a Volcano project, and a Holiday Giving project where they sponsor senior citizens from local nursing homes and assisted living centers for the holidays.

Amy Rapin (OHS) has only been in Oswego for a couple years now, and has quickly become an integral part of the Oswego team! Amy has developed a rapport with students, faculty and the local community. She has developed relationships with community partners that have donated time and resources to our students at OHS and, If you walk by her room on any given day you might see business partners working alongside students to demonstrate proper technique or speaking to students about their personal business experiences. In her free time, Amy likes to visit local restaurants and root on the Buffalo Bills.



Tracy Warner (CER) is originally from Colton, NY. She attended SUNY Oswego and is now a Special Education Teacher at CER in both 4th and 6th grade. Tracy loves seeing students achieve their goals, no matter the size. In her free time, Tracy loves spending time with her family. Tracy looks forward to continuing to meet both her personal and professional goals, and to helping students achieve academically and individually.

Jeff Gordon has been teaching for over 21 years, 18 of them with the OCSD, most as a PE instructor at **KPS**. Jeff graduated from nearby Jamesville-DeWitt High School and uses his athletic background to coach a variety of sports here in the OCSD including Track and Field and Cross Country. About teaching, Jeff says, "I love to have fun and try to spread my joy of sports, fitness, and movement with kids. My inspiration comes from those "AHA" moments when a student accomplishes something that they weren't sure that they could. I also enjoy seeing my students smiling and feeling good about their experiences in my gymnasium . . . I (especially) love the sport of track and field. I love the idea that you are responsible for the outcomes of your efforts, whether good or bad." Outside of teaching, Jeff spends most of his time with his family. Jeff and his wife have 7 children; 3 in college, a ninth grader, an eighth grader, a third grader, and a second grader. As a family, they enjoy spending time outdoors and also hiking, the ocean, and seeing new places. Jeff and his wife were foster parents for 17 years. They have fostered 13 children in their home, 4 of which they ended up adopting. They have 18 chickens and 3 cats. Jeff has traveled to all but 5 states in the US in his lifetime (Alaska, Hawaii, Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi). Thank you for all you do for us, Jeff! KPS is lucky to have you!



Pension & Retirement Education Program



PREP sessions are designed to help members of all ages prepare for retirement.

Contact Us (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6180 communit@nystrs.org

Many retirees wish they began focusing on financial and retirement planning much earlier in their lives. Don't let that happen to you! No matter how far along you are in your career, careful financial and retirement planning are critical. That's why our Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP) seminar is so valuable.

The PREP seminar will help you understand your NYSTRS benefits while also providing essential retirement-planning tips. This information will help you develop a plan to achieve your retirement goals and dreams.

Topics covered during this half-day seminar include:

- **NYSTRS Benefits:** Your pension, disability coverage, loans, vesting and death benefits.
- **Financial Planning:** Saving early, catching up, withdrawals and financial advisors.
- **Social Security:** Benefits, eligibility rules, when to collect and earning limits.
- **Estate Planning:** Wills, trusts, powers of attorney, health care proxies and living wills.
- **The Retirement Process:** Retirement options, "resigning" vs. "retiring," choosing a retirement date, retirement checklist, monthly payments, taxes and earnings limitations on NYS public employment.

Seminars are held from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., with registration beginning at 8 a.m. There is no fee to attend and your spouse/companion is welcome to attend, but you must make a reservation in advance. (Note: These seminars are not designed for individual retirement counseling.)

[PREP seminars often fill up, so book early. Can't attend a seminar now? We begin taking reservations for our three PREP schedules during the year in: mid-September \(fall schedule\); mid-December \(winter/spring schedule\); and, mid-May \(summer schedule\).](#)

Negotiations Update - Submitted by Jess Burridge

Thank you to all of our membership who submitted contract proposals. We are now in the beginning stages of the negotiation process. If you have questions, please reach out to any of the members of the Negotiation's Team: Carrie Patane- OHS, Kim LeRoy- MIN, Jessica Burridge- KPS, Jennifer Cahill- FLS, Erin Wilder- FPS, John Garruto-KPS, Laurie Kelly- FPS, Josh Lerch- OMS, Ted Beers- CER, Stephen Defren- OHS, Kathleen Audlin- OHS, Jeff Brown- OMS, Dan Rupert.

Want to read your current OCTA Contract? Follow the link below to gain access!

■ OCTA Contract 2021-24 (signed).pdf



Dental Benefits Reminder!

submitted by OCTA Dental Administrator Lindsay Voigt

Just a friendly reminder from OCTA Dental: **Please take note of the Plan language that stipulates enrollees are entitled to two cleanings/preventative visits per 12-month period**, and Visit A and Visit C of such visits need to be scheduled a minimum of **12-months and one day from each other**—For example, if you went to the provider on June 20, 2023 (Visit A), and your next visit was on December 23, 2023 (Visit B), your next visit would need to be scheduled on June 21, 2023 (Visit C) or later in order to be covered—

Providers always try to do their best to properly schedule and space appointments, but ultimately the responsibility rests on members to ensure that their appointments are properly spaced based upon the Plan language as described above—

Have you had a recent address change?
Please use the email below to alert Lindsay!

Please feel free to reach out to OCTA Dental at: octadentalplan@gmail.com should you have any questions about this or anything else dental related!

DENTAL DID YOU KNOW?! You can create your very own Delta Dental Login and Mobile Account and in turn gain access to various helpful tools related to your dental insurance? [GO ONLINE TO MANAGE YOUR DENTAL PLAN!](#)



Resources at your fingertips

Go online to manage your plan



Whether you need to check your benefits or select a new dentist, you can do it all with Delta Dental's online tools.

Create an account

What you can do:

- Check your plan details and eligibility.
- Browse claim history.
- Download plan documents.
- Find an in-network dentist.
- View your member ID card or print a paper copy.
- Update your settings to paperless.



Try it out: Go to deltadentalins.com and choose **Log in** to create an account or log in to your existing account.

Tip: Access your benefits info on mobile, tablet or desktop!

Check out all your union membership has to offer!

Free Premium Calm App for All NYSUT In-Service AND Retiree Members!



- The #1 app for sleep, meditation, and relaxation
- Unlimited access to the full library of content
- Add up to five dependents (age 16 or older) to receive their own premium Calm subscription

The Calm app -- recognized as Apple's Best of 2018 award winner, Apple's App of the Year 2017, and Google Play Editor's Choice 2018 -- is the #1 app for sleep, meditation, and relaxation with over 100 million downloads. Whether members have 30 seconds or 30 minutes of time available, the diverse content library offered by Calm includes numerous resources for their schedule and needs.

Members can explore guided meditations and specialized music playlists to help with stress and focus, mindful movement video and audio, relaxing sleep stories, nature scenes and sounds, specific content tailored for children, masterclasses led by experts, and more.

To learn more about how to create your Calm account and access the premium content for free, visit memberbenefits.nysut.org/free-member-benefits and then click on "Premium Calm Service." From there, you will find detailed instructions on how to create your Calm account along with a helpful Frequently Asked Questions document about the service. You will need your NYSUT ID number to create an account with your email address and password. Your NYSUT ID number can be found on your NYSUT Membership Card or by visiting <https://www.nysut.org/memberid>.

Once you create your free Calm account on your computer, it is recommended that you download the Calm app for your iOS or Android device. After downloading the Calm app for your preferred mobile device, you can then log in with your email address and password to unlock the premium Calm content.



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



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.

12/17/23

It's not too late to preserve American democracy—yet

by Randi Weingarten

President, American Federation of Teachers

Let's start with a thought experiment: A candidate for president is asked to reassure voters that he has no plans to abuse his power, break the law or use the government to go after people. The answer is a no-brainer, right? Of course, this isn't a thought experiment; it's the exact question Fox News host Sean Hannity recently posed to Donald Trump, to which Trump replied that he would be a "dictator," but only on "day one." Many in his party shrugged off the statement or dismissed it as a joke. Americans may be desensitized to Trump's words, even when he says he would be a dictator, given the maelstrom of shocking statements he makes. But he has doubled down on this troubling declaration—the latest in a pattern of his authoritarian leanings.

[\(READ MORE\)](#)

[RESOURCES FOR YOU]

Get your 'Fix Tier 6' merch

Want something that shows off your support for pension tier equity?

Head on over to the Fix Tier 6 store and get your hands on one of our magnets, hats, pins or lanyards.

The Fix Tier 6 store is live and taking orders. Proceeds from the Fix Tier 6 store go toward the Fix Tier 6 campaign and our ongoing fight for retirement equity.

Learn more: FixTier6Store.org.





As an added benefit to your employment with the Oswego City School District....

You and your immediate family are eligible for membership with Oswego Teachers Employees Federal Credit Union!! A representative from the credit union will be present in the Staff Break Room at:

Oswego High School from 10:30am to 1:00pm on the following dates:

Tuesday 2/6

Tuesday 2/27

Charles E. Riley Elementary

School on the following dates from 11am – 1:15pm:

Wednesday 2/7

Wednesday 2/28

Frederick Leighton Elementary from 10:45am to 1:00pm on the following dates:

Thursday 2/8

Thursday 2/29

Minetto Elementary from 11:00am to 1:20pm on the following dates:

Friday 3/1

Friday 2/9

Oswego Middle School from 10:00am to 1:00pm on the following dates:

Monday 2/12

Monday 3/4

Fitzhugh Park Elementary

from 11:00am to 1:20pm on the following dates:

Tuesday 2/13

Tuesday 3/5

Kingsford Park Elementary

from 11:00am to 1:20pm on the following dates:

Wednesday 2/14

Wednesday 3/6

CONTACT US

**Oswego Teachers Employees
Federal Credit Union**

Routing Number: 221379060

☎: (315) 342-4574

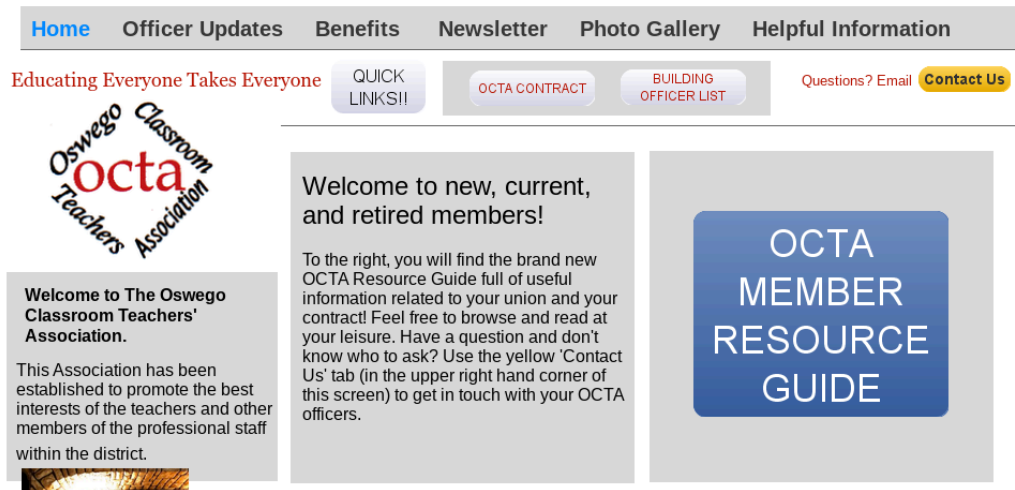
📠: (315) 342-2205

📍: 90 West Utica Street, PO Box 878
Oswego, NY 13126

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

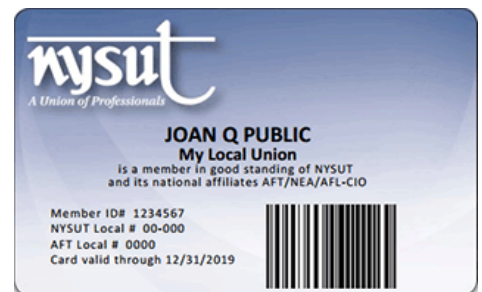
Click on the screenshot of the homepage below to explore the site! Find quick links to important union documents like the new OCTA Contract, the OCTA building officer list, and the new OCTA resources guide!

Oswego Classroom Teachers' Association



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.

