

OCTA Advocate

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



March 2022

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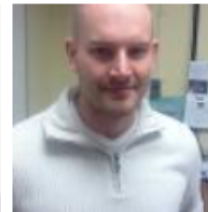
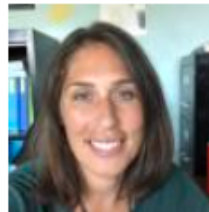
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VP Negotiations

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VP Pol. Action

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VP Newsletter

Message from your OCTA President, Carrie Patane



Negotiating a contract collectively is about so much more than money.

Usually, salary is the first thing people think about when they hear ‘contract negotiations,’ but in reality, stepping up to the bargaining table provides opportunities for so much more.

Recently, Greece, one of the bigger suburban districts in the greater Rochester area, became another collective bargaining success story, winning groundbreaking contract agreements and proving, once again, that unionism ensures that teachers operate in a safe space with fair and equal learning conditions.

With the United States already in the throes of a massive teacher shortage, collective bargaining is the force by which districts can improve contracts whereby attracting more talented educators from across the country. Please take a moment to read the article below (click on the article to read the full piece) which helps to drive these points home. It’s nice to know as we move forward and (hopefully) out of this pandemic, we do so together, as one collective unit fighting for the future of our profession.

[FIGHTING FOR YOU]

Contract gains much more than money

By Sylvia Saunders
sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

A long-awaited contract settlement in Greece gains much more than dollars and cents; it improves childcare leave for adoptive parents, adds student learning time without increasing the work day and gives teachers more control over their own professional learning.

Greece, the largest suburban district in greater Rochester, is one of many locals around the state winning groundbreaking contract agreements — thanks to the power of collective bargaining and substantial state and federal pandemic relief funding.

“We’re very proud of our contract and hope it will help set the pace for other districts,” said Greece Teachers Association President Brian Ebertz, a member of NYSUT’s Board. “That’s what unionism is all about.”

Ebertz noted that with significant staff shortages and retention issues, districts know they need to be competitive and should be more open to wide-ranging contract talks on measures that will improve teaching and learning conditions.

After surveying members on contract priorities, Ebertz said the nego-

tiating team worked hard to restructure the step schedule to accelerate raises, improve starting salaries and remove the salary cap for the most experienced teachers. By the third year of the four-year contract, individuals who started their careers at \$35,000 will have increased to \$47,638. “The new salary schedule will definitely help us with recruitment and retention,” Ebertz said.

Another priority was maintaining the district’s 90/10 health insurance cost-sharing. “There aren’t many districts still contributing 90 percent. We were able to preserve that until the last year of the contract,” he said.

The agreement also overhauls the district’s longtime professional development system.

Rather than a top-down, points-based system, members will now have a great deal more control and choice for their required professional learning. “We researched



Greece TA’s Brian Ebertz

other models and our goal was to have a menu of appropriate offerings based on goals and interests,” Ebertz said. “It’s really a revolutionary change, where P.D. is more tailored, flexible and on-demand.”

The contract will also allow staff to provide more of the professional learning for colleagues and get compensated at a higher rate.

In response to changing times and member requests, the union negotiated a 13-day expansion of paid leave for adoptive parents. Non-birthing parents will be eligible for an additional three days. Until now, adoptive and same-sex parents had to patch together days just to spend some time with their new child. “It’s a matter of fairness,” Ebertz said.

To expand quality sports programs, the contract adds three dozen coaching positions and raises stipends. The district has committed to similarly increase extracurricular compensation once an internal audit is completed.

“Sports and extracurriculars are important to our community and our

kids,” Ebertz said.

Other important provisions provide scheduled time for speech language pathologists to consult with classroom teachers, complete student testing, develop IEPs and provide Medicaid documentation. In an effort to improve retention of special education staff, those teaching students with severe needs will receive stipends. “Again, this is a first step,” Ebertz said.

Negotiations haven’t always been so favorable for the 1,100-member Greece TA. In the last two decades,



negotiations have been so protracted that the two sides have reached only three contract agreements since 2001. With that in mind, the new pact includes a guaranteed 1.5 percent salary increase that kicks in if the current contract expires.

“We’re hopeful this agreement sets the stage for future negotiations, with only minor tweaks next time,” Ebertz said. The contract was overwhelmingly approved by 87 percent of members.

CONGRATS TO ALL WHO SHARE THE MARCH OCTA SPOTLIGHT!

Lori Bushnell was hired by the OCSD in 1988 and took permanent residence at KPS as a music teacher in 2002. Lori has directed multiple chorus concerts and puts forth a great deal of energy and hard work into all her performances. Lori's musical direction includes *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, *Moana*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and this year's musical: *The Lion King*. Lori is dedicated to her craft and motivates students to perform at their very best. This is Lori's 34th year of teaching! She was also a secretary for OCMEA (Oswego County Music Educators Association) for two years as well as the district representative. Lori is planning on retiring this year and we wish her all the best in her future endeavors. Thank you for all you have done for our district, Lori, you will be missed!

Lisa McPherson has taught at the **Oswego High School** for many years, and brings both wisdom and humor to her classes. She goes out of her way to connect with students and families through Good News cards, phone calls, and in-person conversations. She is also the team leader for the English department here at OHS and takes time each month to recognize her department members' hard work, sharing food, inspirational lyrics, and thank you notes with us. Lisa deserves this distinct honor and recognition!



Karen Venditte has been a Kindergarten Special Education teacher at **Minetto** for 18 years now. She has dedicated much of her own time, staying late hours, to make sure students who have a range of abilities have what they need to access the curriculum. She works with all students and includes everyone because she believes the classroom belongs to everyone. Karen loves the grade she teaches and the children with which she works each day. Her job requires constant reflection -to know what works and what doesn't - and Karen deliberately applies her newfound knowledge to make the next day better. The OCSD is lucky to have such a dedicated and hard working teacher.

McKenna Sesselman has been teaching for three years. She taught 8th grade at Ballston Spa, 3rd and 5th at Dorothy Nolan in Saratoga Springs. This is her first year at **Leighton**, and she is loving it! Her favorite part of teaching is seeing students grow throughout the year. McKenna loves to see some students make great strides in academics, while others make great strides in making connections with other students. Ms. Sesselman's favorite part about Leighton is how welcoming everyone has been. Teachers are so supportive of each other. She has made some amazing friends since she started! McKenna patterns her lifestyle after the Dalai Lama quote - *the purpose of our lives is to be happy*. McKenna says that she is very outgoing and is proud that she can make connections easily. However, she admits that up until she was about 22 years old, she was extremely shy and quiet. She is proud of the growth she has made as a person and as a teacher early on in her career.



Kristin Pille has been teaching since January 2020, after receiving her masters degree in Childhood and Special Education from Roberts Wesleyan College. She began her teaching career as a Special Education Teacher at OCM BOCES and this is Kristin's first year at **Leighton Elementary** as a Special Education Teacher. She feels fortunate to be able to work and collaborate with such amazing educators everyday. Her favorite part of teaching is having the opportunity to inspire students. Kristin says that it is her hope that she inspires students to love learning and perhaps, more importantly, that she instills a belief in them that they can learn and do hard things. Kristin also gets inspired each day by the efforts of students and the struggles some overcome, as well as the acts of kindness made by students. Her favorite quote is, "In a world where you can be anything, be kind." Kristin played four years of college lacrosse at Nazareth and would love to give back to the sport she loves by coaching.



James Livingston has been teaching at the **Oswego Middle School** for over 20 years now in the coveted position of ELA instructor. In addition to planning and carrying out dynamic, thoughtful lessons in the classroom, Jim volunteers his time in multiple committees and building-wide improvement groups, and dedicates much of his 'extra' time to professional development, summer grant work and ensuring that the Oswego Middle School remains a premier learning community for aspiring students and teachers. Jim also serves as the English department chair, where his leadership and continued drive for excellence inspire and motivate any and all who are lucky enough to come into contact with him. Thank you, Jim, for all that you continue to do to help make OMS a fantastic place in which to work!



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!*

2022 OCTA Scholarship Application NOW AVAILABLE!



The OCTA Scholarship Committee is proud to be able to provide awards to Oswego High School seniors planning to attend a two or four-year college, university, or vocational school.

To be considered for a scholarship, the following criteria must be met:

1. Typed application form and typed scholarship essay (double spaced)
2. The attached financial statement signed by you and your parent/guardian

[OCTA Scholarship Application](#)

WHO WE ARE WHAT WE DO WHAT WE CARE ABOUT **nysut** TAKE ACTION FOR MEMBERS NEWS
A Union of Professionals

News | NYSUT United | March/April 2022 | NYSUT salutes Black History Month

NYSUT salutes Black History Month

Author: Kara Smith Source: NYSUT United

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Jolene DiBrango @nysutEVP

In the 2nd session of our webinar series on co-teaching, we are convening a panel of three integrated co-teaching teams (1 content teacher & 1 ENL teacher) at early elementary, upper elementary and secondary levels. Join us on March 10, 2022 at 4:00 pm. elt.nysut.org/resources/cote...

Webinar: Advocacy to M...
Webinar: Advocacy to Mak...
elt.nysut.org

NYSUT Retweeted

Viri Pettersen @mispetter

#UnionProud, today and always, of @ESMTAssociation president Linda Wygonik, who presented key points on contract negotiations, resulting in a successful outcome, during our @AFTunion EC meeting. @nysut @AndyPallotta @rweingarten

NYSUT's [Black History Month celebration](#) kicked off in February with a rousing drum circle by The Washington Park Rumberos and performances of the "Star Spangled Banner," sung by Savannah Gordon, and the Black national anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," performed by United Federation of Teachers member Sonja Hill.

The virtual event highlighted the unique struggles underrepresented groups face with regard to mental health and wellness in our nation.

"The health and wellness of individuals within the Black community is a conversation that's long overdue," said J. Philippe Abraham, NYSUT secretary-treasurer, in welcoming remarks. Abraham, who hosted the event, noted that the issue is especially timely since communities of color are disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

[READ THE REST: CLICK HERE](#)

Retirement Seminar (virtual) for OCTA Members coming March 22!!!

Submitted by Dan Rose (OCTA VP/ OCSD Retirement Delegate)



Guaranteed Benefits of the New York State Teachers' Retirement System!

Even in turbulent economic times like these, you can achieve future financial strength and security by building a strong pension at NYSTRS. This presentation will provide an overview of the

important benefits NYSTRS provides, with an emphasis on issues pertaining to members approaching retirement. Highlights include a review of the fundamental pension components such as service credit and final average salary, key retirement thresholds to reach for, the tools needed to maximize these benefits, retirement benefit options and much more. Hopefully you'll leave our meeting with a handle on what's needed to plan wisely on your road to retirement, as well as what costly errors to avoid along the way.

Reserve your spot at this month's New York State Teachers' Retirement System Seminar today! The meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 22 2022 (5:30 - 6:15 PM). After you confirm your attendance with Dan Rose, an invite to the virtual presentation will be sent along with further instructions on materials to bring to the presentation.

New members will learn valuable information about the retirement system of which they are now a part, and experienced members will continue to build on their current knowledge of the system, ensuring a dignified, financially secure retirement.



Please RSVP Dan Rose @ drose@oswego.org to reserve a spot at this very special seminar. The meeting will start promptly at 5:30 PM and end between 6:15 and 6:30.

Q: Where can I find the new 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.

Submitted by: Heidi Sweeney, EdD
Executive Director of Secondary Education and Personnel

Questions about the retirement system of which you are a part (New York State Teachers' Retirement System: 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!!!!**](#)



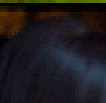
Check out all your union membership has to offer!



INSURANCE YOU CAN COUNT ON.



PROVIDERS YOU CAN TRUST.



**VALUE-ADDED EXTRAS YOU
CAN'T GET ELSEWHERE.**

SOMEONE WHO HAS YOUR BACK.



NYSUT Member Benefits

Every Dollar Counts!



When it comes to protecting yourself, your loved ones, your income or your most valuable possessions, NYSUT Member Benefits has insurance programs that fit the bill. Whether you are looking for **auto & home, life, disability, long-term care, dental, vision, or pet insurance**, there is a Member Benefits-endorsed plan that may be of assistance featuring value-added extras unavailable to the public.

Get started by first bookmarking the Member Benefits website at memberbenefits.nysut.org. There, you will find numerous tools and resources available to you as a NYSUT member – including a **Financial Learning Center** with articles designed to help educate you on financial decisions and topics.

Member Benefits also endorses several discounted shopping programs that can help you save on both everyday and more expensive purchases. Finally, if you ever have an issue or problem when using a Member Benefits program, our staff take great pride in their ability to quickly assist members with any concerns that may arise.

Visit memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101 to learn more about the endorsed programs and services available to you through your union membership.



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.

Jan/Feb 2022



OCTA Newsblast February 2022

Highlights from our February 2022 OCTA Meeting

OCSD Employee COVID Hotline: 315-341-2055

OCSD Student COVID Hotline: 315-341-2050

***Test to Stay:** The district is working towards putting together a test to stay program (Covid). In order to make this work, we need 90,000 tests each month. We are hoping it will be in full effect in March.

***Updated Guidance:** Updated Isolation and Quarantine Guidance (February 5, 2022)

This document updates all isolation and quarantine guidelines to be in line with current CDC guidance. <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/new-york-state-contact-tracing>

Quarantine and isolation table:

https://ar.coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/02/quarantine-and-isolation-tables-20220205_0.pdf

Highlights of the guidance:

- The guidance updates which individuals must quarantine when exposed to COVID 19. The NYSDOH chart is useful shorthand for determining this as well.
- The guidance defines people who are not “up to date” on their COVID 19 vaccinations as:
- Anyone who is not vaccinated or has not completed a primary vaccine series.
- Anyone ages 12 or older who has completed the primary series of recommended vaccine, and is eligible for a CDC recommended booster shot but has not received it.

This has implications for all persons who are eligible for a booster but have not yet received it. According to this guidance, they will now have to quarantine.

- To end quarantine—asymptomatic individuals should take a test at least 5 days after the last date of contact to an exposed person. If the results are negative, they may return to work or school. These people should continue to watch for symptoms for up to 10 days after the last date of contact.
- To end isolation for COVID -19—Individuals may return to work or school after 5 days from the positive COVID 19 test. A negative PCR test is no longer required to return to work or school after isolation.
- If a person is exposed to COVID 19, but they are not required to quarantine, they must still wear a mask around others for 10 days from the date of the last exposure to COVID 19.

***OCTA II Negotiations will begin soon.**

Proposals are being finalized.

Subs should be reminded that they do NOT need to take on additional classes. If they have work to do for the teacher of record, they can use their planning to prepare for their next lesson. They can say “no thank you” when told to cover extra classes during a planning time. We encourage them to consider helping out if they are able to, but they are not required to.

***Technology Updates:** Jamie Sykut has been hosting technology meetings where he updates OCTA Leadership on technology changes, concerns or to bring awareness. Here are the highlights from the February meeting.

- Cleartouch panels are coming into the buildings soon. If you are interested in a Cleartouch Panel, let your principal know. You will need to take PD. They will roll out over the next 2 years.
- Printer issues continue -Jamie and his team are piloting the ability to print using servers rather than the Cloud. This change will not allow printing from home.
- A new data platform, SYNERGY, will replace School Tools, Parent Square and Jupiter Grades in September.
- Chromebook Reteaching Options-There have been 616 broken chromebooks this year alone. If anyone has great ideas on how to reteach Chromebook care, let Kim LeRoy know.
- If anyone has questions or concerns about technology, please reach out to your OCTA Building Reps.
- Student teachers can get email accounts. The host teacher needs to write a helpdesk ticket to ask for the student teacher to get an email address. Starting with the next batch of student teachers, they will get an account at their orientation.

***To Report a Positive At Home COVID Test in OSWEGO COUNTY: PLEASE REPORT!!!**

https://health.oswegocounty.com/information/2019_novel_coronavirus/isolation_quarantine_guidance.php

***Student Debt Webinars:** Offered by NYSUT

Below are the clinics that are currently open for registration: [CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR WEBINARS](#)

- Tuesday, March 8th, 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.
- Thursday, March 24th, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

OCTA RESOURCE GUIDE:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kc9DjnHtYkQTqCKMI2iw4Krey8BFebZtAO5i1wM05Gs>

February 04, 2022

Two years into pandemic, educators need respect, cooperation and patience

Author: Ned Hoskin

Source: NYSUT Communications



Throughout the COVID–19 pandemic, America’s educators have shown how committed they are to helping their students thrive.

In every community across America, educators are partnering with parents and families to ensure all students have the freedom to achieve their dreams.

A [new survey by the National Education Association](#) shows that educators, who have persevered through the hardest school years in memory, are beyond tired — they are exhausted, increasingly burned out, and more than half of them are indicating that they are ready to leave the profession they love.

“Educators by nature put 110 percent of their effort into helping their students succeed,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “The added stress of the pandemic has left too many exhausted and has strained existing support systems.

“What they need right now is respect for the incredible work they continue to do two years into this crisis, cooperation and patience as they advocate for the needs of students, and a commitment from district and state leaders to hiring more teachers and support staff who can help them address the needs of all students.

“At the same time, the latest numbers send a clear message that we have to rebuild the teacher pipeline through grow-your-own, residency and other innovative programs before the already existing teacher shortage becomes an insurmountable challenge.”

NYSUT’s [Future Forward](#) and [Take a Look at Teaching](#) initiatives are advancing short-term and long-term solutions to address the issue. NYSUT is offering [grants to local unions for Grow Your Own initiatives](#) to expand and diversify the teacher pipeline. The deadline to apply for round 3 grants is Feb. 25.

[READ THE REST: CLICK HERE](#)

OCTA Entrepreneurs:

Do you run a business from home or work a 2nd job? Want some support from your OCTA Family?

Send info to drose@oswego.org and get info added to the OCTA Facebook page.

**BERKSHIRE
HATHAWAY**
HomeServices



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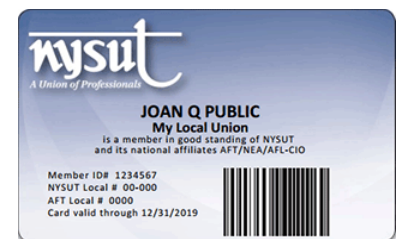
Have you visited the OCTA website yet? What are you waiting for!?

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 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.

