

OCTA Advocate

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



March 2025

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Carrie Patane:
OCTA President



Kim LeRoy:
OCTA VP Grievance



Jess Burrige: 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

Greetings,

With the end of the school year fast approaching, some of you might be thinking about retirement. Retirement letters to the district are due no later than 90 days from the date of retirement. The deadline for retirement letters this year has been moved to APRIL 8 (assuming a resignation as of June 30th and a July 1 date of retirement) to allow members to make an informed decision after attending an informational meeting about contract negotiations. Remember, once a retirement is board approved, it cannot be rescinded, reversed or revoked! [Click here to access the retirement checklist that outlines all the tasks and responsibilities of the soon-to-be-retired educator!](#)

Also, future retirees should schedule an appointment with NYSTRS to ensure that everything is in order! A [Benefits Consultation](#) is an important part of retirement planning. A NYSTRS representative will discuss benefits and review personalized benefit estimates. Don't wait to schedule an appointment! For those still 5, 10, or 20+ years away from retirement, the OCTA will hold a NYSTRS informational seminar on April 10th at the OCTA office. [Click here to read more about it!](#)

In addition to your NYSTRS pension, utilizing a [403B](#) or [457 plan](#) can help you maximize your income during retirement and allow for tax-free earnings and savings during your working years. The earlier you start investing, the better! Click on the links above to learn more about the advantages of each of these important savings vehicles.

Did you know that in retirement you are still eligible to receive benefits from [NYSUT](#) through the [Member Benefits program](#)? This means that you will continue to have access to exclusive shopping, travel and health related deals throughout your retirement years.

Lastly, please take some time to catch up on the state of our union with the latest edition of [NYSUT United](#). These are tumultuous times in politics and education, and staying abreast of all that is happening is not easy, but NYSUT's quarterly magazine makes it easier to stay current!

PS - A shout out to OCTA VP Jenn Cahill who recently attended the Committee of 100 in Albany! Thanks for representin', Jenn! Lobbying for public education is more important than ever!



In solidarity,
Carrie

CONGRATS TO ALL WHO SHARE THE MARCH OCTA SPOTLIGHT!

Originally from a small town in the Finger Lakes called Dundee, **Jennifer Ruggio (CER)** moved to Oswego with her husband in 2003. She graduated from SUNY Cortland with a bachelors in Psychology and then later completed her Master's in Special Education. Jenn has been teaching Special Education for 22 years (her first two years were spent in Hawaii!). Jenn is proud to say that she recently took a Special Education job at Riley Elementary after 17 years of teaching in the Hannibal School District and has always enjoyed working with children at all grade levels from kindergarten to high school. In her spare time, Mrs. Ruggio enjoys reading, hiking, traveling and playing golf. As for the rest of this school year, Jenn is looking forward to seeing her son graduate from Oswego High School and daughter graduate from the University at Buffalo. As for her future in teaching, Jenn continues to look forward to making a difference in a child's life every day any way that she can. She truly believes that all children have the power to learn and educators need to find ways to help them do that.



Leighton is so excited to introduce our new Kindergarten Special Education Teacher **Lindsay**

McCraith, who also teaches 2nd Grade Special Education at KPS.

Lindsay is from Fulton and grew up with her mom who was her best supporter and inspiration, her sister who was her biggest cheerleader and best friend and her dad who always believed in her. She attended Onondaga Community college for her Associates Degree in Liberal Arts, then SUNY Cortland for her Bachelors Degree in Inclusive Childhood Education, and UAlbany for her Masters Degree in Curriculum Design and Instructional Technology. Lindsay shares that she was inspired to become a Special Education teacher because as a student she struggled in school and always had appreciation for the teachers who helped her along the way. Her favorite thing about teaching youngsters is watching the fast growth her students make, and her favorite thing about teaching 2nd grade is her students' outgoing and curious personalities. Outside of school Lindsay enjoys traveling, working out, hiking, kayaking, fishing

and spending time with her boyfriend, friends, family and dogs Luci, Bella and Mia.



Dan Bullard (OHS) has been working as a teacher and teaching assistant in districts around Oswego County since 2010. Prior to working at Oswego High School, he spent several years working for Oswego County Opportunities as an advocate for victims of crime and homeless youth. It was work like this that helped Dan realize that he wanted to return to working with teens in schools full-time. Dan is looking forward to going back to school for his Master's degree in education.

Outside of school, Dan enjoys spending time with his wife and 2 sons and cooking for his family. On weekends in the summer, you can find him kayaking around some local lakes and rivers or camping, when he gets the chance. In his free time, Dan helps organize education and outreach for Úthellingu Kindred, a local religious organization. He enjoys the teaching and writing involved in this work, and is always working on one research project or another.



This month's **KPS OCTA Spotlight is Alyssa Nix.** Alyssa has been teaching 3rd grade at KPS for 6 years. Alyssa grew up in Cicero, NY and attended Cicero-North Syracuse High School. Alyssa attended



SUNY Oswego for grad school where she completed the accelerated Master of Science in Teaching (MST) residency program in Childhood Education (Grades 1-6). When it comes to working at KPS, Alyssa says, "I am very thankful that I am able to be a part of the KPS community. I am thankful to work with such supportive colleagues and teammates and I'm thankful for the collaboration that I am able to be a part of as well. I feel very lucky to be at a school where people really care about one another and want to help one another. I really enjoy working at the 3rd grade age level. When teaching students, one thing that never gets old is the joy of the "aha" moment. When a student is able to grasp a concept they've been struggling with, their excitement is contagious." Alyssa also shares, "Another important part of teaching for me is being able to build students up and helping them to feel cared for and important. I want students to feel safe and cared about at school."

Outside of school, Alyssa enjoys reading and listening to audiobooks. She loves getting wrapped up in a good story where you don't want to stop reading. Alyssa enjoys soaking up sunshine and getting fresh air by being outside, especially in the warmer months. She loves being able to appreciate the beauty and calmness of nature whether it's a peaceful view of a river or the grounding feeling of taking a walk in the woods. Alyssa also finished sewing her first patchwork quilt this past year. Thank you Alyssa for all you do for KPS!

Minetto Elementary would like to introduce **Cailey French** as our new RTI Reading Teacher. Cailey has always known that she wanted to work with children. She grew up in Mattydale, NY and throughout her time at CNS she was fortunate enough to have teachers who inspired her to pursue a career in education. This passion led her to Syracuse University, where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Social Studies education and international Relations. She then followed her degree with her Master's in Literacy Education.

Cailey has been teaching since 2021 and has dedicated a love of learning to her students. Her favorite part of teaching is witnessing students' confidence as they grasp new concepts and take pride in their achievements.

Outside of the classroom, Cailey enjoys reading on her kindle or exploring nature. She read over 100 books in 2024 and is aiming for the same in 2025. She also enjoys traveling and spending quality time with her family which includes her older sister and younger brother. She currently lives in Baldwinsville with her cat, Pika.



Growing up with a mother who is a teacher, **Christopher Cleary (MIN)** has always been drawn to the teaching profession. His journey into education became clearer when he spent a summer as a teaching assistant in summer school, where he realized that helping students learn and grow was exactly the right path for him. This year, he is continuing to gain hands-on experience as a TA here at Minetto while pursuing his Master's in Special Education. His motivation stems from a deep desire to empower children to reach their full potential and be a positive male role model in their lives. He is committed to making a difference in the classroom and supporting students in

every way he can.

Before diving into the world of education, he earned his bachelor's degree in Criminology from Le Moyne College. When Christopher is not working, he enjoys playing and watching basketball, riding dirtbikes, spending quality time with family, and relaxing with a good movie. And when it comes to food, you'll always find him craving Mexican cuisine!

OCTA Blast March 2025

Highlights from our March 2025 OCTA Meeting



NYSUT Legal Plan Signing Days- April 7-11!! - BRING YOUR PAPERWORK

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

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.**



OCTA Scholarship- OCTA Scholarship raised \$825 at their last Jeans Week. This was the week we had two snow days. If you forgot to donate and would still like to, you can Venmo Laurie Kelly **@Laurie-Kelly-10**

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](#))

Share any safety concerns with your safety rep!

CER- Ted Beers

FLS- Kate Bowman

KPS- Carolyn Slobodian

MIN- Don Fronk

FPS-Cari Joyce

OMS-Dan Rogers

OHS- Gina Iorio

SHARE: What are you reporting?

- A. Facility Related Safety Concern (no injury to report)
- B. Facility Related Safety Issue (INJURY to Report)
- C. Safety Incident (threats or unsafe actions of others) with no injury TO STAFF
- D. Safety Incident (threats or unsafe actions of others) with INJURY TO STAFF

Include the following details:

- 1. Where specifically in the building is the concern.
- 2. Describe the concern OR incident
- 3. IF there was an injury - describe the injury - no matter how minor
- 4. Did you fill out the Worker's Comp Injury Form?

SAVE THE DATE: Solidarity Events**Volleyball: June 20, 2025 (It will be here before we know it 😊)****Member Benefits Teacher Discounts-** Click on this [link](#) to view teacher discounts.**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.

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

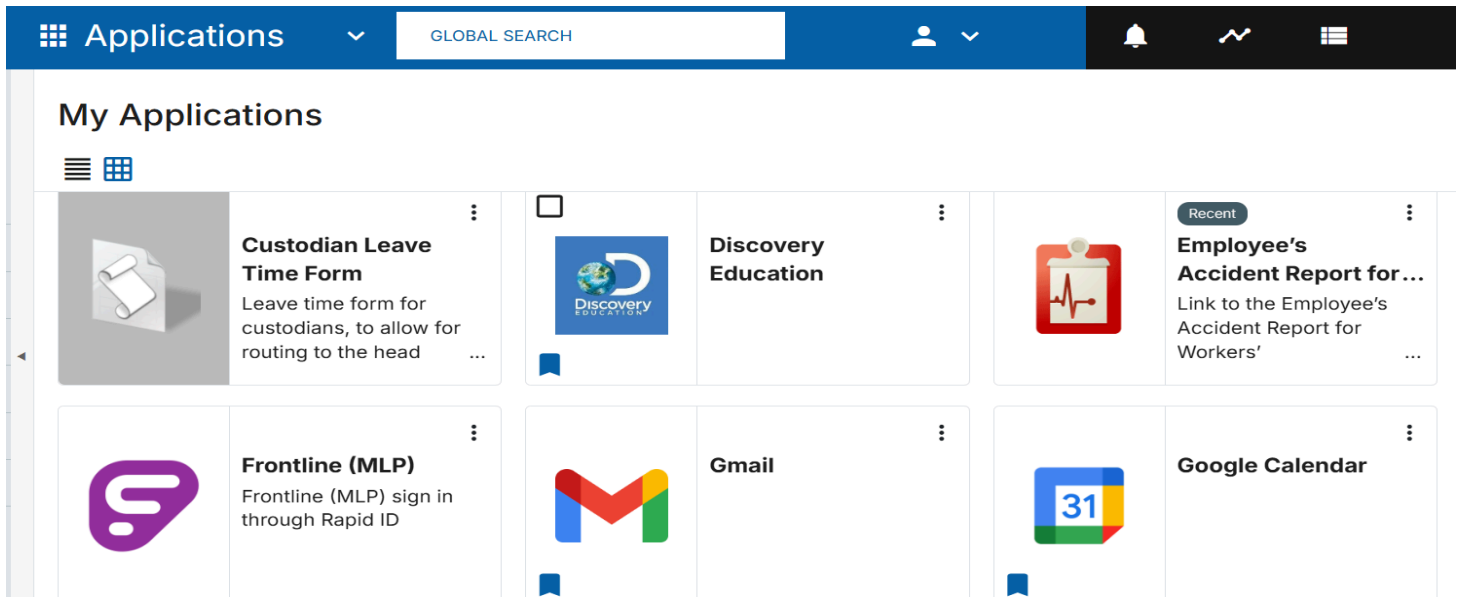
OHS
Gina Iorio
Heather Sugar
Robert Dumas

OMS
Jeff Brown
Clare Donovan

Substitutes
Ed Stacy

Employee Accident Report now available on Rapid ID!

Remember that if you experience any kind of work related injury you can now find the employee Accident Report form quickly and easily right through Rapid ID!



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. Per the current OCTA Constitution, *Elections will be held as follows: The President, 2nd Vice President, 4th Vice President, and Secretary in even years and the 1st Vice President, 3rd Vice President, and Treasurer in odd years on the third Thursday in May, and the officers will be elected when they have received a simple majority of the votes cast from the general membership by written ballot in that election. In the event that all candidates are unopposed, the secretary may cast one ballot.*

All executive positions are filled for a two-year term (July 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 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) April 10!

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

New York State Teachers' Retirement System (NYSTRS) Benefits Presentation (presented by OCTA) **Thursday, April 10th from 6:30 – 7:30 P.M. at the OCTA Office.**

A real NYSTRS 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.

We encourage general questions in this public setting. Specific questions concerning your individual situation should be discussed during an individual benefits consultation or by calling the Retirement System at (800) 348-7298.

Please join us for this one-hour NYSTRS Retirement Benefits Consultation on THURSDAY, APRIL 10th, starting at 6:30 PM in the OCTA Office.

PLEASE let Dan Rose (drose@oswego.org) know that you are interested in attending this in- person presentation. Food and drink will be available courtesy of the Oswego Classroom Teachers Association.

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.

What is a 457 Savings 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!](#)



Oswego Teachers Federal Credit Union offers members amazing benefits! Click here to join or read more!

[Savings Accounts!](#)

OSWEGO TEACHERS
EMPLOYEES FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

OCTA Member
Charter Savings Account

5.11% APY
On Balances up to \$1,000.00

Discover The Benefits of Membership

Effective as of March 1, 2025

Minimum Balance to Earn	Interest Rate	APY
Up to and including the first \$1,000.00	5.00%	5.11%
On remaining balance	1.00%	5.11% to 1.00%

OCTA Member Charter Savings Disclosure

[Home Equity Loans!](#)

The Credit Union for your *Home Equity Loans!*

Great Rates | Flexible Terms | No Closing Costs*

Term	Annual Percentage Rate* (fixed)
Up to 84 months	5.74%
Up to 132 months	5.74%
Up to 180 months	6.49%

Home Equity 80%
Fixed Rate based on the LTV and Credit Score 680+

Term	Annual Percentage Rate* (fixed)
Up to 84 months	5.99%
Up to 132 months	5.99%
Up to 180 months	6.74%

Home Equity 90%
Fixed Rate based on the LTV and Credit Score 680+

Term	Annual Percentage Rate* (fixed)
Up to 84 months	6.49%
Up to 132 months	6.74%
Up to 180 months	7.24%

APPLY ONLINE AT [OSWEGOTEACHERSCU.ORG](https://www.oswegoteacherscu.org)

[Car Loans!](#)

The Credit Union for *Your Loans!*

BUY OR REFINANCE*
Auto, Truck or SUV

	2022 & newer models	2020 & 2021 models
up to 66 months	4.74%** APR	5.00%** APR
67-78 months	5.00%** APR	5.25%** APR
79-84 months	5.50%** APR	5.74%** APR

*The APR includes a 25% discount when you have an automatic payroll deduction, pension or Social Security sent to your OCTAFCU account.

Take Action

Tell Congress: No Cuts To Education

The Trump administration's plan to gut federal support for public schools and give tax cuts to billionaires at the expense of loans for students to make college affordable and health care services for those who need it the most (including disabled children) sends a terrible, symbolic message.

Ending support for federal education programs would mean:

- Eliminating funding for low-income children in rural, suburban and urban areas.
- No services for kids with disabilities denying them their right to a free and appropriate education.
- Gutting career and technical education programs nationally.
- Cutting access to Pell Grants

[Those are not the solutions families voted for.](#)

[Send a letter to Congress right now and tell them: No cuts to education!](#)

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!](#)



We hope all is well with you. This is just a reminder that we're always available to help you feel your best with these Teladoc Health benefits:

General Medical

Teladoc Health board-certified doctors are available by phone or video 24/7 to diagnose and treat common concerns like acid reflux, tummy troubles, stuffy noses, migraines, restless nights and more.

Therapy

Our licensed therapists and board-certified psychiatrists are here for you if you are experiencing mood changes, job stresses, difficulty finding balance in life or coping with the loss of a loved one.

Dermatology

When it comes to common skin concerns like acne, eczema, psoriasis, skin infections, rosacea and more, you can get a quick and easy skin care consultation through our online dermatology service. Simply answer a few questions about your skin concern and upload photos. In 24 hours or less, a dermatologist will get back to you with a treatment plan, including any required prescriptions.

Scheduling is easy: through the **app**, on the **website** or by phone at **800-835-2362**.

Warmly,

Your Teladoc Health Team

[FIGHTING FOR YOU]

North Country locals win big for families

Emily Allen

emily.allen@nysut.org

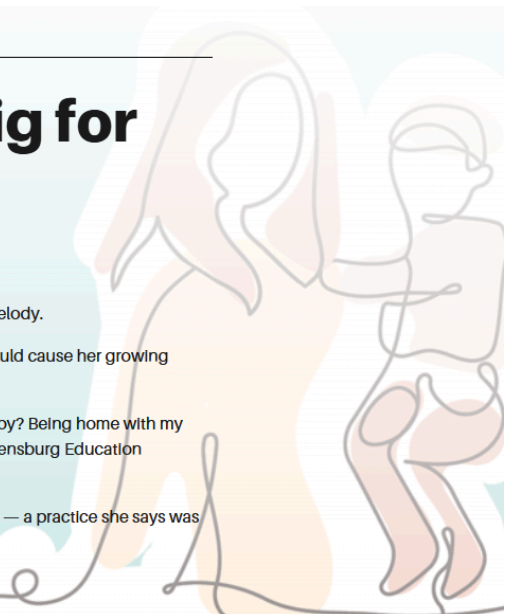
Last year, music teacher Katrina Sheats was overjoyed to discover she was pregnant with her first child, Melody.

But panic set in as Sheats began to fret about her lack of paid parental leave and the financial strain it would cause her growing family.

"I started worrying what would we have to do without and how was I going to cover all the expenses of a new baby? Being home with my baby was going to completely drain my savings until I could go back to work," said Sheats, a member of the Ogdensburg Education Association.

At that time, OEA President Julie Finley says her members mainly had to use their accrued sick and personal time — a practice she says was unfair to new members who hadn't built up a significant amount of time off.

[Read Full Article](#)



OCTA BOWLING SUCCESS...

If you haven't heard, the OCTA Bowling event raised \$1300 this past month! Thank you to everyone who planned, organized, gathered and participated! A special congratulations goes out to Sparely Keeping It Together, the winners of this year's event. Equal donations of \$650 will be made to both the Michelle Wink Foundation and Blessings In A Backpack.

If you were unable to participate or attend this year's event, please keep an ear out for next year's date and time after the turn of the new year. We look forward to seeing you on the lanes!



NYSTRS New York State
Teachers' Retirement System

Your Source



The March 2025 issue of NYSTRS' *Your Source* is now available.

[Download the newsletter \(PDF\) to read the full issue.](#)



NYSUT members have access to programs and services from NYSUT Member Benefits that can help them save money, protect their family, and assist with planning for the future.

With our **Legal Service Plan**, you will receive crucial estate planning documents (Simple Will, Health Care Proxy, Living Will & Power of Attorney); free attorney consultations; and guaranteed maximum fees for personal legal matters. Plan participants receive guaranteed hourly rates along with discounted prices for referral attorneys.

Our **Financial Counseling Program** offers access to certified financial planners that provide fee-based financial counseling services. Participants can get help with retirement planning, 403(b) & 457(b) plan advice, debt management, savings, budgeting, and more.

Check out **Synchrony Bank** for some of today's most competitive interest rates on certificates of deposit, money market, and savings accounts. An optional automated savings program (which makes transfers from your checking account at another bank to your money market or savings account at Synchrony Bank) is an easy way to build your balances in higher-earning accounts.

Our online **Financial Learning Center - powered by Kiplinger's Personal Finance** - offers numerous articles designed to assist NYSUT members with achieving their personal financial goals and better understand the nuances of insurance, savings, investing, and more. This free resource is updated on a monthly basis.

Do you have student loan or general debt concerns? Our **Cambridge Credit Counseling program** is available at no cost to assist NYSUT members with better understanding general debt consolidation and student loan repayment options. Members can take part in a free consultation with a certified Cambridge counselor or sign up for a no-cost student loan debt webinar provided by Cambridge.

Take back your financial independence and protect your family for whatever the future may bring.

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





March/April 2025

[READ MORE](#)



Attention Seniors ...

OCTA Scholarship

Application Now
Available

www.oswego.org

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April 1st Deadline

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

Get Your NYSUT Digital Membership Card

Your NYSUT membership card is going digital! Access your benefits instantly and carry your union pride right on your smartphone. Compatible with Apple and Google Wallets, this eco-friendly update eliminates the need for physical cards while keeping you connected to our 700,000-strong community of education professionals. Prefer a printed card? You can still download and print one through your account.



Visit My NYSUT today to access your digital card: nysut.cc/digitalcard or scan the QR code now.

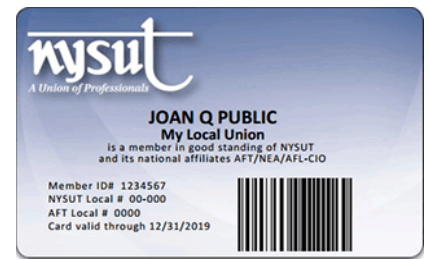



Click [HERE](#) to explore the site! Find quick links to important union documents like the new OCTA Contract, the OCTA building officer list, and the new OCTA resources guide!

Need A Quick NYSUT Membership Card?

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

or follow the QR code in the image to the left and secure your digital card today!



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.

