

NYSUT UNITED

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS

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NYSUT UNITED [September/October 2019, Vol. 10, No. 1]

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Union, community unite to protect public education

By Matt Smith
msmith@nysutmail.org

This is a story about the value of union membership — about solidarity, mobilization and the power of collective voice. And about what happens when a school community — educators working with parents — comes together to protect public education.

“There’s a sense of power and exhilaration knowing that when we stand up and show up, we can hold our administrators accountable and impact change during some truly challenging times,” said New Paltz United Teachers President Arielle Chiger.

At the end of last school year, New Paltz Central School administrators announced the involuntary transfer of 12 teachers. They also cut a third position without board of education approval — after voters approved a budget that included only two job cuts. Teachers were notified about the moves by a note in their mailboxes.

Not only were the transfers forced, they targeted union activists.

The reason, Chiger believes, had to do with retaliating against educators who had spoken up in the past about union, teacher and student rights.

“When pressed, the deputy superintendent and the superintendent of schools were unable to present any academically justifiable reason” for the transfers, Chiger said.

The moves also posed a threat to the education of New Paltz students, especially the district’s youngest ones.

Chiger said teachers who spent up to two decades in early childhood education were being sent to teach high school for the first

time. With the involuntary transfers touching all four buildings in the district, the New Paltz UT sprang into action. Building reps worked with teachers in each school, enabling the union to gather information and coordinate. And, as teachers articulated the potential harm to students, parents and other community stakeholders joined in opposition to the plan.

When the school board met in June, educators and community members packed the room, with more than 30 people speaking during the public comment period.

Emotions ran high that evening; the passion was tangible.

Ultimately, the board offered a resolution to rescind the transfers. All but two have been reversed, and the third position cut has been restored.

Meanwhile, at the board’s request, the local and district have entered into mediation.

Chiger said she was proud of her members.

“The message sent (by administrators) — espe-

cially to newer teachers — was: ‘If you speak up, you will be punished.’ It’s already a challenge for educators to feel empowered and protected to do what they believe is best for their students and their colleagues without fear of being dislodged from the positions they love,” she said.

“The show of solidarity and its power to impact situations in real time has a very positive effect on member engagement and trust.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEW PALTZ TIMES

Educators and community members protest a decision by New Paltz administrators to target longtime teachers — and vocal unionists — for involuntary transfer.

time. Additionally, teaching partnerships that existed for years would have been torn apart.

“This contradicts all we know about best practices,” said Chiger. “Teachers who are involuntarily thrown into a co-teaching setting find themselves having to adapt to a new work partner, as well as a new grade level and setting. All of this takes a huge toll on the morale and emotional well-being of staff.”

COMING UP

Sept. 20-21

NYSUT Board of Directors meets, Latham

Oct 4-6

SRP Leadership Conference, Saratoga Springs

Oct. 11

Deadline to register to vote for the Nov. 5 general elections

Oct. 12-27

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walks take place at locations across the state. See page 21 for details.



Oct. 24-25

ED 51-53 Retiree Contiguous Meeting, Albany

Nov. 8-10

Community College Conference, Cooperstown

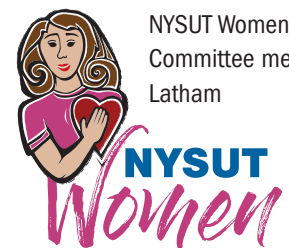
Nov. 5

Election Day



Nov. 15-16

NYSUT Women’s Committee meets, Latham



ON THE COVER

Inspired by his former teacher, Cohoes Teachers Association member Chris Michael, John McKnight is studying to be a physical education teacher. Photo by Becky Miller.

NEXT GENERATION

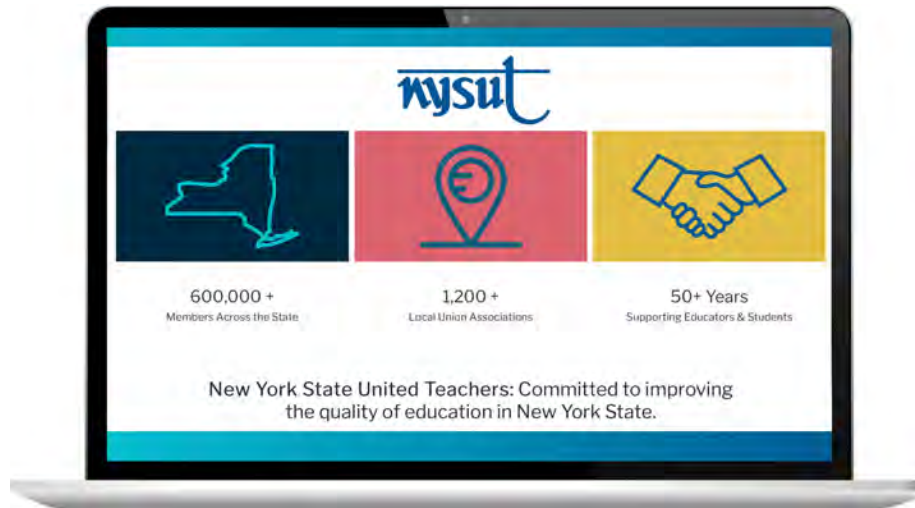
welcomes new members to our union

By James Morrison
jmorriso@nysutmail.org

Generations of NYSUT members have fought for and won rights, benefits and a voice in the workplace. Our decades-long fight has paid off and made our union one of the most powerful unions in our nation. From school boards to the halls of power in Albany and Washington, D.C., our voice is heard and respected.

Despite our victories, in a time when union values are under unrelenting assault, we can't be complacent.

"As a new generation joins our ranks, it's more important than ever that they understand the benefits that previous generations have won for them and that the struggle is ongoing. It's equally important that they learn about the services our union provides to support their lives and careers. From their first day, every new member must feel that they are



supported, appreciated, and an essential contributor to the union cause," says NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

It's with this critical, trans-generational challenge at heart that we introduce Next Generation NYSUT — our new initiative focused on engaging new members, providing the professional support they need and communicating union value from their first day on the job.

We will reach out to our newest members to ensure that NYSUT is a fundamental part of their professional experience. This means a greater focus on digital communications, reaching new members through social media and other digital channels. It also means supporting NYSUT locals by offering more opportunities for them to be engaged with new members from their first day on the job.

Most importantly, it requires connecting new members with the union services that offer them the most value. Part of Next Generation NYSUT will be providing content that aligns with each new member's interests and needs. From professional learning opportunities and certification support to activism; from union stories to discounts through our Member Benefits programs; we will deliver useful and engaging content to our new members.

Next Generation NYSUT is one initiative in the generations-long struggle to secure rights and benefits for our members. If you are a NYSUT member in your first five years on the job, visit [NextGenNYSUT.org](https://www.NextGenNYSUT.org) to learn more about our union.

"If you are an experienced member, do everything you can to help your newer colleagues with the challenges they face early in their careers," Pallotta said. "And encourage them to become active members of our union."

Solidarity lifts downstate local facing contract fight

Elizabeth Negrón and James Faulkner, members of the Biondi Labor Union of Essential Staff, experienced solidarity in action when more than 100 leaders and activists at the Tarrytown Regional Office summer leadership conference pledged to lend the local a helping hand.

Since organizing in 2013, the 145-member local has been unable to

reach a collective bargaining agreement with its employer, the Frank and Carol Biondi Education Center, a taxpayer-funded 853 private school for students with emotional challenges.

Most BLUES members haven't received pay raises in close to a decade — despite seven years of tuition increases, and a 91 percent pay and perks increase for Alan Mucatel, CEO of Rising Ground, which operates the

school. Additionally, due to staffing shortages — exacerbated by poor working conditions and low pay — student violence has increased; a teacher was nearly killed in 2016.

Despite the danger, union calls to install metal detectors, equip staff with alarm bracelets and hire additional monitors have been deemed "too expensive." School management is aggressively anti-union and has

spent more than \$1.5 million in legal fees to avoid reaching a contract deal.

Interested in lending your support to BLUES members? Email your contact info to organize@nysutmail.org; include "I'm in!" in the subject line. To learn more about the local, contact NYSUT labor relations specialists Daniel Esakoff or Julie Berman at NYSUT's Tarrytown Regional Office, 914-592-4410.

All summer long, union-backed bills become laws

By Ned Hoskin
nhoskin@nysutmail.org

With more than 900 bills passed by both houses of the state Legislature in the 2019 session, it's no surprise that it takes a while for them all to get to the governor's desk. But they have to pass that last step for a signature in order to be enacted.

Of the dozens of NYSUT-backed bills that passed, several were enacted this summer, and more are sure to follow.

Notably, one of the union's victories came in mid August when the governor signed legislation to allow school districts to install stop-arm cameras on school buses.

"This law marks a significant step forward for student safety," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "With an estimated 50,000 motor vehicles illegally passing school buses every day across New York, bus drivers are

constantly on the lookout for these reckless motorists while also keeping an eye on the children in their care.

"It is our sincere hope that school districts will work quickly to begin installing stop-arm cameras so we can better hold accountable those who show blatant disregard for our kids. We thank the governor and Legislature for putting our children first," Pallotta said.

The school bus camera legislation was signed into law thanks in large part to the efforts of NYSUT's "Support School Staff" campaign and the hard work and activism of our dedicated School-Related Professional members.

"It's a long process to get a bill passed and ultimately enacted," Pallotta said, "but as in the case of the bus cameras, it's worth the effort. Good laws help to protect us all."

Another bill enacted into law prevents school districts from arming

BOCES to enter into long-term leases.

- Extend injunctive relief provisions under the Taylor Law until June 30, 2021. Injunctive relief was enacted in 1994 to provide an expedited method to resolve improper practice cases in the public sector where there was deemed to be immediate and irreparable harm.

- Create the climate leadership and community protection act, which sets goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the state by 100 percent over 1990 levels by 2050.

- Provide relief from losses incurred due to mistakes on final cost reports for Newburgh City School District and Chester Union Free School District. We also are waiting for enactment on FCR relief passed in the Legislature for 12 other districts.

Also still pending enactment are bills passed by the Legislature that would:

- Include school districts as employers required to implement workplace violence prevention steps.

- Establish seniority rights for SRPs.

- Enroll New York City paraprofessionals automatically into the city Teachers' Retirement System.

- Make it easier for community colleges to hire retired law enforcement professionals as faculty for criminal justice programs.



BECKY MILLER

Deb Paulin, a school bus driver and the president of the Alden Central School Employees Association, spoke passionately about school bus safety earlier this year as part of the union's Support School Staff campaign. "As a mother and grandmother — and one who loves the kids under my care — it makes me sick when drivers illegally pass school buses," she said.

teachers. It prevents educational institutions from arming any faculty or staffer who is not primarily employed as a school resource officer, law enforcement officer or security guard.

In other business, laws have been enacted to:

- Allow BOCES to enter into contracts to provide services with agencies from outside the state, and to extend the expiration dates for

DeJesus elected AFT executive VP



BECKY MILLER

Evelyn DeJesus, a NYSUT Board member who received the union's prestigious 2019 "Not for Ourselves Alone": The Sandra Feldman Outstanding Leadership Award, was elected this summer as executive vice president of the American Federation of Teachers.

"Evelyn exemplifies NYSUT's commitment to ensuring women are an integral part of the labor movement," NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said when she received the Feldman honor. "I applaud her commitment to union values and improving our communities."

DeJesus is a former social worker and paraprofessional who became a skilled teacher and union leader. "She is a fierce advocate for justice and a role model for educators of color and women in the labor movement," United Federation of Teachers President Michael Mulgrew said. She continues as vice president for education of the UFT in New York City.

Educating women to lead on an educational, political and economic agenda is at the core of DeJesus's role as a mentor for the next group of women activists leading the union. It is a cornerstone of her work at UFT and as chair of the AFT's Latino Issues Task Force.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in 2017, she led the union's Operation Agua humanitarian effort to fund clean drinking water for Puerto Rico and to support the 40,000 teachers in the new AFT local affiliate there.

"Evelyn's fighting spirit and fierce advocacy have been an inspiration to a generation of women leaders at all levels of the labor movement," said Jolene DiBrango, NYSUT executive vice president and chair of the NYSUT Women's Committee.

Union summer

While summertime often means barbecues, sunny days and relaxing visits to the beach, for educators and local union leaders summer also means professional learning, networking with colleagues, planning for the year ahead — and knocking on doors urging members to stick with our union.

Scattered throughout the pages of this issue are stories and photos sharing how many of your union colleagues spent their summer. Feel free to share your union summer memories with us. Email united@nysutmail.org; include the subject line: How I spent my summer.

NYSUT members participating in the Member Organizing Institute fanned out across the state to speak one-on-one with their colleagues about the value of the union. From left:

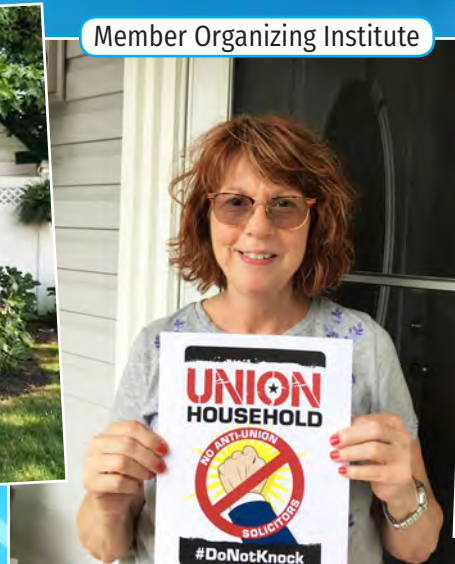
Randy Arnold, Baldwin TA, shares a light moment with Lateef Myles, Hempstead Classroom TA.

Jean Miller, BOCES II TA, is happy to show her union support.

Art teacher Nina Rossi, Irvington FA and Valarie Williams, Greenburgh TF.



Member Organizing Institute



ANDREW WATSON

Anne Penna, center, Albany Public Schools United Employees, tells member organizers Hoa Tran, Honeoye Falls-Lima EA, and Jillian Caci, Newburgh TA she couldn't help but notice that anti-union solicitors who recently visited her home had out-of-state plates.

New York State Fair



ANDREW WATSON

NYSUT members from the Syracuse area, along with NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, prepare to greet visitors to the union's booth on opening day at the New York State Fair.

Figueroa: Rebuild the house of labor

By Ned Hoskin

nhoskin@nysutmail.org

Hector Figueroa, who passed away July 11 in New York City, was born in Puerto Rico, where his parents were part of a long, difficult struggle to win a union for educators, including a strike in 1974.

In 1998, teachers finally won collective bargaining on the island, led by young Hector, then Service Employees International Union organizing director for the U.S. territory.

Only 57 when he passed, he was president of Local 32BJ SEIU, the largest property services union in the country. His influence in labor and politics echoed through halls of power from New York and New Jersey to Washington, D.C., and across the U.S.

"A true champion of the working class, Hector fought tirelessly to ensure hardworking New Yorkers were able to achieve a better life for themselves and their families," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "His work to empower New Yorkers, particularly



PHOTO VIA 32BJ FACEBOOK PAGE

Hector Figueroa

immigrant communities, in the political arena was critical in shaping major debates and ultimately policies."

The day after Figueroa died, *The New York Times* published an inspiring op-ed in which he commented

on the state of unionism and its future in this country. Figueroa called for a renewed focus and investment in organizing, and a commitment to seek justice for all workers.

"It's not too late to rebuild our movement," he wrote, noting critics had hoped the U.S. Supreme Court's 2018 decision in *Janus v. AFSCME* would demolish the house of labor.

"But we survived, and workers are mobilizing and organizing, with and sometimes without a union behind them. We cannot let this unique moment in history pass us by. Organizing workers, all kinds of workers, needs to be our No. 1 priority. ...

"We can build a lasting movement that will reduce income inequality, create a country that is fair for all and kick the hatemongers out of office. We must begin putting organizing first today, not in 2021."

Figueroa is survived by his wife, Deidre McFadyen, and children Eric and Elena. McFadyen is executive editor of *New York Teacher*, NYSUT's publication for members of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION MEETING, NYSUT BOARD OF DIRECTORS, VACANCY ELECTION, ELECTION DISTRICT 4

A vacancy exists on the NYSUT Board of Directors for Election District 4. The vacancy was created by the resignation of Eric Talbot, effective Aug. 11, 2019.

In accordance with the NYSUT Constitution, Article IX, §§4(a) and 4(b): "Directors representing Election Districts shall be elected on a roll call vote by a majority of ballots cast by the representatives from their respective constituencies ... [and in] ... the event of a vacancy in the position of Election District Director, the President shall call a special election to elect a successor who shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term."

The delegates and alternates of Election District 4 are hereby notified that this vacancy will be filled by a special election meeting to be held as follows:

Date: Oct. 8, 2019

Time: 5 p.m.

**Place: John Harvard's Brew House,
6447 Holiday Valley Road
Ellicottville, NY 14731**

Pursuant to NYSUT Constitution, Article IX, §4(b) and the approved NYSUT Campaign and Election Procedures, NYSUT members who were reported as elected delegates to the 2019 Representative Assembly representing the members of ED 4 will be eligible to vote in this special election. A reported alternate delegate may vote in the absence of the delegate.

Nominations to fill this vacancy will be accepted in accordance with the Campaign and Election Procedures approved by the NYSUT Board of Directors adopted for the 2017 Representative

Assembly. In order to qualify as a candidate for this special election, a Nominating Petition must be fully completed and then signed by at least two (2) in-service members from ED 4.

The completed and signed Nominating Petition must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on Sept. 18, 2019. Any member in good standing from a NYSUT local within ED 4 may be a candidate. **Only in-service members in good standing from ED 4 may sign a candidate's Nominating Petition.** Nominating Petitions are available by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at elections@nysutmail.org or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at 518-213-6000, ext. 6662.

At the special election meeting, each candidate

shall be given an opportunity to address the meeting for a period not to exceed three (3) minutes at a candidates' forum scheduled for 5 p.m. on Oct. 8, at the above location. The special election meeting will remain in session until a successor director is elected. The number of votes to which a local is entitled will be evenly distributed among that local's delegates present and voting.

The candidate elected will serve as successor Election District Director immediately upon being elected at the Oct. 8, 2019, special election meeting and continue to serve as the successor director to the conclusion of the 2020 RA.

All elected delegates or their alternates reported for the 2019 NYSUT RA from ED 4 are requested to be present for this election.

New law protects student data

By Kara Smith

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As educators return to the classroom this fall, there's a new issue to keep on the radar: digitally safeguarding student information. Ranging from names, to home addresses, to birth dates and locations, Education Law 2-D was enacted to shield student information from digital hackers. Currently, the State Education Department is seeking public input on how the law will be implemented.

"Although regulations haven't been put in place yet, educators need to remain vigilant about protecting student data," said Jolene DiBrango, NYSUT executive vice president. Once regulations are adopted, all third-party contractors, and educational agencies — including the State Education Department,

school districts and BOCES — will be required to adopt a data security and privacy policy to safeguard student data.

DiBrango submitted implementation feedback to state officials on the union's behalf in March. Compiled by NYSUT's Educational Technology subject area committee, the suggestions include providing training for education professionals about relevant federal and state regulations; requiring written assurances from third-party contractors that they're in compliance with the law; and extending the time frame for districts to adopt and publish a data security and privacy policy from Dec. 31 to July 1, 2020 — an extension that was made by the state.

What this means for educators

The law could significantly impact educators — particularly when it comes to free apps that include "click wrap" agreements that require teachers to accept the app's terms of service. That simple action can make teachers party to a legally binding contract whose terms might violate federal and state law. To protect themselves, teachers should get written district approval before accepting the terms and conditions of any app used in the classroom, or for school purposes. Including students' personal information — such as names, grades or disciplinary problems — in emails is also a concern; that information could be easily shared, either intentionally, or inadvertently, putting student confidentiality at risk.

DiBrango noted that local BOCES and teacher centers are good

resources for obtaining safe classroom technology.

"We will continue to offer SED feedback about the law's implementation during the next round of public comments," said DiBrango. She noted that districts should also review their instructional technology plan to ensure it addresses data privacy. Each district will be required to designate a data protection officer to serve as a point of contact for district data security and privacy, and to implement the required policies and procedures.

"Labor management discussions about privacy requirements and their impact on students, staff and classroom instruction, should also take place," DiBrango said.

Union outreach program builds stronger locals through member engagement

By Matt Smith
msmith@nysutmail.org

Eight-thirty in the morning in the middle of July and there they were — more than 100 teachers and education professionals representing almost 20 local unions — packed inside a large conference room, hard at work.

They came from all over — Long Island, Buffalo, Northern New York and the Southern Tier — using their summertime to hone their leadership and communication skills as part of NYSUT’s weeklong Local Action Project.

With assistance from NYSUT staff, they spent the week discussing ways to build meaningful partnerships within their communities and improve communications and outreach. They strategized on how to boost member participation within their locals. And they examined how to establish effective structures within their unions that would help enhance their workplaces and districts.

“This is a big commitment ... but it’s also a great opportunity,” said Elisabeth Lorentzsen, LAP coordinator for the Lowville Teachers Association in Northern New York. “There’s so much value in being able to talk to your colleagues and learn about what worked in their locals, what didn’t, and what they consider to be successful.”

The annual program requires a three-year commitment from locals and mixes newcomers with those finishing their final year.

“We really want to make sure this is a community for learning,” said Patrick Lyons, NYSUT’s director of Constituency Programs and Services.



PHOTOS: EL-WISE NOISETTE

Eight local unions successfully completed the three-year LAP program. Above, members of the Syracuse Teachers Association with NYSUT officers Jolene DiBrango, Andy Pallotta and Paul Pecorale.

“We want first-year locals to learn from those in their second and third year about what has worked for them, and we want those second- and third-year locals to share their wisdom.”

This summer marked the Lowville TA’s first year at LAP. Lorentzsen, a high school Spanish teacher who also serves as her union’s vice president, said increasing member involvement is what drew her local to

the NYSUT program.

“We needed help in learning how to increase participation in our union,” Lorentzsen said. The local recently negotiated a contract and held an information session to discuss the deal. Of 128 members, “just a handful of people showed up.”

The same needs brought the Mohawk Valley Community College Professional Association to LAP three

years ago.

“We’re pretty strong, but having 250 members across two different campuses gets really tricky in terms of making sure everyone is clued in,” said Patti Antanavige, MVCC’s LAP coordinator and the local’s grievance chair. “We took the lesson we learned in year one regarding one-on-one communication and reorganized our entire representative structure to ensure people were talking with others they were comfortable with, instead of just people in close proximity to their buildings. It was a very big change, but it was an important one.”

NYSUT Second Vice President Paul Pecorale said it’s vital that locals keep their lines of communication open, increase involvement and “talk about what membership looks like.”

Antanavige, a student support adviser, said LAP gave her local “a really good look at how we operated and how we needed to change.

“It’s useful to conduct that sort of introspective research on yourself,” she said. “LAP also gave us the training we need in learning how to plan strategically. It’s been a great program for us.”



NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham meets with Collin Mulcahy of the Brocton TA.



Members of the Croton TA prepare for the three-year LAP experience.



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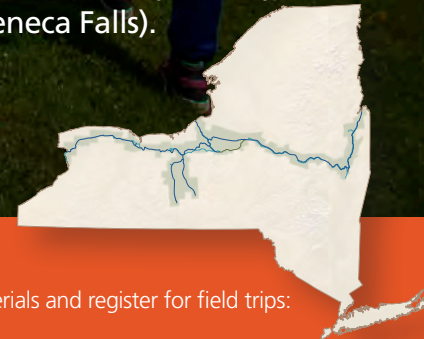
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Teaching kindness from Middle C

By Liza Frenette
lfrenett@nysutmail.org

There are many paths to kindness. Melissa Salguero finds hers everyday in the six-story brick Bronx school where she teaches music to students who come from many places across the globe.

Salguero blends trust, respect and kindness daily, and ties it with relevance to music.

Students can learn to show kindness to a peer who is taking a long time to learn an instrument. When a student soloist misses an entrance, Salguero has taught students to say “It’s cool” instead of pointing out the defect.

“The goal is to recover from mistakes,” she said.

If a student is crying and told to stop, Salguero believes it invalidates their emotion. If they express anger, she does not tell them to stop being angry.

“Maybe those are the only two things he can control today. So it’s important to listen and validate,” she said.

Often, anger is related to an outside factor — or maybe, she muses, it could be that the lesson is boring. As a teacher, she needs to look inward.

“I can talk sternly or give consequences, but I never yell. I deal with them in a polite and respectful manner,” she said. “Kindness is a way of life. It’s not a curriculum. It’s not one more thing.”

Salguero, a member of the United Federation of Teachers, is also a 2018 Grammy winner. She shares her lessons in kindness with her students and to audiences across the world. In March she taught a lesson on kindness in Dubai as a 2019 top 10 finalist for the Global Teacher Prize. In



Music teacher and United Federation of Teachers member Melissa Salguero, second from left, was a 2019 finalist for the \$1 million Global Teacher Prize. She is pictured with music teacher Regina Glamore. For more information about the Global Teacher Prize, visit globalteacherprize.org. The deadline to apply for the 2020 award is Sept. 22.

September she will teach a session in the Ukraine.

Kindness matters

To build trust with students, the approach she uses is consistent behavior over a long period of time.

Salguero says learning an instrument and playing in the marching band taught her patience when she was younger. Today she carries it forward with students who are learning to accept each other and the different cultures represented at the school.

Last spring, her choral students sang songs and read stories, written with the help of literacy coach and UFT member Ginat Kaplan, about where they hail from. The theme was “Home.”

Students talked of home being the coffee from grandma; eating homemade baleadas; the bagels that are like “eating love;” making a cake the colors of the Dominican Republic for New Year’s; the lovely sounds of birds

and roosters waking up; and white butterflies.

When the boys and girls sang “Home” by Phillip Phillips, they belted out “Just know you’re not alone, ‘cause I’m going to make this place your home.”



Teaching kindness

Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, was founded in 1991 to prevent the growth of hate. The organization provides free resources to K-12 educators, including lesson plans, professional learning tools, webinars and more.

There are several lessons on teaching kindness, including an article on helping future educators realize the value of kindness before they teach it to students. Visit tolerance.org.

Immigration lessons come to the classroom

By Liza Frenette

Teaching about disturbing, politically charged events such as the refugee crises and overcrowded detention centers can be a challenge for educators. Students can be frightened hearing about the 40,900 children taken into custody by U.S. Health and Human Services since April 2019, a figure reported by *Time* magazine.

Some students do not know if they will be next to be deported. They learn about children taken from their parents. Some do not understand the differences between immigrants, refugees and illegal immigration and do not know how to view the situation.

When teaching students “current events tied around something that is very polarizing, such as immigration,” it is important to allow all opinions, to have students seek trustworthy news resources offering different perspectives, and to foster critical thinking including empathy, perspective and the law, said Rachel Murat, a Maine-Endwell high school AP Government and Politics teacher.

Teaching students to have productive conversations is a whole life skill. “We’re losing the ability to have civil discourse in this country,” said Murat, a member of the Maine-Endwell Teachers Association.

To help educators, AFT has available lessons about immigration and creating inclusive school communities through the free Share My Lesson site. Teachers, parents and immigration advocacy organizations have contributed to these resources at sharemylesson.com/immigration.

Another great resource on the site is a list of books by seven Latinx authors who have written about their migration experiences. The list includes a learning arc framework for educators to consider as the books are introduced to students. Visit sharemylesson.com/blog/latinx-authors-7-must-read-books-1.



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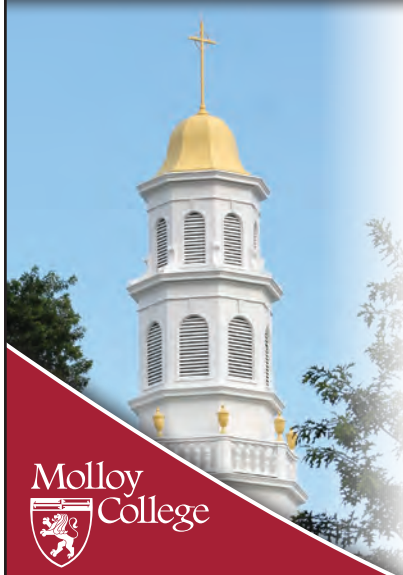
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Getting to know ... Patti Paratore

Patti Paratore is a clerical/senior office assistant at Candlewood Middle School and a member of the Half Hollow Hills Association of Office Personnel. She was interviewed by Lori Levine, paraprofessional trustee for the Half Hollow Hills Teachers Association and a member of the NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee.

Tell me about your job and why you love what you do.

I initially took the job (in 1996 as a substitute clerical) to coordinate days that worked with my son's school schedule. I am actually a 1974 graduate of this district.

I love everything about my job. I am the secretary to the assistant principal, who assigns the paraprofessionals and monitors their placement. Our building has 90 teachers, 59 paraprofessionals and 17 monitors. We have an awesome staff. My office is in earshot of several grade 6 classrooms. I hear the teachers teach

their lessons and hear their passion in what they teach. The paraprofessionals are to me the most amazing staff members. Each and every day I watch how much of an impact they make on their students. They are truly the most important person for a child with high needs. They love, nurture and motivate their students like they are their own child. On a personal note, another reason the paraprofessionals are dear to me is, my mother, Eileen Morgan, with the help of the HHHTA, formed the Paraprofessional Union back in 1979.

How are you involved with your union?

I am a member of the Half Hollow Hills Association of Office Personnel. I am very involved in our union, going to meetings, raising money for breast cancer and the American Cancer Society. I was the secretary of the association for the 2018-19 school year. It was a great experience.

What do you do to make a difference?

Sometimes being a school secretary is just taking the time to listen to a parent, student or staff member's problem or answering their questions. I find it very rewarding to help people. It's not difficult being nice to people.

Tell me about your hobbies.

My hobbies include trying to learn to golf. I enjoy crocheting and gardening. I look forward to the weekends to enjoy time with my husband, Augie, who is a retired police officer. My son, Joseph, is a police officer,

too. I am also the proud "Nana" of two beautiful grandchildren.



PROVIDED

Safety takes center stage at SRP train the trainer



LIZA FRENETTE

Susan Brewer, Buffalo Educational Support Team, posts some of the safety reminder posters created by participants at the August ELT train the trainer.

Nearly three dozen NYSUT SRP members participated in a four-day training session with the union's Education and Learning Trust. The topics, determined by SRPs, included working safely in schools, how to prevent illness and injuries when toileting students; addressing anti-LGBTQ bullying and harassment in schools; supporting students with autism; and promoting a positive school culture and climate. Those who successfully complete the training can then provide workshops and seminars to their peers back in their districts.

Celebrate SRPs

School-Related Professionals Day is Tuesday, Nov. 19, a day to honor the work of the people who support students, teachers and the care of

school buildings.

NYSUT's free SRP Recognition Day Celebration packet is filled with promotional tips, innovative ideas and other helpful resources, including "Proud Union SRP — Essential to Education" stickers, a poster and a flier for display. First come, first served — supplies are limited. Local leaders can visit nysut.org/srp in mid-September to order the celebration packet.

Save the date

NYSUT's 41st Annual SRP Leadership Conference will be held Oct. 4-6 at the Hilton Hotel in Saratoga Springs.

For info, contact NYSUT SRP Coordinator Leslie Fottrell at lfottrel@nysutmail.org.

**Unbroken: 13
Stories Starring
Disabled Teens**

Edited by Marieke
Nijkamp

**Recommended
by:** Rose

Reissman, United Federation of
Teachers, literacy specialist

Recommended for: grades 9 to 12

Why I chose it: This anthology focuses on teen protagonists with disabilities, yet the disabilities are not the focus of this book. The collection offers opportunities for all students to understand more about disabilities, and provides material for students who are in inclusion classes, or who need special support, to recognize their lives and experiences.

What I like about the work: Each author in this book has a disability. There are standard young adult challenges – romance, bullying, divorce, finances, loneliness and beyond. The challenges can be complicated by the protagonist's disability, but the writers build on the teen's inherent strength of character, ingenuity, decision-making and capacity to accept support from someone outside.

How teachers can use this work: Students can write reflections about how the story adds insight into the daily life of a peer – or themselves – living with a disability in the context of regular high school angst. Students can select a story and “write themselves” as teens into this story. Some of the disability behaviors and conditions described may help students who may need to be diagnosed.

About the author: Marieke Nijkamp is the founder of DiversifYA. Her debut novel, *This Is Where It Ends*, follows four teens during a school shooting. Visit mariekenijkamp.com for more.

“Check it Out” features books recommended to teachers and parents by school librarians and other educators. Have a recommendation? Send suggestions, along with your name and local union, to lfrenett@nysutmail.org.



New commissioner offers a chance for a fresh start

By **Sylvia Saunders**
ssaunders@nysutmail.org

With the resignation of State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, NYSUT is advocating for a new leader who will focus on the state's broken testing system, address the teacher shortage and increase diversity in the education profession.

“A new commissioner offers the chance for a fresh start in education,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “We hope that the new commissioner will be open to hearing feedback from educators. It's important that decisions are made *with* our members — rather than *to* our members.”

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango, who serves as the union's liaison with the State Education Department, said she hopes the selection process will be open and that education stakeholder groups including NYSUT will be asked for input on what characteristics they would like to see in the new commissioner.

“We have many issues to tackle and we are hopeful the next commissioner will partner with us,” DiBrango

said. “As a longtime educator and former local union president who sat across from superintendents and boards of education, we get the best results when we have a productive, collaborative, respectful relationship with management.”

In a surprise at the end of the Board of Regents meeting in July, Elia submitted her letter of resignation saying she would leave at the

superintendent in Hillsborough County, Florida, has led the State Education Department since 2015, replacing John King Jr. Since then, the state has grappled with an overhaul in federal education law, teacher evaluations, new learning standards and backlash from the state's continued fixation on standardized testing. There has also been escalating tension between Elia and some mem-

bers of the Board of Regents.

At the same Regents meeting where she announced her resignation, Elia and department staff, along with Chancellor Rosa, outlined a major initiative to spend the next year “rethinking” the state's high school diploma requirements and an aggressive implementation timeline. A

number of Regents questioned the proposal and the wisdom of moving ahead so quickly.

DiBrango said NYSUT's Research Department would be conducting a survey to see what members think about the current graduation requirements and the high school Regents exams.

“Our goal and advocacy is to ensure that every single student gets a high-quality education and that our educators are respected and supported,” DiBrango said.

end of August to pursue work with a national group “supporting districts to help turn around schools.”

New York's education commissioner is selected by the Board of Regents. Shortly after Elia's announcement, Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa and Vice Chancellor T. Andrew Brown announced that Executive Deputy Commissioner Beth Berlin would serve as acting commissioner, while the search for a new commissioner is underway.

Elia, a longtime educator in Western New York and former school



When the 'right path' leads back to the classroom

By Kara Smith
ksmith@nysutmail.org

Chris Michael wants to be remembered for more than names and dates when students move on from his eighth grade social studies class at Cohoes Middle School near Albany.

"I want them to remember me as a caring human being who listened to them, shared life advice and tried to send them down the right path in life," said Michael.

"Anything else is a bonus."

Former student John McKnight is one of Michael's success stories. His life had started sliding off track following his parent's divorce when he was in elementary school. Although his single-parent father did the best he could, long work hours, and tight finances, took a toll.

McKnight found himself drifting. He watched people close to him lose their lives to drug addiction, started hanging out with the wrong crowd and school suspensions followed. "I had to grow up really fast," he said.

"I would go and talk to Mr. Michael and he helped me view things in a positive way and, to this day, that's still the way I am ... he showed me that he cared," said McKnight. "I didn't have a lot of good in my life, but he was like an older brother, that extra person there to guide me."

At eighth grade graduation, McKnight and a group of his friends dressed alike and took a picture with Michael. McKnight also wrote him a thank you letter. "I teared up reading it," Michael said, noting that letters like that are why he went into teaching.

"It's the most fulfilling job I've ever had," said the Cohoes Teachers Association member. Although he'd considered a career in education in high school, he'd worked in journalism and a family business before becoming a teacher at 28.

McKnight and his friends sought Michael out again for a photo at their high school graduation. "We wanted something to remember where we came from," McKnight said. "He played a big role in how we grew up."



BECKY MILLER

John McKnight is entering his senior year at SUNY Cortland. The future physical education teacher draws inspiration from his eighth grade social studies teacher Chris Michael, right.

After completing his freshman year at SUNY Cortland, and dissatisfied with an athletic training major, McKnight did some soul searching. He thought back to what helped shape him into the man he is. He realized it was teachers like Michael. "I never thought I would be a teacher ... but now I try to remember all that I learned from him," he said. "Maybe I can help students become who they're going to be."

This fall, McKnight starts his senior year majoring in physical education. He looks forward to getting kids moving every day. He also looks forward to stability.

"Becoming a teacher, I know that I'll be secure, which is really important," he said noting that having food on the table each night wasn't always a guarantee growing up.

He knows that Michael's influence will guide him throughout his career. "He's a good role model," said McKnight. "When I'm a teacher, I want my students to respect me, but I also want them to feel like they can come to me with a problem. I never realized, until I looked back on it, how much of an impact you can have on a

child's life."

The admiration is mutual. At the start of every school year, Michael talks to his incoming students about McKnight's determination to succeed. "I'm beyond proud of him," he said. "He's going to be an amazing teacher."



PROVIDED

Cohoes Middle School teacher Chris Michael celebrates his students' graduation from eighth grade. From left, Josh Giller, Jordan West, Jacob Bowen, John McKnight and Ryan Sencer. McKnight is now studying to be a teacher himself. Visit nysut.org/nysutunited to see the group's redo of this image at their high school graduation.



NYSUT launched its Take A Look at Teaching initiative in the 2018-19 school year to strengthen teacher recruitment efforts and elevate the profession as a whole.

The effort features campus conversations, and regional summits for students and educators hosted by P-12 and higher education locals across the state.

Another series of summits will be held this school year. Locations include Long Island, Tarrytown, Capital Region and Southern Tier. For more information, visit nysut.org/takealookateaching.

Union lawsuit takes on student debt crisis

By **Sylvia Saunders**
ssaunder@nysutmail.org

When art teacher Kelly Finlaw first heard about the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, she thought it would be a life raft for her.

After more than a decade of teaching in New York City, Finlaw was drowning in more than \$100,000 in debt — struggling to pay her rent, plus \$600 in monthly student loan payments.

"I live a very frugal life, but I felt like I'd spend the rest of my life paying off these loans," Finlaw said. She was barely keeping her head above water.

So when her federal student loan servicer, Nelnet, notified her that she would qualify for loan forgiveness, Finlaw eagerly called to learn more. A Nelnet rep told her that if she made 10 years of on-time payments, she was "on track" for the rest of her federal loan debt to disappear.

The IS 528 teacher is exactly the kind of dedicated public servant lawmakers had in mind when they approved the bipartisan PSLF law with much fanfare in 2007. The first in her family to graduate from college, Finlaw took out federal and direct loans to pay for both her undergraduate and graduate degrees in art education.

A beloved teacher in a high-needs middle school, Finlaw's the kind of teacher who is constantly fundraising and foraging for art supplies, who takes her students on field trips to visit colleges, and who makes sentimental end-of-year videos as a graduation send-off for her eighth graders.

As she enters her 14th year of teaching this fall, Finlaw loves her

job and her students — and hopes to someday be able to buy an apartment in the school's Washington Heights neighborhood.

After she made her 120th on-time loan payment in November 2017, Finlaw thought it would be a time for great celebration. Instead, she was shocked to learn her application was denied and her nightmare would only get worse.

In a series of frustrating phone calls, a Nelnet representative told Finlaw the company had received many similar calls from borrowers who believed they qualified for PSLF, only to be denied. The Nelnet rep referenced news articles about PSLF's low acceptance rate and told Finlaw that PSLF is a faulty program and a "scam."

To make matters worse, the rep incorrectly advised Finlaw that the only way for her to qualify for loan forgiveness was to consolidate all of her loans and start over again. She listened, but now has \$88,000 of debt and feels "back at the bottom again."

"I was misled, lied to and given false information over and over again," Finlaw said. "I can't tell you how many times I sat on my stoop on my lunch break and just went round and round. Then I'd call back again and get a different answer! I felt so alone and powerless."

But one Friday afternoon Finlaw got an email from her local union, the United Federation of Teachers, urging members who applied for PSLF to take an online survey for the American Federation of Teachers.

A couple days later she got a follow-up email, then a phone call in July from an attorney asking if she wanted to join an AFT class action lawsuit.

"My first reaction was 'Hell, no,' because I don't like to be in the limelight," Finlaw said. But the more she thought about it, she was willing to do anything she could to force the Department of Education to fix the program and implement the law the way it was intended.

Finlaw is one of eight public and nonprofit employees to join the AFT lawsuit charging Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and the Department of Education with gross mismanagement and out-and-out sabotage.

"Public Service Loan Forgiveness is a right, but Betsy DeVos has turned it into a crapshoot," AFT President Randi Weingarten said. "Instead of helping the millions of Americans owed debt relief under the program, DeVos has hurt and pauperized them. She has ignored the companies' deplorable behavior, despite the fact they are under contract with and overseen by her department."

DeVos has not only failed to properly administer the program, she has

pushed for PSLF to be eliminated entirely, Weingarten noted. With a trillion-dollar national debt crisis, Congress continues to support the much-needed program, with many lawmakers proposing expansion.

In addition to the case against DeVos and the Education Department, the AFT is also going after the loan companies themselves: Last year the AFT filed a separate class action lawsuit against Navient, another large federal student loan servicer, on behalf of nine teachers who alleged that the servicer gave borrowers "inaccurate and misleading information" for financial gain. A federal court ruling over the summer allows the lawsuit to move forward under New York State consumer protection law.

As the legal action continues, Finlaw is just thankful to have the power of the union behind her.

"I felt like I was so alone and powerless — but all of a sudden I have

an army behind me," Finlaw said. "Without the union, I'd still be on my stoop desperately trying to figure out how to lower my payments and stay afloat."

But this lawsuit isn't just about getting justice for Finlaw and the other plaintiffs. "It's about making the loan forgiveness program live up to its promise," she said.

Denied PSLF? Try again

As of March 2019, the U.S. Department of Education has forgiven the loans of fewer than 1 percent of borrowers who applied for the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.

After so many borrowers were denied access to the program, Congress last year approved a temporary expansion of the program to allow more borrowers to qualify.

The \$350 million is available on a first-come, first-served basis. To qualify, your application must have already been denied because some or all of the payments were made under the wrong type of repayment plan. Borrowers who believe they may qualify for Temporary Expanded Public Service Loan Forgiveness (TEPSLF) should email a request to TEPSLF@myfedloan.org and ask that the Education Department reconsider your eligibility.

For more information, go to studentaid.ed.gov or contact FedLoan Servicing at 1-855-265-4038 from 8 a.m.-9 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Help is available

NYSUT is committed to helping members who are struggling with student debt.

After training from American Federation of Teachers, NYSUT staffers are conducting student debt clinics in regional offices around the state.

Working in partnership with Cambridge Credit Counseling, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit agency, NYSUT Member Benefits is also sponsoring regional events and sending Cambridge Credit representatives to conferences and some local union meetings.

NYSUT members are eligible for a free, no-obligation, debt and student loan consultation with one of Cambridge's certified counselors. There is no charge to call and speak with a counselor, who can review members' loans and help determine the best repayment options.

The company has a dedicated telephone line (888-254-9827) for NYSUT members to get counseling for student loans, or for any other debt management issues. To date, more than 1,000 NYSUT members have contacted Cambridge for help.

Cambridge also offers a web portal available at a reduced rate of \$14.95 that can help explain the various options when paying down student debt, including student loan forgiveness programs, income-based repayment options and more. A report will be provided based on loan information and responses to questions.

For more information, go to memberbenefits.nysut.org/cambridge.

The AFT recently rolled out a new online debt relief tool called "Summer." It's an interface similar to Turbo-Tax that can help ease student debt payments. Go to meetsummer.org/aft for more. In addition, AFT's Forgivemystudentdebt.org website provides public service workers information about the federal PSLF program.



JONATHAN FICKES



PROVIDED

United Federation of Teachers member Kelly Finlaw and Missouri educator Gloria Nolan are plaintiffs in a class-action lawsuit against Betsy DeVos and the U.S. Department of Education over their mishandling of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. From left, attorney Yelena Konanova, Nolan, attorney Margaret Siller, Finlaw and AFT President Randi Weingarten.

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NYSUT poster celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month

NYSUT celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month, Sept. 15–Oct. 15, with a new poster honoring Maria Teresa Kumar, the founding president and CEO of Voto Latino.

Voto Latino is responsible for registering and influencing millions of Latino voters through viral, celebrity-driven campaigns. The organization weighs in on important issues including immigration



and citizenship, health care and social justice.

An Emmy-nominated MSNBC contributor and former host of “Changing America,” Kumar is a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader who serves on the national boards of Planned Parenthood, Emily’s List and the Latino Leaders Network, and is a frequent guest analyst on NPR and PBS. She is a graduate of Harvard’s Kennedy School and the University of California at Davis.

NYSUT is proud to partner with the Hispanic community to ensure a quality education and future for all students. For more on the important contributions of Hispanic Americans, visit nysut.org/publications.

To download a printable copy of the Hispanic Heritage poster, in English-language and Spanish-language versions, visit nysut.org/publications.

Limited quantities are free for NYSUT members and leaders.

Baldwinsville teacher appointed to NYSTRS Board

Elizabeth Chetney was appointed to the state Teachers’ Retirement System Board in July to fill the unexpired term of Paul J. Farfaglia. Farfaglia, Jordan-Elbridge Teachers Association, retired from teaching at the end of the 2018–19 school year. Chetney will stand for election for the post in November at the NYSTRS annual delegates meeting.



A longtime NYSTRS delegate, Chetney leads the Baldwinsville TA. She has also served as a member of the NYSUT Pension and Retirement Committee, and Policy Council. She has taught in Baldwinsville schools, primarily as an English teacher, since 1992.

Chetney is one of three teacher-members on the 10-member retirement board. She joins current TRS representatives Sheila Sullivan Buck, Rush-Henrietta Employees Association; and Ronald Gross, William Floyd United Teachers. The board president is David Keefe, a retired member of the Hempstead Classroom TA; he also serves as the board’s retiree representative.

NYSUT journal tackles culturally responsive teaching

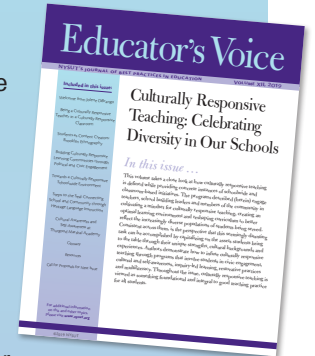
By the year 2040, one in three students in the United States will be an immigrant or

will be the child of an immigrant. “Our schools continue to grow in populations of students who bring cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity to our communities,” said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango. “Culturally responsive teaching is an approach that should be infused into everyday teaching.”

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Celebrating Diversity in our Schools is the theme for Volume XII of NYSUT’s journal of best practices in education, *Educator’s Voice*, set to be published this fall.

Articles include a unique unit that posits students, including English language learners, as ethnographers. Another article focuses on building culturally responsive learning communities through civic and political engagement.

NYSUT is soliciting authors for Volume XIII, *Students with Disabilities: Access and Equity in the School Community*. To read Volume XII, or to download the call for proposals for Volume XIII, visit nysut.org/educatorsvoice. The deadline for proposals is Oct. 1.



STEM education



Top photo, Cheryl Mitchell and Lisa Ringhoff, East Moriches TA, learn about silicone chips at SEMI High Tech U at NYSUT.

Bottom photo, educators make glurch and oobleck to learn about liquids and solids at a statewide STEM conference at SUNY Alfred.

Union actions lead to cooler heads prevailing

By Liza Frenette
lfrenett@nysutmail.org

Auburn teacher Joe DeCarlo can't take the heat, and here's why that's a good thing.

His diligence and strategy, strengthened by union support, propelled his school district to include phased-in centralized air conditioning for all classrooms in a capital improvement project that passed earlier this year. DeCarlo, a special education teacher and first vice president of the Auburn TA, used NYSUT's online temperature log to have his fellow teachers record classroom temperatures over a two-week period in the district's seven school buildings.

"We had multiple rooms (register temperatures) at 100 degrees," said DeCarlo. At Seward Elementary, which has an extension with "harsh" heat conditions, DeCarlo said a thermometer actually melted.

Students and adults in overheated classrooms can suffer from many types of illness, from nausea and dizziness to headaches and asthma attacks.

NYSUT uses the temperature logs submitted from members around the state to demonstrate to lawmakers the importance of passing a maximum temperature law for schools.

DeCarlo used the data beyond that. He presented the revealing temperature recordings to administrators and the board of education, persuading them to include air conditioning in a \$45 million capital improvement project.

DeCarlo and his colleagues also enlightened parents about how overheated classrooms were impacting learning — and let them feel the heat for themselves. Instead of having



PROVIDED

Special education teacher Joe DeCarlo, first vice president of the Auburn Teachers Association, uses union resources to advocate at the district for safer teaching and learning conditions — in this case, air conditioning to help regulate classroom temperatures.

the open house in late September, educators moved it to the day before school started, so parents could bring in their child's school supplies, meet teachers, and observe how hot the buildings were.

Once the superintendent was on board and told the educators that air conditioning would be part of the capital improvement project, the

union got busy to drum up voter support for its passage.

"The Auburn TA was a significant force," DeCarlo said, noting that members did phone banking and wrote letters to the editor.

The centralized air conditioning, which is scheduled to start being installed in spring 2020 in targeted buildings, is part of improving overall

air quality in school buildings.

"The whole air system is being improved," he said.

"He's a total champion," said NYSUT staffer Wendy Hord, who handles health, safety and health-care. "They're prioritizing based on these temperature logs."

DeCarlo went to his first NYSUT Health and Safety Conference in 2015 as a new union officer for the Auburn TA.

"I really had this whole world opened up to me," he said. Back home, he formed a union health and safety committee and by 2017 he was named NYSUT's Unsung Hero.

"Not having a health and safety committee in your union is like having a toolkit without a hammer," DeCarlo said.

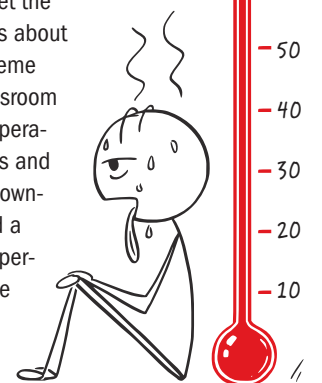
NYSUT continues to lobby for legislative relief for extreme classroom temperatures.

Hord said she receives the most heat complaints from educators in September, although summer school has challenges.

"Summer school is often for kids who don't pass their classes — and now they're in class where it's difficult to concentrate because it's so hot," she said.

Visit nysut.org/heat

to get the facts about extreme classroom temperatures and to download a temperature log.



Weather forecast: Clouds of pink

By Liza Frenette
lfrenett@nysutmail.org

The pink storm is upon us. You've seen them. Walkers wearing headbands, leis, sneakers, shirts, wands, wings — you name it — all in the color pink and in the name of taking on breast cancer.

Educators will be stepping out again this fall for the annual Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walks to raise funds for the American Cancer Society, with NYSUT continuing its pivotal role as a flagship sponsor.

According to the American Society



FILE PHOTO
NYSUT Rochester-area members come out to raise funds for breast cancer research.

of Clinical Oncology, it is estimated that 41,260 women and 500 men will die from breast cancer this year.

Walkers are fighting against those daunting statistics and have their own strong numbers.

Last year, NYSUT members generated more than \$722,270 in donations for ACS.

For information on specific walks, go to **makingstrideswalk.org** and enter your ZIP code.

Money raised via the Making Strides walks is earmarked for research, education and support services.

"Every year, thousands of NYSUT members come together at annual Making Strides walks to raise awareness and funds to support the mission of the American Cancer Society," said Katie Goepfrich, community development, ACS.

"NYSUT continues to be a proud partner with the ACS," said NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham.

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Oct. 20	Staten Island
Albany	Rochester
Bronx	Westchester
Plattsburgh	Oct. 27
Hudson Valley	Riverhead
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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that not counting some kinds of skin cancer, breast cancer in the United States is:

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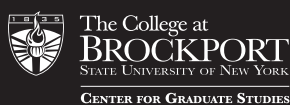
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Jolene DiBrango

Replying to @DCarlisto and @NYSUTHigherEd I wouldn't be in my current role if not for the education I received, and the degree I earned from my beloved @MVCC_UticaRome! I am a proud community college graduate and always will be. @MVCCAlumni @NYSUTCNY (@nysutEVP)

Sara Nelson

The ONLY check against corporate greed is the Labor Movement. That's why unions have been under attack — corporate elite want to remove the hurdle to having ALL the control & ALL the \$\$\$.

Organize urgently. Open your arms wide — the Labor Movement is for every worker. #1u #1job (@FlyingWithSara)



QUESTIONS FOR... Dafny Irizarry

ENL teacher, Central Islip Teachers Association

1. As founder and president of the Long Island Latino Teachers Association, you led a delegation to El Salvador to learn more about the country's educational system. What was your motivation?

Salvadorans are Long Island's largest immigrant group and our schools serve a large and growing number of Salvadoran students, including thousands of unaccompanied minors who have joined our English as a New Language classes. This propelled our organization to have discussions on our experiences and challenges with Salvadoran students and their families about their needs. As a result, we reached out to the consul general of El Salvador in Brentwood to explore a collaboration with Salvadoran educators and to help Long Island educators develop a culturally responsive curriculum.

2. What were the learning and teaching conditions like?

We visited schools that extended their hours to protect students from gang violence while providing an enriched curriculum focused on academic and trade skills. We also witnessed schools with a scarcity of personnel, books and supplies. One

school had toilets that would only flush if a bucket of water were dumped in by hand. We also saw rural students who couldn't get to school because of a lack of affordable transport. Teachers repeatedly emphasized the need for mental health services and explained they handle myriad subjects, and act as social workers, psychologists and nurses.

3. What were your key takeaways?

This experience confirmed that community schools are key to effectively meeting the needs of students. The schools with higher community participation had the most success, from safety to academic achievement. Also, it facilitated an understanding of their K-12 system and teacher preparation. For example, in

El Salvador, children begin first

grade at the age of 7. Moreover, a large number of Salvadoran children do not attend high school. Education is free and mandatory until ninth grade. These conditions have real consequences in our classrooms.

4. As more English language learners come to New York schools, what are some practical ways educators can ease their transition?

While helping students acculturate and appreciate the history and government of the United States, we can include historical events and personalities from their own native country. For example, teachers can include Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero in their civil rights unit. Salvadorans value his contributions in defending the rights of marginalized communities. He sacrificed his life in pursuit of social justice. As teachers, we can engage students in comparing and contrasting Monsignor Romero with our own Martin Luther King Jr.

5. NYSUT has been out front making the case for more support for ELLs. In your view, what's most needed?

The creation of a diverse teacher pipeline is crucial in addressing the needs of English language learners. We need more students of color, especially former ELLs, to consider teaching as a viable career path. They can help us narrow the performance gap.



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Alexandra Fee | Aug. 10, 2019
Gananda Teachers Association

John T. "Jack" Lis
March 24, 2019
Retiree Council 3

Joan MacFarland
April 15, 2019
United Federation of Teachers

Hedi Moore | June 18, 2019
Retiree Council 10

Marie Muyot | May 25, 2019
Wappingers Congress of Teachers

Michael S. McDermott
July 14, 2019
Kings Park Classroom Teachers Association

Bernhard Ruhlig | June 2019
East Islip Teachers Association

Peter Phillips | May 25, 2019
Wappingers Congress of Teachers

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Obituary submissions must include decedent's full name, union affiliation, date of death, and contact information for the person submitting the notice. Fax notices to 518-213-6415; send to Julie Malec, NYSUT United, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110-2455; or email jmalec@nysutmail.org.

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Claire Zatorski, RC 17, 18, 19
516-496-2035

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Judy D. Kalb, RC 43
561-994-4929, ext. 129



PROVIDED

Members of the New York State Alliance for Retired Americans' Central New York chapter attend the statewide NYSARA convention at NYSUT headquarters. From left, William Spreter, Margo Buckingham, Pete Rusczak, Peg Corbett, Carole Gehrig, Jan Corn and Dick Knowles.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

RC 5 & 6, Oct. 1

RSC: Peter Randazzo

RC 13, Oct. 3

RSC: Jennifer Shaad-Derby

RC 14-16, Oct. 16

RSC: Ellen Pincus

RC 17-23, Oct. 29

RSCs: Joan Perrini, Claire Zatorski

MEETING NOTICE

**Contiguous At-Large meeting
ED 51-53, Oct. 24-25**



PROVIDED

Retiree leaders including NYSUT Board members Loretta Donlon, Tom Murphy and Florence McCue, presented about retirement security and continued activism at the 2019 AFT TEACH conference in Washington, D.C. From left, McCue, ED 51-53 at-large director, and Marilyn Marion, Boston retired teachers union.



PROVIDED

RC 12 members, from left, Beverly Alves, Stacey Caruso-Sharpe and Kathlene Lyman, cue up to speak with NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli at the statewide NYSARA convention at NYSUT headquarters.

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Croton Teachers Association

The 155-member Croton Teachers Association is an active community partner. Members take part in an annual run against hunger to raise money for local, regional and global organizations helping to feed people in need. Members serve lunch and make dessert for the annual spring luncheon for senior citizens, and they make hospitality baskets for the senior citizen prom. Each summer the local has a table at the Croton Summer Fest to raise money for its scholarship fund by raffling off donated items. The Louis H. Drinkwine Scholarship is for students in their second year of college who demonstrate need.

Honeoye Teachers Association



PROVIDED

The Honeoye TA awards multiple scholarships each school year, typically to seniors who are interested in pursuing a degree in education. Funds for the program come from member donations. Above, Honeoye TA co-presidents Bev Fisher and Mary Beth Cornish present scholarships to, from left, Ethan Ball, Clay Allison, Joe Morsheimer and Quentin Sacchitella.

Mohawk Valley Community College Professional Association

Fostering a connection forged at NYSUT's Local Action Project, the Mohawk Valley Community College Professional Association last year partnered with the Utica TA to support students in a high-needs district in Utica. Members of the higher education local purchased school supplies and backpacks, along with winter coats, hats, mittens and boots, and delivered them directly to the Kernan Elementary School. While the local has long been active in community service, "We've kicked it up a bit since we joined LAP," said President Norma Chrisman. The PA will help out again this year.

Working in conjunction with the United Way, the PA also helped to organize and recruit other community organizations and labor groups to pack 50,000 meals for

distribution to local food pantries in Oneida and Herkimer counties — 2,500 meals went to a food pantry on campus.

Professional Staff Congress

The Professional Staff Congress, representing academic faculty and staff at the City University of New York, scored a major health and safety win when it forced administrators to resolve a health risk to students and members at the Bronx Community College.

After months of pressure from the union, led by BCC chapter chair Sharon Utakis, the administration finally agreed to remove mold due to flooding from dozens of pipes that had burst at the school in January. The union had brought in a nationally recognized mold consultant, but it still took months of pressure and sharing their stories with the press and politicians before the college did the right thing. PSC/CUNY is led by President Barbara Bowen.

Roslyn Teachers Association

The Roslyn TA found a way to help students in need during the summer months. The local raised money to pay for transportation so that six students could go to a summer day camp.

To communicate better with families, the RTA also sends out a communitywide newsletter twice a year — in January and in May — to 7,000 households.

"It highlights the great things that teachers are doing with students in and outside the classroom," said Eleanor Russell, president of the 301-member local.

Wappingers Congress of Teachers



A not-for-profit launched by the Wappingers Congress of Teachers in January is off to a great start. The local founded the WCT HeartShip Fund to lend a hand to members of the community dealing with a financial hardship due to devastating illnesses, catastrophes and emergency situations. District staff as well as families in the school community are eligible to fill out applications for themselves or those in need. All employees can donate through payroll deduction or one-time donations.

"We have over 300 members contributing to this fund. What a GREAT start!" said Donna Kart, vice president of the WCT, led by Pasquale Delli Carpini. "The hope is that this fund will help many in our local community who find themselves in dire need of monetary intervention and/or situations where help is needed to alleviate everyday stresses that illness or tragedy can cause a family."

Share news about your local's union or community events at united@nysutmail.org; include LIA in the subject line.

KUDOS!



It's an honor

Three NYSUT members were recognized by the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) America. **Donn Tobin**, Mahopac Teachers Association, was named National Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year. Tobin was also recognized as a 2019 Eastern District Teacher of the Year. Also winning regional teacher of the year honors: **Shelly Connors**, Auburn TA, high school physical education. **Leslie Pieters**, Roosevelt TA, dance education.

Allyson Pietronigro, Farmingdale Federation of Teachers, was recognized as the New York State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Association Middle School Health Teacher of the Year.

Becky Duprey, United University Professions at SUNY Potsdam, created a numbers and strategy board game, SUM OF WHICH, that engages students in practicing for fluency of addition. The game is available at www.sumofwhich.com.

In print

Chaitram Akl, United Federation of Teachers retiree, has written "Women's History Month: The Struggle for Women's Rights" for the online version of *The West Indian*, a weekly newspaper covering and serving the Caribbean diaspora. Visit thewestindianonline.com for more info.

Darrin Renner, Schuylerville TA, has published *Little Land of Loose Ends*, a contemporary fiction for middle grade to adult readers. This is Renner's second contemporary fiction. He also published a historical fiction. Visit djrennerbooks.com for more info.

"Kudos!" recognizes the accomplishments of NYSUT members. Have good news you'd like to share? Email united@nysutmail.org; include "Kudos!" in the subject line.



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Tap into the power of the Union

In 1983, NYSUT created Member Benefits as a separate insurance benefit trust in order to utilize the united buying power of its membership and be able to offer quality benefit programs to members. Since then it has grown to include the Member Benefits Corporation and the Catastrophe Major Medical Insurance Trust, allowing it to greatly expand the programs and services available to NYSUT members.

A board of appointed trustees and directors oversees these three entities to ensure the best interests of NYSUT members are being met. The department falls under the leadership of NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, chairperson of the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust, and Jeffrey Hartnett, director of Member Benefits.

Member Benefits also provides a variety of educational opportunities to NYSUT members, including financial assistance, legal education and home buying workshops. These can be accessed via our website, your regional Member Benefits Coordinator or through your local union.

What are some of the benefits of being a union member?

You may already realize how important it is to keep our union strong in order to continue providing the valuable services the NYSUT organization offers to its members. However, your union membership also allows you to enjoy the benefits of the dozens of programs and services endorsed by Member Benefits.

We encourage all NYSUT members to take the time to get to know your union-endorsed benefits, and learn how Member Benefits can help both you and your family members save time and money on purchases.

What makes your endorsed programs and services unique?

Regardless of whether you are participating in one of our endorsed insurance programs; legal or financial services; or the many shopping, travel or personal offerings, NYSUT members receive a quality product and enjoy the power of the union behind them.

Unlike when purchasing products available to the general public, Member Benefits is here if you ever have any issues or concerns with our endorsed programs. No matter what the issue or question, our staff takes great pride in assisting NYSUT members and their families in any way possible.

Are my NYSUT dues dollars used to support Member Benefits?

Absolutely not! Member Benefits receives funds to cover expenses from negotiated endorsement arrangements with many of the providers of our endorsed programs (including, in some cases, a percentage of premium paid).

These funds are used solely to defray the costs of operating Member Benefits, including compensation, rent, office expenses, and the cost of retaining consultants, auditors and attorneys to advise the trustees, directors and their staff. Where appropriate, Member Benefits revenue is also used to enhance the benefit programs for participants, and to help develop new programs and services for the NYSUT membership.

No monies are paid to NYSUT except reimbursement for the use of facilities, and for services and personnel provided by NYSUT to Member Benefits (the reasonableness of which amounts are certified annually to the trustees and directors by independent auditors).

What is the latest news on Member Benefits-endorsed programs?



We are continually seeking new and exciting programs that best meet the needs of NYSUT members and their families. Our new student loan and debt counseling program helps to address the ongoing student loan and debt crisis. We are proud to team with Cambridge Credit Counseling to offer no-obligation debt and student loan consultations with a Cambridge certified counselor at no cost to the NYSUT member.

Our newly endorsed Mortgage Discount Program, presented by Mid-Island Mortgage Corp., offers NYSUT members up to a \$2,700 savings on lender fees and closing costs along with other benefits.

Finally, the new SnapQuote program offered by MetLife puts the power of choice right in members' hands, allowing them to choose from multiple, highly rated, national insurance carriers. This online platform provides competitive prices and savings from bundled auto and home insurance coverage.

NYSUT members are invited to visit memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101 to learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs available to them.

Please note: Although some Member Benefits-endorsed programs may provide legal or financial advice, Member Benefits itself does not offer investment, legal or tax advice. Participants should consult their own investment, financial, tax or legal advisers to help them with an evaluation of the benefit programs. Shop and compare before making any purchasing decisions.

IT'S WHAT WE DO

Thea MacFawn and Kelly Wetherbee, North Colonie TA

Teacher Thea MacFawn and librarian Kelly Wetherbee are kindred social justice spirits. The co-directors of the five-year-old Capital Region Institute for Human Rights discovered the connection during MacFawn's frequent visits to the school library to research human rights issues. She wanted to bring a service element to her lessons.

"We realized we had common goals," said Wetherbee.

MacFawn felt called to make a more permanent imprint by creating an institute. The pair had no money — but they did have a model: the Summer Institute for Human Rights and Genocide Studies, founded by teacher Andrew Beiter, Springville Faculty Association.

Since its inception, the institute has been held at NYSUT headquarters in Latham. Topics range from poetry and art to women's rights; personal experiences of speakers from countries wrung out by war and poverty; LGBTQ rights.

"Our guiding principle is not to admire the problem," said Wetherbee. "We give tools, skills and information to take action."

The women raise funds, manage a website, promote the program through contact with schools, arrange for speakers, and respond to student queries.

To learn more about the institute and the women behind it, visit nysut.org.itswhatwedo.

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ERS: Understanding your final average salary



As a member of the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS), your retirement benefit is based on your age, your years of service credit and your Final Average Salary (FAS). This article focuses on the FAS portion of your pension calculation.

Your FAS is the average of your highest consecutive years of earnings. For Tiers 1–5, your FAS is based on your highest three consecutive years of earnings. For Tier 6, it's your highest five consecutive years of earnings. For FAS purposes, a "year" is any period during which you earned one full-time year of service credit; it may not match up to a calendar year or fiscal year. Usually your FAS is based on the years right before retirement, but they can come anytime in your career.

In calculating your FAS, there is generally a limit to how much your

In every issue, State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, administrative head of the State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS) and trustee of the Common Retirement Fund, provides information on the System, which delivers retirement benefits to many NYSUT School-Related Professionals and other support staff. If you are an ERS member with a question of general interest, email united@nysutmail.org.

For immediate assistance, call the ERS Contact Center toll-free at 866-805-0990 or 518-474-7736 in the Capital District.

earnings can increase between each year. For example, for Tiers 3–5, earnings each year cannot exceed the average of the previous two years by more than 10 percent. For Tier 6, each year cannot exceed the average of the previous four years by more than 10 percent.

Earnings above these limits will not be included in your pension calculation.

Your tier and retirement plan determine specific payments that can be included in your FAS. For instance, for Tiers 3–5, payment for up to 30 days of unused vacation may be included in your FAS if the payment is made in the years used for your FAS. Unused vacation pay cannot be included in the FAS for Tier 6 members. For Tiers 5 and 6, the amount of overtime that can be included in your FAS is limited.

To learn more about your FAS, including examples, visit our Final Average Salary page at: osc.state.ny.us/retire/members/final_average_salary.php.

NYSUT ERS consultants

Most NYSUT School-Related Professionals* belong to the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS). NYSUT ERS consultants are available to help SRP members navigate the retirement system. Consultants can answer questions, provide forms and help members contact the ERS. Contact any one of our consultants for assistance.

Trudi Davis • 914-592-4411
troers@nysutmail.org

Patti Lennon • 516-496-2035, ext. 324
nroers@nysutmail.org

*Note: Certified teaching assistants belong to the state Teachers' Retirement System (TRS).

"Fall" into retirement

Q: I'm planning to retire at the end of the 2019-20 school year. Are there any special steps I should take this fall?

A: Congratulations on your impending retirement. And to answer your question, yes, there are a number of things you should do. The New York State Teachers' Retirement System publishes *A Seasonable Approach to Retiring*, outlining quarterly steps future retirees should take in their final year. Since this column covers the fall months, we'll highlight what you should do now.

- Review your contract — find out when you should notify your employer of your retirement date, and make an appointment to discuss health insurance coverage in retirement.
- If you haven't already, register for a MyNYSTRS account to access your personal NYSTRS information, secure.nystrs.org/MyNYSTRS/register.
- If eligible, claim and purchase prior service credit for past New York State public employment or military

service. For details, watch "PSI: Prior Service Investigation" nystrs.org/Library/Videos/Member-Information. Other helpful videos include "The Retirement Process" and "Your NYSTRS Benefit Payment: Making the Choice That's Right for You."

- Attend a NYSTRS PREP seminar to learn about key retirement issues, including legal considerations, financial planning and Social Security.
- Schedule a benefits consultation with a NYSTRS representative to review the retirement process and get estimates.
- Research benefit payment options. Read the publication *Maximum or an Option* at nystrs.org/Library/Publications/Nearing-Retirement.
- Check your Benefit Profile. Is your service and salary information accurate? Ask your employer to send NYSTRS revised information if you find mistakes.
- Contact the Social Security Administration if you are eligible to receive benefits at the end of the school year.
- Monitor pending New York State legislation — new laws, such as state-wide retirement incentives, could affect your NYSTRS benefits.
- Download the free NYSTRS app (available through Google Play for android and the App Store for Apple products).
- Visit the NYSTRS Ready to Retire page, accessible from both the Retirement Planning and Active Members tabs.

NYSUT TRS consultants

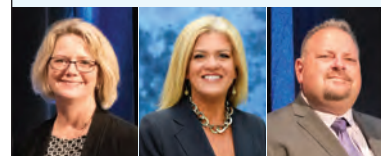
TRS members with questions may call your teacher-members on the New York State Teachers' Retirement System Board of Directors:

David Keefe • 516-741-1241
(Retiree Representative)

Sheila Sullivan Buck • 585-454-5550
sbuck@nysutmail.org

Beth Chetney • 315-431-4040
bchetney@nysutmail.org

Ronald Gross • 631-273-8822
rgross@nysutmail.org



DID YOU KNOW?

In a savings for school districts, the TRS employer contribution rate will drop from 10.62 percent in 2018–19 to 8.86 percent in 2019–20.



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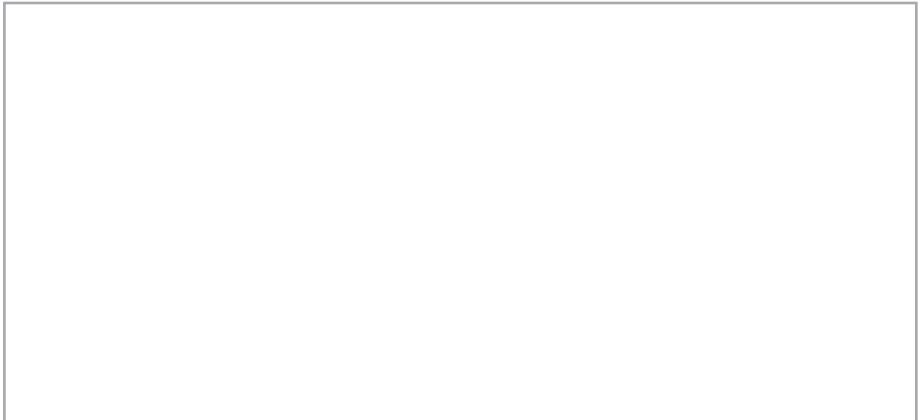
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NYSUT members receive a 40% discount off of tuition for graduate courses. ELT is now a CTLE provider and many courses are applicable for NYSED Certification.



NYSUT represents teachers, school-related professionals, higher education faculty, professionals in education, human services and health care, and retirees.



5

Reasons You Should Get to Know Member Benefits

NYSUT Member Benefits endorses dozens of quality programs and services that are available to NYSUT members and their families. **To the right**, you'll find five of our most popular benefits that union members just like you participate in on a regular basis.

The Power of the Union

Unlike with purchasing products available to the general public, Member Benefits staff is ready to assist with any issues or concerns you may have with our endorsed programs. We call this the "**Power of the Union.**"

Learn more about our "**Fab Five**" along with dozens of other endorsed programs by visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org or calling **800-626-8101**.

OUR FAB FIVE:

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