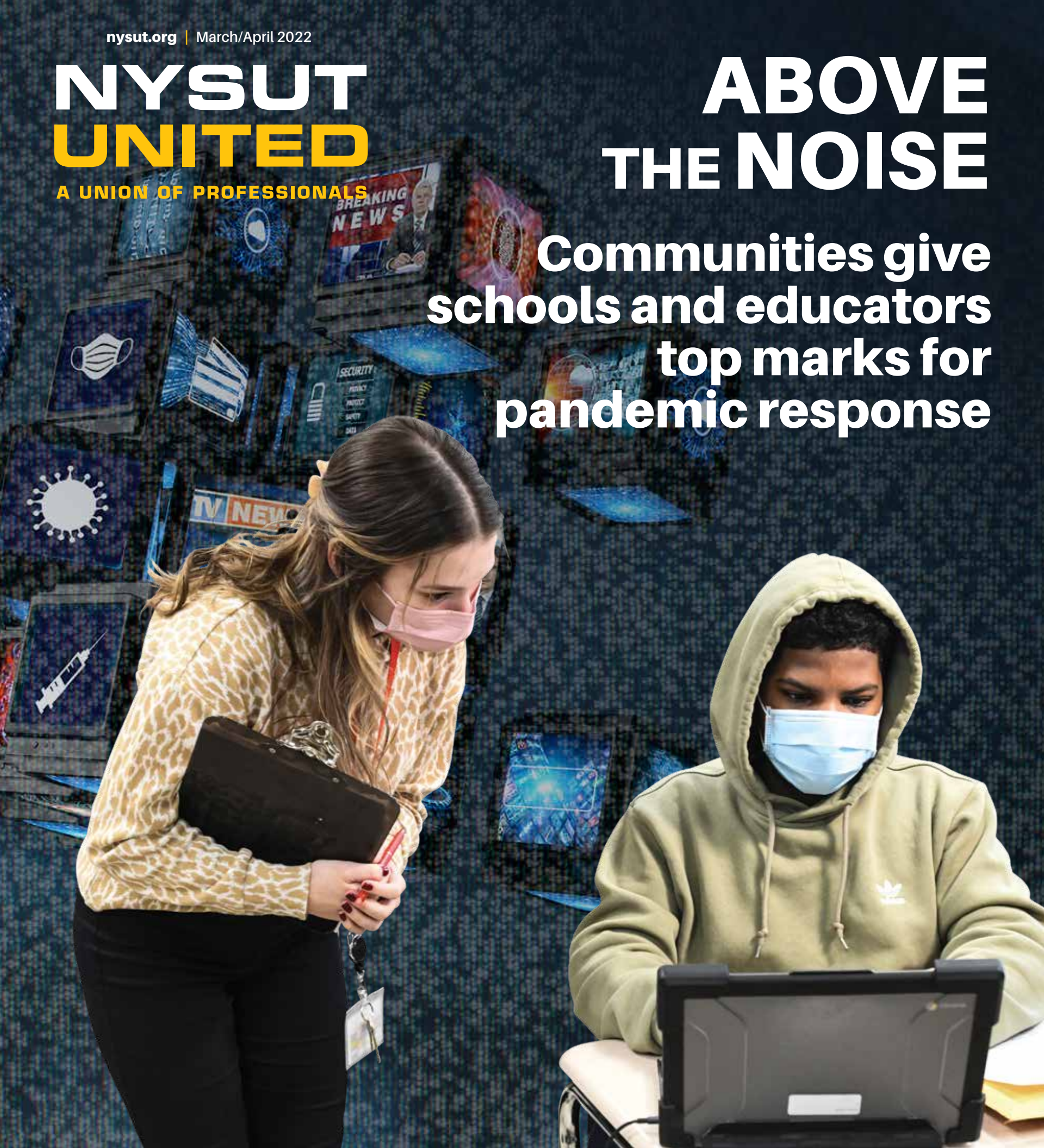


NYSUT UNITED

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS

ABOVE THE NOISE

Communities give
schools and educators
top marks for
pandemic response



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NYSUT UNITED [March/April 2022, Vol. 12, No. 4]

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Lobby efforts push Future Forward priorities

By Ned Hoskin
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said recently that last year's commitment to a three-year phase in of the full Foundation Aid formula, along with the governor's promise to honor that commitment, is "a tremendous step forward for education in New York."

However, he told lawmakers, below, at a virtual joint hearing on the elementary and secondary education budget, it will take more than that to meet the needs of students, educators and their communities in the post-COVID-19 future.

Gov. Hochul introduced her 2022-23 executive budget proposal in January, kicking off the annual weeks of debate in the Legislature — not in the statehouse, due to COVID-19 restrictions — to negotiate

a final fiscal plan for the state by April 1, the start of the fiscal year.

Pallotta, NYSUT legislative staff and volunteer political activists have shared the union's groundbreaking Future Forward Taskforce Report (futureforwardny.org) widely as a blueprint for moving education forward. The report represents ground-level guidance by NYSUT members from every region of the state.

Pallotta said the union was pleased to see many of the items recommended in the FF report were included in the executive budget proposal. But the union's testimony and subsequent lobbying efforts in Zoom meetings, written memos, phone calls — and even a virtual legislative reception — have focused on areas where we need to ensure that programs or services meet the needs of students and help them

move forward from the past two years.

"The issues around schools being the centers of communities and having the wrap-around services that students and their families require — such as child nutrition, mental health and childcare, which we have been discussing for years — have been thrust into the forefront throughout this pandemic," Pallotta said.

With the state's commitment to fully fund school aid and federal pandemic relief funding in hand, "We have a unique opportunity to make lasting change to address the complex needs of our students," he said.

NYSUT is calling for dedicated funding to expand the number of community schools; new laws to set minimum staffing levels and ensure there's a social worker, school psychologist, counselor and nurse in every school; support for prospective teachers, particularly educators of color, and restoring funding to teacher centers.

The union also seeks repeal of the oppressive receivership law and punitive consequences of flawed standardized tests.

"Returning to 'normal' isn't good enough for our students," Pallotta said. "Now is the time to redefine public education as a system that truly supports every child and ensures they have the tools to create a brighter future for our nation and our state. Because when students thrive, we all thrive."



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

ANDREW PALLOTTA
PRESIDENT
NEW YORK STATE UNITED TEACHERS - NYSUT

COMING UP

March 7-18
NYSUT Committee of 100 legislative meetings

March 21
World Poetry Day



March 31
Local & Retiree Council Presidents Conference, Albany

March 31
NYSUT Board of Directors meets, Latham

April 1
State budget due

April 1-2
Representative Assembly, Albany



April 8-10
NYS Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislators annual conference

May 5-6
In-district Committee of 100 meetings

May 7
Professional Issues Forum on Health Care virtual conference



May 9-11
SRP Lobby Day

May 12
Health Care Lobby Day

Please note, some or all of these events may be conducted as virtual meetings in compliance with COVID-19 and social-distancing guidance.

ON THE COVER

Student teacher Camryn Foley, under the guidance of Schenectady Federation of Teachers member Lori Lebel, assists a student.

Photo by El-Wise Noisette

Higher ed unions call for increased investment

By Ned Hoskin
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

The negotiations over state aid to higher education started off this year on a hopeful note as the executive budget proposal would invest more in SUNY, CUNY and the community colleges than anyone has seen in years.

Even so, leaders of NYSUT higher education affiliates are telling lawmakers that, due to a decade of fiscal neglect prior to Gov. Hochul's administration, they need to increase funding to colleges and universities in the 2022-23 state budget.

"We are thankful for many of the

initiatives contained in this year's executive budget proposal, but more is needed to reverse the impact caused by years of underfunding," said Andy Sako, president of the Faculty Federation of Erie Community College. "We will once again be looking to our friends in the Legislature ... as we struggle to emerge from the pandemic."

"Campuses continue to face difficult decisions concerning the potential elimination of programs and declining student services due to inadequate resources," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

"Our SUNY and CUNY systems have long provided a pathway to

the middle class for so many New Yorkers," he said, "and they must have access to the funding necessary to offer the high-quality programs and services students rely on to prepare for their careers."

United University Professions, representing academic and professional faculty at SUNY campuses, and the Professional Staff Congress, representing faculty and professional staff at CUNY, each seek more than \$250 million in additional funding for their campuses.

"We thank the governor for addressing longstanding issues like closing the TAP Gap and investing in the Excelsior Scholarship,"

said UUP President Frederick E. Kowal, but more is needed for campuses and to support the SUNY teaching hospitals.

PSC seeks resources to fund year one of the New Deal for CUNY legislation, which could restore CUNY as a tuition-free institution for undergraduates.

PSC President James Davis called on the governor and lawmakers "to reaffirm the values of equity, opportunity and access to quality higher education."

You can find NYSUT's budget testimony on higher education at nysut.org/news.



This is no time to cut health care resources

By Ned Hoskin
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NYSUT and its Health Care Professionals Council were pleased to see Gov. Hochul's commitment to grow the state's health care workforce by 20 percent over the next five years. The union is urging lawmakers to support the objective.

"It is a very ambitious goal," said NYSUT Second Vice President Ron Gross, who leads the union's health care contingent, "one that requires dedication and outreach to those health care professionals and facilities for whom this goal is designed.

"We must do everything possible



to incentivize existing nurses to remain in the profession while also taking steps to attract the next generation of caregivers."

The union also seeks to restore the mission funding, or subsidy, for the

three SUNY hospitals. Properly funding these vital teaching institutions that were front and center in the war against COVID-19 will help ensure New York is ready for the next health crisis. It should be restored to the 2017-18 level of \$88 million.

NYSUT supports the governor's proposal to increase funding under the Medicaid Global Cap, as well as various health care reforms in the executive budget proposal. But the group vowed to condemn any cuts that would adversely affect the health care workforce or facilities.

You can find NYSUT's legislative budget testimony on health and Medicaid at nysut.org/news.

'Hello senator, nice to (virtually) see you'

The pandemic cannot stop the union's political action army from marching through the annual legislative marathon budget negotiations, as well as the rest of the session.

The 2022-23 state budget is due by April 1, the day the fiscal year begins, although there is no guarantee it will be completed by then.

NYSUT's legislative staff and hundreds of volunteer political activists are going through the rites and rituals required to connect with lawmakers and address the issues reflected in our union values.

However, they will not be meeting with lawmakers in person. All this activity will be virtual. Here are some advocacy highlights for the next few months:

- **BOCES lobby week begins Feb. 28 and runs through March 4.**
- **The virtual Committee of 100 will run from March 7-18.**
- **In-district Committee of 100, May 5-6 (in district offices).**
- **The Professional Issues Forum on Health Care, May 7.**
- **SRP Lobby Day, May 9-11.**
- **Health Care Lobby Day, May 12.**

GOTV! to win school board elections, pass budgets May 17

Our public schools belong to all of us.

They belong to the students, the hard-working families who support them, and the educators and staff who ensure that children from every background have the opportunity to lead fulfilling lives.

New Yorkers need strong public schools to unite us and be the center of our communities. Their votes voice those values in the annual ritual of district budget approval.

Fortunately, a recent poll from the National School Boards Association shows that parents and educators are united in this cause. It said 59 percent of voters think funding for public

schools should be increased, and 86 percent of those voters would support an increase in funding even if it meant they would pay more in taxes.

It is imperative that union members and communities stand up, speak out and VOTE MAY 17 to show that they support the best interests of our students.

Last spring, the distortion and disinformation that pollutes the political landscape flowed into school board elections and budget votes in a dangerous new way. In districts from many corners of the state, it overturned the fragile balance of community interest and common sense that levels debates over priorities and

public education.

NYSUT members need to get involved with their local unions to endorse and elect school board members who support public education, teachers and school staff.

The statewide school budget votes and board elections — for schools not in the Big 5 — are May 17, but the budget preparation process has already begun.

Contact your union representative to find out how you can help. NYSUT even has a pipeline project that can help candidates run for board seats — and win!





Michael Emmi — A unionist's unionist



If you've traveled to the Great New York State Fair in Syracuse, there's a good chance you've run into Michael Emmi. For more than 20 years, Emmi has been

NYSUT's state fair liaison, recruiting and organizing Onondaga County members to staff the union's booth, keep it stocked with necessary supplies and greet fair visitors throughout the event's 13-day run. It's a big job, and to recognize him for those and other efforts, members of the Onondaga County Teachers Association, an umbrella group for educators countywide, honored him through the NYSUT Legacy Fund.

Emmi has led the Solvay TA for the past 25 years and, along with his fair duties, is a former Onondaga County TA president and a longtime NYSUT Representative Assembly delegate, where he chairs the sergeants and tellers group for the event.

He's also active in state and national labor events including NYSUT's Committee of 100, NEA and AFT conventions, and he serves as project leader for an AFT Innovation Fund grant at his district. "Mike goes above and beyond and it's fitting that someone who has given so much of themselves should receive this honor," said Beth Chetney, Baldwinsville TA president. "Thank you Mike for showing us what true union leadership looks like!"

To honor an in-service or retiree activist from your area, visit nysut.org/legacyfund.

[FIGHTING FOR YOU]

Agreement addresses chronic pay, staffing issues at Long Island hospital



By Liza Frenette
liza.frenette@nysut.org

Members of the Brookhaven Memorial Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals union have been overworked and understaffed for two years fighting COVID-19. That fight continues, but the dedicated unionists do have one victory to celebrate. Members overwhelmingly ratified a three-year contract that will boost pay and address staffing problems.

The agreement includes 3 percent salary raises each year and a special recognition bonus for members who have remained working at the hospital throughout the pandemic.

The contract agreement for professional staff at Long Island Community Hospital — which changed its name from Brookhaven Memorial four years ago — includes monetary increases in longevity, call pay and tuition reimbursement. It provides ongoing opportunities for the union to address staffing issues and a commitment to comply with the New

York state Safe Staffing Law, enacted last June after a years-long struggle.

Brookhaven Memorial FNHP President Cynthia Lacey said she has received texts from members who are working extended shifts, and others who raised concerns over the number of patients they are responsible for.

"Nurses who are out due to COVID has been a big factor," Lacey said, adding that because of the shortage caused by symptomatic nurses out of work, those who test positive but have no symptoms are still required to go to work.

Respiratory therapists and lab workers are also working mandatory overtime, and nurse practitioners and physician assistants "have been pushed to the limit," Lacey said.

NYSUT labor relations specialist Mike Krauthamer said union leaders are constantly advocating with hospital administration over staffing issues and health and safety protocol.

"Recently, many members have themselves tested positive resulting in challenging staffing issues as well as obviously being concerned over

the health of their union colleagues," he said. "It is hard to describe the impact that the pandemic has had on these members. Their lives have been turned upside down."

The hospital has suffered significant staffing issues for years, even prior to COVID-19, but it has been greatly magnified during the pandemic. The lack of staff has resulted in members consistently working extra shifts, often in areas of the hospital they are not typically assigned, Krauthamer said. Members also have to deal with mandated overtime during periods that New York state is under a state of emergency.

The 538-member unit predominantly comprises nurses working in all capacities, but also includes respiratory therapists, homecare and hospice workers, social workers, pharmacy workers, nurse practitioners, lab technologists, care managers and others.

The parties also agreed to participate in labor/management training sessions conducted by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

Contract gains much more than money

By Sylvia Saunders

sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Greece TA's Brian Ebertz

PROVIDED

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

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

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

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

“Sports and extracurriculars are important to our community and our

kids,” Ebertz said.

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

Negotiations haven’t always been so favorable for the 1,100-member Greece TA. In the last two decades, negotiations have been so protracted that the two sides have reached only three contract agreements since



2001. With that in mind, the new pact includes a guaranteed 1.5 percent salary increase that kicks in if the current contract expires.

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

NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION MEETING • NYSUT BOARD OF DIRECTORS VACANCY ELECTION

ELECTION DISTRICT 52

A vacancy exists on the NYSUT Board of Directors for Election District 52. The vacancy was created by the passing of Director Rosemary Catanzariti.

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.”

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 2022 Representative Assembly representing the members of ED 52 will be eligible to vote in this Special Election.

The delegates and alternates of ED 52 are hereby notified that this vacancy will be filled by a Special Election Meeting to be held as follows:

DATE: April 2, 2022
TIME: 8:30 a.m.
PLACE: Albany Capital Center
 55 Eagle St., Albany, NY 12207

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 2020 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) members from ED 52.

The completed and signed Nominating Petition must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on March 22, 2022. Any member in good standing from within ED 52 may be a candidate. Nominating Petitions are available by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at elections@nysut.org or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at 800-342-9810.

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 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 2, 2022, 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 Retiree Council 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 April 2, 2022, Special Election Meeting and continue to serve as the Successor Director through the conclusion of the 2023 Representative Assembly.

All elected delegates or their alternates reported for the 2022 NYSUT RA from ED 52 are requested to be present for this election meeting.

Women risked a lot for workers' rights

Students are often intrigued by the mystery of secret agents. Rosina Tucker was one, passing messages about labor actions in the formation of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first African American trade union. Since men who supported the union were punished by their employer, it was women like Tucker who made clandestine home visits and carried literature to workers or their wives. Tucker formed the Women's Economic Council, boycotting businesses that refused to hire Black employees and formed unions to support women working in several different industries.

The AFT's free resource Share My Lesson has made available lesson plans about five female labor leaders — including Tucker — who provide a treasure trove of discovery for Women's History Month:

- Grace Abbott fought for the rights and livelihood of immigrants, along with the rights of children. Abbott is also heralded for her work drafting the 1935 Social Security Act.
- High school students will find a hero their own age in Emma Tenayuca, who was first arrested at age 16. Tenayuca went on to lead the massive pecan-shellers strike in San Antonio, encompassing more than 12,000 workers.
- Dolores Huerta has spent her life fighting for the rights of exploited, farm workers. Huerta co-founded the United Farm Workers and in 2012 earned the Presidential Medal of Freedom.
- Rose Schneiderman was a founding member of the American Civil Liberties Union. She started working in sixth grade after her father died, and experienced first-hand the horrible conditions of garment workers. She chartered the first women's local of the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers Union.

For more info on the women above, visit nysut.cc/fivelaborwomen.

Empowerment clubs, new ELT course mark Women's History Month

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

Lena Schmalacker might be 12 years old, but if she had her way, she'd already be a NYSUT Women's Committee member. "She wanted to attend the November meeting with me, but I said 'no, it's for grown ups,'" said mom Rahana Schmalacker, Central Islip Teachers Association, a steering committee member. "She sees me doing this work and wants to get kids her age involved."

Schmalacker kept Lena in the loop throughout the meeting, particularly during a presentation about student empowerment clubs by Andrea McCue, Haldane Faculty Association; Rebekah Stoll, Valley Central TA; and Tenika Wilcox, Troy TA. "While I was listening to their presentation, I texted her about starting an empowerment club in our town," said Schmalacker. Empowerment groups offer students space to explore issues like fairness, safety, equity, access and representation.

Thanks to the mother-daughter team, "Learn and Lead" will host its first meeting at the Patchogue-Medford Carnegie Library for Young Adults in March, which is Women's History Month. They plan to host monthly meetings for interested community students in grades 6 - 12. The Schmalackers envision club meetings that teach about history-making women, engage in community service projects and host community guest speakers like elected officials, female trade

professionals, business leaders and other community members willing to serve as mentors.

Empowering students like Lena is one of the goals of the NYSUT Women's Committee, explained committee co-chairs Aisha Cook, New Rochelle FUSE, and Leslie Rose, Hewlett Woodmere FA. "We want girls to grow into confident and powerful women, who are equal to the men around them ... nothing can stop us if we do this work together," said Cook.

office oversees the NYSUT Women's Committee, encouraged attendees to use their collective strength to stand together in their communities, build coalitions and make their voices heard.

"The loss of jobs, wages and childcare, due to the pandemic, has set women back financially for decades, and by association women's equity and equality," she said, noting that women must assume positions of prominence equal to men to "change the power paradigm" and make real change.

Creating more gender inclusive classrooms is key, said DiBrango, who discussed "Examining Curriculum Through an Equity Lens: Focus on Gender," a new, two-hour NYSUT Education & Learning Trust seminar slated to launch March 29.

The course will explore gender equity in the classroom and provide strategies for integrating diversity, equity and inclusion concepts into lessons.

DiBrango noted that educators' actions, words and behaviors can have a big impact on student success. "Starting an empowerment club, or enrolling in the new seminar are both great ways to celebrate Women's History Month this March," she said.

For seminar information, visit elt.nysut.org. To learn more about the NYSUT Women's Committee, and get resources to celebrate Women's History Month including the 2022 Women's History Month poster, visit nysut.org/women.

The site includes information on starting a women's empowerment club at your school or in your community.



Central Islip TA member Rahana Schmalacker, and her daughter Lena started a community-based empowerment club called "Learn and Lead."

A central committee focus is building relationships and empowering union women through local-level women's committees. "It's important to have a network in place when issues arise, so we know that we're never alone," said Rose.

Jolene DiBrango, NYSUT executive vice president, whose

It's golden! Union celebrates 50 years

The 2022 NYSUT Representative Assembly, April 1-2 in Albany, will mark the 50th anniversary of the formation of New York State United Teachers. The statewide union was formed March 30, 1972, with the merger of two rival statewide teacher unions — the New York State Teachers Association and United Teachers of New York.

Initially named the New York Congress of Teachers, delegates at the union's first RA, held in Montreal in 1973, adopted NYSUT as the union's official name.

Over the past half century, our membership and visibility have steadily soared. During this time, NYSUT members have advocated tirelessly to make sure that the work we do is properly valued, appreciated and protected.

"Now, we focus every day on growing, guarding and solidifying this movement for the benefit of our professions, our people and our communities," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

After the pandemic forced NYSUT to conduct virtual RAs the past two years, restoring the annual convention to an in-person event is an important priority for 2022, with appropriate precautions in place.

The RA is NYSUT's highest policy-making body. Convention delegates, elected by their local unions, will debate nearly 30 resolutions to set the union's course on legislation, health care, pre-K through post-grad education, organizing and retirement. They will also consider amendments to the NYSUT Constitution and Bylaws.

View the full document at nysut.org/about/constitution-and-bylaws.

The RA will pay tribute to the winners of the union's awards and recognitions for members' work on the job and their service to the community.

For more information on the RA and the Local and Retiree Council Presidents Conference, visit nysut.org/ra.

REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY 2022
50th Anniversary
ALBANY



PROPOSED BYLAWS AMENDMENT

SUBMITTED BY THE NYSUT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NOTE: Brackets [] indicate deletions. Underscores ____ indicate additions.

Applicable Bylaws Section numbers: As Listed Below.

Line #

B. Membership (Section 1)

86 which [he/she is] they are eligible.

C. Representative Assembly (Section 3[a])

242 or represented on [her/his] their own behalf

E. Referenda (Sections 3[h], 4, 7)

262 weeks of its receipt by [him/her] them.

283 President, or [her/his] their representative,

297 the count. [He/she] The President shall also publish the

J. Special Rules of Order for Representative Assembly (Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 5[c])

334 be prepared by the President or [her/his] their

336 Each delegate voting shall enter on [her/his] their

337 ballot how [she/he is] they are voting and sign the

341 from the delegates of [her/his] their local or retiree

349 by the Chair of the Convention or [her/his] their

358 [her/his] their local or retiree council, the roll

361 shall rise as [her/his] their name is called, and

362 announce [her/his] their vote.

PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

SUBMITTED BY THE NYSUT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NOTE: Brackets [] indicate deletions. Underscores ____

indicate additions. Applicable Constitution Article and

Section numbers: As Listed Below.

Line #

Article VII — Officers (Sections 3[a], 3[h], 3[k], 4)

226 NYSUT. It shall be [her/his] their duty to

253 who will serve at [her/his] their pleasure,

254 manage [her/his] their office, speak for and

255 represent [her/him] them, and who, if at time of

276 fulfill such other duties as [her/his] their office

284 President in [her/his] their absence and to perform

Article VIII — Representative Assembly (Section 1[c])

327 leaves the Assembly, [her/his] their place in

Article IX — Board of Directors (Sections 1[f-i], 1[f-ii])

564 equivalent membership for [her/his] their

570 [his/her] their election district.

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NYSUT salutes Black History Month

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

NYSUT's Black History Month celebration kicked off in February with a rousing drum circle by The Washington Park Rumberos and performances of the "Star Spangled Banner," sung by Savannah Gordon, and the Black national anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," performed by United Federation of Teachers member Sonja Hill. The virtual event highlighted the unique struggles underrepresented groups face with regard to mental health and wellness in our nation.

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

Lisa Good, founder and director

of Urban Grief, discussed the lasting impact of trauma on the overall health and well-being of Black citizens — both from the pandemic and from historic hardships such as unfair policing, Jim Crow laws and slavery. Experiences like these, coming without break, can overwhelm an individual's normal ability to cope, she explained.

"We have to comfort one another and collaborate with each other as we work toward a healthier community," said Good. "We must be bold and lift up conversations about health equity and learn how to better navigate our health systems."

Leven "Chuck" Wilson, assistant director of health issues for the American Federation of Teachers, encouraged participants to foster well-being within themselves, and others in their community, by promoting good communication. "Having courageous conversations is key to achieving wellness," he said. "A lifetime of disparity and unfair treatment has created an inability to talk, ask for help or seek support. Our wellness is our responsibility."



Student dancers from the Farmingdale High School REAL Harmony Club perform. Farmingdale Federation of Teachers members Esther Hernandez-Kramer, a global studies teacher, and social worker Josseline Morales serve as club advisors.

Members of the Federation of Nurses/UFT and NYSUT's Health Care Professionals Council were recognized for their dedicated work throughout the pandemic. Anne Goldman, FON/UFT special representative, accepted on behalf of members, noting that "we're proud of the work we do, and blessed to be part of a powerful union."

Accepting on behalf of NYSUT's HCPC, Karen Griffin, BOCES United Professionals, thanked nurses and health aides "for your compassion and resilience. Be encouraged;

your ongoing work has not gone unnoticed."

Other event highlights included performances by HerTemple Monologues, singer Tamara Horn and poet LeDerick Horne. Rev. Marc E. Thompson, pastor of the New Day Christian Empowerment Center in Schenectady, delivered an opening invocation and closing benediction.

To learn more about NYSUT's Many Threads One Fabric initiative exploring racial justice, diversity and equity issues, visit nysut.org/manythreads.



EL-WISE NOISETTE

NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham traveled to Tri-Valley Secondary School in Sullivan County in late January to meet with Matt Haynes' Civics and Social Justice students and discuss the work of the NYSUT Social Justice Committee. Haynes, a NYSUT Board member and vice president of the Tri-Valley Teachers Association, presented Abraham with a "Partners in Education" certificate in recognition of his advocacy on behalf of Tri-Valley members and NYSUT members statewide.

I Talk Like a River

By Jordan Scott

Illustrated by

Sydney Smith

Suitable for:

Grades K-8

Recommended

by: Jennifer Groff, retired school librarian, Lincoln Middle School, Syracuse Teachers Association

Why I chose it: In this story, readers are drawn into the struggle of the young narrator to express himself verbally. The simple poetic language and beautiful illustrations capture the feelings that many students know well, and explain them to those who might not have had to cope with difficulty in speaking.

What I like best: Although the narrator is a young boy, the voice and illustrations are still suited for use with middle schoolers. An author's note at the end explains his own experience with stuttering. This story allows for a spectrum of students to relate to the characters. There's also a strong, understanding father figure that is appealing.

How teachers can use this book: Elementary teachers can include it in regular story time or classroom libraries as part of offering a diverse collection of books that acknowledge all children. Teachers could pull writing prompts from the story. Teachers of English language learners and special education may want to use it for more direct instruction. Speech language pathologists will also want to be aware of this book to have on hand for students.

About the author: Jordan Scott is an award-winning Canadian poet. This is his first book for children.

About the illustrator: Sydney Smith has illustrated several award-winning books. Visit sydneydraws.ca.

"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 liza.frenette@nysut.org.



51 NY teachers earn profession's highest credential

By Sylvia Saunders

sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

Becoming a National Board Certified Teacher is always a big honor. But earning the profession's highest credential during a pandemic? That's even more impressive.

NYSUT congratulated the 51 teachers from across the state who earned National Board Certification in December 2021. They will be honored April 5 in an online event co-hosted by NYSUT and the New York State Education Department.

"Achieving National Board Certification in the midst of a pandemic is a testament to the dedication these teachers have to their students and their profession," NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said. "It's a tremendous accomplishment."

New York is now home to 2,224 National Board Certified Teachers, with nearly 700 more educators still in the process, according to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Candidates typically spend 200-400 hours completing the extensive application including a portfolio, student work samples, videos and an analysis of their teaching and student learning.

"We began our journey three years ago before the pandemic hit," said Lisa Cannata, a speech pathologist who worked with a cohort of Half Hollow Hills teachers led by Elissa Reichstein. "If you told me I'd be doing this while teaching my kids (with severe disabilities) on Zoom and documenting their growth in a video, I never would have believed you!"

Cannata said working with a group was incredibly helpful, with



CHIP PARKER

With help from union-backed programs, Half Hollow Hills TA members Lisa Cannata, Caroline Greene, Camellia Amadio and Lauren Ruiz worked together to earn National Board Certification.

colleagues reading each other's papers, offering technology tips and much more. "We met Saturdays and during shared free periods," Cannata said. "Sometimes it's moral support, sometimes it's specific to our discipline. Other times, it is just reviewing the teaching standards and discussing with our colleagues, how their teaching works within this framework."

Cannata and three other teachers who were the first in the cohort to achieve will continue working with colleagues who are still working on their applications. "While doing this during a pandemic was certainly challenging, it really helped me grow collaboratively, technologically and creatively," Cannata said. "Now I want to give back and help others on their journey."

Cannata said she is fortunate that her district is one of hundreds in the state with contracts offering a salary step or stipend for NBCTs. She also is grateful for the state's Albert Shanker Grant, a union-backed initiative that covers the costs for National Board Certification.

NYSUT Executive Vice President

Jolene T. DiBrango said the union strongly supports national board candidates by offering awareness programs, support and advice through online discussion forums, writing retreats and professional learning through its Education & Learning Trust. The union also works with teacher centers to support candidates.

Achieving National Board Certification can also be used to satisfy the state's Continuing Teacher and Leader Education requirements, DiBrango noted. Through NYSUT's ELT and Empire State College, candidates can earn three graduate credits for each completed component for a total of 12 graduate credits. Many school districts provide compensation for graduate credits.

Want to know more? Teachers interested in pursuing National Board Certification can find resources online, including a support program, tips and a list of districts that offer incentives. Visit the national board page at nysut.org/nbpts or nbpts.org.

Congratulations!

NYS Class of 2021 National Board Certified Teachers

CHITTENANGO TA

Elizabeth Carpenter
Science/AYA

CORNWALL CENTRAL TA

Olga Chernyak
World Languages/EAYA

GRAND ISLAND TA

Mary Howard
Generalist/MC

HALF HOLLOW HILLS TA

Camellia Amadio
Exceptional Needs Specialist/ECYA

Lisa Cannata
Exceptional Needs Specialist/ECYA

Caroline Greene
Exceptional Needs Specialist/ECYA

Lauren Ruiz
Exceptional Needs Specialist/ECYA

HASTINGS TA

Steven Lopez
World Languages/EAYA

HUDSON FALLS TA

Sharon Farrel
English Language Arts/AYA

JAMESVILLE-DEWITT FA

David Bunyan
Social Studies-History/AYA

Andrew Cottet
Social Studies-History/AYA

LAFAYETTE TA

David Amidon
Science/EA

LONG BEACH CLASSROOM TA

Christine Graham
Social Studies-History/AYA

PLAINEDGE FT

Maura Czachor
Mathematics/EA

SCHENECTADY FT

Rebecca Benjamin
Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/
EMC

Donya Clute

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/
EMC

Jessica Kohout

Science/AYA

Ellen Lin

Science/AYA

Julie Neugebauer

Mathematics/EA

SEWANHAKA FT

Joan Molloy-Castles
Exceptional Needs Specialist/ECYA

Lorin Wirth-Eckl

Exceptional Needs Specialist/ECYA

SMITHTOWN TA

Jennifer Keller
Social Studies-History/AYA

SPRINGS TA

Ryan Scala
Generalist/MC

STILLWATER TA

Madison Ramnes
Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/
EMC

SYOSSET TA

Manoj Thadhani
Social Studies-History/AYA

SYRACUSE TA

Melicia Edwards
Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/
EMC

UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Michelle Asaro
Exceptional Needs Specialist/ECYA

Jihyun Bahng

Mathematics/AYA

Yvonne Banks

Generalist/EC

Katelyn Chinnis

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/
EMC

Ivelisse Cortes

Exceptional Needs Specialist/ECYA

Kiersten Franz

Mathematics/AYA

Diana Guerrin

Generalist/EC

Yesenia Moreno

English as a New Language/EMC

Mary Petit

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/
EMC

Vincent Pham

English as a New Language/EAYA

Sarah Przedborski

Generalist/EC

Cassandra Regan

Exceptional Needs Specialist/ECYA

Cynthia Serrano

Exceptional Needs Specialist/ECYA

Julia Shube

Mathematics/AYA

Jessica VanScoy

Social Studies-History/AYA

Susan Wierzbowski

Exceptional Needs Specialist/ECYA

UNITED LIVERPOOL FA

Valerie Manzo
Generalist/EC

WAPPINGERS CT

Laura Ineson
Science/EA

WEST GENESEE DISTRICT TA

Kelli Barbuto
Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/
EMC

YONKERS FT

Christine Heidelberger
Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/
EMC

UNAFFILIATED:

Molly Goodell
Science/EA

Grace Hwang
Generalist/EC

Chris Marshall
Exceptional Needs Specialist/ECYA

Kasey Rabideau
Social Studies-History/EA

Stephanie Schaefer
Mathematics/AYA

Key:

AYA: Adolescence and Young
Adulthood

EA: Early Adolescence

EAYA: Early Adolescence through
Young Adulthood

EC: Early Childhood

ECYA: Early Childhood through Young
Adulthood

EMC: Early and Middle Childhood

MC: Middle Childhood



White Plains TA member Irene Spiconardi, a bilingual eighth-grade math teacher, helps keep students safe — and in school.

PHOTOS: AFT

'We want our kids healthy, and we want them in classrooms'

By Ned Hoskin
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

We've all heard the noise.

A small but vocal minority of citizens, local officials, even board members and some parents blame educators — who are on the front lines of the pandemic, striving to keep students, their families and

communities safe — for the disruption of the school year.

In Saratoga Springs, a teacher was attacked viciously on social media for trying to help a distraught youngster who showed up at school without a mask. The same week, another educator near Albany was directly threatened by a parent whose high-schooler was sent home for refusing to wear a mask.

Reports of similar confrontations have been reported all over the state.

These are the latest examples of NYSUT members enduring unfair challenges to their professionalism and competence while doing all they can to help kids recover and thrive.

"Our union stands with them," said Andy Pallotta, NYSUT president. "While there are small, vocal elements who unfairly blame teachers,

the larger community has shown its understanding and appreciation."

While educators feel the heat in the crucible of understaffed buildings, the majority of parents say neighborhood public schools are crucial to help their children get through this ordeal.

According to a recent survey by the American Federation of Teachers, a supermajority of parents give

their schools and teachers top marks for their Herculean efforts to respond to the challenges of COVID-19.

Overall, 72 percent of parents say their schools provide excellent or good-quality education, and 78 percent endorse the quality and performance of their teachers.

In addition, teachers unions are seen by parents as a more positive force in education today than prior to the pandemic, mirroring public polling that shows record-high support for the labor movement as a whole. Visit nysut.cc/aftsurvey.

Still, this unprecedented challenge to public education has completely stressed the system and society in general. But educators are not the problem. They are the solution.

"This false narrative that teachers want schools closed is just that: fiction," said Kara McCormick-Lyons, president of the White Plains Teachers Association in Westchester. "We want our kids healthy, and we want them in our classrooms."

Joseph Ricca, White Plains superintendent, agreed. "Unions, teachers, administrators are not keeping children out of school," he said. "The virus is."

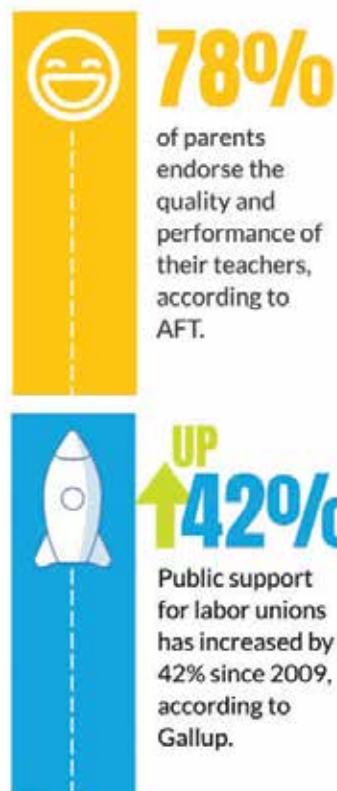
It's difficult, in large part, because the students and staff who get sick — especially during the explosive omicron variant surge — are not in class. Flexibility and cooperation are keys to getting through each day.

"Teachers are doing everything they can to not only make up for the kids who are unable to attend regularly, but to cover for each other," said Juliet Benaquisto, president of the Schenectady Federation of Teachers.

When teachers are absent, after testing positive or to care for their own children who are quarantined, those who are present fill up their day covering colleagues' classes, as well as their own.

The numbers crunch is a constant challenge. Schools need more teachers, all kinds of School-Related Professionals, health care professionals and counselors.

AFT President Randi Weingarten recently visited the White Plains and Schenectady districts, both of which have been open all year. She was uplifted by the progress she witnessed.



"From watching pre-K kiddos learning to use scissors, to talking with high-schoolers discussing gender pay gaps, I witnessed educators helping kids succeed while keeping themselves and their kids safe," she said. "Educators are doing amazing work in horrible circumstances.

"This polling shows the virus is our enemy, not each other," Weingarten said. Parents say,

"teachers are heroes for their efforts."

Even so, recent data from the National Education Association, NYSUT's other national affiliate, shows staffing storm clouds gathering quickly on the horizon.

Alarming, more than half of the responding educators, 55 percent, said they plan to leave education sooner than planned because of the pandemic. Find it at <https://nysut.cc/neasurvey>.

NYSUT's Future Forward initiative (futureforwardny.org) prescribes solutions to many of the current problems wrapped in a vision for a better future for public education.

FF outlines how to support schools as the centers of our communities; to support students' social-emotional needs; to fight for racial justice, which includes the statewide union's efforts to diversify the teacher workforce through its Take a Look at Teaching initiative; to de-emphasize high-stakes testing; and to adopt best practices for instruction and technology.

"NYSUT is focused on identifying solutions to our challenges that will strengthen the core of our communities — our public schools," Pallotta said.

NYSUT awards more 'Grow Your Own' grants to stem teacher shortage

By Sylvia Saunders
sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

Sometimes all it takes is a tap on the shoulder from a trusted teacher, an after-school tutoring program — or an inspiring college visit to plant a seed for a future educator.

“There are so many ways for us to nurture aspiring teachers, and often the best place to start is right in our own communities,” said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango. “It’s about eliminating barriers and providing support all along the way.”

To plant more seeds, NYSUT has awarded a second round of “Grow Your Own” grants to more than a dozen local unions planning a variety of activities to encourage more people to consider a career in education.

The \$4,000-\$5,000 GYO grants will go to: East Syracuse-Minoa United Teachers, Farmingdale Federation of Teachers, Lansingburgh Teachers Association, Lewiston-Porter UT, Long Beach Classroom TA, Newark TA, Niagara-Wheatfield TA, Patchogue-Medford Congress of Teachers, Port Jefferson Station TA, Rockville Centre TA, Saranac TA, Starpoint TA and Windsor TA.

The grants are an outgrowth of NYSUT’s Take a Look at Teaching initiative, which began four years



PROVIDED
University at Albany professor Tammy Ellis-Robinson, second from left, welcomes Capital Region high school students and K-12 professionals, participants in the new Equity in Education Explorations council. The group is planning a summit in May. NYSUT’s Take a Look at Teaching initiative is funding dozens of local “Grow Your Own” projects to encourage students to consider teaching in their own communities.

ago to address the teacher shortage and improve diversity in the educator workforce. The union-led initiative is funded through a three-year, \$675,000 grant from the National Education Association.

In a conference call with local union leaders, DiBrango noted the latest round of applications focus on first-generation college-bound high school students; rural school initiatives; engaging families and paraprofessionals; and attracting more students of color into education careers. Grants will be used for TALAT clubs, after-school programs, internships, expansion of career and technical programs, mentoring experiences, guest speakers and college campus visits.

Research has shown that GYO

programs can be a highly effective way to boost recruitment and retention. A study of GYO programs found that not only do they help teaching candidates become certified and get jobs, participants are more likely to stay in the profession in the long run.

“GYO participants are connected and committed to their communities and are more likely to stay,” DiBrango said. “They are also strong role models for future generations.”

A study by the Pathways to Teaching Career initiative found that retention rates tend to be higher for GYO participants. Of the teachers who participated in GYO programs, 81 percent were still teaching three years later, compared to 71 percent of beginning teachers overall. And for School-Related Professionals

who went through the program, the three-year retention rate was 88 percent.

NYSUT’s website [takealookatteaching.org](https://www.nysut.org/takealookatteaching) offers a variety of resources for GYO efforts, including how to start a Take a Look at Teaching Club and a model course of study with a menu of activities. A TALAT Google classroom is in the works to provide a collaborative space to share engagement, exploration and immersion ideas. The materials are free for anyone interested in encouraging more people to consider education careers.

Last fall, NYSUT awarded a first round of GYO grants to a dozen local unions: Brentwood Teacher Center, Greece TA, North Syracuse EA, Pittsford TA, Sag Harbor TA, Spencerport TA, Syracuse TA, Utica TA, West Irondequoit TA, Yonkers Federation of Teachers, United Federation of Teachers and Suffolk County Community College FA.

Projects funded through United University Professions include grants for University at Albany, Buffalo State, Empire State College, Binghamton University and SUNY Plattsburgh.

“Our grants are meant to get folks started, but more funding is needed to make these programs sustainable and truly successful,” DiBrango said.

Getting to know ... Anthony Andrews



Teaching assistant Anthony Andrews is secretary/treasurer of the Rochester Association of Paraprofessionals. He was interviewed by Angie Rivera, RAP president and SRP at-large director on the NYSUT Board.

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

As a teaching assistant in the classroom, my job was to assist in the educational and social development of the students. I assisted with the implementation of individualized education programs (IEPs) and monitored the students' progress. I supported students with emotional or behavioral concerns and assisted them in developing appropriate social skills. The thing I loved most about my job was the interaction with my students, learning from them,

helping them understand the content of their courses. I loved to see when they make the connection between what they are learning and their lives.

What was your path to union advocacy?

As a kid, I saw the passion that both my parents had toward union rights, as part of making a decision when fighting for and supporting their colleagues. I joined my union right away in 2000. I learned how to advocate for myself and my colleagues. I became a building rep, was elected to the Executive Board, served in various committees and recently became the full-time secretary/treasurer of my local.

How do you make a difference?

I make a difference when I build

positive relationships with the members, students and community. I focus on their needs and how I can support them.

I make a difference when I can be the voice for those who need a voice or representation on many levels. I make a difference when I see the smiles on people's faces or receive a thank you for my support.

What do you do for fun? Hobbies?

I enjoy my time with family and friends. I volunteer a lot at work, doing union business. I support the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk, the labor parade and rallies. I support all events and activities from my union. I love working with cars in my free time. My goal is to keep working with my union to make a difference in the members' lives.



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#notjustphysical: Teen dating abuse comes in many forms

By **Liza Frenette**
liza.frenette@nysut.org

As a school social worker, Christina Rufo has observed that adolescents are particularly vulnerable to dating abuse. What begins as put-downs, jealous reactions or controlling behavior can turn harmful and even dangerous.



PROVIDED

School social worker Christina Rufo, Solvay TA, makes sure teens in her Central New York district have access to the resources they need to stay informed and safe.

Calling attention to harmful relationships is a mission that many school social workers, counselors and psychologists continue to promote through education in a joint state and national campaign that began with February's Teen Dating Abuse Awareness Month.

Teens often do not yet have experience in healthy relationships, so they may not realize when things are off track until they are in deep. They are trying to strike out on their own as

young adults, and they can easily mistake jealousy for love. Jealousy has become a more threatening issue with the proliferation of social media.

"Kids who are prone to jealousy are monitoring platforms," said Rufo, a member of the Solvay Teachers Association. She explained that a boyfriend might see photos of his girlfriend on her social media and then ask, "Why were you wearing that outfit? Why is some other guy commenting on your post?"

"All the different platforms have created a breeding ground for increased anxiety and controlling behavior in people already prone to that," Rufo said.

Sexting is also alarming behavior and can be used for control. In some dating situations, teens can be victims of sexual violence from coercion or forced touching to sexual trafficking.

Unhealthy treatment can begin with put-downs, which are often mislabeled as "joking."

Teens often think some behaviors, like teasing and name-calling, are a "normal" part of a relationship. But these behaviors can become abusive and develop into serious forms of violence, reports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Hair pulling, punching, slapping and pinching are physical forms of abuse. Guilt and shame are psychological abuse. Stalking is another form of abuse.

Rufo has established resources to deal with dating violence on her Central New York district's website under social, emotional and mental health. Resources include links to local residential and advocacy centers, [sites.google](https://www.google.com).

[com/solvayschools.org/selmh/student-resources](https://www.com/solvayschools.org/selmh/student-resources).

The New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence is spreading awareness about dating abuse and providing resources to educate and help teens. The OPDV site includes access to support with a 24/7 phone number or online chat available.

"It's difficult for teens to talk to parents. They feel embarrassed," Rufo said. "They are afraid of the repercussions from parents, or fearful of what their peers will think." She said her district is working as a team to help enlighten students about dating abuse.

"As we talk more about social-emotional learning, it comes out. It's also in books that are being discussed," Rufo said.

Studying historical events, such as women's suffrage, can generate questions to students, including "How do you advocate for yourself?" Rufo explained.

The school psychologists, social workers and counselors have a vital role to play, which is one of the many reasons NYSUT is advocating to lawmakers for one of each of them in every building as part of its Future Forward initiative.

"In today's world, it's pretty significant to have resources available at the place where they're spending the most time," Rufo said.

Providing a safe space for teens to talk, and knowing the signs that can signal concern, are vital to help students. Teens who are homeless, who have disabilities, or who are LGBTQ+ are even more vulnerable to dating abuse, reports the state OPDV.

What does "dating abuse" look like?

Signs of potential dating abuse include:

- Decreased or lost attachments with family/loved ones
- Frequent arguing, fighting
- Unable to attend events without partner
- Isolating from prior friends/activities
- Significant age difference in the couple
- Becoming uncharacteristically emotional, anxious, weepy, edgy
- Frequent breaking up and getting back together
- Constant texting
- Using more makeup, or none at all

Boundaries can change



but they should always make you feel good about yourself and your relationship.

Resources:

The New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence includes access to advocates.

Call 800-942-6906

Text 844-997-2121

Chat at [opdv.ny.gov](https://www.opdv.ny.gov)

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Meet your NYSUT retiree consultants

Central and Western New York regions

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

NYSUT has a network of 11 retiree services consultants who serve as liaisons between retired members, retiree councils and NYSUT headquarters. In honor of the 30th anniversary of NYSUT retiree councils, we're highlighting each regional consultant so retiree members know who to contact for assistance. Meet the four consultants representing Central and Western New York: Anne Marie Voutsinas, Janet Goddard, Peter Randazzo and Louise Ortman.

DID YOU KNOW?

NYSUT Retiree Services consultants are resources for retired members, retiree councils and in-service locals on NYSUT retiree matters.

Janet Goddard, RC 1, 2, 3, 44
716-634-7132

Louise Ortman, RC 4, 46
716-664-7425

Peter Randazzo, RC 5, 6
585-454-5550

Anne Marie Voutsinas, RC 7, 8
315-431-4040

Ruth Shippee, RC 9, 10
518-783-7977

Mark Padgett, RC 11, 45
607-786-5742

Sheryl Baker Delano, RC 12, 13
845-339-4450

Ellen Pincus, RC 14, 15-16
914-592-4411

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

Joan Perrini, RC 20, 21, 22, 23
631-273-8822

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

Anne Marie Voutsinas represents Retiree Councils 7 and 8, encompassing the counties of Cayuga, Onondaga, Oswego, Oneida and Madison. A former Syracuse Teachers Association president, middle school math teacher and Syracuse Teacher Center director, Voutsinas retired in 2011 and took over as RC 7 and 8 consultant in 2014. A big focus of her work is keeping members connected. After surveying in-service presidents in the spring, "we found that connections are often lost when school emails shut down after retirement," said Voutsinas, noting that the lost addresses often lead to severed connections with the in-service local. "We try to maintain that connection with all NYSUT members when they retire."

Janet Goddard represents RC 1-3 and 44, encompassing the counties of Erie, Niagara, Orleans, Genesee and parts of Western Wyoming County. As a former member of the NYSUT Board of Directors, ED 2 director and Retiree Councils 1-3 Board trustee representing RC 2, Goddard is an experienced unionist; she's also one of NYSUT's newest consultants, assuming the post in January. "Union involvement has always been second nature to me," said Goddard, who retired in 2009 as a high school biology and chemistry teacher and served as the Cheektowaga Central TA president for 11 years. "My goal

is to continue to bring new retirees into the fold and support union initiatives that help active and retired members."

Peter Randazzo represents RC 5 and 6, encompassing the counties of Monroe, Eastern Wyoming, Livingston, Ontario, Wayne, Northern Seneca and Yates. He became a NYSUT retiree services consultant in 2000 after retiring as a high school biology teacher from the Spencerport School District in 1999. He is currently the longest tenured consultant. "I've always been involved in the union," said Randazzo, who headed the Spencerport TA for 18 years. After spending a few months "just relaxing" post retirement, he considered the RC position a logical next step in his union activism.

Louise Ortman represents RC 4 and 46, encompassing the counties of Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany, Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and a Western slice of Tioga. Ortman, a 2007 elementary music teacher retiree and 15-year Bloomfield Professional Education Association president, became a consultant in 2008. "When I started, one of my missions was to round up former NEA/NY retirees," said Ortman noting that many who retired in June of 2006, or earlier, before NEA/NY and NYSUT merged, don't realize they can join NYSUT retiree chapters at no cost. "There are huge pockets of former NEA locals throughout Western and Southwestern New York."

**JANET
GODDARD**



**PETER
RANDAZZO**



**ANNE MARIE
VOUTSINAS**



LOUISE ORTMAN



“Quotable”



Rebecca Meyer

Abbott Elementary needs an episode about the copier situation in public schools. The amount of anxiety, almost panic attacks, fights and gray hair that copy machines have caused --- phew! Broken copiers, no toner, no paper, having to be a repair person, and on and on. (@rmeyer4488)

Brookhaven Democrats

More Unions = More Income Equality. It's not a complicated formula. #UnionStrong (@Brookhaven_Dems)

Kara McCormick-Lyons

Thank you to all of our amazing counselors!!!! We are so grateful for all the ways you support students! @DrJosephRicca @nysut @AFTUnion @WPTApresidents National School Counseling Week - American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (@kmclyons)

NEA

When school staff reflect the incredible diversity of their students — and can better understand their experiences and identities — everyone benefits. #NSCW22 (@NEAToday)

IUPAT

Floor covering apprentice Edgar Diaz: “Before I joined our union, I never had weekends off or nights off for 20 years. I missed my kids soccer games, school functions, and never had days off with my wife before. Now finally, I’m able to do that. I love it.” (@GoIUPAT)



QUESTIONS FOR...

Deb Berger

Southern Adirondack Substitute Teachers Alliance

1. After teaching more than three decades at Gloversville Middle School, you retired and returned to the classroom as a substitute teacher. At 75, you still go in every day! Why do you do it?

When I retired I felt I needed a change and worked as a secretary in a realtor’s office. But I really felt like I was missing something in my new retired life ... I realized I had missed that connection to “my” kids, so I gave subbing a try. That was about 17 years ago. Amazing, right? I get up every day, looking forward to going to school. I enjoy what I am doing. It’s teaching without creating lesson plans and observations. Although I’m a certified English teacher, the special education department has “adopted” me. Who knew? When I work longer terms with the same students, I promise them in ninth grade that I will be there when they graduate ... I’ve gone to several graduations in June and the summer. Once a teacher, always a teacher.

2. Why do you think there is such a shortage of substitute teachers?

Some of our members are apprehensive about returning to the classroom environment due to COVID-19. We seem to have lost many of the retired, experienced teachers who used to substitute on a regular basis. I continued subbing over the last two years — I share the concerns that teachers and students

have with remote learning. Nothing replaces the importance of the teacher and students in the classroom.

3. What can districts do to recruit and retain subs?

Many subs have told me they will go to districts where they feel comfortable, appreciated and not overused. Pay is a factor: some districts that have been having a difficult time recruiting substitutes have raised daily rates by \$10 or \$20. Since many of the subs work because they need the income to live on, they are now going to districts that pay more.

4. With staff shortages, some states have resorted to bringing in the National Guard and state workers as substitute teachers. Our governor has proposed raising the cap on how much retired teachers can earn. Will that help?

Raising the cap would be a great incentive. I speak as a teacher who ended up having to pay back the NYSTRS because over a two-year period I earned too much. I would think bringing in the National Guard would become more of a disruption to the students. Seeing familiar faces (retired teachers) is always easier for the students. There is no age limit to subbing. You can sub a half day a week or every day each week. You work to your comfort level.

5. You’re the local president of NYSUT’s Southern Adirondack Substitute Teachers Alliance, with members in more than a dozen districts. Why should subs belong to the union?

The union acts to protect us, defend us if necessary, and negotiate for better pay and benefits. We offer good benefits and help when people need advice. Some say, “I never have a problem” or “I don’t need someone to help me.” Well, during the pandemic, I was getting emails on a daily basis from our members about how to qualify for unemployment insurance. Luckily, our small union has the support of NYSUT and their experts. There’s strength in numbers.



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Wendy Bernard | Nov. 17, 2021
Retiree Council 39

Rosemary Catanzariti
Feb. 6, 2022
Glen Cove Teachers Association

Richard Conley | Jan. 16, 2022
Hudson Falls Teachers
Association

Julie L. Dentinger
Dec. 10, 2021
Orchard Park Teachers
Association

Nicholas Farinacci | July 2, 2021
United Federation of Teachers

Barbara D. Gordon
April 15, 2021
Wappingers Congress of
Teachers

Elmer C. Henretta | Dec. 5, 2021
Rochester Teachers Association

Bernice Jagoda | June 14, 2021
United Federation of Teachers

Patricia King | Jan. 14, 2021
Wappingers Congress of
Teachers

John E. Mack | Dec. 29, 2021
United University Professions –
Buffalo State

Barbara Paronett | Dec. 25, 2021
Phoenix Central Schools
Teachers Association

David Schmidt | Jan. 3, 2022
Retiree Council 9

Frank Spinner | Nov. 29, 2021
Niagara Falls Teachers

Jeffrey Van Brink | April 22, 2021
East Meadow Teachers
Association

Eileen Zipes | March 15, 2021
Wappingers Congress of
Teachers

Obituary submissions must include decedent's full name, union affiliation, date of death, and contact info 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 julie.malec@nysut.org.

2022 Summary of Material Modifications

**NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary of
Material Modifications
And Notice to Participants**

(Plan No: 503; I.D. No.: 22-2480854)

Dated: March 2022

The following is a summary of important changes made to endorsed benefit programs since the publication of the New York State United Teachers Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description in March 2021 and the subsequent NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary of Material Modifications and Notice to Participants dated March 2021. Please retain this information until a new Summary Plan Description is issued to you.

Trustees News

Carolyn Kube was appointed as a new Trustee of the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust at the December 2021 NYSUT Board of Trustees meeting (replacing Thomas Tucker). The current list of Trustees of the Member Benefits Trust includes Chairperson J. Philippe Abraham, Secretary Roderick P. Sherman, Loretta Donlon, Matthew Hill, Ms. Kube, Thomas McMahon, Kevin Peterman and Angelina Rivera.

Legal Service Plan, Group Access Legal Service Plan & Group Prepaid Legal Service Plan

Participants who need assistance for new legal matters arising in the State of Florida should contact the National Legal Office of Feldman, Kramer & Monaco, P.C., rather than the Glantz Law firm.

Personal Property & Liability Insurance Plan

Farmers Property & Casualty Insurance Company completed its purchase of the Auto & Home book of business from MetLife in April 2021. The Farmers Insurance Choice platform offered by Farmers GroupSelect allows NYSUT members to choose from multiple highly rated insurance carriers, featuring competitive prices and savings for stand-alone or bundled auto and home policies.

Special group rates, coverage and discounts offered through this program are available in most states to those who qualify. Eligibility guidelines and financial arrangements remain the same.

NYSUT members who purchase auto, home or renter's policies from Farmers GroupSelect receive access to identity protection services through Farmers' service provider CyberScout at no additional cost.

The phone number for this program remains 866-697-8822 and mailing address remains P.O. Box 671, Warwick, RI 02887.

Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement of 5.5% of total premiums for this program.

Financial Arrangements

Financial arrangements between the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust and the providers of the following endorsed programs have changed:

The Group Vision Care Plan & Group Voluntary Vision Care Plan, which are provided and administered by Davis Vision, are self-insured by Member Benefits for groups with guaranteed rate contracts, meaning total premiums collected and claims paid are pooled annually. At the end of the plan year, any surplus funds revert to Member Benefits. For the last 10-year period, a surplus equaling 14.09% of paid premiums has resulted.

As of January 1, 2022, Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement of 27.5% of annual participation fees for the Legal Service Plan.

As of January 1, 2022, Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement of 13% of annual participation fees for the Group Access and Group Prepaid Legal Service Plans.

Sincerely,
**Board of Trustees
NYSUT Member Benefits Trust**

PRIVACY NOTICE

NYSUT Member Benefits, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110-2455, 800-626-8101, Plan No.: 503; EIN: 22-2480854

Notification of Availability of Privacy Notice

[As required by 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 160.520(c)(1)(ii)]

In the course of providing you with access to health benefits, Member Benefits has access to information about you, which may be consid-

ered protected health information (PHI) under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) regulations. As a participant of Member Benefits, you were previously provided, either through publication in the *NYSUT United* publication or USPS mail, with a Privacy Notice describing our privacy practices, legal duties and rights concerning your PHI. If you would like to receive another copy of our

Privacy Notice, you can download a copy from our website at memberbenefits.nysut.org, or you can contact Member Benefits' Privacy Official Betsy Porter at 800-626-8101 or by submitting to the above address a written request for a copy.

Sincerely,
**Board of Trustees,
NYSUT Member Benefits Trust**

IT'S WHAT WE DO

Iize Earner, Professional Staff Congress

Iize Earner remembers the awkwardness of growing up poor after her family moved to the United States from a refugee camp in France.

She found salvation at 5 years old, when her older brother took her on a roadside pony ride.



"That was it," she said. Earner bartered work for riding lessons, and even competed. Now, she is a volunteer who has created a summer literacy program for students ages 9–13 at a horse farm in Hudson.

"Having horses in my life meant a lot to me," said Earner, a newly retired CUNY Hunter College professor of social work and Professional Staff Congress member. "I felt a sense of power and control on top of a horse I didn't feel anywhere else."

Earner reads a chapter to students in the Reading and Riding program at Whispering Meadows; next, students read the same chapter to the horses, then journal, using the new vocabulary. They also help to clean stalls, groom the horses and lead them around the barn, all to build confidence, keep the students engaged and socialize the horses.

Earner formerly worked as a consultant at an Ulster County residential school. She brought students outside weekly to be with horses, noting the confines of a classroom can cause more acting out.

Here, "you really need to get quiet with yourself," said Eileen Cunningham, a volunteer with the Reading and Riding program and retired school librarian with the Spackenkill TA.

To learn more about Earner's work, visit nysut.org/itswhatwedo.

**On the job and in the community,
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Save up to 15% on Member Benefits-endorsed programs

Automating your finances can save you time and money. If you're still writing and mailing out checks for bills, consider the convenience and savings of using payroll or pension deduction when purchasing NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

With payroll or pension deduction, you will never have to write checks or remember important premium due dates for many of our endorsed programs.

The buying power of more than 600,000 NYSUT members, on its own, generates meaningful savings. However, members taking advantage of either payroll or pension deduction as a payment option may save even more — up to 15 percent. If you want to enjoy these additional discounts and eliminate service fees, join the more than 90,000 NYSUT members who currently utilize payroll or pension deduction to pay for Member Benefits programs.

Budgeting becomes easier

Using payroll or pension deduction can make budgeting more manageable since premiums are divided into smaller payments deducted from your paycheck or monthly pension benefit.

These payment options also help to minimize your environmental footprint since the printing and mailing of paper bills is eliminated. NYSUT members see these savings passed on to them through reduced premiums and/or the elimination of service fees for many endorsed programs.

Payroll or pension deduction is currently available for the following Member Benefits programs: Auto



Insurance; Catastrophe Major Medical Insurance (not available to new applicants); Dental & Vision Plans (pension deduction only for vision plan); Disability Insurance (payroll deduction only); Financial Counseling Program; Home, Renter's & Boat Insurance; Legal Service Plan; MetLife Long-Term Care Insurance (not available to new applicants); Personal Excess Liability Insurance; Purchasing Power (payroll deduction only); Term Life & Level Term Life Insurance; and WrapPlan® II Universal Life Insurance.

Are you eligible for payroll/pension deduction?

Almost 90 percent of NYSUT members have payroll or pension deduction already in place. If your local association has arranged for payroll deduction with its employer, you are eligible to use this payment option.

Pension deduction is available to retirees collecting a monthly pension benefit from the New York State Teachers' Retirement System, New York City Teachers' Retirement System, New York State Employees' Retirement System, or New York City Board of Education Retirement System. It is also an option for retirees receiving a monthly lifetime annuity from TIAA.

Important note: You must have

an active NYSUT membership as an in-service or retiree member to participate in payroll or pension deduction of NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

How to get started

1. Select either payroll or pension deduction at the time of application for any of our eligible programs.
2. Fill out the appropriate authorization form and return it with your application.
3. Please do NOT send any payment! Member Benefits will be notified of the change and advise your employer's business office or retirement system to begin your deductions.

If you already participate in any of the programs referenced above and are currently paying through direct bill, you can convert to payroll or pension deduction when your premium is up for renewal (if these payment options are available to you).

When you receive your premium renewal notice, mail it along with a signed payroll or pension deduction authorization form (included with your renewal notice) to the address indicated. If it is not included, contact Member Benefits to request the appropriate form.

You can learn more about payroll/pension deduction of Member Benefits-endorsed programs by visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org or calling 800-626-8101.

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

ERS membership basics

If you work for a public employer in New York state in a non-teaching position, you may be a member of the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System, or you may be eligible to join ERS.

ERS membership is mandatory for full-time, permanent 12-month positions. Membership is generally optional if you are: a full-time 10-month school employee, employed in a temporary position, or if your work schedule is less than what your employer considers full time. (Independent contractors and consultants are not eligible to join.)

When you join ERS, you are assigned to a tier, based on your date of membership. Your tier determines contribution requirements, benefit eligibility and the formulas used to calculate retirement benefits. Members who join on or after April 1, 2012, are in Tier 6, and most are in the Article 15 Retirement Plan. Find plan information at osc.state.ny.us/retirement/publications/1530.

Tier 6 members pay membership contributions based on their annual earnings — anywhere from 3 percent to 6 percent. Members can purchase service for prior public employment,

however the cost of the service credit purchased by Tier 6 members is based on 6 percent of their earnings. Questions about ERS membership eligibility? Visit contactNYSLRS.com.

ERS plans are defined-benefit plans, which means your pension will be a lifetime benefit. Benefits are based on a preset formula that takes into account your salary and years of service. Defined contribution plans, for example 401(k) plans, provide benefits which depend on the investment returns of the individual account. In these plans, the individual is responsible for the investment risk, and generally the benefit is not a lifetime benefit. Read more at nyretirementnews.com/defined-benefit-plan.

For most members, if you leave public employment with fewer than 10 years of service, you may withdraw your contributions or roll them over to another qualified retirement plan. However, this would terminate your ERS membership.

Retirement Online, web.osc.state.ny.us/retire/sign-in.php, provides real-time access to your retirement account. For more info about ERS membership, visit our Membership in a Nutshell page at osc.state.ny.us/retirement/publications/life-changes-membership-nutshell.



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@nysut.org.

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

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
trudi.davis@nysut.org

Patti Lennon • 518-496-2035, ext. 324
patti.lennon@nysut.org

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

Working in retirement, and naming beneficiaries



Q: I retired in 2018 and receive a monthly pension benefit. After doing some per diem substitute work for my previous employer, I was approached about filling in for a long-term leave. What are the financial implications for me if I take the leave replacement?

A: Generally, if you're under 65 years old, your post-retirement earnings from public employment in New York state are capped at \$35,000 per calendar year; there are no income limits for those over age 65. Other types of employment — for example private, out-of-state or federal government work — are not subject to the earnings cap.

However, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the earnings cap was temporarily suspended for retired public-sector workers who re-enter the workforce during the pandemic. Any pay earned from Sept. 27, 2021 through March 1, 2022, won't count toward the annual retiree earnings cap. Contact NYSTRS at 800-348-7298, ext. 6150 with questions.

Q: Is it possible to name one person as your pension benefit recipient, and a second person as your in-service death beneficiary?

A: Yes, it is. Your in-service death benefit is separate from your pension benefit. If you die before retiring, the New York State Teachers' Retirement System pays

both an in-service death benefit, and the balance of your retirement contributions, to your beneficiaries. Since the payments are separate, you can select different beneficiaries for each.

If you haven't already named a contingent beneficiary for your account, the new year is a good time to do so. Having a contingent beneficiary adds an extra level of protection if your primary beneficiary dies. If you don't have one, NYSTRS will pay any benefits directly to your estate.

Did you know?

The NYSTRS Board unanimously adopted a climate change action plan at its Dec. 28 meeting. The move ends further fund investment in 20 oil and gas and thermal coal reserve holdings.

NYSUT TRS consultants

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

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

Juliet Benaquisto • 518-807-7085
juliet.benaquisto@nysut.org

Beth Chetney • 315-431-4040
beth.chetney@nysut.org

Eric Iberger • 518-376-4333
eric.iberger@nysut.org



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NYSUT Women's History Month poster honors work of Malala Yousafzai

NYSUT celebrates Women's

History Month with a new poster honoring Malala Yousafzai, often referred to simply as Malala, a Pakistani activist for female education — particularly in her native land, which has sometimes banned girls

from attending school. Malala was shot in 2012 by a Taliban gunman on her way home from school, after speaking publicly about girls' right to learn.

In 2014, at age 17, she became the world's youngest Nobel Prize laureate and the second Pakistani to ever receive a Nobel Prize. In 2015, she was the subject of the Oscar-shortlisted documentary "He Named Me Malala." In 2013, 2014 and 2015, *Time* magazine featured her as one of the most influential people globally. Awarded honorary Canadian citizenship in 2017, she became the youngest person to address Canada's House of Commons.

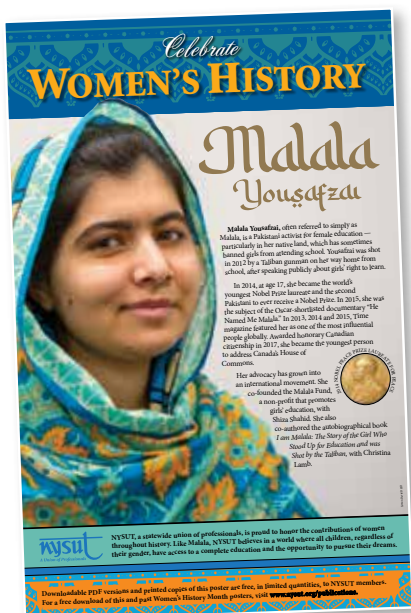
Her advocacy has grown into an international movement. She co-founded the Malala Fund, a non-profit organization that promotes girls' education, with Shiza Shahid. She also co-authored the autobiographical book *I Am Malala: The Story of the Girl Who Stood Up*

for Education and was Shot by the Taliban, with Christina Lamb.

NYSUT, a statewide union of professionals, is proud to honor the contributions of women throughout history. Like Malala, NYSUT believes in a world where all

children, regardless of their gender, have access to a complete education, and the opportunity to pursue their dreams.

Downloadable PDF versions and printed copies of this poster are free, in limited quantities, to NYSUT members. For a free download of this and past Women's History Month posters, visit nysut.org/publications.



Virtual student art exhibit to return

The NYSUT Subject Area Committee on the Arts is encouraging educators across the state to participate in its second annual virtual arts showcase. This year's theme is *Students of the Arts Imagine If...*



"This is a great way to highlight the importance of the arts on mental and physical health and recognize the value of the arts in education," said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango.

The showcase will premier June 5 and is open to all the arts — music, theater, dance, visual and media arts. Teachers may submit up to five student visual arts entries and up to five videos featuring student performances.

Student work in visual arts, theater, music and media arts must be submitted by April 26; dance submissions must be received by May 11.

NYSUT's 2021 showcase featured more than 100 students representing 30 schools across the state. Watch the NYSUT website for submission guidelines and more info. Contact Terry McSweeney at research@nysut.org.

Educator expense tax deduction renewed

Eligible educators can deduct up to \$250 of qualified expenses you paid in 2021 on your federal taxes.

If you and your spouse are filing jointly and both of you were eligible educators, the maximum deduction is \$500. However, neither spouse can deduct more than \$250 of their qualified expenses.

An eligible educator is a K-12 teacher, instructor, counselor, principal or aide who worked at least 900 hours in a school that provides elementary or secondary education as determined by state law.

Qualified expenses include ordinary and necessary expenses paid:

- Books, supplies, equipment (including computer equipment, software and services), and other materials used in the classroom.
- Professional development courses related to the curriculum you teach or to the students you teach.
- Personal protective equipment, disinfectant, and other supplies used for the prevention of the spread of coronavirus.

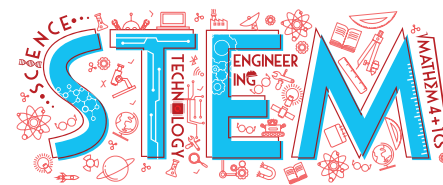
An ordinary expense is one that is common and accepted in your educational field. A necessary expense is one that is helpful and appropriate for your profession. An expense doesn't have to be required to be considered necessary.

For more info, consult your tax preparer and/or IRS Publication 17, *Your Federal Income Tax for Individuals*.

Questions? Contact Amy Ethier at 800-342-9810, Amy.Ethier@nysut.org.

Save the date: Summer STEM institute

The New York State STEM Education Collaborative, Inc. is hosting its summer institute July 24–26 at SUNY Alfred under the theme, *STEM 360 — Growing Opportunities in Changing Environments*.



Attendees can gain up to 17 CTLE professional learning hours. Online registration and housing open April 25.

The group is also seeking presentations and posters, PK–20, that show how to integrate two or more STEM disciplines, with an emphasis on elementary STEM. For more info, visit nysstemeducation.org.

NYSUT audit notice

NYSUT continues its practice of providing members with access to the union's certified audit for their review. The annual audit for the fiscal year ending Aug. 31, 2021, is available and can be found on the NYSUT Member Center at nysut.org/audit. Members may request a hard copy by contacting the NYSUT Accounting Department at 800-342-9810, or by sending an email to finance@nysut.org.

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