

nysut.org | January/February 2022

NYSUT UNITED

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS

*These times have raised
an important question:*

**How can we support
our public schools
as the center of
every community?**





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Cover design by Dana Fournier

COMING UP

Jan. 5

Governor's State of the State; 2022 state legislative session begins

Jan. 10-11

Board of Regents meets

Jan. 18

Governor's budget proposal due

Jan. 21-22

NYSUT Board of Directors meets

Feb. 7

Community Schools Lobby Day
Special Schools Lobby Day

Feb. 7-11

Higher Ed Lobby Week

Feb. 11-12

NYSUT Subject Area Committee meetings

Feb. 14-15

Board of Regents meets

Feb. 28-March 4

BOCES Lobby Week

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

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Future Forward Task Force focuses on whole child

Almost two years ago, NYSUT started its “Fund Our Future” campaign to illuminate the glaring fiscal needs of schools and communities.

The statewide union rolled out a bus tour to visit schools in every corner of the state. In rural, urban and suburban districts unionists found a need for additional educators, social workers, school counselors and school nurses. Many schools had created food pantries and clothing closets to provide students with basic necessities and other supplies.

The tour revealed a lot of desperation.

Three months after the campaign began, COVID-19 closed school buildings, as well as the state Capitol. However, while school buildings were closed, the work of educating and feeding students continued — under complicated, confusing conditions that educators had to figure out on the fly.

With legislative action in Albany and Washington, D.C., New York secured critical federal American Rescue Plan and increased state Foundation Aid funding to help schools and students recover from the past year and a half.

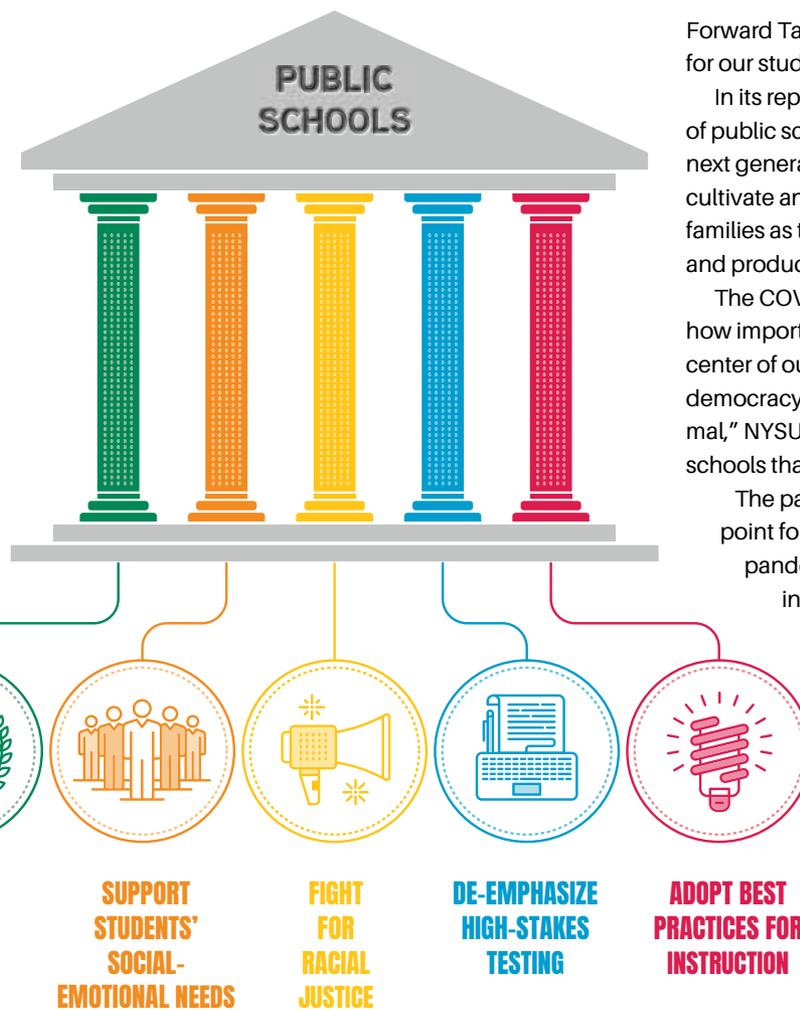
“When I say recover, I am not focusing on education, but rather the whole child, with an emphasis on the social and emotional needs of our students,” NYSUT President Andy Pallotta told state Senators at the end of September. “We can no longer ignore the role that our teachers play in educating and shaping our children.”

Pallotta said that in the wake of a pandemic, New York’s funding priorities must shift.

“It is unimaginable to me that after COVID, we still have school buildings without enough teachers, a full-time school nurse or a social worker, school counselor or school psychologist,” he said.

“The needs of our students have grown and become more complex. Throughout the pandemic, we had students who were caring for other siblings and relatives, and we had students who lacked internet access, which prevented them from engaging in educational activities.”

Over the course of several months, NYSUT organized discussions with an exceptional group of educators from around the state — the Future



Forward Task Force — to envision a way forward for our students, our members and our schools.

In its report, the task force said the purpose of public schools is to develop and support the next generation of leaders in our communities, cultivate and nurture the whole child and support families as they raise children to be healthy, caring and productive citizens.

The COVID-19 pandemic reminded all of us how important schools are and that they are the center of our communities, the cornerstone of democracy. Rather than simply returning to “normal,” NYSUT’s task force advocates building the schools that students deserve.

The past 18 months have been a turning point for the future of public education. The pandemic, racial injustice, and the chronic inequality and inadequacy of education funding and educational opportunity that 2020 brought to the forefront are undeniable, the report states. Returning to schooling as it was pre-pandemic is neither possible nor acceptable.

It’s up to all of us to outline a path forward for our students, the report concluded. We must act on what we have learned from these crises. Together we can outline a path forward that will lead New York’s schools to a chapter of profound progress.

By Ned Hoskin
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NYSUT United Special Edition



This edition is dedicated to the five pillars of the Future Forward Task Force report:

- Support public schools as the center of our communities
- Support students’ social-emotional needs
- Fight for racial justice
- De-emphasize high-stakes testing
- Adopt best practices for instruction and technology

In the coming weeks, NYSUT will also be launching our program to advocate for proper funding and support for SUNY and CUNY four-year institutions, community colleges and SUNY hospitals. We will also be adding focus to specific SRP issues.

This is just the beginning. We will be collecting and publishing more stories as we push for the future of public schools. Visit futureforwardny.org to see the full task force report, to read member stories and to add yours.

What Future Forward seeks right now

Many of the recommendations made by NYSUT's Future Forward Task Force involve state budget requests, legislative proposals and possible regulatory changes.

Here's a rundown:

■ **Funding for community schools** — In the next state budget, NYSUT seeks \$100 million in new funding to double the number of districts using community schools and to hire directors.

■ **Food and nutrition** — NYSUT wants federal legislation to permanently provide universal free meals to all students, including summer and after-school meals.

In the meantime, NYSUT calls on New York to set aside funding in the upcoming budget to provide meals not covered by federal dollars.

■ **Child care** — NYSUT is pushing for reimbursement reforms to support affordable child care, including expanded access to subsidies and other financial help for low-income and middle-class families.

■ **SEL** — NYSUT wants all schools to implement schoolwide social-emotional learning plans that meet student needs and to provide professional learning that supports the needs of students and staff.

■ **Testing** — Not all children show mastery through traditional tests. NYSUT supports state regulatory changes to allow alternative methods to meet graduation requirements.

On the federally mandated grades 3–8 tests, the union supports changes to the scoring benchmarks to ensure they provide accurate data. The tests should be developmentally appropriate, authentic and shorter.

■ **Receivership and evaluations** — Testing also is tied to the punitive receivership law. NYSUT says



New York should repeal the receivership law to allow schools to better meet the individual needs of students and preserve a rich learning experience for all kids.

Additionally, high-stakes testing should no longer be required to be tied to individual teacher evaluation.

■ **Universal Pre-K** — School districts must be able to operate these programs along with community-based organizations. To that end, NYSUT recommends consolidation of the state's UPK grant programs into a modified entitlement program that will automatically provide funding to school districts based upon children served in qualified pre-K programs.

■ **Critical staff in schools** — NYSUT advocates passing three state legislative bills to help mitigate the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. One would require schools to employ at least one full-time social worker and licensed school psychologist (S.1969/A.5019). Another would require schools to employ at least one school guidance counselor (S.831/A.7473). The third would ensure all public school districts and BOCES employ at least one registered professional nurse in each school building (S.4782/A.666).

■ **Racial justice** — NYSUT supports SED's expectations that school districts advance diversity, equity and inclusion. Last year, NYSUT received \$1 million in the state budget to provide implicit bias training to 10,000 educators across the state. Doubling this funding (\$2 million) in the upcoming budget will expand the program.

■ **Grow Your Own** — The 2022–23 state budget should include \$500,000 to provide grants to help districts establish educator pipeline initiatives and collaborate with programs engaging students of color. The budget also should include \$5 million to expand the Teacher Opportunity

Corps and \$20 million to fund scholarships to potential educators. NYSUT also seeks \$30 million for programs to support career ladders, career changers, fellowships and residency programs.

■ **Technology** — For many families the lack of in-home computers and reliable, high-speed internet obstructs access to learning and basic services. As part of last year's budget, the state instituted internet service for all qualifying families at \$15 per month, but for many families that is still prohibitive. NYSUT seeks free internet for those who cannot afford it. NYSUT is also pushing a bill (S.3593/A.3912) to ensure students in transitional housing have access to the internet.

■ **Professional development** — There are 126 teacher centers across New York that played a critical role in assisting educators and community members transition to learning online. NYSUT advocates restoring teacher center funding to \$40 million per year, an investment not seen since the 2007–08 state budget.

Read the full task force report at futureforwardny.org.

By Ned Hoskin
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'It's about empowerment': Community schools lift families

If you knew your investment would get a 20-to-1 return, wouldn't you think it's a pretty smart move?

"Community schools are the biggest bang for your buck," Rome Teachers Association President Rob Wood told Central New York lawmakers during a recent online advocacy meeting. "For every dollar you invest in a site coordinator, we get \$20 of payback — that's an amazing return on investment."

Wood, whose union-led Connected Community Schools model has spread to 40 schools in a dozen area school districts, said the pandemic has highlighted tremendous community needs and the important role community schools can play. Wood is a member of NYSUT's Future Forward Task Force that is recommending the state invest \$100 million in new funding to double the number of districts using the community school model.

Community schools offer a valuable coordination of services to support students and families in need with housing, food insecurity, transportation, health care, dental needs and mental health. Families can access job and career resources, and some community school programs even offer cooking or technology classes for adults to help them develop valuable personal and professional skills.

"We're using schools as a hub for connecting children and families with essential services, whether it's access to after-school care, technology or even adequate clothing," Wood said. "Our students can't focus on academics if they're worried about where their next meal is coming from or where they'll be sleeping tonight."

Community schools offer community-based wraparound supports that can prevent a crisis, said social worker Adrienne Cohan, vice president of the Starpoint TA. In rural districts there are not a lot of counseling options and many families lack transportation to access services.

In a RAND Corporation study of successful programs in New York City, community schools were proven to have a positive impact on student attendance, credit accumulation and on-time

progression. Students experienced an increased sense of connectedness to adults and peers and there was a reduction in disciplinary incidents.

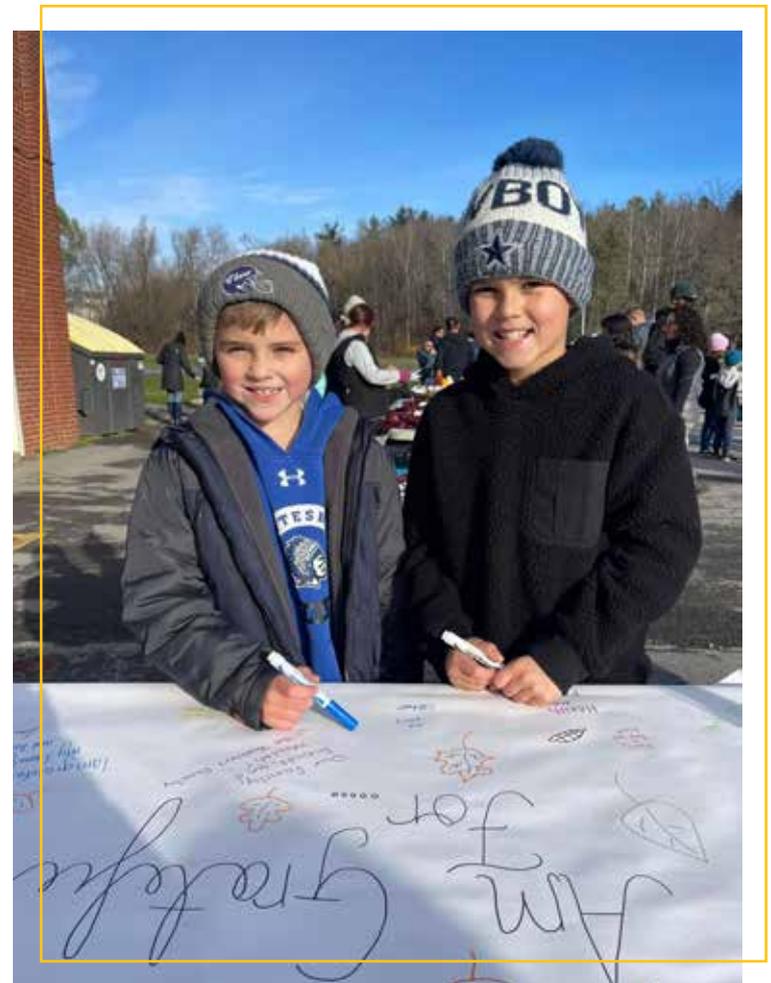
At the core of effective community school initiatives is a well-planned coordination of services by a dedicated community school director/coordinator who brings in grants, leverages existing government funding, spearheads fundraising and works with local community-based organizations and businesses to provide services.

Melissa Roys, executive director of the Connected Community Schools Alliance, said the community school model spurs an amazing spirit of giving and community service.

Roys said one of their most popular events is the "Operation Elves Shopping Store," where adults and children can select gifts for their loved ones. The store will serve about 1,300 students and families this year.

"We even provide the wrapping paper," Roys said. "It's about empowerment."

By Sylvia Saunders
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Two students write down what they are thankful for at a community-wide "Turkey Trot" event in Whitesboro. The poster is on display at Hartshill Elementary School.

PROVIDED

Improve Funding for Community Schools

Task Force Recommendation:

NYSUT recommends new annual funding of \$100 million be provided in the 2022-23 state budget dedicated specifically for creating additional community schools and supporting the hiring of community school directors/coordinators to lead the critical work of aligning community services with family and student needs.

These funds could potentially double the number of districts utilizing the community school model in New York state.

Food insecurity challenges schools, families across New York

Hungry kids — pre-K through college — struggle to learn. Not having enough to eat can make students lethargic, irritable, unfocused and even miss school.

In his own informal polling, elementary school teacher Jason Carter found half of his students would have gone without breakfast if it had not been available at school. During the pandemic, breakfast and lunch have been free for all students in Wayne Central Schools, but that practice will not continue, said Carter, a member of the Wayne Teachers Association.

Knowing that food insecurity has only been exacerbated during the pandemic, NYSUT wants federal legislation to permanently provide universal free meals to all students, including during the summer and after school.

"I have noticed the positive benefits. In the past, especially with schedules like this year where my class is next to last to eat lunch at 1:05 p.m., students might complain throughout the day about being hungry," Carter said.

Now that just about all of the students are eating breakfast at school, "students are not thinking about food as much, which in turn means they are more on task for learning. When they are hungry they are not as focused and are more likely to be off task, thinking about eating and lunch time."

The nonprofit No Kid Hungry found that nearly 1 in 5 New York students was projected to face hunger this year. Educators are all too familiar with the faces behind those statistics. Actions to alleviate student hunger — many of them union-driven — vary from school to school, and include setting up food pantries at schools and colleges, organizing drive-by food events, and filling backpacks with weekend food for students in need.

"A student's participation in the Backpack Program helps improve attendance and academic performance while reducing disciplinary actions," reports the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York, which serves upward of 6,500 students in 241 schools across 22 counties.

NYSUT school nurses, social workers, psychologists, counselors, teachers and School-Related Professionals help make the program work,



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Union members across the state regularly coordinate food and supply drives for needy families. Above, more than 700 bags containing chicken, dairy items, produce and other staples are prepared for a drive-thru event held Dec. 16 at NYSUT headquarters in Latham.

identifying students in need, packing the backpacks and distributing them to students.

More and more, schools and colleges are setting up food pantries on site.

At SUNY Morrisville, there are four food pantry locations. Miguel Pereira, a member of United University Professions who heads SUNY Morrisville's diversity, equity and inclusion committee, pointed out that many students need financial aid just to attend college, so purchasing enough food can be tough. A local food pantry sometimes brings food; the last campus food drive netted 300 pounds of food donated by members of UUP, CSEA and the administration.

"Fresh fruit and produce go quickly," Pereira said.

Food pantries are in place at many campuses throughout the City University of New York as well.

Campaigns across the state include union efforts to support local food pantries, which students and families can access outside of school for more privacy. The Victor TA, using donations from local stores, recently raffled off turkeys and pies, raising more than \$1,000 for a local food pantry.

In Great Neck, the union's social justice committee identified food insecurity as a pressing

issue, said Jennifer Snyder, TA vice president. The local union has been working to clear any past food debt that students may have at school, and works directly with a pantry to keep it stocked, running food and toiletry drives at schools.

"There has been an increase (in demand) of about 25 percent since COVID," said Snyder.

Bernard Washington, a cook and fourth vice president of the Syracuse TA, said the city's schools have been community schools for five years, and all kids receive free breakfast and lunch.

"The kids are happier, and there is no shame," he said.

By Liza Frenette
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Provide Free, Healthy and Nutritious Meals to All Students

Task Force Recommendation:

NYSUT will continue to work with NEA and AFT to secure federal legislation to permanently provide universal free meals to all students, including summer and after-school meals.

- No-cost universal school meals should be made permanent, and unnecessary paperwork and income tests for participation should be removed to streamline families' access.
- NYSUT is calling on New York to set aside funding in the upcoming budget to supplement the cost of providing meals not covered by federal dollars, once the waivers expire, to ensure that all students have access to meals at no cost.

From the front lines: Every school building needs a nurse

COVID-19 is nearing the two-year mark, and school nurses are nearing exhaustion with the extra demands it has put on their work.

“The job has changed immensely, state testing has increased, psych-social issues have increased, and now COVID,” said Jody Barnes, a school nurse with the North Syracuse Education Association. “Fifty percent of our job is now related to COVID. We start our day reviewing emails, COVID results and making follow-up phone calls. We have referred 593 students for COVID testing.”

That work is on top of treating injuries; handing out medications for asthma, diabetes or ADHD; testing eyesight and hearing; calling parents when a student is out sick; tracking required physicals; approving athletes for sports participation; tube feedings, catheterizations, and more.

In nearby Fayetteville-Manlius, school nurse Kimberly Welling agreed. “We have a lot more demands, more fragile students with serious health needs, and also more responsibilities with COVID,” Welling said. She and Barnes both serve on NYSUT’s Health Care Professionals Council.

Burgeoning responsibilities like these are why the statewide union’s Future Forward Task Force recommends a renewed call for legislation requiring a registered nurse in every school building.

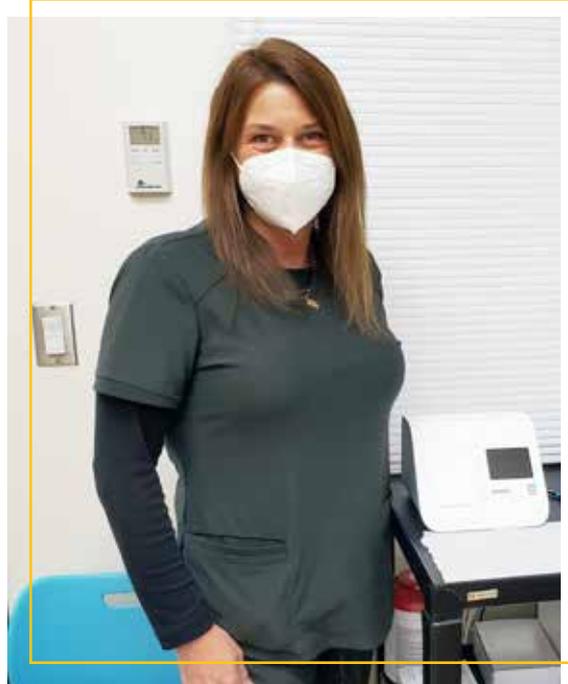
“We are 100 percent on board to have a school nurse in every building,” said Cynthia Bennett, a school nurse in Queens and school nurse representative for the United Federation of Teachers.

“The nurses’ spirits are broken.”

Even before the coronavirus pandemic there were not enough permanent nurses in the city’s public schools. Massive numbers of nursing positions have been filled with agency nurses, many of them right out of school without training, said Bennett, adding that agency nurses do not perform the detailed information logging and tracking required by school nurses.

Turnover is also a problem. Bennett said her school recently went through 60 agency nurses in less than a school year.

Due to emergency situations in nurse



Salmon River school nurse Melanie Cunningham shows the school’s COVID-19 rapid testing machine that returns results in 15 minutes versus two to three days.

PROVIDED

staffing, agency nurses are hired at \$100 an hour. Meanwhile, schools have trouble keeping permanent nurses because of low pay.

School nurses are crucial to deal with increased demands due to the pandemic. Melanie Cunningham, Salmon River TA, is an elementary school nurse for 380 children in Franklin County. Without her position, the students would have to

rely on the middle and high school nurses, who would have to toggle between them and the hundreds of students they already care for.

Thanks to a grant, the school was able to secure a rapid testing machine. If a student tests positive for COVID-19, they are masked and set up in a quarantine isolation room until they are picked up from school. Nurses use a seating chart from teachers and from the cafeteria, as well as security footage, to determine who the student was in close contact with. Those students and families then have to be notified.

“We work closely with the county,” Cunningham said.

Laurie Grimaldi of the Uniondale School Registered Nurse Association works with pre-school classes and students who are new to the district. She has had 1,700 new students a year for the past six years, she said.

Many of the new students speak Haitian Creole or Spanish, and she uses a translator on her phone to communicate.

“We do have a school nurse in every building, but COVID has brought us over the hill with requirements,” she said.

Initial contact tracing for students and staff consumed the whole day, she said, and tracking is now limited to students.

“At the high school it’s daily. It’s hourly,” she said.

By Liza Frenette
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Prioritize Funding to Support Hiring Critical Staff

Task Force Recommendation:

Schools must be provided the resources to fully fund counseling and mental health staff to meet the growing needs of students and families and further mitigate the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs that support English language learners and special education students must be fully staffed to adequately assist children with increased needs as they return to post-pandemic learning.

To ensure that such staffing is in place, the Task Force recommends enactment of the following state legislation:

- Ensure that all public school districts and boards of cooperative educational services employ at least one registered professional nurse in each school building (S.4782 Jackson/A.666 Cahill).



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Kids need smaller class size, a well-rounded curriculum

For Oceanside teacher Jennifer Wolfe, a key lesson from pandemic teaching has been the incredible importance of smaller class size.

“My own daughter’s reading and math skills are on grade level for the first time in elementary school because she had a fantastic teacher and a class size of 11 last year,” Wolfe said. “With that extra one-to-one attention, she really grew academically and personally.”

In her high school world history classroom, Wolfe, the 2021 New York State Teacher of the Year, taught one-third fewer students. “I was able to spend much more time getting to know my students — building relationships and creating lessons in a way I can’t always do when there are 30 of them in the same class,” she said. “We could do more special projects, writing workshops and student-choice assignments.”

As in many schools last year, Wolfe’s classes and her daughter’s fourth-grade class size were kept small to accommodate social distancing. Unfortunately, both are back to full size this year.

“It’s like we got a taste of how wonderful smaller class size can be,” Wolfe said. “We need to learn from that experience — and do what works best for students and teachers.”

What’s been made clear, and what educators and researchers knew long before COVID-19, is that establishing smaller class sizes in all grades is one of the most effective ways to achieve and maintain the highest level of student learning and engagement in our schools. Students in smaller classes perform substantially better by the end of second grade in test scores and grades, and have fewer disciplinary referrals. They are more likely to graduate in four years, more likely to go to college and more likely to get a degree in a STEM field.

“We definitely want our class sizes to remain manageable and small when we can, because we know that individualized instruction is really beneficial to students,” NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene T. DiBrango said. “And with severe staffing shortages, surveys show smaller class sizes will



help us recruit and retain educators.”

Another lesson from pandemic teaching is the need to maintain a complete curriculum to support the whole child, DiBrango said. In many cases across the state, pandemic-triggered smaller class sizes were achieved by reassigning library, art, music and physical education teachers outside their certification area. This decimated the special area curriculum for too many kids.

Task force members agreed it is crucial to restore and expand special area opportunities and provide a well-rounded, complete curriculum for all students.

By Sylvia Saunders
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Reduce Class Size and Maintain a Complete Curriculum to Support the Whole Child

Task Force Recommendation:

Diverse learning opportunities — including the arts, library, STEM and physical education classes — help develop the whole child as students grow into young adults. Schools must safeguard these opportunities, even in crisis situations, and commit to providing a well-rounded, complete curriculum for all students.

Additionally, schools should prioritize Foundation Aid resources to adopt smaller class sizes to improve student engagement and learning. This means prioritizing the hiring of teachers, avoiding the elimination of teaching and teaching assistant positions upon retirements and lowering student-teacher ratios, particularly for grades pre-K-3.

Support staff make huge impact on students' social-emotional health

When NYSUT leaders traveled to the Kingston City School District as part of the statewide union's Fund Our Future bus tour before the pandemic hit, one message came through loud and clear — more social workers and mental health professionals are needed.

It's a common refrain heard statewide as districts struggle to mitigate the ongoing impact of the pandemic and to meet the growing needs of students and their families. NYSUT's Future Forward report calls on districts to hire additional counseling and mental health care staff — particularly for programs that support English language learners and special education students.

More than a year later, that wish came true for staffers and students in the Ulster County district. Thanks to union advocacy, followed by state and federal increases in school aid, Kingston hired several new social workers and mental health professionals. NYSUT Second Vice President Ron Gross, whose office oversees issues impacting School-Related Professionals, commended the union advocacy for the much-needed support staff.

"Schools must have the resources they need to prioritize hiring critical staff," Gross said. "Every school needs school psychologists, social workers, counselors, nurses and SRPs."

To specifically meet the needs of the district's growing ELL population, the new additions include a bilingual social worker and a bilingual guidance counselor at the high school, and two bilingual family workers.

"We're now much more equipped to meet the social-emotional needs of students and to better support the staff," said Amy Kapes, Kingston Teachers Federation, a high school social worker. "When I found out about the new hires, I felt relieved and hopeful. It was difficult to meet student needs pre-COVID; having the extra support when kids returned has been essential."

The district also added a new social worker at both the middle and elementary levels, and two new social workers focused solely on student

attendance. One attendance social worker will oversee Kingston's seven elementary schools; the other will focus on students at the district's two middle schools.

"Attendance social workers have the skills to assess, counsel and refer families for services. Attendance issues are often not as simple as students refusing to go to school," explained Kapes.

With the district's growing population of Spanish-speaking students, Tatiana Rojas, Kingston Educational Support Professionals, a middle school bilingual family worker, welcomes the addition of more Spanish-speaking professionals, particularly the bilingual social worker.

"Having someone who speaks their language and understands their culture will help students open up," she said.

A new bilingual family worker will join Rojas as the communication point between families and the district. A second bilingual family worker will serve an elementary school and the district's central office. "I have conferences with families and teachers, explain to families how the system works, translate medical needs for nurses and make sure families get the information they need," said Rojas of her work advocating for the districts' ELL students and their families. With the influx of new ELL students, it's a big job that keeps growing.

"I'm extremely happy that the district is being proactive and that they listened," Rojas said. "It will make a huge impact."



Prioritize Funding to Support Hiring Critical Staff

Task Force Recommendation:

Schools must be provided the resources to fully fund counseling and mental health staff to meet the growing needs of students and families and further mitigate the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs that support English language learners and special education students must be fully staffed to adequately assist children with increased needs as they return to post-pandemic learning.

- Require schools to employ at least one full-time social worker and at least one licensed school psychologist (S.1969 Jackson/A.5019 González-Rojas)
- Require schools to employ at least one school counselor (S.831 Gounardes/A.7473 Clark)

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

Threat of receivership leads to a downward spiral

Because of marginal standardized test results the previous year, “We started the year one stop from receivership,” said Jason Valenti of the Rochester Teachers Association.

And that set the tone from the first day.

“All the students who scored 2s on the state tests, and were known as easy to work with and ‘behaved,’ were slated for pull-out services to ensure we had enough students moving from 2 to 3 to keep us out of receivership. We did the same with the 1s, because we needed enough 1 to 2 movement, as well.”

Valenti said the plan “consumed our school academic support staff — reading teachers, coaches, specialists — who weren’t able to work with our K-2 students.” Those younger students would not be taking the high-stakes tests that begin in grade 3.

“This set up a continuing cycle of students who are not receiving the services they need in grades K-2, increasing the chances they won’t perform at grade level on the tests once they hit third grade,” Valenti said.

Despite progress made in recent years, educators in New York continue to face enormous pressure to “teach to the tests” in order to raise student test scores. Receivership is one of the looming threats encountered through the unfair standardized testing regimen.

Under state law, schools enter receivership if their performance on standardized tests ranks them among the lower schools in the state for four years. New receivership schools have two years in which to show “demonstrable improvement” to avoid having an external “independent receiver” appointed to run the district.

An independent receiver has an inordinate amount of control to make arbitrary decisions in personnel and programs, and even to close buildings.

“This over-emphasis on high-stakes testing also affects staffing. When a school is facing



receivership, many teachers apply to transfer out due to the uncertainty, fear and excessive paperwork obligations that come when your school is designated,” Valenti said.

“What that results in is a downward spiral. The receivership school loses experienced teachers, the very people the students need to bridge the academic gap the tests pointed out in the first place.”

NYSUT is on record opposing receivership as an assault on local control and collective bargaining and is working to repeal the law.

By Ned Hoskin
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

Remove the Punitive Consequences of Testing for Students and Teachers

Task Force Recommendation:

- Repeal the receivership law to allow schools to better meet the individual needs of students and preserve a rich learning experience for all kids.
- Educators should be free to dedicate themselves to students and communities without the threat of involuntary, automatic transfers that disrupt year-to-year staff consistency and hamper strong relationships between school staff, students and families.
- High-stakes testing should no longer be required to be tied to individual teacher evaluation.

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High-stakes tests cause high anxiety

As the pandemic continues to disrupt a third school year, educators say it's time to focus more on student needs and less on high-stakes standardized testing.

When NYSUT unveiled its Future Forward recommendations, we asked members to share their personal views on the issues most important to them. Many spoke passionately about the over-emphasis on high-stakes testing.

"High-stakes testing prep takes up too much learning time. It causes too much stress on students as well as teachers!"

"The tests are ruining education ... teachers are leaving the profession because of it."

"Assessments and APPR are becoming more important than students' social-emotional needs."

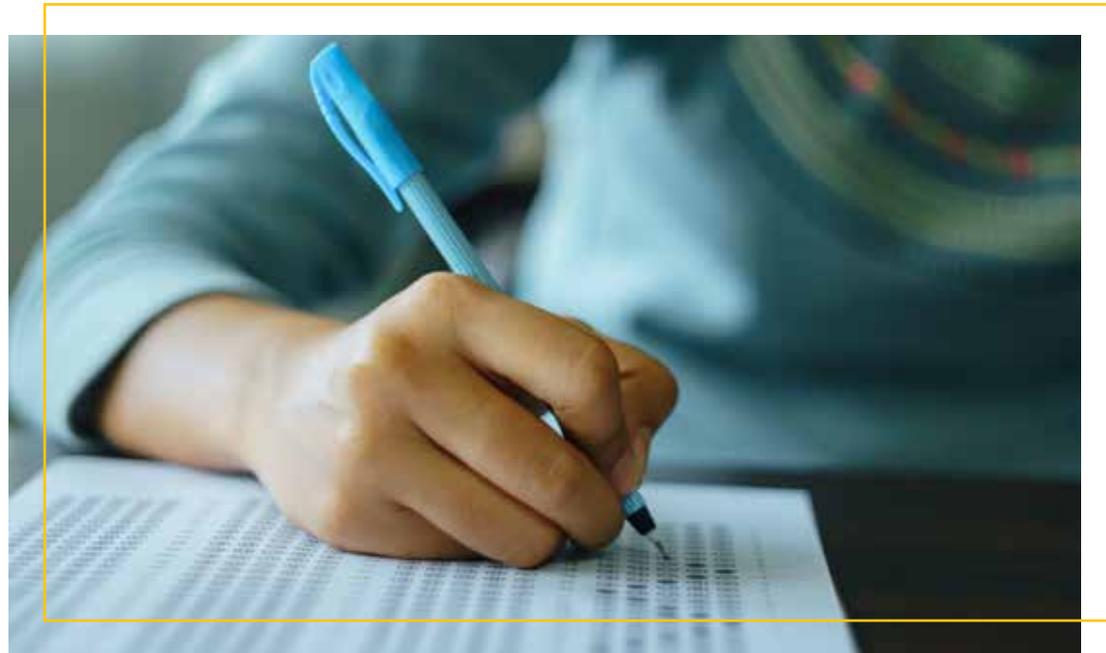
"It is time for grades 3-8 tests to go. They're unfair and unnecessary. We need to do better for kids."

That's just a sampling of comments suggesting that while state standards should guide instruction, they should not drive the current fixation on standardized tests. NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene T. DiBrango said educators need to be able to teach to the needs of the students, not "teach to the test" in order to raise student test scores.

In a letter to State Education Commissioner Betty Rosa, DiBrango said NYSUT is deeply concerned about the stress and anxiety students and staff are experiencing. "Health and safety concerns are abundant and significant staffing shortages across the state are having a real impact on the learning environment," DiBrango said. "There has been a dramatic increase in incidents of school violence. Many of our most vulnerable students are not getting the support they need."

Instead of worrying about state standardized tests, DiBrango suggested schools focus on local assessments that inform instruction and help move students forward. "Our schools need time to rebuild," DiBrango said. "We share the department's concerns with the disparate impact of the pandemic and the ongoing trauma our schools are facing."

The COVID-19 pandemic forced state assessments to be cancelled entirely in 2020 and



optional in 2021. More than 40 percent of students did not take last year's grades 3-8 ELA and math tests, which were shortened to just one day each.

The task force supports substantive changes to the federally mandated grades 3-8 test scoring benchmarks to ensure the tests provide an accurate picture of student progress. The current benchmarks are invalid and mislabel kids. In addition, the tests should be developmentally appropriate, authentic and shorter.

DiBrango noted teacher-generated, locally

developed assessments are more authentic than high-stakes exams crafted by corporate testing companies.

Not all children show what they know through traditional tests. The task force also supports providing students with alternative methods to show that they meet graduation requirements — including project-based learning, portfolios and capstone projects.

By Sylvia Saunders
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Implement Developmentally Appropriate Grades 3-8 Assessments

» Task Force Recommendation:

New York should make changes to the statewide grades 3-8 assessments, including making tests shorter and more developmentally appropriate and supporting efforts at the federal level to allow grade-span testing in lieu of grade-by-grade testing. Also, allowing local assessments provides more timely, reliable feedback to teachers and parents to monitor student progress and inform instruction.

- NYSUT should continue to work with NEA and AFT to secure changes to the federal testing mandate to allow changes at the state level.



Buffalo Teachers Federation members Jenna Rivera, left, and Kylene Holmes, both former teaching assistants, graduated with master's degrees from Buffalo State College and are now first-year teachers in Buffalo City Schools. The pipeline program is supported by both the Buffalo TF, led by Phil Rumore, and the Buffalo Educational Support Team, led by JoAnn Sweat.

Of color
Source!

Home-grown programs tackle the teacher shortage

A pair of pilot “Grow Your Own” programs in Buffalo are already sprouting an impressive number of new and aspiring teachers.

Former teaching assistants Kylene Holmes and Jenna Rivera are now first-year teachers in Buffalo City Schools, thanks to a union-backed pipeline program through Buffalo State College.

“It was an amazing opportunity because it allowed me to keep working as a teaching assistant while completing the teacher prep program,” said Rivera, whose love of working seven years as a pre-K teaching assistant convinced her to pursue a teaching degree.

“I was so lucky to be a part of the pipeline program,” Holmes said. “As a single parent, I thought it would be nearly impossible to go back to school for my master’s in teaching. The program was so helpful because our schedule was very accommodating and we worked at our own pace.”

Both Rivera and Holmes were able to complete the two-

year graduate program by attending classes year-round, evenings and Saturdays. Their student teaching experience dovetailed with their teaching assistant duties so they were able to continue their TA employment. The state-funded program, which includes about two dozen other Buffalo TAs and aides, also covers tuition, books and vouchers for state certification exams.

“It makes sense to recruit from the ranks of teaching assistants and aides because we already have extensive experience working in schools,” Rivera said. “We love kids, plus we know what we’re getting into!”

Rivera, who attended Buffalo City Schools herself, thinks it’s important for students to have teachers with similar backgrounds. Home-grown teachers can be a positive role model for all students, whether it’s in big-city schools or rural districts. Studies have shown retention is also better for GYO graduates.

Buffalo’s other state-funded pipeline program, the Urban Teacher Academy, is also having early success. The Career and Technical Education program at McKinley High School just graduated its first class of high school students, with several choosing teacher education majors in college. The four-year high school program offers education career exploration, job shadowing and teaching/community service opportunities. In their senior year, students can take college-level courses and work toward being accepted at Buffalo State as education majors.

With support from Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Buffalo City Schools are working hard to expand and diversify the educator workforce. According to a State Education Department report, while two-thirds of Buffalo’s enrollment are students of color, only 14 percent of the workforce are teachers of color.

“The lack of diversity is a statewide problem that has to be addressed,” said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene T. DiBrango, who leads the union’s Take a Look at Teaching initiative. “As we tackle the teacher shortage, GYO programs like Buffalo’s should be promoted and expanded.”

By Sylvia Saunders

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DIVERSITY IN NYS SCHOOLS

56% STUDENTS OF COLOR

19% TEACHERS OF COLOR

is defined as American Indian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian and Multi-Racial
NYSSED 2019 data

Strengthen and Diversify the Educator Pipeline through Grow-Your-Own Initiatives

Task Force Recommendation:

The 2022-23 state budget should include:

- **\$500,000** to provide grants to assist school districts with establishing and growing educator pipeline initiatives and developing collaborations with established programs that have a proven track record of engaging students of color.
- **\$5 million** to expand the successful Teacher Opportunity Corps in public and private colleges to recruit and support teacher candidates from diverse backgrounds.
- **\$20 million** to provide scholarship opportunities to potential educators.
- **\$30 million** for the creation of programs to support career ladders, career changers, fellowship and residency programs.
- **\$1.5 million** for State Education Department staffing to improve the teacher certification process.

NYSUT launches implicit bias training statewide

Thought provoking. Non-judgmental. Welcoming. Honest. Those were a handful of participant responses following a NYSUT-led implicit bias workshop held on Long Island for Hewlett Woodmere Faculty Association members in early November.

The program is one of several social justice initiatives offered under the office of NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham. "Sticks & Stones: Understanding Implicit Bias, Microaggressions & Stereotypes," is a series of union-led workshops that raise awareness about the role of implicit bias in classroom dynamics. NYSUT received a \$1 million grant in the last state budget to expand its implicit bias training program statewide over the coming year.

So far, NYSUT's 65 instructors have conducted six trainings, for around 500 members. "We have a lot of training requests from throughout the state. Our goal is to launch the implicit bias series in earnest in January and February," Abraham said. The workshops are available for Continuing Teacher and Leader Education credit through NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust.

Wayne White, NYSUT's director of social justice, led the Hewlett-Woodmere training in partnership with Leslie Rose, a district second-grade teacher.

"People were engaged for the entire four hours," Rose said. "I worried we wouldn't get enough interest, but we had to cap the workshop at 50."

According to "Understanding Implicit Bias," a paper published by Ohio State University's Kirwan Institute, implicit bias is holding "negative attitudes about people who are not members of one's own 'in group.'" These preferences can cause us to discriminate against people who don't share our ethnicity — whether we do so knowingly or not. While most people realize they hold some degree of prejudiced and stereotypical thinking, they don't understand how much those beliefs influence their behaviors, the researchers found.

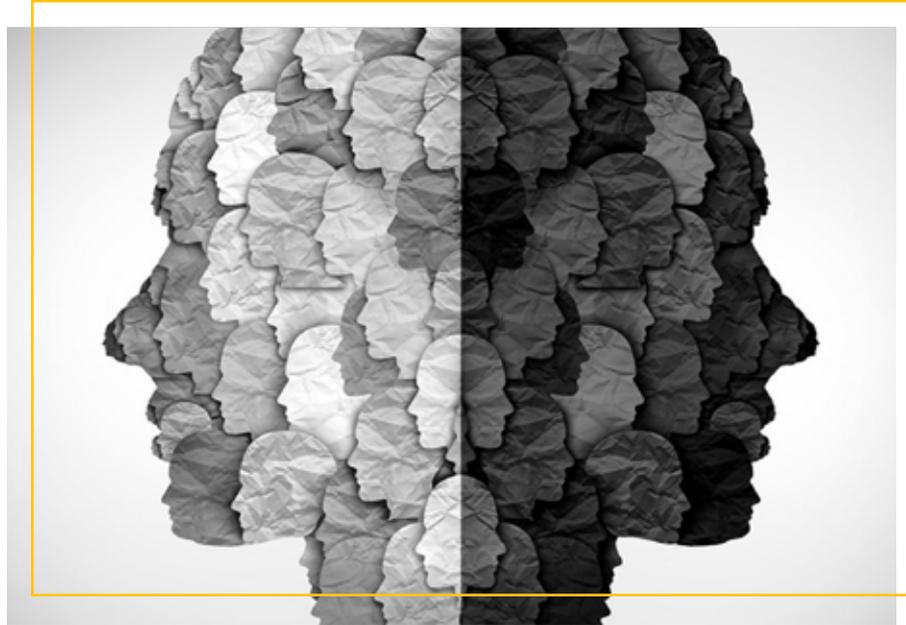
The Nassau County Hewlett Woodmere FA, led by NYSUT Board member and ED 18 Director Frederic Stark, serves a diverse student body. Nearly 40 percent of students identify as non-white.

Participants at the November training shared personal stories of how microaggressions and stereotypes have impacted them, such as assumptions about the language they speak, the color of their skin and even the news programs they listen to.

The purpose of the training is to make members aware of what's affecting students and other members.

Building that awareness is a goal of the trainings, explained Abraham. "Helping educators recognize their own implicit biases and consider how they impact their behavior toward students fosters more inclusivity and empathy within our classrooms and communities," said Abraham.

The training sessions use exercises, readings and personal narratives to help participants self reflect. Teaching members how to interrupt and challenge microaggressions and stereotypes when they hear them in the classroom is another goal. Although comments like "what are you?" or "that's



so gay," might not be said with harmful intent, they still have a negative impact on the person on the receiving end and are inappropriate.

"We're proud to raise awareness about these type of issues for our members and to continue the work toward a more just and welcoming environment for all," said Abraham.

For information about future implicit bias trainings, visit nysut.org/implicitbias. To learn more about NYSUT's social justice initiatives, visit nysut.org/socialjustice.

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

Establish Regular Training For All School Staff on the Topics of Implicit Bias and Supporting Inclusivity

» Task Force Recommendation:

As part of the enacted 2021-22 state budget, NYSUT received \$1 million to provide implicit bias training to 10,000 educators across the state. Doubling this funding (\$2 million) in the upcoming budget will ensure that more educators can participate in this training, which will improve school and classroom environments for students and educators. School districts should commit to providing implicit bias training for all staff.

Book study jump-starts conversation on racial awareness

Sharon Luck and Beth Dubay, longtime friends and Peru Association of Teachers members, often swap books. So, last fall, when both recommended a new, non-fiction book they were reading, they were pleased to discover it was the same one: *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi.

"We thought a discussion about the issues in the book would be good to have with other faculty members," so they decided to organize a book study group, explained Luck, a librarian at Peru's middle and high school. They didn't know it then, but that decision would have a big impact on the small, majority white, Clinton County district, roughly 30 miles south of the Canadian border. It would spark greater racial awareness among both students and educators.

The administration was supportive from the start. It offered to pay Dubay and Luck to lead the session, and to buy books, offer Continuing Teacher and Leader Education hours and pay book study participants. The pair set five book study session dates and developed discussion points.

"People were hungry to talk, we met our cap, 15 participants, the first session," said Dubay, noting that despite the often-sensitive nature of discussions about race, the book ended up "being neutral ground — the discussions didn't turn political." Participants were engaged and *Stamped* opened their eyes to perspectives they hadn't learned about, or even considered.

Since that initial group, the district has offered 12 more sessions for about 85 participants focused initially on *Stamped*, and later growing to include the books *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, and *Start Here, Start Now: A Guide to Antiracism and Antiracist Work in Your School Community*, by Liz Kleinrock. Under Luck's and Dubay's guidance, four colleagues also lead book studies at the primary, intermediate, middle and high schools. Participants have included teachers, School-Related Professionals, administrators and Peru community members.

The book studies also inspired the creation of

The Butterfly Effect, a student club focused on race, gender and ability at the high school. "Our principal was approached by a few students of color who knew about the book studies and wanted to get involved," said Luck, who advises the club.

Club initiatives include weekly public service announcements to educate students about events like Native American Heritage month, and the "word of the week," which defines words such as "microaggressions" for students.

One teacher who completed the book study will incorporate *Stamped* into the curriculum of Diversity and Social Justice, a high school elective.

"The goal is to eventually bring these topics to the classroom to further the discussion with open minds," said Dubay. "We might not always agree, but we can respect different points of view. We



A love of reading helped fifth-grade teacher Beth Dubay, left, and librarian Sharon Luck launch important discussions on racial awareness in their North Country district.

PROVIDED

want to grow as individuals and have a more accepting school community."

Interested in increasing racial awareness in your classroom? A great place to start is the New York State Education Department's framework on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Visit nysed.gov/diversity-equity-inclusion.

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

Implement NYSED's DEI Framework and Establish Culturally Responsive Curricula

» Task Force Recommendation:

In order to determine the districts that need support with implementation, the New York State Education Department should conduct a survey of school districts to identify those that are implementing changes as outlined in the framework and those that have not begun to do so.

The Task Force recommends NYSUT's support of the State Education Department's expectations that school districts develop policies and practices that advance diversity, equity and inclusion and implement these policies with fidelity and urgency as well as their ongoing support of these initiatives in the field and their efforts to create culturally responsive-sustaining education resources for schools.

In-person instruction: Learning how much a smile can mean

“I will never forget the night I got an email from a student that simply said, ‘I just can’t,’” recalled Lori Atkinson, Copenhagen Teachers Association secretary and high school English teacher.

After weeks of remote instruction under the pandemic, that student “never realized how much she needed face-to-face interaction,” Atkinson said. “She was describing how much a smile meant to her and how she needed teachers to ask her about her game or what she was reading.”

Students reported that online classes during the pandemic provided important contact with peers and teachers during building closures, but they did not prefer remote learning over in-person school.

“Remote learning was a band-aid covering a chasm of issues,” Atkinson said. “I had kids who had never before experienced anxiety who were shutting down.”

The Future Forward Task Force said some students who were already disengaged in school became even more disengaged in online classes — checking in briefly to satisfy attendance requirements before turning off cameras, disappearing into the background. Teachers further reported that concurrent teaching (working simultaneously with in-person and online students) was ineffective and counterproductive.



EL-WISE NOISSETTE

High school English teacher Lori Atkinson, Copenhagen Teachers Association.



The return to in-person instruction this fall reinforced the power of face-to-face, one-to-one teaching and learning that develops strong teacher-student relationships.

“As educators, we know that the best place for students to learn is in the classroom,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “We must do everything we can to ensure every student has access to full-time, in-person instruction.”

This past summer, NYSUT and the American Federation of Teachers organized an army of union members under the “Back to School for All” initiative to visit with parents in their communities and assure them that in-person learning is best for all.

“This is a priority for all of us,” said Laura Franz, president of the Albany Public School TA, who knocked on doors in her district. “Teachers want to see their students in classes. That’s the gold standard.”

By Ned Hoskin

ned.hoskin@nysut.org

Guarantee In-Person Instruction as the Core Learning Experience

Task Force Recommendation:

- School districts should support in-person, face-to-face instruction as the core learning experience for students.
- If remote instruction becomes necessary, due to pandemic-related school closures or quarantines, concurrent (simultaneous) instruction should not be an option.
- When classrooms are open for full in-person instruction, school districts should not be required to provide remote instruction unless individual students require access to instruction in an IEP.
- NYSUT should oppose fully virtual, remote schools that do not meet students’ needs for diverse educational and developmental opportunities.

Mobile classroom helping to close the digital divide

Sullivan County is a beautiful region. It's surrounded by the Catskill Mountains, boasts acres of farmland and its streams are renowned for trout fishing. But when it comes to internet access, its beauty begins to fade; many areas are plagued by spotty or non-existent service, a problem that's painfully widespread across New York state.

A State Education Department digital equity survey found that more than 165,000 students and 3,000 teachers lack sufficient internet access for teaching and learning from home. NYSUT's Future Forward report calls on districts to support multiple opportunities for internet access.

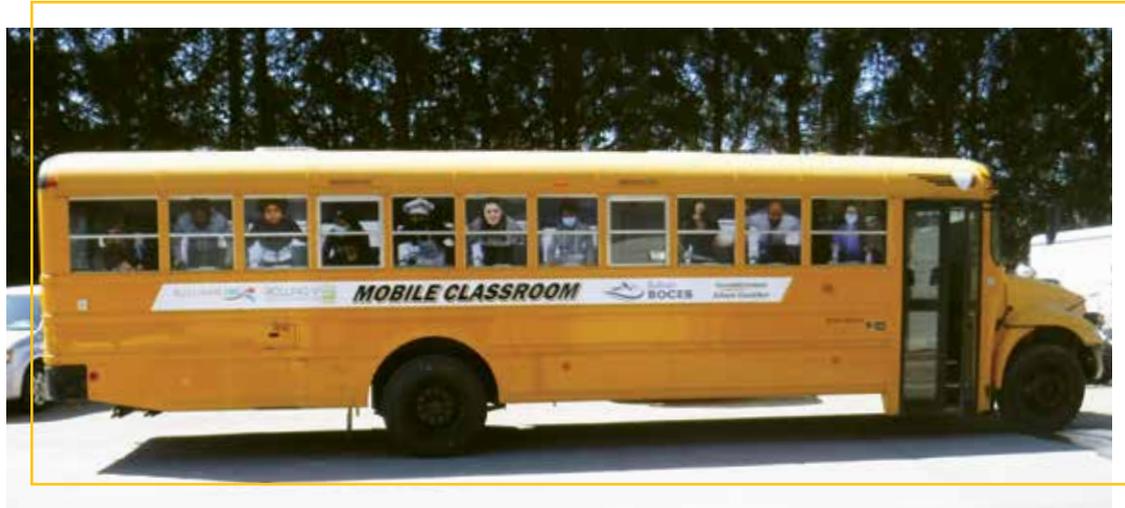
In Sullivan County, the connectivity problem deepened when the pandemic hit. Many students and educators struggled to get work done in a virtual environment often hamstrung by unreliable internet service. Earlier this year, a group of Sullivan County BOCES Teachers Association members, all Career and Technical Education instructors, worked with their students to help develop a solution. They converted a school bus into a mobile classroom to provide students and residents with socially distanced high-speed internet access.

To complete the project, Sullivan BOCES partnered with Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther, who provided \$7,000 in funding; Rolling V Bus Corporation, which donated a bus; and Sullivan 180, a local non-profit.

A team effort

It took Nicholas Conklin's welding students about a week to construct six desk frames after seats in the donated bus were either removed or rotated to create social distance. "Some of the students who worked on the project have problems getting the internet themselves," he said. "When they can see the work and say, 'wow, I built that,' it really motivates them."

William Drasher's construction technology students installed a new floor, made wood tops for the desk frames, did general trim work, wired the bus for onboard electrical outlets and configured



More than 165,000 students across New York state lack reliable access to the internet. With community support, Sullivan County BOCES educators and students converted the school bus above into a mobile classroom.

an onboard generator. "The kids had a good time since it wasn't a normal construction project," said Drasher, who is now retired.

To make the bus feel more welcoming, Fred Muller used student photographs for the window decals. "Some look like they're sitting on the bus, others look like they're trying to escape!" he said. He added that students love seeing themselves on the windows and the decals provide privacy, allowing riders to see out while obscuring the interior.

Muller's auto body students created and installed an exterior wrap, perforated window films, paintwork for the tables and interior signage.

Samuel Rogers' natural resources and ecology students worked as floaters, using skid steers to unload supplies into the welding shop and lending a hand when it came time to load in and install the finished desk frames.

"Working collaboratively is pretty standard for us," said Rogers, who explained that his curriculum covers everything from forestry and heavy equipment operation to greenhouse management, basic maintenance and repair.

"(Students) were excited to do something positive to support the community."

The mobile classroom is available to all Sullivan County school districts and not-for profits. It provides desks, electricity and high-speed internet access for up to six students at a time.

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

Bridge the Digital Divide

Task Force Recommendation:

Schools must address the digital divide in their communities by identifying families in need and partnering with local providers, public libraries and other community organizations to support opportunities for internet access.

- The Task Force recommends that NYSUT urge the Legislature to improve internet access to all families by eliminating fees for low-income families with students.
- Students residing in transitional housing, such as shelters where internet access is not provided, also lack access. We urge passage of legislation to require these facilities to provide residents with internet access (S.3593-A Biaggi/A.3912-A Hevesi).

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POSITIONS TO BE FILLED AT THE NYSUT RA

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT AN ELECTION FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS WILL BE CONDUCTED ON FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2022 AT 4:30 P.M. DURING THE 2022 NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY AT THE ALBANY CAPITAL CENTER, ALBANY, N.Y. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROCEDURES SPECIFIED BELOW.

IF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC NECESSITATES GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS ON PUBLIC GATHERINGS, THEREBY PROHIBITING AN IN-PERSON REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY, IN ORDER TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE NYSUT CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, AND ALL APPLICABLE LAWS, A MAIL-BALLOT ELECTION FOR THE POSITIONS OUTLINED BELOW WILL BE CONDUCTED UPON THE CONCLUSION OF THE 2022 NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROCEDURES OUTLINED HEREIN.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN THAT NOMINATING PETITIONS FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED THROUGH 5 P.M., FEB. 7, 2022, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CRITERIA AND PROCESSES OUTLINED BELOW.

I. NEA State Director and Alternate State Director

(To be elected by all in-service delegates¹ from NYSUT locals representing NEA Active members)

- Elect one (1) NEA State Director to the NEA Board of Directors, three-year term.
- Elect one (1) Alternate NEA State Director to the NEA Board of Directors, three-year term.

A. Term of Office:

Three (3) year term commencing Sept. 1, 2022 and concluding Aug. 31, 2025.

Important Notice

The NEA’s governance documents provide that the successful candidate for NEA State Director will serve as an ex-officio delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly for all purposes, except nominating candidates for office and voting in elections for NEA officers.

¹ “In-service delegates” are delegates who were nominated by and elected by the in-service NYSUT members of a NYSUT local. “Retiree delegates” are delegates who were nominated, elected by and from the NYSUT Retiree Councils (NYSUT Bylaw C (2)(c)).

B. Eligibility Requirements for Nomination and Candidacy:

All members of NYSUT who hold Active membership in the NEA may nominate a candidate and be a candidate for NEA Director or Alternate Director. To be eligible, candidates must also have two (2) years of Active membership in the NEA by the date of the election.

C. Elector Qualifications:

Each credentialed 2022 NYSUT RA in-service delegate who represents NEA Active members shall be eligible to cast a ballot for NEA Director and Alternate NEA Director.

In order to be eligible to vote at the NYSUT Representative Assembly a delegate must be registered by 3:45 p.m. on April 1, 2022 and must be present at their assigned voting locations on April 1, 2022 by 4:30 p.m. (or 15 minutes after the close of the session should it run beyond 4:30 p.m.). Instructions on voting and distribution of ballots will be announced by the NYSUT Elections Committee Chair before the close of General Session #1 on April 1, 2022.

If the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates government restrictions on public gatherings and an in-person Representative Assembly cannot be held, an alternative web-based program will be developed. Electors will be those 2022 NYSUT RA in-service delegates who are registered and credentialed for the web-based program.

D. Tabulation:

The NEA Director and Alternate Director shall be elected by a secret ballot vote of the qualified electors, pursuant to NYSUT Constitution Article VIII §§ 1(c), 1(d) and 4(e) and Bylaw C(1)(b). The candidate for the NEA Director position with the highest vote total shall be declared elected to the NEA Board of Directors. The candidate for the NEA Alternate Director position with the highest vote total shall be declared elected to the NEA Board of Directors Alternate Director position.

II. Other Campaign and Election Procedures

A. General Candidate Qualification & Nomination Procedures For All Offices

1. Candidate Qualifications: A candidate is any member in good standing who meets the above candidate eligibility criteria, the nomination requirements for the position and fulfills the requirements listed below.

2. Availability of Nominating Petitions: Nominating Petitions for all positions may be obtained from

the Elections Committee commencing Jan. 3, 2022 by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at NYSUT Headquarters either in writing (800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, New York 12110-2455); by telephone 800-342-9810; or by email request to elections@nysut.org.

3. Acceptance of Candidacy/ Candidate Name Verification/ Candidate Contact Information:

Acceptance of Nomination: In order to qualify as a candidate for any position, the candidate must signify their acceptance of the nomination by signing the Acceptance of Candidacy portion of the Nominating Petition.

Name Verification: Each candidate should also indicate on the Nominating Petition the manner in which their name should be printed on the election ballot.

Contact Information: All candidates are asked to provide both their personal (i.e., non-employer) email address (if available) and cellphone number (or home telephone number, if there is no cellphone) on the Nominating Petition to enable the NYSUT Elections Committee to readily contact them.

4. Candidates’ Ability to Verify Election Committee’s Receipt of Nominating Petition: The Elections Committee will notify nominees either by email (if available), or by telephone, that their Petition has been received and validated by the Committee. Nominees for any position who wish to verify the Election Committee’s receipt of their nominating petition may contact the NYSUT Elections Committee at NYSUT Headquarters either in writing (800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, New York 12110-2455); by telephone 800-342-9810; or by email request to elections@nysut.org.

5. Multiple Candidacies: In addition to serving as an elected NEA State Delegate, no member may be a nominee for more than one elected NYSUT position, except candidates for AFT State Delegate and AFT Alternate State Delegate may be a candidate for one additional elected NYSUT position.

6. Observers: All candidates shall have the right to be present or to have an observer at each polling location at the Representative Assembly and at the tabulation of ballots.

B. Candidate Qualification, Nomination & Election Procedure For Each Office

1. Nomination Procedure: A nominee is any member who meets the above candidate eligibility requirements for the position and fulfills the following

requirements for nomination: **NEA Board of Directors and NEA Alternate Director Candidates:** A Nominating Petition, signed by fifty (50) Active NEA members must be submitted to the NYSUT Elections Committee by 5 p.m. on, Feb. 7, 2022.

Further information will be available on the nominating petition.

2. Uncontested Election: An election may be waived by the Elections Committee for any position if, following the period of open nominations, the number of candidates is equal to or less than the number of positions to be filled.² In such instance, the Chair of the Election Committee shall certify that voting is unnecessary and the Secretary-Treasurer shall be directed to cast a single vote on behalf of that candidate at a meeting of the NYSUT Board of Directors. The certified election results shall be reported to the NYSUT Representative Assembly and posted at nysut.org.

III. Publication of Notice of Nomination and Election And Campaign and Election Procedures

This Notice of Nomination and Election and Campaign & Election Procedures will appear in the January/February 2022 issue of *NYSUT United*.

A reminder of the January/February 2022 *NYSUT United* publication of this Notice of Nomination and Election and Campaign & Election Procedures shall also be published in the January issues and the Feb. 4 issue of the *NYSUT Leader Briefing*.

IV. Candidates’ Access to Mailing Labels and the Submission of Campaign Statements for the “Election Issue” of NYSUT United

Any candidate who completes and submits a valid Nominating Petition to the NYSUT Elections Committee by no later than 5 p.m. on Feb. 7, 2022 shall be eligible: (a) to access and affix the mailing labels of eligible electors for campaign purposes at the NYSUT regional office designated by the candidate, and/or (b) to promote their candidacy by submitting a campaign statement for publication in the March/April 2022 *NYSUT United* “Election Issue.”

Mailing labels and appropriate office space in a common area will be provided to any candidate at the NYSUT regional

² See, NEA Bylaw 5-1.a

office designated by the candidate on their Nominating Petition, to affix the mailing labels of eligible electors on materials for campaign purposes. It shall be the sole responsibility of individual candidates to produce their campaign material, supply adequate postage and meet any other requirements of the U.S. Postal Service or other delivery service selected by the candidate, regarding the delivery of such materials. The designated NYSUT regional office shall take all reasonable steps to mail the material or to deliver it to such other delivery service selected by the candidate. Mailing labels shall not be taken from the regional office, reproduced or otherwise distributed.

A. Elector Mailing Labels

(1) Candidates for State Director and Alternate State Director are eligible to use mailing labels of the eligible electors provided to the candidates so indicated on the Nominating Petition. The applicable delegate mailing labels will be available in the NYSUT regional office designated by the candidate during the week of Feb. 21, 2022. Candidates will be notified by the regional office when the labels are available.

All mailing labels are confidential and privileged information and shall not be taken from the regional office, reproduced or shared with anyone. Candidates should contact the committee at elections@nysut.org if they have not been contacted by the regional office regarding mailing labels, during the week of Feb. 21, 2022.

Provided, however that in lieu of accessing and affixing mailing labels at a NYSUT regional office, a candidate may use a bona fide outside mailing service to deliver campaign material to eligible electors, pursuant to the following procedures:

- (1) Such candidate shall notify the NYSUT Elections Committee of the name and contact information for the outside mailing service by listing that information on their Nominating Petition; and
- (2) Within 48 hours of receipt of the Nomination Petition or as soon thereafter as practicable, the NYSUT Elections Committee shall contact the candidate, and the outside mailing service using the contact information provided by the candidate, to obtain any written assurance the Committee may require in order to prevent the reproduction or unauthorized distribution of member data.

After the receipt of such written assurances as the NYSUT Elections Committee shall require, the Committee shall arrange

for the electronic delivery of data directly to the mailing service.

B. NYSUT United "Election Issue"

The March/April 2022 issue of *NYSUT United* shall be the "Election Issue" which may be used by a candidate to promote their candidacy, provided the qualified candidate submits their Campaign statement and their Nominating Petition, both of which are to be validated by the Elections Committee, by no later than 5 p.m. on Feb. 7, 2022.

Candidate statements shall be submitted to the Elections Committee. Electronic submissions are preferred and shall be sent to the Elections Committee at elections@nysut.org. Candidate statements may also be sent to the Elections Committee by fax (518) 213-6411 or in hard copy (NYSUT Elections Committee, c/o Office of the President, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110-2455).

Any words that extend beyond the allowable space will be deleted and not published as part of the candidate statement. The Editor of NYSUT United maintains the right to alter the format, font, print style or any other formatting to ensure uniformity in the presentation of all candidate statements.

Please note that candidates are solely responsible for the grammar and content of their statements. Space in the March/April 2022 "Election Edition" of the *NYSUT United* for campaign statements shall be allocated as follows:

Position	Space	Photos Published	Order of Statement
NEA State Director	50 words	Yes	Candidates will be listed alphabetically
NEA Alternate State Director	50 words	Yes	Candidates will be listed alphabetically
Complete Caucus	100 words	Yes	Candidates will be listed alphabetically
Incomplete Caucus Slate	Proportionate space (not to exceed the space listed alphabetically allocated to the candidates as individuals)	Yes	Candidates will be listed alphabetically

In addition to the uncharged space provided above, a full listing of candidates for the positions of NEA State Director and NEA Alternate State Director will also be published in the "Election Issue" of *NYSUT United*.

C. Caucus Slate Campaign Statements

Organizations wishing to be identified by the Elections Committee as a caucus under the Campaign and Election

Procedures and thereby be eligible to have a caucus-identified campaign statement published in the March/April 2022 "Election Issue" of *NYSUT United* shall request, properly complete and timely return a Caucus Notification Form to the Elections Committee. That form is available from the NYSUT Elections Committee. The deadline for the submission to the Elections Committee of a completed Caucus Notification Form as well as the caucus-identified campaign statement, which are to be validated by the Elections Committee, is 5 p.m. on Feb. 7, 2022.

Caucus-identified campaign page(s) or a portion of a page (if partial slate) will be assigned on the basis of a drawing by the Election Committee; independent announced candidates will follow and will be arranged alphabetically for each position, and separately listed as described below.

Note: Any candidate whose name is included in a published (uncharged) caucus-identified campaign statement shall be ineligible to have an individual (uncharged) campaign statement also published.

D. Option to Purchase Space in NYSUT United "Election Issue"

In addition to a candidate being allocated uncharged space in the *NYSUT United* "Election Issue" under the above criteria (either individually or as a part of a caucus statement), a candidate who has submitted a validated Nominating Petition by no later than 5 p.m. on Feb. 7, 2022 may purchase additional space in the *NYSUT*

United "Election Issue." This space will be charged as an advertisement and printed in the advertisement portion of *NYSUT United*, separate and apart from the uncharged space provided in Subdivision B above. The cost of that purchased space will be based upon *NYSUT United's* standard advertisement house rates and policy. Please note that candidates may NOT purchase additional space as part of the uncharged space provided for

in Subdivision B above. Any candidate interested in purchasing additional space must provide the copy to be published in the March/April 2022 *NYSUT United* "Election Issue" to *NYSUT United* Editor at united@nysut.org by no later than 5 p.m. on Feb. 7, 2022. Additional information regarding *NYSUT United's* standard advertising house rates and policy may be obtained by telephoning *NYSUT United* at 800-342-9810 or by email to united@nysut.org.

V. Nominees' Forum Statewide Offices Nominees' Forum

Nominees for NEA Director and NEA Alternate Director shall be given the opportunity to speak to the RA delegates during a Nominees' Forum. In order to be eligible to participate in a Nominees' Forum for any of the statewide offices, a candidate must complete the Nominees' Forum Participant Request Form contained in the Nominating Petition. The time allocated shall be divided equally among the nominees for the same position. The order of speaking shall be determined by lot. Groups of nominees may pool their time.

VI. Campaigning at the Representative Assembly

Campaign material shall not be distributed on the Representative Assembly Convention Floor or as otherwise limited by the Rules of Procedure for the 2022 Representative Assembly, as approved by the Board of Directors and as adopted by the delegates at the 2022 Representative Assembly.

Campaigning at the NYSUT Representative Assembly shall end on April 1, 2022 at 3:45 p.m.

Pursuant to Article VIII (1) (f) of the NYSUT Constitution, the NYSUT Elections Committee shall have the authority to resolve any and all issues or disputes involving any election.

VII. Staff Restrictions, Campaign Contributions & Limited Candidate Services

NYSUT staff members are prohibited by law from campaigning for any candidate. Therefore, no candidate should request any campaign assistance from any NYSUT staff member.

No portion of dues money at the local, state or national level shall be used, directly or indirectly, to promote the candidacy of any person for any elected office.

Contributions may be received by a

candidate only from individual persons or groups of individuals. No employer whatsoever (including, but not limited to, other unions, commercial firms, non-profit organizations, law firms, and businesses) may contribute money, goods, services, or anything of value, to promote directly or indirectly, the candidacy of any person for any elected office.

In conducting their election campaign no candidate or anyone acting on behalf of a candidate shall utilize any funds, facilities, equipment, stationery, supplies or resources (including, but not limited to, computers, email systems, computer networks, electronic media, telephones, supplies, photocopiers or fax machines) which are financed by, owned or leased by NYSUT (except as provided below), or any of its national or local affiliates.

NYSUT through its Elections Committee will (subject to availability, i.e. NYSUT is not obliged to purchase equipment if not otherwise available) make limited services equally accessible to all candidates and caucuses (the cost of which incurred by NYSUT is to be paid to NYSUT). The exclusive limited services which will be made equally available by the Elections Committee to candidates and caucuses are as follows: (a) use of a table with chairs, and easels, in the vicinity of the convention hall for campaigning; (b) meeting space totaling not more than three (3) hours during the entire period of the Representative Assembly (Friday-Saturday); (c) use of a fax machine; and (d) photocopying; provided that NYSUT is fully compensated for all cost incurred by NYSUT (as determined, in writing, by NYSUT) for the limited services utilized, and provided further that such services are available. All candidates and caucuses shall have equal access to receive all such limited services, and all reasonable requests will be honored, subject to the above qualifications. No alcohol, food or refreshments will be permitted in any meeting space made available to candidates by the Election Committee. Any candidate who is endorsed by a caucus shall be ineligible to receive individual candidate services under these provisions whenever the caucus receives such services. Should either a candidate or a caucus wish to utilize any of these limited services, the Services Request Form (and additionally, in the case of a caucus, a proper Caucus Notification Form) shall be completed, signed, received, and validated by the NYSUT Elections Committee, all by not later than 5 p.m. on Feb. 25, 2022.

If due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g. scheduling, equipment limitations or unavailability), the Election Committee determines that any of the above-described

limited services need to be revised or modified, all eligible candidates and caucuses that have timely submitted the Services Request Form shall be promptly notified by the Elections Committee of the change. In such event, the Elections Committee will take reasonable means and measures to arrange comparable services so that there is no disparate treatment among any of the candidates, recognizing that if any costs are incurred by NYSUT in making alternate arrangements available, such are to be borne by the requesting candidate(s) and/or caucus(es).

The cost of all services received by every candidate and every caucus shall be reimbursed to NYSUT within thirty (30) days of the candidate's or caucus's receipt of NYSUT's written statement of services.

VIII. Role and Authority of Elections Committee

The NYSUT Elections Committee shall have the authority to interpret and apply these Campaign and Election Procedures. The NYSUT Elections Committee shall be empowered to modify the procedures and timelines in the event of extenuating or unforeseen circumstances, or pursuant to the requirements of either law or NYSUT's affiliates. Notification shall be provided in the event there is a material change in these procedures or timelines.

IX. Conducting Election

All elections shall be conducted in accordance with the following instructions, and those provided by the NYSUT Elections Committee.

A. Time And Date Of Elections

In order to be eligible to vote at the NYSUT Representative Assembly a delegate must be registered by 3:45 p.m. on April 1, 2022 and must be present at their assigned voting locations on April 1, 2022 by 4:30 p.m. (or 15 minutes after the close of the session should it run beyond 4:30 p.m.). Instructions on voting and distribution of ballots will be announced by the NYSUT Elections Committee Chair before the close of General Session #1 on April 1, 2022.

If the COVID-19 pandemic continues to necessitate government restrictions on public gatherings and an in-person Representative Assembly cannot be held, an alternative web-based program will be developed. A delegate must be registered and credentialed for the web-based program in order to be eligible to receive a mail-in ballot for voting.

B. Voting Tabulation & Elections Reporting

Write-in votes will not be counted nor be part of any tabulation.

The Elections Committee will use all reasonable efforts to make the certified election results available to candidates requesting such information, before any results are announced during the following General Session, provided the candidate has provided to the Election Committee, in advance, their cell telephone number, another telephone number, or an email address.

To the maximum extent practicable, certified election results will be announced during the General Session held following the tabulation of votes by the Elections Committee.

All candidates will receive official notification of the certified election results from the Election Committee as soon as practicable. The certified election results and vote total per candidate will be reported in the next available NYSUT United and posted at nysut.org. However, roll call voting by delegates will not be released for any secret ballot elections.

Observers of the tabulation process shall be afforded the opportunity to receive the results either electronically or in writing after the candidates have been notified of the results.

C. Runoff Procedure

In the event of a tie vote in an election to fill a vacancy in the position of NEA State Director or NEA Alternate State Director, a run-off election or run-off elections will be held until such time as a candidate or candidates receive the highest number of votes for each vacant position as prescribed herein.

The run-off election or run-off elections will be held Saturday, April 2, 2022 at a time to be announced by the Elections Committee Chair at the beginning of General Session #2.

If the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates government restrictions on public gatherings, an in-person Representative Assembly cannot be held, and there is a tie vote in any mail ballot election held to fill a vacancy in the position of NEA State Director or NEA Alternate State Director, a run-off election(s) will be held by subsequent mail-ballot vote.

D. Observers

Candidates may observe or designate an observer(s) to observe the voting and tabulation process. Observers need not

be elected delegates or alternates to the Representative Assembly. Observers may observe the voting and/or tabulation process subject to the following conditions:

1. Voting: Any candidate may observe or designate an observer(s) to observe the voting process at each polling location.
2. Tabulation: Any candidate may observe or designate an observer for the tabulation process. The Chair of the NYSUT Elections Committee retains the right due to logistical concerns to limit the number of observers in the tabulation room, however, every candidate for election shall have the right to have at least one observer in the tabulation room.

Each candidate must register the name of each observer with the NYSUT Elections Committee before 3:45 p.m. on April 1, 2022. Observers are required to show photo identification to a representative of the NYSUT Elections Committee and each observer will be issued a special observer badge that must be displayed at all times during the voting and tabulation process. No observer will be allowed to observe voting or enter the tabulation room without the special observer badge.

If the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates government restrictions on public gatherings and an in-person Representative Assembly cannot be held, additional instructions for registering observers will be provided.

X. Forms & Information

Forms and information are available from: NYSUT Elections Committee, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110-2455; phone 800-342-9810; or by email request to elections@nysut.org.

Items available as specified within the Campaign and Election Procedures from the NYSUT Elections Committee are listed below. (This is not an order form.)

- Nominating Petition for:
 - NEA Director
 - NEA Alternate Director
- Candidate and Caucus Services Request Form
- Caucus Notification Form

Completed forms must be returned to the NYSUT Elections Committee as specified above.

90% 80%

60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10%

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NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION MEETING

NYSUT Board of Directors Vacancy Election Election District 25

A vacancy exists on the NYSUT Board of Directors for Election District 25. The vacancy was created by the resignation of Dwayne Clarke, effective Dec. 1, 2021.

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 2021 Representative Assembly representing the members of ED 24-35 will be eligible to vote in this Special Election.

The delegates and alternates of ED 24-35 are hereby notified that this vacancy will be filled by a Special Election Meeting to be held as follows:

Date: March 23, 2022

Time: 6:00 p.m.

**Place: UFT Headquarters
52 Broadway, New York, NY 10004**

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) in-service members from ED 24-35.

The completed and signed Nominating Petitions must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on Jan. 24, 2022. Any member in good standing from a NYSUT local within ED 24-35 may be a candidate. **Only in-service members in good standing from ED 24-35 may sign a candidate's Nominating Petition.** 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 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 23, 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 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 March 23, 2022 Special Election Meeting and continue to serve as the successor Director to the conclusion of the 2023 Representative Assembly.

All elected delegates or their alternates reported for the 2021 NYSUT RA from ED 24-35 are requested to be present for this election meeting.

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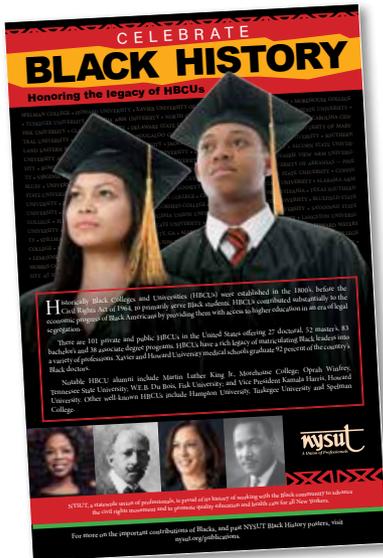


[RESOURCES FOR YOU]

Free NYSUT poster celebrates HBCUs

NYSUT celebrates Black History Month with a new poster highlighting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), which were established to primarily serve Black students. Cheyney University, established in 1837, is the oldest historically Black school of higher education. HBCUs contributed substantially to the economic progress of Black Americans by providing them with access to higher education in an era of legal segregation.

There are 101 private and public HBCUs in the United States offering 27 doctoral, 52 master's, 83 bachelor's and 38 associate degree programs. HBCUs have a rich legacy of matriculating Black leaders into a variety of professions. Xavier and Howard University medical schools graduate 92



percent of the country's Black doctors. Notable HBCU alumni include Vice President Kamala Harris, Howard University; Martin Luther King Jr., Morehouse College; Oprah Winfrey, Tennessee State University; and W.E.B. Du Bois, Fisk University. Other well-known HBCUs include Hampton University, Tuskegee University and Spelman College.

The free poster is available for download for NYSUT members and leaders at the state-wide union's online Publications Ordering Catalog, nysut.org/publications.

IRS mileage rate increased for 2022

The IRS has announced that the business standard mileage rate for 2022 will be 58.5 cents per mile, up 2.5 cents from the 56 cent rate in 2021.

NYS Parks resources for virtual, in-person field trips

The state Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation offers schools virtual and in-person options for enjoying many of the natural

resources the Empire State has to offer.

Not able to travel? No worries. State Park environmental educators have compiled a series of virtual field trips available on YouTube. Topics include geology, invasive species and how maple syrup is made. Visit parks.ny.gov/environment/nature-nearby.aspx.

For those able to travel a little farther, the Connect Kids field trip grant program provides reimbursement of up to \$40 per student (\$80 for special education students) for field trips to state and federal parks, forests, historic sites, fish hatcheries and outdoor recreation areas.

Eligible organizations include public schools, schools for the deaf and blind, and BOCES programs. Each class is eligible for up to three transportation grants per academic session. The grant is a reimbursement, so schools must cover all initial field trip costs up front.

Reimbursable field trip expenses include transportation costs (driver time, fuel), as well as program, entry and pavilion fees.

For complete details, visit parks.ny.gov.



Retirement planning tips you might not have considered

You applied for retirement, received your benefit estimate, chose your pension payment option, submitted all the necessary documents and are counting down the days. But have you considered everything you'll need to know after retirement? Here are some tips you might find helpful.

Most New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS) pensions are subject to federal income tax, but your pension is not subject to New York state or local income taxes. Be on the lookout for your 1099-R federal tax form, which we mail to retirees with taxable pensions by Jan. 31 of each year. If you plan on moving, be aware that other states may tax your pension. Visit the Retired Public Employees Association website, rpea.org/retirement-planning/pension-tax-by-state, to see which states tax pensions.

You may be wondering whether your loved ones will be entitled to a death benefit if you die after retiring. In addition to any pension payment option benefit you choose, your beneficiary(ies) may be entitled to a post-retirement death benefit. Our Death Benefits webpage, osc.state.ny.us/retirement/retirees/

death-benefits, provides helpful general information. You should also review your retirement plan booklet, which you can find on our Publications webpage, osc.state.ny.us/retirement/publications.

If you find that you need to work after retirement, you should know that there may be restrictions on your earnings. Generally, post-retirement earnings aren't limited if you are age 65 or older, if you make less than \$35,000, or if you work for a private or federal employer. Visit our webpage, What If I Work After Retirement, osc.state.ny.us/retirement/publications/life-changes-what-if-i-work-after-retirement, for more information.

It's important to know that ERS does not administer health insurance programs. You should speak to your employer for any questions about your health insurance coverage (New York state agency retirees should contact the state Department of Civil Service).

Finally, be sure to stay connected through Retirement Online, osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement_online/customers.php. You can view your personal benefit information and update your contact information (be sure we have a personal email address on file for you rather than your work email address). You can also view a breakdown of your most recent pension payment, including tax withholding and other deductions.



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 • 516-496-2035, ext. 324
patti.lennon@nysut.org

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

Is TRS membership optional?



Q: If I teach full time, do I have to join the New York State Teachers' Retirement System?

A: Generally, the answer is yes if you're a full-time teacher, teaching assistant, guidance counselor or educational administrator in a New York state public school, BOCES or a charter school that has opted to participate in NYSTRS. However, there are exceptions.

For instance, New York City public school teachers are members of the Teachers' Retirement System of New York City. And New York state community college or SUNY employees can select coverage through NYSTRS, the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System, or SUNY's Optional Retirement Program.

Q: I'm a public-school special education teacher. I've been told there's no way for me to buy back retirement credit for the years I worked at a private school in New York state. Many of my colleagues have bought back

time for military service and from non-teaching county and state jobs. Isn't there some way I can get credit for my years as a private school teacher?

A: Unfortunately, there's currently no way to buy back credit for private school teaching. And while NYSUT has lobbied hard for a bill that would allow pension credit for private school service, the state Legislature has yet to take action. Neither NYSUT nor the New York State Teachers' Retirement System has control over this, only state lawmakers. We encourage you to call, email or write your state representatives and urge them to pass this important legislation.

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



Did you know?

Retirees aged 62 with five years of retirement, aged 55 with 10 years of retirement, or retirees who've received a disability retirement benefit for at least 5 years, received a **\$21** monthly cost-of-living increase starting **Sept. 30**.

Plan the upcoming year with help from Member Benefits

Taking inventory of your financial situation is a great place to begin when planning for the year and beyond. Your NYSUT membership offers you exclusive access to dozens of endorsed programs and services that may be of assistance and feature value-added extras unavailable to the public.

Get started by first bookmarking the Member Benefits website at memberbenefits.nysut.org. There, you will find numerous tools and resources available to you as a NYSUT member — including a Financial Learning Center with articles designed to help educate you on financial decisions and topics. You may then decide that unbiased assistance from a certified financial planner may be appropriate, and our Financial Counseling Program can provide that.

If your plans include purchasing a home, it is important to have enough money to make a down payment on your investment. Synchrony Bank offers several savings vehicles that can help to grow your nest egg over time, including high-yield savings accounts, money market accounts or certificates of deposit.

Once you have your finances in good order and enough money for that down payment, you will want to get pre-approved for a mortgage to help with the home-buying process. Mid-Island Mortgage has



been assisting union members with mortgages for 60 years, and its UnionDirect Mortgage Discount Program can save members up to \$2,700 in lender fees and closing costs.

Speaking of closings, you can also save money on the home-buying process by enrolling in our Legal Service Plan. With this plan, you'll receive access to a national network of attorneys at a reduced cost; two free hour-long consultations; and much more. Our legal plan also provides a Legal Security Package consisting of the following crucial documents at no additional cost: a Simple Will, Health Care Proxy, Living Will and

Power of Attorney.

With so much invested in a new home, protecting it against fire, flood, accidents and theft becomes a priority. Farmers GroupSelect is a trusted name in the insurance field and can provide coverage that you can purchase through payroll or pension deduction to save even more.

If you recently got married, welcomed a new baby or adopted a child, it's important to protect your loved ones if something were to happen to you. Member Benefits endorses a variety of life insurance and other plans along with value-added extras to make sure you never miss a premium payment.

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

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

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



William Scott — Gone but not forgotten



Every local has members who leave lasting impressions. For the Syracuse Teachers Association,

William Scott is one of them. Elected STA president in July of 2019, and leading during a time shaped by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, Scott brought a humanist approach to the office.

"He fought hard during the pandemic, staying off furloughs and going to great lengths to keep everyone working on the front lines safe," said Richard Rogers, STA treasurer.

Scott, a social worker by profession, was an empathic friend and colleague who communicated effectively with members and fostered collaboration with fellow leaders. He was a member of the NYSUT Board of Directors, serving as At-Large Director for Election District 7/8; a Greater Syracuse Labor Council member; and STA fourth vice president from 2014-19.

His unexpected death in April 2021 is a tremendous loss. STA leaders consider the Legacy Fund a perfect way to commemorate his work. "Bill fought tirelessly for justice in the workplace and better schools for our students," said Rogers. "We hope that all STA members find inspiration in his legacy."

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

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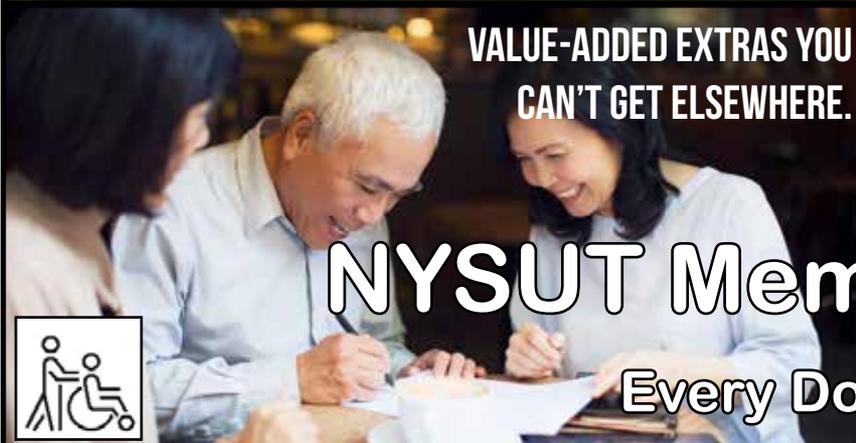
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