New day for public education
Kudos! 

Month poster; memories

Election Procedures: ratings this year

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Jan. 8 deadline for Union food drives

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The song remains the same: Raise revenue

Union’s legislative priorities focus on COVID-19 issues

By Ned Hoskin
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

T
here’s no debate over this fact: At the current rate, in the midst of a pandemic, New York State faces a fiscal deficit of some $60 billion over the next four to five years.

And there should be no debate over this fact, as well: The two-pronged solution is to enact federal COVID-19 stimulus funding and to raise revenue at home by taxing the state’s wealthiest residents.

As a result of the fiscal situation, the New York State Division of Budget has been withholding support for higher education on SUNY and CUNY campuses as well as community colleges, causing massive layoffs, lost programs and ballooning class sizes. They also zeroed-out funding for educational programs such as Universal Pre-K and teacher centers, essentially shutting them down. Now, a further 20 percent reduction in state aid looms as a step toward closing the state budget gap. Such cuts taken in lieu of revenue solutions are unfair and ill-advised, NYSUT maintains.

“We can hope the changes in Washington, D.C., will loosen the purse strings for much needed pandemic relief,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “But we need the commonsense revenue enhancers at home to survive this medical, educational and economic disaster.”

Enacted as the coronavirus shoved the economy into a tailspin, last year’s state budget reduced state support for schools for 2020-21 by $1.1 billion through what was called the Pandemic Adjustment. Some of that was covered by the federal CARES Act, but it did not fully restore lost state aid to public schools.

“But devastating cuts to state aid will lead to a reprehensible loss of opportunities for students. It’s time to refocus on federal stimulus funding and state revenues that can help cover the budget gap and stop deep cuts to public schools. The alternative simply isn’t acceptable for students, educators and families.”

Session in isolation

The legislative session will be even more unusual than last year’s, which shifted to remote business and essentially kept the books open for months. This year, the Legislature will meet online to comply with social distancing requirements.

Of course, that also means the face-to-face rituals of lobbying at the Capitol will be impossible. NYSUT activists in the Committee of 100, and the legislative staff, will still be working the phones, the emails and the Zoom meetings.

- Obviously, COVID-19 recovery is the No. 1 priority. Students in all public schools — including low-wealth rural and urban areas — must have the equipment, the internet access and the resources needed to support their education.
- NYSUT activists will also be looking to restore funding cuts that were made last year. In higher education and pre-K-12, these programs must be made whole.
- Community schools, which serve entire communities with wrap-around health and social services to improve education, took a hit last year. They require committed funding to build a better system, with a school nurse in every building, and to ensure supports are available to help with the mental health needs of students and teachers.
We’ll have one of our own in the White House

By Sylvia Saunders
sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

Talk about elevating teacher voice. When President-elect Joe Biden takes his oath of office this month, he will have a longtime teacher and union member standing by his side: Dr. Jill Biden.

The future first lady is a lifelong educator who loves the profession so much that she will continue teaching at an area community college even after she moves into the White House — just like she did while her husband served as vice president. She is a longtime member of the National Education Association.

“Teaching isn’t just what she does. It’s who she is,” Joe Biden said in his Nov. 7 victory speech. “For America’s educators, this is a great day. You’re going to have one of your own in the White House.”

Known as “Dr. B.” to her community college students, Biden has been an educator for more than three decades. Before moving to Washington, D.C., she taught English and writing at a community college in Delaware, at public high schools and at a psychiatric hospital for adolescents. When she gave her Democratic National Convention speech last summer, it was from her former classroom at Brandywine High School in Delaware.

She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Delaware in 2007, with a dissertation on how to maximize student retention in community college. She also has master’s degrees in education and English.

Jill Biden is often asked why she wants to continue teaching at Northern Virginia Community College while serving as first lady.

“It’s important, and I want people to value teachers and know their contributions, and lift up the profession,” she told the “CBS Morning Show.”

As second lady, Jill Biden frequently visited schools.

Biden is passionate about the power of community college as a path to success — and always a strong advocate for expanding higher education access and support.

Not surprisingly, Jill Biden strongly supports her husband’s promise to appoint an educator to be the nation’s new education secretary.

“Four years of Betsy DeVos is more than enough,” Joe Biden said. “We need a secretary of education who is actually a public school educator.”

DeVos, who has been among the most unpopular cabinet members in the Trump administration, never taught in a classroom or attended a public school. The education secretary oversees the U.S. Department of Education and sets the nation’s agenda on everything from standardized testing requirements to federal funding priorities.

Biden has repeatedly made it clear he intends to keep listening to educators. “You will never find in American history a president who is more teacher-centric and more supportive of teachers than me,” Biden told NEA members at their 2020 convention.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION MEETING • NYSUT BOARD OF DIRECTORS VACANCY ELECTION • ELECTION DISTRICT 26

A vacancy exists on the NYSUT Board of Directors for Election District 26. The vacancy was created by the resignation of Evelyn DeJesus, effective Dec. 31, 2020.

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 2020 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. Due to ongoing government restrictions on public gatherings brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, and in order to ensure compliance with the NYSUT Constitution, Bylaws, and all applicable laws, this Special Election will be conducted by mail ballot following an electronic special election Zoom meeting:

**DATE:** Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021
**TIME:** 6 p.m.
**PLACE:** Electronic Zoom Meeting

All eligible delegate voters who were reported to the 2020 NYSUT Representative Assembly from ED 24–35 will be sent login instructions one week prior to the meeting, Feb. 9, 2021. If a delegate does not receive login instructions by that date, they may request instructions by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at elections@nysut.org or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at 800-342-9810.

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 Petition must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on Thursday, March 11, 2020, for tabulation at that time, or as soon afterward as possible.

The candidate elected will serve as successor to the Director through the conclusion of the 2023 Representative Assembly.

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 Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021, via electronic Zoom meeting. Ballots will be mailed to voters on or about Thursday, Feb. 11, 2021. Ballots must be returned to and received by NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on Thursday, March 11, 2020, for tabulation.

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.
Furloughs, layoffs are not the answer

By Ned Hoskin
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

The statewide union is standing up for common sense and urging calm this holiday season as districts struggle with reduced state aid and fear further fiscal fallout of the pandemic.

The rush to cut staff might save pennies, but the cost to the community is devastating.

Two weeks before the holiday break, the Syracuse Teachers Association met to discuss the district’s sudden plans to furlough and lay off teachers and School-Related Professionals, plans based on potential 20 percent cuts in school aid.

NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, who met online with STA members and President Bill Scott, said it’s not clear why the district floated this proposal.

Pallotta called the Division of Budget in Albany and asked if there was some new directive to cut staff, because the Syracuse district said it had no choice.

“The answer I got is no,” he said.

STA’s Scott said 85 percent of the district’s funding comes from the state, and proposed cuts could result in a $40–$70 million shortfall. But they haven’t happened yet.

The district has already enacted a central office hiring freeze, begun austerity spending and program reductions. It seeks the layoffs and furloughs to help cut $15 million in spending for the remainder of the school year, Scott said. Talks with the STA continue.

“We are working on finalizing an agreement for voluntary furlough that would meet members’ needs and would not interfere with instruction,” Scott said.

Districts in several regions went through the same thing in September. After efforts to pass a second COVID-19 stimulus bill in Washington stalled, some districts threatened massive layoffs because, they said, the state told them aid was being withheld and the cuts had to be made.

NYSUT and local unions fought back — even taking legal action — and the Division of Budget promised to deliver some of the delayed school aid payments and to hold off on further cuts until after the elections. DOB said it was all a misunderstanding.

Some layoffs were averted, although many were not, including in Schenectady, Albany and Rochester.

NYSUT continues its Fund Our Future initiative that calls for new federal stimulus funding for education and state revenue enhancements, including taxes on the ultra-wealthy.

NYSUT expects to see a pandemic aid package from the federal government, although there are no guarantees.

In mid-December, NYSUT, other labor unions and the State AFL-CIO urged lawmakers to increase revenue by taxing ultramillionaires and billionaires, saying it would raise up to $9 billion to offset the economic strain of the coronavirus crisis.

As a result, Gov. Cuomo announced $1.5 billion to provide money to organizations facing cash flow issues. The state AFL-CIO supported the move as a temporary fix to help keep organizations operational in January and February while the state budget is being negotiated. NYSUT is working with the governor’s office to ensure that these funds will be accessible by public schools, SUNY and CUNY to stave off additional cuts and layoffs.

Meanwhile, the Whitesboro district, near Utica, put 103 non-teaching staff members on furlough between Thanksgiving and Christmas while the district switched to remote-only learning. The local Whitesboro Employees Union ensured furloughed staff members retained health insurance coverage and could use paid time off.

“This is an incredibly painful situation for the members of the WEU and one that we do not take lightly,” Jennifer Faulkner, union president, told the Observer-Dispatch. “Make no mistake, though, the district’s decision will have ripple effects across our community.”

Help from your union

NYSUT’s online Career Center at nysut.org/resources includes links for education job listings in New York State, along with information to help you progress in your career and many links to additional resources.

The “Resources for Laid-Off Employees” provides information about protecting your benefits, your rights in returning to work, and news and resources to help in a job search.
Union: Remain vigilant against privatization threats

By Liza Frenette
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There are people who use disasters and crises to profit and laborers need to be watchful against attempts to privatize their work now during the pandemic when education budgets are being slashed.

Tim Barchak, organizer, lobbyist and policy analyst with National Education Association, issued that warning during NYSUT’s 2020 School-Related Professionals leadership conference, held online this year.

Privatizers can ignore benefits — such as sick days and health care — vital to keeping workplaces healthy and safe during the pandemic.

“If there’s an outbreak of COVID-19 we want to know if an employee is feeling ill,” Barchak said. However, if employees feel pressured to work or don’t have sick days, they may be less likely to disclose. “Privatizers literally put our students and teachers in danger. As an association, we need to stop mincing words and say it that way.”

In challenging times, “we need more transparency and public accountability,” he said. “The community and school district should be as committed to SRPs as they are to students.”

The COVID-19 pandemic is a time to recognize how essential SRP’s are, Barchak said.

Privatization often leads to a combination of business practices that will make a school community less safe, he said, including a workforce that can be less stable due to temporary job seekers, and workers not as committed to the school population.

SRPs are not the only school workforce at risk.

Recently, the Newburgh Teachers Association won a Public Employment Relations Board ruling upholding its opposition to the ongoing privatization of school social workers.

Stacy Moran, Newburgh TA president, explained that during an economic crisis in 2012-13, the district lost social workers and school psychologists. A community schools grant brought in subcontracted social workers through the Orange County Department of Mental Health for three years; the psychologists were not replaced.

“Their presence is critical,” Moran said. “They brought in subcontracted workers.”

By the time the three-year grant program was up, Moran said, the district was in better financial shape to bring back the bargaining unit social workers but has failed to do so to the staffing level that existed prior to 2012.

“We put them on notice that we did not agree to use the subcontracted workers,” Moran said. The union filed an improper practice charge in December 2017. This year, the TA won a PERB case to eliminate the use of the subcontracted social workers and return the work to bargaining unit personnel. The district is appealing.

The subcontracting of these social workers is concerning for several reasons, Moran explained, with the key concern being that their services were limited only to students who had health insurance.

“In a district like Newburgh, that cuts out so many students,” she said.

Get your story out

When fighting against the threat of privatization, Barchak said, it’s important for those working in education to ensure that school boards, parents and the public understand how vital their roles are.

- Attend monthly school board meetings; become recognized names and faces.
- Let stakeholders such as BOE, PTA and other parent groups know the types of work you and your colleagues perform.
- Ask board members and legislators to job shadow for a day.
Committee meeting has “PowHERful” theme

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

The United States will inaugurate Kamala Harris as vice president in January; she will be the first woman to hold the position. Harris will also be the first woman of color to serve in the office, but our nation still lacks true equality.

Women don’t have full reproductive rights; economic equality; equal access to health care; and don’t hold positions of power in equal proportion to their numbers.

“Until women have equality in these areas, a women’s movement is still necessary,” said Jolene DiBrango, NYSUT executive vice president. Those words underscored the “PowHERful” theme of the 2020 NYSUT Women’s Committee meeting in November, a virtual weekend focused on raising awareness about the challenges women face and learning how to support and empower the next generation of female leaders.

Session topics included recognizing and preventing human trafficking; disparities and implicit biases in women’s health care; fostering girls’ and women’s interest in science and math; and understanding how intersectionality — overlapping differences in gender, race and class — impacts discrimination. In an art session, participants used images and words to visually document their strengths.

New York State Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon’s keynote address detailed how she rose from a traditional upbringing to co-found and lead SAG-AFTRA, a 165,000-member entertainment union, and become a statewide workers’ advocate. Reardon advised speaking up, being heard and getting comfortable with power, not undercutting it with humor or apologies.

“Treat men the same way you treat women,” she said urging listeners to empower the next female vice president or president. “We have as much right to be there as anyone else.”

DiBrango and committee co-chairs Aisha Cook, New Rochelle Federation of United School Employees, and Leslie Rose, Hewlett-Woodmere Faculty Association, advocated amplifying women’s voices and harnessing their power as educators, leaders and activists.

Speaking up in difficult times is particularly important. “People assume that when you’re quiet, you’re ok,” said Cook who established the first NYSUT Women’s Committee in her local and is an AFT Women’s Committee member. “A fear of being viewed negatively keeps many girls and women from advocating for themselves.”

Women’s committees are important because they’re an “opportunity for members to feel connected to their local,” said Rose, co-founder of NYSUT Women of Long Island. “For women who don’t want to run for office, it’s another way to get involved.”

NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, Second Vice President Ron Gross and Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, welcomed attendees. “I’m proud of the work you’re doing to encourage more members to take active roles in our union,” said Pallotta.

With the pandemic, the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment and Kamala Harris’ election, “2020 has been a year like no other ... we have seen the lowest of lows and the highest of highs,” said DiBrango. “At our lowest, it’s easy to feel powerless, but women — our power, our ideas, our resiliency and our perseverance — are needed to lead now more than ever before.”

For more information about the NYSUT Women’s Committee, or to learn how to start a NYSUT Women’s Committee chapter in your local, visit nysut.org/women.
Union food drives filling in the gaps

By Liza Frenette
liza.frenette@nysut.org

One car at a time. One need at a time. The cars wound around corners and orange cones. Each car had its trunk popped up, waiting to pick up food.

Two large-scale drive-thru food pantries and several small ones sponsored by NYSUT and other labor, religious and civic organizations helped more than 1,000 families. Local unions have also held regional food drives on Long Island and in Rochester.

“I’m here for my mom and dad,” said the driver of one car waiting to get food at the snow-covered Saratoga County Fairgrounds. “For them to even ask, it’s a big thing.”

The Saratoga event fed 450 families. The next drive-thru, held at NYSUT headquarters, fed 900 families — many of them out-of-work educators and school staffers.

A local school bus driver who was without her job from March until September was in line for her family and a neighbor.

One man lost his job due to the pandemic. His unemployment is due to end Dec. 26.

While drivers waited, volunteers loaded boxes of frozen chicken, lettuce, potato salad, potatoes, eggs, oranges, brussel sprouts, sausages, and fresh fruit.

“Schenectady lost 440 staff, and Albany lost more than 200. This is for them, and for members of our community in need of food,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, dropping frozen chickens into the boxes. “It’s powerful and inspiring.”

Sonya Flowers, president of Albany Public School United Employees, stood in solidarity at a drive-thru food pantry that she helped set up at the Albany Labor Temple with NYSUT. More than 100 of her members have been laid off: home-school coordinators, maintenance workers, teaching assistants and hall monitors.

“They’re angry this has happened,” she said as a car drove up for food and co-workers shouted greetings.

NYSUT worked with the Regional Food Bank and Catholic Charities to stage the drive-thru pantries in Latham, Schenectady and Albany, coordinating with the Schenectady Federation of Teachers, Albany Public School Teachers Association and Albany Public School United Employees.

“All of us need to do what we can … and that little thing is going to change the world,” said Sister Betsy Van Deusen, director of community partnerships for Catholic Charities.

The food and mobile van outreach has been setting up 10 events a month in a 14-county region — up from one a month — providing resources for health care, case management, unemployment and more.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango, Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham, and Second Vice President Ron Gross, loaded food into boxes in the morning hours before the food drives opened.

One teacher waiting for food had to take a year absence to care for her son with special needs because COVID-19 has prevented access to both full-time in-school classes and day care.

“Essentially I’ve lost a year of pay,” she said, the worry lines on her forehead visible over her mask.

“I see the need in my community, and in some of my members,” said volunteer Pamela Malone, NYSUT Board member and Empire State College chapter president for UUP, the SUNY higher education union for faculty and professional staff.

“Labor is always ready to help the community.”
We showed up. We voted. Now what?
The questions were the focus of a December “Many Threads, One Fabric” event, the third in a series of NYSUT and AFT virtual town halls exploring racial justice, diversity and equity issues. In the wake of the November general election, which saw historic voter turnout in communities of color, panelists discussed how to use that political capital to improve the lives of multicultural citizens.

Moderated by Lezli Baskerville, president and CEO of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, event panelists included Sindy Benavides, CEO, League of United Latin American Citizens; Diana Cournoyer, executive director, National Indian Education Association; Fedrick Ingram, secretary-treasurer for the American Federation of Teachers; and Kent Wong, director of the UCLA Labor Center and vice president of the California Federation of Teachers.

J. Philippe Abraham, NYSUT secretary-treasurer, whose office handles social justice issues, welcomed panelists.

“We knocked on doors, we phone banked and we made our voices heard,” said Abraham. “The question is how do we as unionists sustain those efforts, to advance the rights of workers and immigrants and to advocate for social justice.”

The COVID-19 pandemic drove voter turnout. “It brought the inequalities in health care, economics and education to the fore,” said Baskerville, noting that in communities of color, one in four children face food insecurity and unemployment continues to rise.

“We need a stimulus package, not just testing and vaccines, because people are struggling,” said Benavides. A real solution for immigration and diverse cabinet appointments are also important. “We can’t be what we can’t see. We need more leaders who represent our communities.”

Ingram called for harnessing the energy of young activists to keep the pressure on lawmakers, and adopting a national approach to COVID-19, including a blueprint for keeping schools open safely. “The piecemeal strategy isn’t fair to the American people and we can’t have another lost year for students,” he said. “Our young people were out all summer — and those folks voted for change.”

As the smallest ethnic group within the multicultural coalition, Cournoyer asked for continued inclusion for Native Americans.

“Invite us to the table, and include Natives in your fight and advocacy,” she said noting that the challenges those communities face — health care and economic and educational inequity — mirror those of other minority groups. “It’s exciting to look outside our Native nation — let’s help each other.”

Wong believes that the best way to heal the nation after four years of division is to envision a multiracial democracy based on the values of economic and social justice. “The multiracial coalition scored a tremendous victory,” he said. “Now we need to collectively celebrate and build on what that means for the country. We need to lift up the hopes and aspirations of all people of color and conscience and organize toward a future grounded in our common values.”
Getting to know ... Mary Smith

Mary Smith is a food service worker and member of the Syracuse Teachers Association. She was interviewed by Mark Warner, a Unit 8 SRP Director with the Syracuse TA and a member of the NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee.

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

I work in the kitchen prepping, preparing and serving food to the students at the Syracuse Latin School.

I love my job because I love to feed people. Nutrition plays a very important part of the students’ learning experience. I feel I provide a resource to the children to help them learn and grow to their fullest potential. One of my biggest joys is that I can watch them grow from kindergarten to graduation.

I am a proud member of my union and support my brothers and sisters whenever I can.

How do you make a difference?

I feel I make a difference because we are some of the first people the students see and interact with as they start their day. We provide the nutrition and a smile that will start the day off on the right foot and a full belly to help them stay focused throughout the day. COVID-19 has affected me in a few ways, including having my extra hours cut. This not only affects me financially, but I miss the face-to-face interaction with the students and being assured that they are getting the hot meals and nutrition they need and require. This is so much more than a job for me.

What do you do outside of work?

My community involvement comes from me working with my own children. We are involved in cheerleading, marching band and Girl Scouts.

My favorite hobbies are cooking, baking and spending quality time with my family and friends.
Higher ed unions committed to finding solutions

By Ned Hoskin
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

The budget stinks, and everybody knows the budget stinks,” said recently appointed SUNY Chancellor Jim Malatras, laying it on the line as more than 50 stakeholders met for NYSUT’s annual community college summit to prepare for the upcoming legislative session.

“I think we can all unite in the theme that we need more federal aid,” he said.

Participants agreed that federal pandemic relief is long overdue, but that recovery will require enhanced revenue at the state level, as well.

“New York has been hit very hard by the pandemic and the economic crisis, especially the community colleges,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. Gathering SUNY officials, local college presidents and labor leaders from the campuses is invaluable. “Things have changed, and with labor and management working together, we present a unified message to policymakers,” he said.

The threat of 20 percent funding cuts this winter loom large, if more funding cannot be secured. It may be impossible in the spring to avoid departmental cuts and larger classes. Previous delays of 20 percent this year have already caused cuts and disruptions.

Meanwhile, in New York City, the City University — which earlier laid off 2,900 adjuncts — failed to honor a contractual pay increase in November. SUNY raises were delayed in September and October.

“Attempting to balance the budget on the backs of modestly paid public employees is a losing fiscal strategy, and a cruel one,” said Professional Staff Congress President Barbara Bowen. The state has failed to increase revenue by taxing the ultra-rich, she said, “preferring instead to shift costs to workers.” PSC is demanding that the chancellor rethink his plan.

At the December summit, Roberta Elins, president of the United College Employees/Fashion Institute of Technology, discussed the importance of reaching agreement with each community college’s administration on campus COVID-19 testing.

Elins said CC union leaders for the autonomous locals have been sharing strategies as they negotiate with their employers. Most of the locals have reached agreements, she said.

At SUNY four-year campuses, United University Professions has released spring semester safety guidelines to stem the spread of coronavirus once classes restart in February.

“Our report offers the strongest possible set of guidelines for SUNY to keep students, faculty and staff, and surrounding communities safe,” said UUP President Fred Kowal. “The recommendations are built upon lessons learned from the fall semester and the excellent work that SUNY has done since the arrival of Chancellor Malatras.”

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With the pandemic upending every aspect of education, one of the pioneers of a nationally known teacher evaluation system suggests this is not the year to be focusing on teacher ratings.

“Teachers need support, not scores,” says The Danielson Group, explaining why its remote teaching guide includes no teacher evaluation rubric. “Now is not the time to be thinking about how to evaluate teacher performance in a new and fluid context. This moment compels us to pause and engage in a thoughtful reset on our approaches to teacher support.”

While the union and many educators have voiced similar concerns, this is an unexpected move from The Danielson Group, whose four-level “Framework for Teaching” evaluation rubric serves as a model for many school districts across the country. It’s the basis of New York’s HEDI rating system, standing for Highly Effective, Effective, Developing and Ineffective.

“The school year ahead will be like no other before it and, we hope, like no other after it,” the group’s Framework for Remote Teaching guide’s introduction says. Referencing both the pandemic and today’s focus on racial justice issues, the guide suggests prioritizing student well-being, teacher wellness and family engagement in the 2020–21 school year.

At recent Board of Regents meetings, State Education Department officials acknowledged that many school districts are concerned about teacher evaluations because they use state assessments to measure the student performance category for Annual Professional Performance Reviews.

The board has not yet decided whether state assessments will be held this year but have made it clear that if any tests are administered, they must be in-person in school buildings. Last school year’s state exams were canceled due to the pandemic.

To give districts flexibility on APPR, SED is allowing districts to use the variance process for COVID-19-related temporary changes to APPR plans. Any changes must be locally negotiated.

In response to NYSUT concerns, the Regents voted in December to continue to accept variance applications for the rest of the school year.

Districts will still have to follow state law on minimum APPR requirements. However, many district plans currently require more. Variances could temporarily include: reducing the number of observations (if more than two are required); revising the student performance measure; and changing unannounced observations to be announced. Variances must be approved by SED and in compliance with Education Law.

The Regents and SED do not have the power to halt APPR this year. That would require an Executive Order from the governor, or a new state law approved by the Legislature and governor.
Educators say ‘new normal’ is not sustainable

By Sylvia Saunders
sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

As districts cope with spiking COVID-19 cases and crippling staff shortages, union members urged NYSUT to keep up the pressure for increased safety measures and more social-emotional support for staff. “The push is to keep schools open — not keep them safe,” said Joanna Monachino-Orlando, Shenendehowa Teachers Association.

“Teachers are performing miracles at great personal cost,” said Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake leader Mike Mosall. “It’s not sustainable.” The two were among many who spoke out recently in a series of online union meetings, including NYSUT’s Policy Council, Subject Area committees and BOCES Leadership Council.

Clearly moved by the first-hand reports from the field, NYSUT officers said their comments will help shape the statewide union’s ongoing advocacy with the governor’s office, state legislators, the Department of Health and State Education Department.

“We’re going to keep pushing back,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

NYSUT members from around the state shared poignant stories of how difficult it is to keep up with ever-changing state protocols for COVID-19 — and the varying implementation by local school districts. Many voiced concerns about the wide range of quarantine policies, testing protocols and a lack of notification when someone in the school community tests positive for COVID-19.

The uncertainty is taking its toll, leaders said. As COVID cases spiked throughout November and December, a growing number of schools shifted back and forth between in-person/hybrid schedules to fully remote. Others extended remote instruction into January and beyond.

With so many chaotic scheduling changes and hybrid versions, many members are struggling with childcare issues, said Schenectady Federation of Teachers President Juliet Benaquisto. “It would be a little easier if schedules were more aligned,” she said.

Union leaders also urged NYSUT to advocate for the state to cancel this year’s Regents Exams and grades 3–8 assessments. “We’re halfway through the year and there are big differences in how kids are learning,” said North Syracuse Education Association’s Joanne Thornton.

“Teachers and students need to know; what will finals look like?” Leaders also noted the lack of uniformity among districts and schools is clearly hurting morale. While some schools allow educators to teach remotely from their homes, others require that staff report to school to stream lessons. “It’s insulting,” said one elementary teacher, who must report to her empty classroom.

With so many educators in and out of quarantine and a severe shortage of substitutes, some districts have shifted to fully remote because they simply don’t have enough staff.

“I worry that COVID-19 has increased the inequity around the state,” said Benaquisto, whose district depends significantly on state aid. “Our district went remote because of savings. We also struggle with the digital divide.” The pandemic “has also brought to light the terrible condition of school buildings,” said Newburgh TA’s Lourdes Lopez-Romero. Clarence TA President Elizabeth Dunne agreed, asking why the state’s ventilation standards are more stringent for malls than school buildings.

“The pandemic has also shown us we need to have something in place for (staff) burnout,” said Dora Leland, a Horseheads TA leader and NYSUT Board member. “In the last four months, we’ve had members who are sobbing — and they do not feel supported. Social-emotional support does not mean shooting us an EAP video to watch.”

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango agreed, noting that SED’s reopening guidance clearly specifies that districts must provide ongoing social and emotional support for staff.

“Educators are hurting,” DiBrango wrote in a blog after the meetings. “Pandemic teaching and learning is hard, exhausting and some days nearly impossible.”

She said it’s essential for districts to make social-emotional support for staff a priority for the new year. “Educators need time to plan, time to collaborate and time to share how things are really going,” DiBrango said. “They need real help and real solutions to tackle the challenges they are facing, so they can be at their best for the students they care so deeply about.”
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Even the most experienced educators feel like first-year teachers this year. While there’s no teacher’s manual for today’s blended/hybrid learning environment, hundreds of educators from around the state shared practical tips and support during a series of free online webinars sponsored by NYSUT’s Education & Learning Trust.

“Some days are more about survival than academic achievement,” said Kurt Hassenpflug, an ELA/ENL teacher and North Colonie Teachers Association member who served as one of the panelists. “I feel more like Sisyphus than Hercules.”

Hassenpflug was one of three teachers on the ELT panel who offered a wide range of helpful tips during the sessions in November and December.

Looking for a more effective way to communicate with parents? Use loom.com to create quick videos explaining assignments. Want to create animated GIFs? Try https://giccap.dev/.

Presenter Kira Martelli, a sixth-grade teacher and Massapequa Federation of Teachers member, offered helpful tips on staying mobile for teachers traveling from classroom to classroom, such as using an apron, a backpack and a cart. Stick-on big chart paper is also invaluable.

“Always have a lesson plan in your back pocket,” Martelli said. “We’re in a blended model and we always have to be ready to go (fully) remote with less than 12 hours notice.”

Newburgh TA’s Kathleen Young, a physical education teacher, said it’s important to keep social-emotional needs front and center — for both educators and students.

“Turn off emails at the end of the day. Set alarms for start and finish times,” Young said. “Be patient with yourself and the students.”

The sessions were divided into two parts. In the first session, panelists discussed how to weave structure and routines into a chaotic day. The second session offered suggestions for engaging assignments and purposeful formative assessments, troubleshooting technology and modifying instruction for different learners.

To get out in front of that “Wait, what are we doing?” constant question during instruction, Hassenpflug suggested a multi-modal approach, including subtitles, images and multiple screens. If you are doing breakout rooms, give clear instructions on what’s expected.

Hassenpflug also urged participants to work through their union to advocate for training and raise concerns. “Know your contract,” he said.

During question-and-answer periods, participants talked about the importance of informing parents if students aren’t working, keeping grades up to date and ensuring school counselors are in the loop. Participants shared dozens of online tools and resources such as the Teachers Pay Teachers website, Book Creator and Class Dojo. A group of Long Island science teachers have created an online collection of lesson materials for middle school and high school courses.

Throughout the sessions, participants used the online chat to share more suggestions and thank presenters for their recommendations.

“Thank you for that See-Think-Wonder graphic organizer!” said Coxsackie TA’s Joshua Pray. Kenmore TA’s Mary Lynn Bieron, said teaching remotely can be very isolating. “Sometimes it’s just nice to see/hear that across the state we are all in this together!”

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango said the union offered the free webinars at the request of members, who said they needed practical training they could use immediately. “These sessions really filled a critical need,” DiBrango said. “They’ve also served as a powerful support system. It’s essential for us to lean on each other and share resources to make the daily instructional load a little less challenging.”

Tech troubles? ▪ When in doubt, restart devices.
▪ Is it charged? Even if it is, try plugging it in anyway.
▪ Hold down the power button longer than you think you need to.
▪ Try switching the device into airplane mode; leave it for a minute, then switch it out. This resets the Wi-Fi and Bluetooth radios built into most devices.
▪ Have a pre-established plan for what students will work on when WiFi goes down or there are tech troubles.

If you missed NYSUT’s two-part webinar series “Teaching in Blended & Hybrid Models,” video recordings and resources are posted at nysut.org/hybrid. You’ll find tech tips and a collection of recommended online apps, from gamified quizzes to actors reading stories.

www.nysut.org

By Sylvia Saunders sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

Educators share lessons learned on remote/hybrid teaching

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Union sees path forward with new slate of educator-lawmakers

By Ned Hoskin

For years hard of work with many months of active support from members of NYSUT and other unions all over the state, new state Sen. John Mannion finally broke through in Central New York. Mannion is a product of the NYSUT Pipeline Project that helps identify, train and support local union members who are interested in running for office. He joins several other members in the state Legislature, most of whom came through the pipeline. Sen.-elect Jabari Brisport, D-Bronx, and Assemblymembers-elect Chantel Jackson, D-Bronx, and Bill Conrad, D-Tonawanda, among others who are members or former members of the statewide union.

Having educators who are also labor leaders and activists in the halls of power is essential, said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, as fiscal support for public education, from pre-K through graduate school, seems to be one of the first things sacrificed when budget negotiations at the statehouse heat up. These educator-lawmakers know how many educators we’ve lost and the impact on students and communities. "Pallotta told the State of Education blog recently. "So they will be ferocious when they are fighting for the schools and for the communities throughout the state that will be impacted by negative budgets.”

Veto-proof supermajority

Two years ago, Democrats rode a mid-term wave to seize control of the state Senate in New York. But the moderating thumb of the executive branch weighed on their ability to move significant parts of their agenda.

In the weeks following this year’s elections, as mail-in ballots were tallied and results were certified, the scales tipped.

When Mannion was elected freshman senator in Senate District 50, his race in Senate District 50 the following week, they exceeded their goal with 43 seats. "We worked hard to support the incumbents and candidates who share our agenda, our values and our vision," said Pallotta. "The historic veto-proof majority ensures that these allies will be able to bypass the policies and programs that best serve our communities, students and parents, as well as the NYSUT members who worked so hard.”

Over the past several years, a number of NYSUT-backed legislative initiatives have passed both houses of the Legislature, only to die on the governor’s desk. In the wake of the 2020 U.S. Census, this advantage also means Democratic will be able to draw new district lines in 2022. If their supermajority is still intact. As of today, three Senate districts in 2022, if their supermajority is still intact. As of today, three of the four districts in Central New York that will be redistricted in the coming months are held by Democrats.

Federal wish list puts students, educators first

By Sylvia Saunders

Education advocates are looking forward to big changes on the federal front. While the most visible change will be the appointment of a new education secretary, many other leadership positions in the Biden administration will also provide a new level of support for public education, from pre-K through college.

"We’re expecting a commitment to strengthen and invest in public education,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “It’s a victory for working people in every district across the country.”

The new secretary of education will be at the forefront of federal support for education, and the Biden administration has already moved quickly to address the pandemic and its impact on students and schools.

A similar investment is needed for modernization of school buildings. The pandemic exposed the precarity of too many school buildings — older heating systems, cramped spaces, a lack of ventilation and windows that can’t be opened. Federal funding is desperately needed to all schools can re-open safely.

Other initiatives on our federal wish list include:

- Increased funding for Title 1 programs, special education services and community schools;
- End the federal education agency’s obsession with standardized tests;
- Expand access to higher education with debt-free public colleges;
- Strengthen the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program;
- End the federal education agency’s obsession with standardized tests;
- Invest in meaningful professional learning opportunities that teacher recruitment and retention;
- Protects for DREAMers, or young undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children; and
- Restore the Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights, Protections for DREAMers, or young undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children; and
- End the federal education agency’s obsession with standardized tests;
- Invest in meaningful professional learning opportunities that teacher recruitment and retention;
Authors, tween fans face off

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

For author Steve Sheinkin, isolation is one of the hardest parts of the coronavirus pandemic. Forced to cancel his regular schedule of 20 to 25 annual school visits, the Newbery Honor winning author of Bomb missed seeing students and teachers. “I didn’t think answering questions online was very creative,” said Sheinkin who longed to create a virtual community.

He reached out to Stacey Rattner, a librarian at Castleton Elementary School, whom he’d met eight years ago during an author visit. “I consider Stacey a super librarian,” said Sheinkin.

Rattner, a Schodack Faculty Association member, suggested going bigger. “Steve originally just wanted to ask authors questions about their book, but I said, ‘we need a kid in there,’” she said, explaining how the pair brainstormed “Author Fan Face-off,” a game-show-themed book trivia program airing Monday mornings on YouTube. It pits a tween-age superfan against a book author in a Jeopardy!-like showdown.

Since August, nearly 25 different authors have competed against pint-sized opponents from schools as far flung as Missouri, Toronto and California to determine who knows more about their book — the author or the superfan.

“Katherine Applegate, author of The One and Only Ivan, got crushed in her episode,” said Sheinkin, noting that most authors don’t mind being outplayed by a pre-teen. “I think it’s beautiful when the fan becomes the greater expert than the author.”

Since both Sheinkin and Rattner have strong connections in the student book world, they recruit authors through tweets, notes and personal connections. Authors scheduled for 2021 include Kwame Alexander, Jewell Parker Rhodes, Pam Munoz Ryan and Trenton Lee Stewart.

Rattner suggests incorporating the program into lessons by having students read a featured book and then watch the “Author Fan Face-off” episode.

“The program helps me stay connected with my middle-grade readers since I don’t get to meet with them due to COVID-19,” she said noting that at roughly 10 minutes long, the programs work well at the beginning or end of a class session.

Sheinkin suggests having students read the book and then play along with the episode to see how they fare against the author. “It’s about making reading fun — educators and authors are allies,” he said.

Check out “Author Fan Face-off” at youtube.com/SteveSheinkin1.

To nominate a student competitor or share a suggestion, contact Rattner (@staceybethr) and Sheinkin (@SteveSheinkin) on Twitter.

Plans underway for RA 2021

The NYSUT Board of Directors will meet this month to finalize plans for the 2021 NYSUT Representative Assembly and Local and Retiree Council Presidents Conference, scheduled for April 29–May 1.

“Our team is planning for every possible contingency,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “So, whether we ultimately meet in person, connect remotely, or experience the RA and presidents conference with some combination of the two, our delegates will have the opportunity to come together in solidarity to represent our members and conduct the business of our union.”

RA delegates will elect NEA state directors and NEA RA delegates. The RA will also honor the winners of the union constituency awards, the Lifeline Honor Roll, the social justice recognition award, and the Lifeline Honor Roll.

“Not for Ourselves Alone:” The Sandy Feldman Outstanding Leadership Award, the social justice recognition award, community service awards and the Lifeline Honor Roll.

For the most up-to-date info on the RA, including upcoming deadlines for submitting resolutions and amendments to the NYSUT Constitution and Bylaws, visit nysut.org/ra.
**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 30, 2021 at 5 p.m. during the 2021 NYSUT Representative Assembly at the Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza, Albany, N.Y. In accordance with the procedures specified below.

If the COVID-19 pandemic continues to necessitate government restrictions on public gatherings, therefor 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 2021 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., Friday, Feb. 12, 2021, in accordance with the criteria and procedures outlined below.

I. NYSUT State Director and Alternate NYSUT Director

To be elected by all in-service delegates* from NYSUT locals representing NYSUT Active members

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


Important Notice

The NEA’s governance documents provide that the successful candidate for NYSUT 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.

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 NYSUT 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 2021 NYSUT RA in-service delegate who represents NYSUT Active members shall be eligible to cast a ballot for NYSUT Director and Alternate NYSUT Director. In order to be eligible to vote at the NYSUT Representative Assembly a delegate must be registered by 4 p.m. on April 30, 2021 and must be present at her/his assigned voting locations on April 30, 2021 by 5 p.m. (or 15 minutes after the close of the session should it run beyond 5 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 30, 2021.

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. Electors will be those 2021 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 §6 (1c), (1d) and (4e) and Bylaw C(1)(b). The candidate for the NYSUT Director position with the highest vote total shall be declared elected to the NYSUT Board of Directors. The candidate for the NYSUT Alternate Director position with the highest vote total shall be declared elected to the NYSUT Board of Directors Alternate Director position.

II. NEA RA State Delegates

To be elected by all in-service delegates from NYSUT locals representing NYSUT Active members

- Elect approximately 37 NYSUT RA State delegates

The exact number of NYSUT State delegates to which NYSUT is entitled has not yet been officially determined by the NEA. The NEA’s NYSUT State delegate entitlement will be set by the NEA in late January 2021. The above estimate is subject to modification once the official State delegate entitlement for NYSUT is announced by the NEA.

A. Term of Office: The term of office shall commence as of the close of the 2021 NYSUT RA and conclude as of the close of the 2024 NYSUT Representative Assembly.

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 NYSUT State delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly.

C. Elector Qualifications: Each credentialed 2021 NYSUT RA in-service delegate who represents NYSUT Active members shall be eligible to cast a ballot for NYSUT State delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly.

In order to be eligible to vote at the NYSUT Representative Assembly a delegate must be registered by 4 p.m. on April 30, 2021 and must be present at her/his assigned voting locations on April 30, 2021 by 5 p.m. (or 15 minutes after the close of the session should it run beyond 5 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 30, 2021.

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. Electors will be those 2021 NYSUT RA in-service delegates who are registered and credentialed for the web-based program.

D. Tabulation: NYSUT State delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly shall be elected by a secret ballot vote of the eligible electors, pursuant to NYSUT Constitution Article VIII §(1c) and (1d) and Bylaw C(1)(b). The number of candidates receiving the highest number of votes corresponding to the number of delegate positions necessary to fill NYSUT’s entire NEA RA State delegate entitlement, shall be declared elected to the position of NYSUT State Delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly.

**Positions to be filled outside of the NYSUT RA**

III. NEA RA Retired Delegates

To be elected by NEA Retired members

Notice is hereby further given that the tally of a mail ballot election for the following positions will be conducted on April 19, 2021 at 10:30 a.m. at the NYSUT Headquarters, Latham, New York, in accordance with the procedures specified below.

Notice is hereby further given

A. Positions to be filled: Elect NEA’s four (4) NEA Retired delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly (subject to notification from NEA of any change in NYSUT’s final NEA Retired Delegate entitlement).

B. Eligibility Requirements for Nomination and Candidacy: Each NEA Retired member included in the NEA retiree membership roster, as provided to NYSUT and which resulted in NYSUT’s NEA Retired delegate entitlement, shall be eligible to nominate a candidate and serve as a candidate for NEA Retired delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly.

C. Term of Office: The term of office shall commence as of the close of the 2021 NYSUT RA and conclude as of the close of the 2024 NYSUT Representative Assembly.

D. Elector Qualifications: Each NEA Retired member included in the NEA retiree membership roster as of March 8, 2021, as provided to NYSUT and which resulted in NYSUT’s NEA Retired delegate entitlement, shall be eligible to cast a ballot for NYSUT’s NEA Retired delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly.

E. Mailing of Ballots: The ballots for the NEA Retired delegate election will be mailed on or about March 22, 2021 to the eligible electors at their address of record (as of March 8, 2021 at 5 p.m.)

F. Tabulation: NYSUT’s NEA Retired delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly shall be elected by a secret ballot vote of the NEA Retired members.

The number of candidates receiving the highest number of votes corresponding to the number of delegate positions necessary to fill NYSUT’s entire NEA Retired delegate entitlement, shall be declared elected to the position of NEA Retired Delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly.

IV. 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

*Inasmuch as the vast majority of the electors eligible to cast ballots in the NEA Retired delegate election (i.e. NEA Retired members) are not delegates to the NYSUT RA, a mail secret ballot will be conducted by the NYSUT Elections Committee for the election of NEA Retired delegates.

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may be obtained from the Elections Committee commencing Jan. 4, 2021 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 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 his/her 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 his/her 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 NYS 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 requirements for nomination listed below.
   Nominating Petitions: 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 Friday, Feb. 12, 2021.
   State Delegate Candidates to the NEA Representative Assembly: A Nominating Petition, signed by fifty (50) Active NEA members must be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by 5 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 12, 2021.
   NEA Retired Delegate Candidates to the Representative Assembly: A Nominating Petition, signed by twenty-five (25) NEA Retired members from the NEA retiree membership roster, which was used by the NEA as the basis for NYSUT’s NEA Retired delegate allocation, must be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by 5 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 12, 2021.
   Due to the potential for continuing government restrictions on public meeting and gathering, signatures for nominating petitions may be collected electronically. 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, followed by the period of open nominations, the number of candidates is equal to or less than the number of positions to be filled. In such instance, the NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer shall cast a single vote for the candidate and the candidate shall then be deemed elected by the Elections Committee.

V. 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 2021 issue of NYSUT United.

A reminder of the January/February 2021 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. 5 issue of the NYSUT Leader Briefing.

VI. 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 Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 shall be eligible: (a) to access and affix the mailing labels of eligible voters for campaign purposes at the NYSUT regional office designated by the candidate, and/or (b) to promote his/her candidacy by submitting a campaign statement for publication in the March/April 2021 NYSUT United “Election Issue.”

Mailing labels and appropriate office space in a common area will be provided to any candidate at the NYSUT regional office designated by the candidate on his or her Nominating Petition, to affix the mailing labels of eligible voters 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 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 NEA RA Retired Delegate are eligible to use mailing labels of eligible voters provided the candidates so indicated on the Nominating Petition. The mailing labels will be available in the regional office designated by the candidate during the week of March 15, 2021. Candidates will be notified by the regional office when the labels are available.

(2) Candidates for State Director, Alternate State Director and NEA RA State Delegate are eligible to use mailing labels of the eligible voters provided 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 March 22, 2021. Candidates will be notified by the regional office when the labels are available.

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 2021 “Election Issue” of the NYSUT United for campaign statements shall be allocated as follows:
In addition to the uncharged space provided above, a full listing of candidates for the positions of NEA State Director, NEA Alternate State Director, NEA State Delegate and NEA Retired State Delegate will also be published in the “Election Issue” of NYSUT United.

C. Caucus Slate Campaign Statements
Organizations wishing to be identified under the Campaign and Election Procedures and thereby be eligible to have a caucus identified campaign statement published in the March/April 2021 “Election Issue” of the 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 Friday, Feb. 12, 2021.

Caucus-identified campaign page(s) or a portion of a page (if partial state) 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 (charged) 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 Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 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 the 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 2021 NYSUT United “Election Issue” to NYSUT United Editor at united@nysut.org by no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 12, 2021. Additional information regarding the NYSUT United’s standard advertising house rates and policy may be obtained by telephoning the NYSUT United at 800-342-9810 or by email to united@nysut.org.

VII. NOMINEES’ FORUM
Statewide Offices Nominees’ Forum
Nominees for NEA Director, NEA Alternate Director and NEA State Delegates (“statewide offices”) 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 and return the Statewide Offices’ Nominees’ Forum Participant Request Form to the Elections Committee by no later than 5 p.m. on March 22, 2021.

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.

VIII. 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 2021 Representative Assembly, as approved by the Board of Directors and as adopted by the delegates at the 2021 Representative Assembly.

Campaigning at the NYSUT Representative Assembly shall end on April 30, 2021 at 4:45 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.

IX. 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 March 22, 2021.

If due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g. scheduling, equipment limitations or unavailability), the Elections Committee determines that any of the above-described limited services need to be 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 reimburised to NYSUT within thirty (30) days of the candidate’s or caucus’s receipt of NYSUT’s written statement of services.

X. 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.
XI. 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 4 p.m. on April 30, 2021, and must be present at her/his assigned voting locations on April 30, 2021 by 5 p.m. (or 15 minutes after the close of the session should it run beyond 5 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 30, 2021.

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 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, NEA Alternate State Director, and/or NEA State Delegate, 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.

In the event that a run-off election or run-off elections need to be held for a statewide office, the run-off election or run-off elections will be held Saturday, May 1, 2021 at a time to be announced by the Elections Committee Chair at the beginning of General Session #2.

If the COVID-19 pandemic continues to necessitate government restrictions on public gatherings, an in-person Representative Assembly cannot be held, and there is a tie vote in the mail ballot election held to fill a vacancy in the position of NEA State Director, NEA Alternate State Director, and/or NEA State Delegate, 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 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 4:45 p.m. on April 30, 2021. 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 continues to necessitate government restrictions on public gatherings, and an in-person Representative Assembly cannot be held, additional instructions for registering observers will be provided.

XII. 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
  - NEA State Delegate
  - NEA Retired Delegate

- Nominees’ Forum Participant Request Form

- Candidate and Caucus Services Request Form

- Caucus Notification Form

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

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and related government restrictions on large-group gatherings, a number of previously scheduled retiree council elections meetings were rescheduled for September and October in order to complete the nominations and elections process for retiree council officers and delegates. Listed below are the results of these elections. Congratulations to the newly elected retiree council officers and delegates from around the state and thank you to all the candidates and members who participated in the elections process. For more information, contact geraldyn.oreilly@nysut.org.

RC 2: President: Eva Mrocza; Vice President: Rose Furman; Secretary/Treasurer: Joanne Smith; NYSUT Delegates: Eva Mrocza, Rose Furman, Joanne Smith; NYSUT Alternate Delegates: Liz Dolce, Mark Shanahan, Janet Utz; AFT Delegates: Eva Mrocza, Rose Furman, Joanne Smith

RC 3: President: Veronica Cavan; Vice President: Arlene Reese; Secretary/Treasurer: David D’Amato; NYSUT Delegates: Veronica Cavan, Arlene Reese, David D’Amato; NYSUT Alternate Delegates: Mary-Lou Mancuso-Whalen, Ann Kennedy; AFT Delegates: Veronica Cavan, Arlene Reese, David D’Amato

RC 4: President: R. H. von Der Heide; Vice President: Frank Spero; Secretary: N. E. Stolle; NYSUT Delegates: R. H. von Der Heide, Frank Spero, N. E. Stolle; NYSUT Alternate Delegates: Janet Utz, John Cooper

RC 5: President: John Cooper; Vice President: R. H. von Der Heide; Secretary: N. E. Stolle; NYSUT Delegates: John Cooper, R. H. von Der Heide, N. E. Stolle; NYSUT Alternate Delegates: Janice Strauss, Joe Sano

RC 6: President: Margaret Bartolotti; Vice President: B. V. Voos; Secretary: Dan Sanfratello; Treasurer: Mary Moss; NYSUT Delegates: Margaret Bartolotti, Deanne Herrick, B. V. Voos; NYSUT Alternate Delegates: Jeanne Coonan, Mary Daly

RC 7: President: Loretta Donlon; First Vice President: Candace Johnson; Second Vice President: William Spreeter; Secretary: Melody Mariani; Treasurer: Carol Graham; Board of Directors: Paul Faraglia, Lili Rastegar, Mary Hanus, Ed O’Rourke, Philip DelloStritto; NYSUT Delegates: Loretta Donlon, Margo Buckingham, Candace Johnson; AFT Delegate: Loretta Donlon; AFT Alternate Delegate: Margo Buckingham

RC 9: President: Lynn Hunneyman; Vice President: Rod Sherman; Secretary: Carol Lawrence; Treasurer: John Clancy; NYSUT Delegates: Lynn Hunneyman, Phyllis Doane, Joe Verno

RC 10: President: Barbara McCarthy; First Vice President: Joe Sano; Second Vice President (SRP): Ann Cheyney; Treasurer: Laraine Gillette; NYSUT Delegates: Barbara McCarthy, Mary Kruhinski; NYSUT Alternate Delegates: Celine Casey, Deb Escobar

RC 11: President: Howard Kasen; Vice President: Andrew Kavulich; Secretary: Janice Strauss; Treasurer: Richard Escott; NYSUT Delegates: Andrew Kavulich, Loretta Curtin, Timothy Cooper; AFT Alternate Delegates: Richard Escott

RC 14: President: Howard Kasen; Vice Presidents: Nick Karnahez, David Cantor; Secretary: Yvon Leroy; Treasurer: Terri Meyer; NYSUT Delegates: Howard Kasen, Terri Meyer, Diane Tracy; AFT Alternate Delegates: Paul Ellis Graham, Yvon Leroy, Nina Rossi; AFT Delegate: Howard Kasen; AFT Alternate Delegate: Terri Meyer
Have a teacher strike memory?  
Share it!

By Kara Smith  
kara.smith@nysut.org

Long Island teacher locals have a long history of strikes and Retiree Council 17 President Ken Ulric wants to ensure it’s not forgotten.

The passing of legendary Long Island NYSUT activist Sheila Goldberg in 2020 was a wakeup call. “I realized that we’re losing our institutional history as members like Sheila pass,” said Ulric. With the election season winding down, Ulric — who heads Nassau County’s powerhouse retiree phone banking efforts — was ready for a new challenge. “I want to document these memories for our locals and our union,” he said.

In the 1976 Farmingdale Federation of Teachers strike, NYSUT officers and staff and scores of teachers from surrounding Nassau and Suffolk county districts joined their Farmingdale sisters and brothers on the picket line before and after school. “Unique for the time was using walkie talkies and CB radios to coordinate strike lines,” said Ulric. Members also noted license plate numbers to discourage line crossing, a practice that led one group of scabs to travel to school in a funeral hearse to avoid identification. It didn’t work.

That same year, the Nassau BOCES Central Council of Teachers went on strike, and some 50 law enforcement officers arrived on motorcycles to disrupt and intimidate picketing unionists. The Levittown United Teachers’ 53-day strike in 1978 remains the longest teacher strike on Long Island. President Martin Cullinan was sentenced to 20 days in the Nassau Island public school teacher strike to avoid identification. It didn’t work. That same year, the Nassau BOCES Central Council of Teachers went on strike, and some 50 law enforcement officers arrived on motorcycles to disrupt and intimidate picketing unionists. The Levittown United Teachers’ 53-day strike in 1978 remains the longest teacher strike on Long Island. President Martin Cullinan was sentenced to 20 days in the Nassau County correctional facility for his role, a sentence that then-Gov. Hugh Carey commuted after eight days.

Of Long Island’s 124 school districts, roughly 20 percent have struck, and nearly 62 percent of the striking locals have hailed from ED 17. “I’m really proud to be part of one of the most militant election districts on the island,” said Ulric.

He plans to interview members and document their stories in a manuscript. As this project is a work in progress, Ulric notes that facts may change as he compiles more information. To keep the project scale manageable, he’s focusing solely on Long Island public school teacher strikes, although he realizes several Long Island college educator locals have also struck. “I haven’t found any SRP strikes yet,” said Ulric.

The 2021 Representative Assembly marks the 30th anniversary of NYSUT’s retiree program. The retiree unit began in 1991 to help retired members stay organized and involved in union activities.

Do you have a story about a Long Island public school teacher strike to share? Contact Ken Ulric at kulric@optonline.net.

Not from Long Island? We want to hear all of your strike stories. Send stories to geralyn.oreilly@nysut.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

Tracy Beatty, RC 1, 2, 3, 4, 44  
716-634-7132  
Louise Ortman, RC 4, 46  
716-664-7425  
Peter Randazzo, RC 5, 6  
585-454-5550  
Anne Marie Voutsinas, RC 7, 8  
315-431-4040  
Ruth Shippee, RC 9, 10  
518-783-7977  
Mark Padgett, RC 11, 15  
607-786-5742

Jennifer Shaad-Derby, RC 12, 13  
518-783-7977  
Ellen Pincus, RC 14, 15-16  
914-592-4411  
Claire Zatorski, RC 17, 18, 19  
516-496-2035  
Joan Perrini, RC 20, 21, 22, 23  
631-273-8822  
Judy D. Kalb, RC 43  
561-994-4929, ext. 129
Union voice imperative when navigating workplace hazards

By Liza Frenette
liza.frenette@nysut.org

Educators working in close contact with students, including those with special needs, are often exposed to spitting and crying, which generate airborne particles. Since the coronavirus now sweeping the world is most potent when airborne, there are serious concerns that unions are helping to resolve.

Veronica Foley, NYSUT health and safety specialist, explained that concerns should be brought to administrators, who must share them with mandated health and safety committees. Unresolved concerns can generate a complaint to the Public Employee Safety and Health bureau, run by the New York State Department of Labor. The agency maintains respiratory protection, sanitation, hazard communication and record keeping standards. Complaints falling outside those regulations can be filed under a general duty violation.

Mike Piccolo, Southern Westchester BOCES, said there are SRP staff who work closely with students with special needs who may not be able to wear masks and can be yelling, crying and spitting — all generating airborne contaminants. Not enough face shields have been provided to staff.

“School staff working in close proximity with unmasked students should be provided with N95s (masks) and included in the school’s respiratory protection program. This is a requirement based on state guidance, but it is best practice,” Foley said. “Unfortunately most are ignoring this even though we all now know COVID-19 is airborne.”

Custodians may also be using chemicals that require a respirator. SRPs who provide assistance with toileting and breathing apparatus are also at more risk.

Administrators should be approached about getting proper personal protective equipment. If you’re not receiving an adequate response to a complaint and it is a PESH violation, speak to your local union president about filing a PESH complaint, Foley said.

The State Education Department also mandates a health and safety committee for each district; it must include labor and parents.

“NYSUT helped us form a health and safety committee, and it’s so helpful now,” said Tammy Hughes, East Syracuse-Minoa Teaching Assistants Association. Forming a labor-only committee is key, Foley said, to organize concerns before they are brought to the district committee.

Union power can help with many concerns. Rhonda Harrell, Ossining Support Staff president, said her local was successful getting plexiglass workplace shields where needed; face shields for some support staff; and gowns and gloves for those assisting with toileting. The OSS was also able to get extra pay for security workers and TA’s doing additional COVID-19 related work.

Harrell’s advocacy began with a request to be part of a school reopening team.

“Because of a NYSUT webinar, I learned that we should have a seat at the table,” she said. “I want support staff to know their voices will be heard.”

Workplace essentials

- If your school identifies that a teacher, school nurse, or SRP needs a respirator, then they need to make sure they are properly fit tested by the employer, and instructed in how to maintain it.
- Sanitizers used in the workplace need dwell time. They cannot be wiped off right away.
- Soap and hand towels need to be in every bathroom.
- Be sure administrators are keeping accurate records. According to Labor Law 27, these must include sicknesses, injuries, etc.
- If a custodian is provided with a new disinfectant to use, be sure that it is accompanied by training. If teaching staff is asked to disinfect then they must receive the same training and PPE that is provided to the custodial staff.
- Check to see if the district is maintaining a required cleaning log.
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“CABIN IN THE WOODS” — Cozy creekside Adirondack getaway. Sleeps four. May–October. $850/week. 518-582-4851. nancy.tracy10@yahoo.com; www.adirondacktracycamp.us.

EDUCATION

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PASSINGS

Edith “Eadie” Gerber Shanker

Eadie Shanker, a teacher, activist, organizer and founder of the United Federation of Teachers, died Sept. 19; she was 87.

Eadie began her career teaching English at JHS 126 in Queens. Before the UFT was formed, she was a member and organizer with the Teachers Guild.

“Eadie’s commitment to labor and education served as an inspiration to scores of unionists,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “She helped lay the foundation for our union and her work has touched the lives of so many. Eadie will be missed, but her legacy will live on.”

“Eadie Shanker was not only a courageous woman who put her career at stake to found this union, but she remained a lifelong supporter and advocate for public education and social justice,” said UFT President Michael Mulgrew.

In 1959, Eadie met fellow educator and union pioneer Al Shanker. The two married in 1961. In addition to her work in the UFT’s infancy, Eadie helped establish literacy programs for adults and she worked to create CUNY programs for high school dropout prevention.

In 2012, Eadie received NYSUT’s “Not for Ourselves Alone:” The Sandy Feldman Outstanding Leadership Award, which recognizes women who have provided significant service and leadership to their local and state affiliates.

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[ PASSINGS ]
5 QUESTIONS FOR...

Stacy Bradley
George Junior Republic TA Co-President

1. Throughout the pandemic, you and your colleagues at Special Act School Districts around the state have gone above and beyond to serve your students. Tell us about that.

We serve about 190 at-risk students who live on campus and come from 53 counties across the state. George Junior has continued to be a safe haven for students because of the perseverance, care and commitment of the educators and staff. While traditional public schools have closed, our educators have continued reporting for duty in person to care for our at-risk students, many of whom are neglected or abused minors and juveniles with a history of delinquency. We’ve juggled those responsibilities with providing a remote education for about 30 local day-school students.

2. Why didn’t you shut down along with the other schools?

Sending residential students home to learn by themselves on a laptop wasn’t an option. We moved our entire operation from our classrooms to our students’ living areas because it was absolutely essential to ensure there were no gaps in learning. More than that, we knew there couldn’t be gaps in the care and love these students need to feel from the adults they rely on. Our members worked quickly to create a safe-learning environment that has helped students navigate the trauma they have experienced and the anxieties that come with learning during this public health crisis.

3. What kind of support did you provide?

Our staff became their counselors, parents and a support system — and we did the same for each other, leaning on our colleagues for support with both instructional and emotional challenges. On site, it wasn’t just subject-area teachers who reported for duty. Our reading specialists, speech therapists, physical education teachers and our culinary arts teacher pitched in to make sure math, science and other subjects were being taught in the residential cottages where students live. It had to be all hands on deck to keep our school going for these children who went six months with nothing more than a weekly Zoom call with their families as support.

4. What about local students?

Off site, our day-school teachers were calling home, contacting social service agencies and families, and in some cases scouring local towns to locate and help students dealing with homelessness. When crisis struck, our members have been nothing short of heroic, creating a safe, supportive space for children who need it most.

5. What has been the union’s role?

We’ve pushed to address health and safety concerns, ensuring proper protocols are in place to keep students and staff safe. We are constantly advocating for more funding for programming and to raise salaries for educators who are paid dramatically less than other public school staff. In a pandemic that has highlighted inequities in education and beyond, we are yet again seeing the disparities that exist for our Special Act Schools. The state is in a precarious financial situation, but we can’t allow that to disproportionately affect schools that serve students with the highest needs. These students need adults to do the right thing and provide them with every resource possible to succeed.
Charlotte Johnson, Port Jefferson Teachers Association

You might assume that, as a marathon competitor, Charlotte Johnson has a sparkling collection of hard-earned medals hanging on a wall.

But no. She’s given them all away.

It’s personal. She used to teach with Christine Pendergast, whose husband Chris, also a teacher, was diagnosed with ALS the year Johnson began her career at Comsewogue. Chris Pendergast, an outdoor enthusiast and athlete who founded ALS Ride for Life, raised $10 million in the more than 27 years he lived with the crippling disease of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. He died Oct. 14.

While Johnson swam, ran, cycled and sweated her way through marathons, she put a price on it: she used the events to raise money for the ride. “I would give him my medal every year,” said Johnson. “He lived with the disease of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. He died Oct. 14.

When Chris Pendergast added a bike trek as an ALS Ride for Life fundraiser, Johnson helped map out the routes of 25, 50, 75 and 100 miles. For two decades, as Chris and others with ALS traveled the length of Long Island in their wheelchairs, they would stop at schools. When they stopped at Comsewogue, Johnson’s students would perform a song that they had chosen specifically for that event. “The kids really cherished being able to sing for him,” Johnson said. “When you can make a connection through singing, that’s a very powerful thing.”

Money raised by ALS Ride for Life is used to fund research, a treatment clinic, and practical, day-to-day care for families.

To read more about Johnson’s work with ALS Ride for Life, visit nysut.org/itswhatwedo.

On the job and in the community, NYSUT members make a difference.
What to know about taxes and your retirement

As a member or retiree of the New York State Employees’ Retirement System (ERS), you may receive taxable income or a taxable distribution from ERS under certain circumstances. If you received a taxable payment in 2020, we will mail you a 1099-R form by Jan. 31, 2021, to use when preparing your federal tax return.

For members

You may be responsible for a taxable distribution from ERS if you take a taxable loan. If you borrow more than a certain amount, the Internal Revenue Service may consider part or all of your loan taxable. If you apply for a loan using Retirement Online, you can see your loan options and any taxable amounts before you borrow. You may also be responsible for a taxable distribution from ERS if you default on a loan. This happens when you do not make payments at least quarterly or do not pay your loan back within five years. For more information about the taxability of ERS loans, visit our Loans page at osc.state.ny.us/retirement/members/loans-applying-and-repaying.

Members who leave public employment before they are vested, and withdraw their ERS membership and contributions, will also receive a 1099-R form.

For retirees

Most ERS pensions are subject to federal income tax, but not New York State or local income tax. (Note: if you move to another state, that state may tax your pension.) ERS calculates your federal withholding amount based on your W-4-P form (Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity Payments), which you initially filled out when you retired. You can adjust your federal withholding at any time. For more information and answers to common tax questions, visit our Taxes and Your Pension page at osc.state.ny.us/retirement/retirees/taxes-and-your-pension.

For members and retirees

To make sure you receive your 1099-R before Dec. 31 of each year, you should sign in to your Retirement Online account, see if we have your correct mailing address on file, and update it if needed. Sign in or register at web.osc.state.ny.us/retire/sign-in.php. For help understanding your 1099-R, visit our interactive tutorial at web.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirees/tutorial_1099r_form/index.php.

NYSTERS consultants

Most NYSTERS 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)
Sheila Sullivan Buck • 585-454-5550 sheila.buck@nysut.org
Beth Chetney • 315-431-4040 beth.chetney@nysut.org
Ronald Gross • 631-273-8822 ron.gross@nysut.org

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

NYSTRS 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)
Sheila Sullivan Buck • 585-454-5550 sheila.buck@nysut.org
Beth Chetney • 315-431-4040 beth.chetney@nysut.org
Ronald Gross • 631-273-8822 ron.gross@nysut.org

Did you know?

Under New York State’s Cost-of-Living Adjustment, eligible retirees received up to an extra $15 monthly starting with their Sept. 30 pension payment.

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Poster honors Black History Month

NYSUT celebrates Black History Month this February with a new poster honoring Stacey Abrams, an American politician, lawyer, voting rights activist and author who served in the Georgia House of Representatives from 2007 to 2017. She was the body’s minority leader from 2011 until the end of her term.

As the 2018 Democratic nominee in the Georgia gubernatorial race, Abrams was the first female, Black major-party nominee for governor in the United States. After losing to Republican Brian Kemp in an election marked by accusations of voter suppression, in 2018 Abrams founded Fair Fight Action, an organization committed to ensuring that all votes are counted.

The group has helped register an estimated 800,000 new voters and fought “exact match” rules used to disqualify ballots for typos and minor errors.

In February 2019, Abrams became the first Black woman to deliver a response to a presidential State of the Union address. In 2020, Abrams’ work was crucial in increasing the number of registered voters and getting a record number of voters to the Georgia polls.

NYSUT is proud of its history of working with the Black community to advance the civil rights movement and to promote quality education and health care for all New Yorkers.

For more on the important contributions of Black Americans to the labor movement, or to download a printable copy of the poster, visit nysut.org/publications. Limited quantities are free for NYSUT members and leaders.

Read Across America

While Read Across America Day is celebrated March 2, the reading program sponsored by the National Education Association is celebrated all year long! Visit readacrossamerica.org for a plethora of resources, including tips for readers, book list recommendations that showcase diverse authors and characters, and info on securing free books. The site also includes a monthly calendar featuring a different theme each month. Upcoming themes include Explore families and history (January); Practice empathy (February) and Cultivate compassion (March).

Kudos

The podcast highlights obscure, lesser known events in history. To listen, visit podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-missing-chapter-histories-forgotten-stories/id1534509472.

Penny Prince, Professional Staff Congress/CUNY Lehman College, has produced a new musical online. “Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet” debuted Sept. 22 on the Lehman MMTD YouTube page.youtu.be/IbwgYh2b_KA.

In print

Elizabeth Battaglia, Rondout Valley FT retiree, has published her first children’s book. Astrid-20 helps children understand the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Judith Harding, Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers retiree, published Soaring for Academic Success: 50 Simple Ways Families Can Help Their Young Children Succeed in School.

Kenneth Huff, Williamsville TA, has written Engaging Students in Science Investigation Using GRC: Science Instruction Consistent with the NRC Framework and NGSS. The book is available at teachingsciences.phenomenal.org/store/p10/EngagewithGRC.html.

Wilbur (Bill) Johnson, United Federation of Teachers retiree, published Right Time, Right Places: One Teacher’s School Reform Journey. The memoir is available from the publisher, Adelaide Books, adelaidebooks.org.

Helen Levin, a UFT retiree, has written Small Gifts: A Memoir of an Artist in the Classroom. An art and literacy teacher, Levin describes in the book how she implemented original drawing techniques, then applies them for an adult literacy pilot program.

Michael Pelletieri, UFT retiree, published The Boardwalkers, a murder-mystery set in the ‘80s. The book “features love, suspense and exposes the seedy underbelly of Atlantic City.” The book is available at Barnes and Noble.

Nancy Robison, Nassau BOCES Central Council of Teachers retiree, has published a children’s series, Stubby: A Cat’s Story. The books follow the adventures of Stubby the cat. Robinson donates all proceeds from the book sales to animal charities.

Maddyn Epstein Steinhart, UFT retiree, has written Put Your Boots On and Dance in the Rain. The poetry book is available via The Three Tomatoes Publishing.
NYSUT members receive a 40% discount off tuition for graduate courses. ELT is now a CTLE provider and many courses are applicable for NYSED Certification.

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