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HOPE

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NYSUT UNITED

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS



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Director of Communications: Damien LaVera
Lead Editor/Copy Desk Chief: Clarisse Butler Banks
Assistant Editors/Writers: Liza Frenette, Ned Hoskin, Sylvia Saunders, Kara E. Smith, Matt Smith
Photo Editor: J. El-Wise Noisette
Lead Designer: Nicole Clayton
Art and Production: Dana Fournier
Advertising: Andrew Watson
Online Communications Coordinator: Bryan Thomas
Editorial Support: Julie Malec
Contributors: Rachel Paster, Clayton Eichelberger, NYSUT Office of General Counsel

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NEW YORK STATE UNITED TEACHERS
 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110
 518-213-6000 ■ 800-342-9810

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Union fights and wins on APPR!

In a major victory for NYSUT, a new law ensures K-12 districts are not required to complete annual professional performance reviews for 2020-21 and will not lose any school aid as a result.

It means superintendents may grant tenure to educators who, in their discretion, are eligible and

otherwise qualified, except for the absence of an APPR rating for the 2019-20 and/or 2020-21 school years.

"NYSUT fought throughout this legislative session for this law to ensure fairness in the tenure system for K-12 teachers in a year like no other," said President Andy Pallotta.

COVID-19 raised unprecedented obstacles, challenges and detours, and "educators have doubled their efforts to tend to students' academic, social and emotional needs throughout the pandemic," he said.

"This law recognizes that commitment by no longer requiring districts to complete APPR this year while

still providing administrators with flexibility in making tenure decisions under the unique circumstances of the pandemic.

"This is a win-win for educators and their districts."

The governor's signature enacted the law June 7.

— Ned Hoskin

Legislative session ends with many signs of progress

By Ned Hoskin

ned.hoskin@nysut.org

In a bizarre legislative session conducted gavel to gavel under pandemic conditions, NYSUT managed to make more significant gains after the state budget was enacted in April.

"The union's legislative department, team of political action coordinators and grassroots volunteer lobbyists pulled out all the stops in May and June to help pass important bills that will support union members and the people they serve," said President Andy Pallotta, who leads the legislative operation.

Here are several examples that passed both houses of the Legislature. They require the governor's signature to be enacted.

Insurance consortia

Since 2015, through a series of legislative extensions, the state has allowed employers/school districts with between 51 and 100 employees to remain in health insurance consortia and trusts. This allows them to afford better benefits at lower costs. In December of 2022, however, the most recent extension would have expired and caused those districts with experience-rated health

insurance plans to lose their consortia and to purchase their insurance in a community-rated market, which would be more costly and likely offer less coverage.

With NYSUT support, lawmakers passed a bill to extend the current December 2022 sunset until December 2025.

Higher Ed teacher prep

Since 2014, students entering graduate-level education programs have been required to achieve a minimum score on the Graduate Record Examination and have an overall grade point average of 3.0, both of which severely restrict admission practices and prevent institutions from admitting students they would otherwise deem to be qualified.

NYSUT helped pass a bill that would remove the GRE requirement and provide flexibility in the GPA bar.

Especially as the state faces a teacher shortage, NYSUT advocates maintained, the current law disregards the fact that students and would-be teachers are a diverse group with unique backgrounds, talents and abilities that should be comprehensively evaluated and not be arbitrarily excluded by subjective, rigid standards that are, quite frankly, poor predictors of quality educators.

Section 80

Both houses of the Legislature passed a bill to provide uniform layoff and job recall protections in civil service law to all public employees throughout the state when government employers seek to reduce the public workforce, including procedures for rehiring based on length of service as a determining factor — last in, first out. Employees who have longer permanent service should have greater retention rights than those employees who are subsequently hired to jobs in the same title.

Lead in schools

Due to their relatively smaller size and rapidly developing bodies, children are particularly susceptible to the deleterious effects of lead in drinking water, which is still found in many older buildings.

NYSUT helped pass a bill in both houses that expands water testing in schools, increases testing frequency, removes testing exemptions, establishes action levels and increases information disclosure requirements.

The bill allows for any expenses, appropriated by the Department of Environmental Conservation, to be reimbursable to the school district from clean water infrastructure funding.

Safety zones

Students living within 1.5 miles of their public school are not entitled to transportation unless they live in designated "safety zones." With NYSUT support, both houses of the Legislature passed a bill to expand the criteria for safety zones to include areas with proven high crime rates and deteriorating vacant buildings. NYSUT showed lawmakers that these conditions present reasonable safety issues for school children in K-12 who otherwise must walk to school.

COMING UP

June 22

Primary Day

June 28

NYSUT Board of Directors meets

June 30–July 3

NEA Representative Assembly

July 6–10

AFT TEACH Conference

July 12–13

NYS Board of Regents meets

July 12–16

NYSUT LAP Conference

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

NYSUT pushes bill to protect rights of trans students

By **Ned Hoskin**
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

In a recent national survey of more than 40,000 LGBTQ youths ages 13-24, 40 percent said they seriously considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months.

Even more frightening, more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth said they had seriously contemplated taking their own lives.

The results are shocking, but transgender, gender nonconforming, and non-binary (TGNCNB) students are routinely misgendered and denied accommodations based on their gender identity in educational settings. While some large New York school districts have policies to protect these young people, most do not.

That's why NYSUT's LGBTQ Committee and political activists engaged with Equality New York to push the Transgender and Non-Binary Anti-Discrimination Requirements in

Schools bill (S369/A840), which would ensure all TGNCNB students in K-12 education settings are safer.

"This institutional bias against transgender, gender nonconforming, and non-binary students is harmful," said NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, who leads the union's LGBTQ Committee.

"The survey sounds the alarm that something must be done as soon as possible," he said. "This is not about who uses what lavatories; this is about saving lives."

The bill would require boards of education of every school district to establish policies and procedures regarding the treatment of transgender or gender non-conforming students.

The 2020 survey was conducted



by The Trevor Project, a non-profit organization focused on suicide prevention among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. Among other things, it showed that 61 percent of transgender and

nonbinary youth reported being prevented or discouraged from using bathrooms that correspond with their gender identity. Overall, many respondents described being afraid to express their identities at school and reported bullying from peers and a lack of support from adults.

The bill makes the case that "affirming" schools not only help these students in their academics and social integration, but also help keep them safe by decreasing self-harm behaviors. Without affirmative

support, youth are at higher risk.

For example, the survey quantified this difference: Transgender and non-binary youth who reported having pronouns respected by most people in their lives attempted suicide at half the rate of those who did not have their pronouns respected.

"NYSUT members in upstate locals, as well as New York City and downstate, have been educating their communities on this issue for years," said President Andy Pallotta. "It's so important to work with the LGBTQ community on this legislation."

Get involved

The NYSUT LGBTQ Committee is sponsoring a Many Threads, One Fabric event June 17 to help members learn "How to Support Our LGBTQ and Allied Students."

Learn more and register at nysut.org/pride2021.

VOTE in local primary elections!

June 22 is primary day in New York state. Early voting will be available from June 12-20. Absentee ballots will be available, as well.

Check with your local county board of elections for times and locations.

With no state general election this fall, this year's June primaries all concern local-level offices.

A primary election is an election in which registered voters select a candidate who they believe should be a political party's candidate for elected office to run in the general election. They are also used to choose convention delegates and party leaders. New York uses a closed primary process, in which the selection of a party's candidates in an election is limited to registered party members.



Grassroots advocacy gets results!

By **Ned Hoskin**
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

Jason Carter of the Wayne Teachers Association shared the plight of NYSUT members who need legislative relief from the annual professional performance review requirements for this pandemic year.

Tenure is tied to state testing, which again this year has been compromised by COVID-19 restrictions. Last year, the governor issued an executive order to suspend APPR for 2020, allowing districts to grant earned tenure.

This year, Carter explained in a virtual meeting with Assemblyman Josh Jensen, R-Rochester, it's up to the Legislature.

Jensen, who supports the move, quickly jumped in with an update: "The Assembly just passed it — unanimously."

A dozen people on the Zoom call laughed as Carter threw up his hands and exclaimed, "I just asked you for it, and 30 seconds later you delivered!" The Senate approved the bill earlier and it went to the governor, who signed it June 7 to enact the measure.

OK, we all know it doesn't always work that way, but the value of May's In-District Committee of 100 advocacy by NYSUT political activists cannot be understated.

"Progress on legislative issues cannot be separated from the efforts of NYSUT members who share real-life experiences to educate lawmakers about the impact of their decisions," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

Another hot topic for NYSUT volunteer lobbyists is the need to limit the expansion of charter schools, which are privately operated but publicly funded through local districts.

"They have a history of fraud and mismanagement, and they are opaque, with no transparency," said Candace Rubin of the Rochester TA. It's more of an issue in the cities, she said, "but the issues seem to represent principles that (suburban and rural) Republicans would support."

Among other issues, advocates urged lawmakers to move legislation

emergency calls earlier that week — one for a mental health issue, and another for a student who was severely crashing on a new diabetic regimen.

She called it a typical day and used the story to show lawmakers why a school nurse is needed in every building.

NYSUT nurses showed up in force via Zoom to thank lawmakers for passing safe staffing legislation that awaits Gov. Andrew Cuomo's signature, and to explain the need to end mandatory overtime for home care nurses.

In a lobby day for School-Related Professionals, bus driver Barbara Montalbano of Sachem Central TA told lawmakers that recently a student had a seizure on a bus. The other kids thought the student was just being silly and did not alert the bus driver, who was focused on driving.

"The seizure was made worse because of the lapse of time before the student got attention," Montalbano said. "We're talking about students' lives and safety." That's why NYSUT members are advocating for a bill to require a bus monitor, in addition to a driver, on every school bus.

Union advocates also urged legislative action to support labor rights for SRPs, including seniority rights for people in civil service jobs when filling vacancies and a bill to preserve employees' due process rights and a fair process to appoint independent hearing officers for disciplinary actions.

*Note: **Liza Frenette** contributed to this article.*



Kim Hartshorn, United University Professions, Plattsburgh chapter, addresses higher ed issues in a virtual Committee of 100 meeting with state Sen. Dan Stec, R-Queensbury.

to provide flexibility for higher education institutions when determining admission standards for graduate level teacher programs. This could provide more exemptions for the minimum admission test scores and the required grade-point average, which limit the pool of potential educators in the pipeline.

"This restricts who can be allowed into teacher programs, at a time when we are already facing a teacher shortage," said Ellen Mancuso, Monroe CC Faculty Association.

In a special Health Care Lobby Day, Roslyn school nurse Beth Schroeder told lawmakers how she had been handling two 911

Budget success ties record high

In yet another strong display of support for public schools, voters approved 99.3 percent of school budgets for 2021–22, according to analysis by NYSUT.

"Voters in communities across New York once again have shown that funding public schools at the local level is a top priority for their families," NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said.

"After more than a year of crisis, it's clearer than ever before that public schools are the backbones of our communities, delivering not only an education to our students, but providing social-emotional learning, mental health services, meals and so much more," he said. "Investing in public education is investing in the future of our state. Clearly, voters agree."

Voters across the state approved 670 budgets and defeated only five — a rate of 99.3 percent. This passage rate ties the record set in 2017. More than 95 percent of school budgets have passed annually since 2013.

This year school districts devised budgets following historic funding commitments, from both the state and federal governments, aimed at bolstering public education after more than a year of pandemic-related disruptions.

Even before the pandemic, NYSUT advocated for significant new investments to address critical underlying needs that schools have dealt with for years. These include increased mental health needs, cuts to AP and elective courses, and a lack of support for English language learners.

Pallotta said it's critical that districts use their budgets to immediately begin addressing those underlying needs, while bolstering the health and safety of schools in the ongoing battle against COVID-19.



COVID-19 vaccines and the law

By Rachel Paster and Clayton Eichelberger
NYSUT Office of General Counsel

NYSUT's Office of General Counsel fields many questions about rules pertaining to the COVID-19 vaccine. The following is general guidance that is subject to change as the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine status continue to develop:

- Currently, there is no federal or state law that requires COVID-19 vaccination. There is also no COVID-19 vaccination requirement for children in grades pre-K-12.
- On May 10, Governor Cuomo announced that all in-person students at SUNY and CUNY schools would be required to be vaccinated in the fall. He did note this requirement would be contingent on the vaccines receiving full FDA approval rather than their current Emergency Use Authorization. Some private colleges have also announced vaccination

requirements. We note that Pfizer and Moderna have filed for full authorization, which is expected to be granted soon.

- While a few employers have mandated vaccination for their employees, most employers have not. Mandating the vaccine for employees may be legally permissible, but it is not without controversy especially given the vaccine's Emergency Use Authorization status.

- Employers may relax certain COVID-19 policies for vaccinated employees, such as no longer requiring a vaccinated employee who has come in contact with a positive COVID-19 case to self-quarantine.

- Employees who decline to get vaccinated may be subject to additional protective measures either at their employer's behest or due to CDC guidelines. For instance, an employer could require unvaccinated employees to take extra protective measures, or work in a different workspace or worksite.



HAKAN NURAL/UNSPPLASH

- It is possible that certain reasonable accommodations previously made under the Americans with Disabilities Act for individuals considered to be at high risk from COVID-19 could no longer be available for employees who decline to be vaccinated. The U.S. Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has not yet issued updated guidance concerning the availability of vaccines and accommodations for high-risk individuals.

- In New York state, employees in both the public and private sectors are entitled to four hours of paid COVID-19 vaccination leave per injection.

In sum, while your employer may not require you to be vaccinated, taking the opportunity to do so may afford you certain rights and privileges you might otherwise not be eligible to receive. Remember, both the law and employer guidelines in the COVID-19 arena are ever-changing, so be sure to check for updates on these issues with your local union.

**For general information purposes only. Nothing in this article should be taken as legal advice for any individual case or situation. This information is not intended to create, and receipt or viewing does not constitute, an attorney-client relationship.*



PROVIDED

Higher ed members play crucial role in state's fight against COVID-19

Combatting the COVID-19 pandemic has required an all-hands-on-deck approach, especially among higher education union members from all across New York state. From campuses in the heart of New York City, to community colleges in the more rural counties, these dedicated public servants are among those who have helped conduct testing and administer massive numbers of COVID-19 vaccines.

As of mid-May, more than 1.5 million vaccines had been provided at State University of New York campuses. More than 420,000 New Yorkers have been vaccinated at City University of New York campuses. SUNY and CUNY four-year colleges, community colleges, university centers and SUNY hospitals continue to house vaccination sites, as well as ongoing testing locations to help track and stop the virus.

Carolyn Kube, left, is president of the 5,000-member UUP chapter representing health care professionals at SUNY Stony Brook University Hospital. "Many of my members have been redeployed to work at PODS (points of distribution); some are volunteering on their day off, and some retirees are volunteering at the Suffolk County PODS."

Campus-based coronavirus testing helps check for clusters, and helps stay ahead of any possible outbreaks, said Ed Quinn, United University Professions/Stony Brook University chapter president. Stony Brook University, as of mid-May, reported administering 200,000 shots on campus as well as 350,000 vaccines throughout Long Island.

— Liza Frenette

What is the PRO Act?

By NYSUT Office of General Counsel

Legislation that would dramatically expand workers' right to organize has cleared the U.S. House and is awaiting Senate approval. If passed by the Senate, the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act will significantly expand labor protections for private sector employees' right to organize and bargain collectively in the workplace.

The PRO Act increases penalties for employers that violate workers' rights; protects strikes and other protest activity; streamlines the process for reaching a collective bargaining agreement once a union is formed; and so much more.

Specifically, if passed, the PRO Act would:

- Eliminate so-called "right to work" laws which, contrary to their name,

make it harder for working people to form unions and bargain collectively for better wages and benefits;

- Forbid employer interference with union elections. It makes it an unfair labor practice to require employees to attend "captive audience" meetings designed to discourage union membership. It would also prohibit employers from entering into agreements with employees under which employees waive the right to pursue or join collective or class-action litigation;
- Assist newly formed unions in reaching a first contract;
- Strengthen worker protections against employer retaliation for exercising rights under the National Labor Relations Act;
- Increase penalties for employers that violate workers' rights by instituting civil penalties for violations of

federal labor law, including back pay and damages;

- Address procedures for union representation elections; provide employees with the ability to vote in elections remotely by telephone or the internet; modify the protections against unfair labor practices that result in serious economic harm; and establish penalties and permit injunctive relief against entities that fail to comply with National Labor Relations Board orders; and
- Protect strikes and other protest activity and make it unlawful to hire permanent replacements for striking workers.

Importantly, the PRO Act would also provide whistleblower protection to employees, including those with management responsibilities, when they participate in protected activities such as:

- providing information about a potential violation to an enforcement agency;
- initiating or participating in a proceeding concerning an alleged violation; or
- refusing to participate in an activity the employee reasonably believes is a violation of labor laws.

In addition to these increased workplace protections, the PRO Act would provide economic justice for marginalized groups by encouraging and supporting unionization efforts and the corresponding rise in wages for workers of color and women that comes with collectively bargained pay. The PRO Act's passage is critical to protecting working people and providing a significant step toward leveling the playing field between employers and employees.



Union calls for end of 'simultaneous teaching'

By Sylvia Saunders

sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

Concurrent teaching. Simultaneous instruction. Double-duty live-streaming.

Whatever you call it, NYSUT leaders say it's time for the practice to end. It's unfair for districts to expect or require educators to teach in-person students and remote students at the same time.

"It's been nothing short of a nightmare. A lot of tears and exhaustion," said John Caulfield, president of the Levittown United Teachers. "Concurrent teaching was a desperate response to the pandemic crisis — but it's time to get back to what we know works best: in-person teaching and learning."

That was the consensus of hundreds of local presidents who came together for an online dialogue earlier this spring with NYSUT officers. Local leaders said teachers were simply expected to turn on the camera and broadcast from their classrooms. There was little training or adequate equipment provided.

"Teachers just did the best they

could under very difficult conditions," said Caulfield, a school counselor. "Many found that switching attention between remote and in-person learners created an impossible situation where both groups of students lose out."

As districts start planning what school will look like this fall, NYSUT is strongly advocating for an end to simultaneous instruction.

"We need the State Education Department to set up guardrails," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "Let's not have an à la carte way of teaching."

"We believe it's bad practice and bad pedagogy," said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango. "It's simply not a good use of technology."

DiBrango noted teaching strategies and preparation are obviously different for in-person and virtual students. The logistics can also be distracting for students in both settings. "Teachers may be the ultimate multi-taskers, but concurrent teaching is pushing the limits," DiBrango said. "It's unreasonable to expect teachers to do both at the same time."

If we've learned anything from the

pandemic, it's the value of in-person learning, DiBrango said. "That face-to-face interaction is best practice," she said. "Students perform best when they have daily interaction with educators and their fellow students."

In addition to pushing for an end to concurrent teaching, NYSUT is urging state policymakers to phase out remote learning as a primary instructional practice.

"Remote instruction should not be required to be offered and if it is, it should be a separate program where educators will be specifically dedicated to the remote learning mode," DiBrango said. If remote learning is offered as an alternative, details should be subject to collective bargaining. Districts should set clear eligibility guidelines and time frames, so that remote instruction is not being done for the wrong reason or for convenience, she said.

Districts that lack the capacity to offer a remote instruction alternative can turn to BOCES, which contract with component districts for services.

"We've had a high level of success with it this year," said Donna Walters, president of Erie 1 Professional Educators Association, at a BOCES

union leadership meeting earlier this month. After contracting with Springville-Griffith to provide remote education to about 35 high school students this year, her BOCES is expanding its eAcademy to offer middle and elementary education this fall.

"They're hiring additional staff, including full-time instructors for art, music and physical education," she said. "All teachers are remote-only and housed in a common area to encourage collaboration."

It's important for the union to be involved, Walters noted. During the initial planning stages administration attempted to assign one math teacher to cover grades 7-12 for about 300 remote students. "I just laughed like I was watching a comedy routine," she said. "I said stop and think how many preps that is."

A number of other union leaders said their BOCES are looking at offering remote instruction services.

"There's been a lot of conversation about this and it's important we have clear parameters from the state," said Andy Jordan, president of BOCES United Professionals at Monroe 1 BOCES. "If we're going to do it, it must be done right."

Through tough times, NYSUT members shape the future

By Ned Hoskin and Sylvia Saunders

NYSUT leaders wrapped up the 2021 Representative Assembly with a powerful sense of hope, purpose and union pride — a feeling that together, we can get through anything.

Though the pandemic forced the statewide union to conduct its annual convention in a remote format for the second year, NYSUT leaders and a who's who of speakers recalled a year that offered tremendous challenges, yet brought people together like never before.

Speaking online to 2,679 delegates and 513 alternates, President Andy Pallotta said educators ensure a safe space where students can respectfully exchange ideas and grow and learn from each other.

"Through public schools and public higher education we protect and strengthen our democracy," Pallotta said, "and this is the incredibly important work that you do every day."

Pallotta applauded the response by health care professional members who ran toward the danger to serve patients in crisis. He also hailed educators' response to pandemic-related changes that turned the practice of teaching upside down overnight and stressed families and communities around the clock.

"Moving forward — things have to change," he said. Teachers should not be expected to teach in-person and remote students simultaneously.

He demanded that the state Legislature and the governor suspend APPR for the 2020-21 school year. "Penalizing hard-working



NYSUT officers observe a moment of silence in honor of members lost since the last RA.

EL-WISE NOISETTE

educators during this crazy year is simply the wrong approach," he said.

Despite the disruption of the pandemic, Pallotta said, NYSUT scored some big wins this year, including achieving priority vaccination status for members of the union and historic gains in the state budget.

"Pause a moment and realize that what you're doing matters," Pallotta said. "It matters not just for the students you have in your classes today, but also for the future. You are making history."

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango said NYSUT members have served as first responders in a time of crisis.

"You are the reason our students will do more than just survive this pandemic," she said. "As their first responders, you have given them hope. You've taught them how to resist in the face of racism, sexism and hatred. You've taught them resiliency, and you've shown communities that schools and campuses are more than just buildings. They are lifelines."

DiBrango said NYSUT would continue to advocate for a safe return to in-person learning. "That personal connection is critical," she said.

NYSUT Second Vice President Ron

Gross, who was elected at the height of the pandemic, recalled a year of inspiration leading NYSUT's program services department, which includes health and safety, health care, social services, constituency groups and retirees.

"The last 14 months have been extraordinary. But we as a union are even more extraordinary," Gross said. "This pandemic has opened our eyes to see what can be done to prevent illnesses and injuries to our students and staff. We must not recede once this dreaded scourge is over."

NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, who heads up the union's social justice efforts, was proud to report on the great success of the union's "Many Threads, One Fabric" initiative to promote racial and social justice.

"We are also making great progress in getting social justice committees established and active in every region of the state," Abraham noted.

In his role as treasurer, Abraham said NYSUT is marking its sixth straight year where state dues have remained flat for all salary banks, with growth to 675,000 members statewide.

Convention Committee Chair

Sterling Roberson, UFT, reported that resolutions committees had met in the weeks leading up to the RA, and reported their recommendations to the NYSUT Board for further consideration.

Visit nysut.org/ra for full coverage of the convention, including remarks from our national affiliates and state and federal lawmakers.

RA Elections results

NYSUT Elections Committee Co-chairs Rod Sherman of Plattsburgh Teachers Association and Joe Najuch of Newfane TA announced election results. With no contested races, the following candidates were elected for 2021-24:

NEA Retiree Delegates

Lynn Diagostino, Retiree Council 44
William Ninness, Bethlehem Central TA
Sara Rodland, RC 44
Catherine Savage-Ninness, RC 45

NEA State Director

Serena Kotch, Cleveland Hill Education Association

NEA Alternate Director

Sue Raichilson, Buffalo Teachers Federation

NEA State Delegates

J. Philippe Abraham, UUP-Albany
Cordelia Anthony, Farmingdale FT
Rowena Blackman-Stroud, UUP-Downstate Medical

Denise Breckenridge-Barnes, Buffalo TF

Gwendolyn Brown, Buffalo Educational Support Team

Thomas Brown, UFT

Michele Bushey, Saranac TA

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RA Elections results

Jolene DiBrango, Pittsford District TA
 Laura Franz, Albany Public School TA
 Lynn Garcia, Buffalo TF
 Anne Goldman, UFT
 Ron Gross, William Floyd United Teachers
 Sophia Howard-Johnson, Buffalo TF
 Dora Leland, Horseheads TA
 Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, Buffalo TF
 Kara McCormick-Lyons, White Plains TA
 Andrea McCue, Haldane Faculty Association
 Kimberlyn McEvoy, Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers & SRPs
 Christine O'Callaghan, UFT
 Adam Piasecki, Ithaca TA
 Debra Poulos, UFT
 Sue Raichilson, Buffalo TF
 Angie Rivera, Rochester Association of Paraprofessionals
 Dolores Rosso, Buffalo EST
 Andrew Sako, Faculty Federation of Erie Community College
 Christine Salamone, Buffalo TF
 Michael Sill, UFT
 Maureen Singer, East Greenbush TA
 Jo Ann Sweat, Buffalo EST
 Mary Vaccaro, UFT
 Bernard Washington, Syracuse TA

NYSUT Legacy Fund celebrates members

By Kara Smith
 kara.smith@nysut.org

Recognize an activist from your local, chapter or retiree council with a donation to the NYSUT Legacy Fund, the statewide union's newest way to help members celebrate members.

Make a contribution in honor of a retiring, longtime local president. Commemorate the passing of a dedicated negotiations team member. Or mark an important professional milestone for a committee chair.

"There are countless in-service and retiree activists who work tirelessly on behalf of NYSUT," said Ron Gross, NYSUT second vice president. "With more than 600,000 members, it's impossible for the statewide union to recognize them all. The NYSUT Legacy Fund is a way to give long overdue recognition to these dedicated men and women — the backbone of our union."



The NYSUT Legacy Fund recognizes honorees at three contribution levels. All donors receive a letter of thanks, on behalf of the statewide union, for their contribution.

■ \$250 — Honorees receive a certificate of recognition and a NYSUT Legacy Fund pin.

■ \$500 — Honorees receive a certificate of recognition, a NYSUT Legacy Fund pin and a mention in *NYSUT United*.

■ \$1,000 — Honorees receive a certificate of recognition, a NYSUT Legacy Fund pin, a mention in *NYSUT United* and recognition at the annual NYSUT Representative Assembly.

A portion of the donations will expand support for NYSUT retirees, including retiree council grants and enhancements to NYSUT's Retiree Services Program. To honor an activist from your local, chapter or retiree council with statewide union recognition, visit nysut.org/legacyfund.

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Union workshops explore implicit bias



By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

It can influence where we live and who we vote for. It can determine who we're friends with and who we marry. It can also lead to tragedy when it affects split-second decisions — like determining whether a stranger coming toward you in a dim alley is a friend or a foe.

"It" is implicit bias, hard-wired, subconscious preferences that we all hold, but that most of us don't even think about. According to researchers, whether we're aware of them or not, our implicit biases play a key role in how we interact with the world.

NYSUT is helping educators take a closer look at the issue with "Sticks & Stones: Understanding Implicit Bias, Microaggressions & Stereotypes," a series of workshops that raise awareness about the role of implicit bias in classroom dynamics. NYSUT received a \$1 million dollar grant in the state budget to expand its implicit

bias training program statewide over the coming year.

According to "Understanding Implicit Bias," a paper published by Ohio State University's Kirwan Institute, implicit bias is holding "negative attitudes about people who are not members of one's own 'in group.'" These preferences can cause us to discriminate against people who are different than us — whether we do so knowingly or not.

To test the theory, days before beginning the NYSUT course, participants are assigned to take the Implicit Association Test offered by Project Implicit to measure their strength of associations between different concepts, evaluations and stereotypes. The results are often eye-opening. While most people are aware they hold some degree of prejudiced and stereotypical thinking, they don't realize how much those beliefs influence their behaviors, the researchers found.

Building that awareness is the

goal of the trainings, explained J. Philippe Abraham, NYSUT's secretary treasurer, whose office heads the union's social justice initiatives. "Helping members identify and examine their own implicit biases helps them explore how their biases impact their behavior toward the students in their classrooms and communities," Abraham continued. "Ultimately, this helps educators foster more inclusivity within our schools and classrooms."

And that helps students feel valued, heard and safe.

The training is split into two modules. The first session details the concept of implicit bias; the second looks at stereotypes and microaggressions — subtle, typically unintentional slights directed at minorities. Both sessions use exercises, readings and personal narratives to help participants self reflect.

"A valuable aspect of the training is that it teaches members how to interrupt and challenge

TOGETHER WE RISE

How implicit bias can show up in schools

Disproportionality in discipline: Policies that appear racially neutral on their face, but result in the over-representation of students of color — particularly Black students — in suspensions, expulsions and referrals.

Disproportionality in special education: Misguided placements that result in the over-representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education programs.

Teacher mindsets and beliefs: Underestimating the intellectual capacity of culturally and linguistically diverse students, and often girls, inside the classroom.

Tracking: School policies that disproportionately place students of color in remedial or low-track courses.

Dominant discourse: Ways of thinking and talking about students and families that diminish, underestimate, or even pathologize them.

Source: edutopia.org

microaggressions and stereotyping when they hear them in the classroom," said Abraham, noting that while comments like "What are you?" or "That's so gay" might not be said with harmful intent, they still have a negative impact on the person on the receiving end and are inappropriate. "We're proud to raise awareness about these type of issues for our members."

For info about future implicit bias trainings, visit <http://nysut.cc/implicitbias2>. To learn more about NYSUT's social justice initiatives, visit nysut.org/socialjustice.



How to combat anti-Asian hate? Education

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

For most of her life, Natasha Christensen, Monroe Community College Faculty Association, flew under the radar. As the child of Taiwanese immigrants, “It was assumed that I was law-abiding, studied a lot, followed rules and people didn’t look at me as a threat,” said Christensen, a professor of sociology.

That changed with the pandemic, when some Americans unfairly blamed and attacked Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders due to the coronavirus. “I went from freely navigating to being scared to live my life and teach what I’d spent the last 35 years of my life studying,” she said. Christensen’s experience isn’t unique. In the wake of the pandemic, violence against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is on the rise.



From left, Preya Krishna-Kennedy, Bethlehem CTA; Jessica Tang, president of the Boston Teachers Union; and Natasha Christensen, Monroe Community College FA.

NYSUT’s Civil and Human Rights Committee hosted a virtual meeting to learn more about the issue and discuss solutions. “An injustice against one is an injustice against all,” said NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, whose office covers NYSUT’s social justice initiatives. “Only by raising awareness and increasing education can we combat the growing attacks on our Asian and Pacific Islander siblings.”

Christensen joined with Preya Krishna-Kennedy, Bethlehem Central

Teachers Association, to explore the historical roots of racism and violence against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and help participants raise awareness within their communities.

“Our goal is to give some context for the violence over the past year,” said Krishna-Kennedy, a high school social studies teacher. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders communities have experienced discrimination since arriving in the United States in large numbers in the 1850s. A shared commonality is a feeling of

otherness.

“I grew up not being reflected on television, in magazines or in other areas of American society,” said Christensen.

“We are not seen as Americans by the general population,” said Krishna-Kennedy, the daughter of Indian immigrants, who remembers having to explain that she wasn’t a terrorist after the 9/11 attack.

In breakout sessions, participants discussed how to build awareness and reduce race-based violence. All agreed that education is key.

“These are parts of American history and they should, and need to be, taught to help people understand the systems of oppression,” said Boston Teachers Union President Jessica Tang, who chairs the AFT’s Asian American and Pacific Islander Task Force.

For more information, visit nysut.org/manythreads.

Empathy key to effective communication

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

American schools don’t have a behavior problem; they have a communication problem. “After a lifetime of traumatic experiences, two-thirds of Americans respond to perceived threats by fighting, flight or freezing,” said Cindy Bigbie, Ph.D., founder of “The Bigbie Method” a conflict resolution process based on nonviolent communication techniques and restorative practices.

Connection — being seen, heard and valued without judgment — is key to interrupting the cycle of trauma and bringing about

better understanding and peace. “Operationalizing Peace in America’s Schools,” a recent installment in NYSUT’s Many Threads, One Fabric series exploring social justice issues, detailed Bigbie’s theories.

Moderated by J. Philippe Abraham, NYSUT secretary-treasurer, the event helped educators foster better classroom communication. “As educators, we are committed to helping our students in every way that we can,” said Abraham.

Trauma, on behalf of both educators and students, is the root of most communication breakdowns, explained Bigbie. To move beyond it, we must connect through empathy.

“Empathy has three components, really listening to what people say, reflecting back what you hear, and needs guessing — looking past their words and trying to guess what their true underlying need is,” explained Bigbie. “Conflict is nothing more than an unmet need.”

Instead of empathizing and listening, most people fall back on tactics like blaming, minimizing or giving advice. “Often these strategies foster more disconnection because



Cindy Bigbie, Ph.D.

listeners make it about themselves,” she said.

Two of Bigbie’s former students offered high praise for the strategies. Trevon Patterson said a lot of his troubles in school stemmed from the way he was treated by adults. “When people say things that make you feel like you’re a menace, then you might as well play that role.”

“It’s mostly about empathy for me,” said Trevon Germany. “When you feel like someone is consciously listening to you it hits home differently.”

Visit bigbiemethod.com for more.

Getting to know ... Christopher Martino



Christopher Martino, a microcomputer specialist, is second vice president of the Saratoga-Adirondack BOCES Employees Association and a member of the NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee. He was interviewed by Cindy Goodsell, SABEA secretary.

issues with smartboards, PCs, laptops, software, hardware and anything in between — pretty much anything associated with technology.

I always had a passion for fixing computers and helping people. Helping the teachers with a problem in the middle of their lesson and seeing the smiles on their faces when it's fixed makes me happy. Knowing I helped someone remedy their problem is why I love my job.

How did you get involved in the union?

My dad was very involved in his union on the Long Island Railroad back in the '60s and '70s. My brother followed his footsteps.

After moving up to Warrensburg and, later, to

Queensbury, there were not many opportunities for me to join a union. When I finally got hired by Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES, I jumped at the chance to join our union and never looked back.

I was approached by the president at the time to see if I wanted to be a building rep, so I accepted. After about a year I was elected to second vice president and am currently serving my third term. I am on the Local Action Project team. I also am on the Next Gen Committee, an ED 10 Delegate, and just got appointed to the NYSUT SRP Advisory Board.

Do you have any hobbies?

My main hobby is my gaming computer. I also have been playing Dungeons and Dragons since 1980 and love getting together with my friends every Tuesday night to play. I have quite the collection of records and tapes, as well as fantasy novels and comic books. My favorite author is R.A. Salvatore — I have every book he has written.

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

I've been doing IT work for over 30 years. My primary duties are to support the clients at whatever center I am at, which can be assisting with any

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'Grow Your Own' initiatives inspire future educators

By Sylvia Saunders

sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

For Caitlin Caiazza, an "Exploring Teaching" course at Half Hollow Hills High School was eye-opening.

"When we shadowed teachers at different levels and subject areas, it was super helpful," Caiazza said. "It made me realize elementary is definitely not a good fit for me, so I focused on secondary instead."

The course also helped steer Caiazza into becoming a special education math teacher at her high school alma mater.

"I still remember the director of special education — my current director — coming in and giving us a presentation," she said. "It certainly helped guide me."

Caiazza's experience is typical of the many students who have participated in Jessica Nolan's "Exploring Teaching" high school elective and Future Educators Club at Half Hollow Hills. "The goal is to expose them to as much as possible," said Nolan, a social studies teacher who has taught the course and run the club for about 15 years.

For some, the experience inspires a student to enthusiastically pursue a career in education. For others, she said, a day shadowing a teacher prompts some students to conclude, "Whoa, this is hard work!" and decide



Half Hollow Hills teacher Caitlin Caiazza, at right, says a high school elective course led by Jessica Nolan, left, helped inspire her to become a special education math teacher.

PROVIDED

that education is not a good career choice for them.

Nolan shared her experiences earlier this spring at a Take a Look at Teaching conference co-sponsored by NYSUT, United University Professions, SUNY and the State Education Department.

Nolan's coursework and club offer various "buddy" programs, after-school elementary tutoring, job shadowing and school-wide activities such as celebrating teacher appreciation week. Students design 15-minute mini-lessons and present them to elementary classes. Others volunteer in a specialized program for students with autism.

Nolan believes it's important to

introduce students to a wide range of options within the education profession beyond teaching, including school counseling, social work and occupational and speech therapy. She has also arranged visits to New York City classrooms so that students can see what it's like to teach in an urban setting.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango said the union will be working with local teacher unions around the state on a wide variety of "Grow Your Own" programs for middle and high school students, thanks to a major grant from the National Education Association.

"NYSUT's priority is to develop a strong pipeline of diversified and talented

educators who are valued and supported," DiBrango said. "'Grow Your Own' programs like these two at Half Hollow Hills are a wonderful way to develop aspiring educators who are strongly connected to the school and community."

For local leaders and members interested in starting or expanding local "Grow Your Own" initiatives, NYSUT has posted resources at takealookatteaching.org. The TALAT Educator Career Framework offers a menu of suggested activities to help middle and high school students learn more about themselves and think about a career in teaching.

SED extends timelines for Next Generation testing

As NYSUT has been advocating, the State Education Department has postponed full implementation of the Next Generation Learning Standards by one year due to the pandemic.

Under SED's extended timeline, the first tests based on the new standards will be the state's grades 3–8 tests in English Language Arts and math in Spring 2023. The new tests were slated to begin in the upcoming school year.

"Districts and teachers have put their efforts into triaging the pandemic-related needs of our students in the past year, and they need time to collaborate with colleagues on curriculum and be trained on the shifts," said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango. "We're glad the State Education Department agreed."

DiBrango said NYSUT's subject area committees, board members, BOCES and Policy Councils provided valuable insight on the uneven and inequitable rollout of the new standards. While some districts have provided substantial professional learning opportunities, others have not.

With the timeline extension for science, the final administration of the grade 4 science test will now be Spring 2022. The final administration of the grade 8 science test aligned to common core curriculum will be Spring 2023. The first administration of the new grade 5 and grade 8 science tests aligned to the new standards will be June 2024.

Regents exams tied to the new standards will also be postponed, with the first slated for June 2024.

Young voices of the pandemic

Creating art both sharp and tender has allowed students to work through feelings of anxiety, isolation and fear. Many have shared their work in NYSUT's first-ever virtual arts showcase, "Inside/Outside: Students of the Arts Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic."

Colorful. Painful. Thoughtful. Hopeful. Students have unmasked and explored their feelings in dance, music, painting and photography.

"The arts are such an essential part of the development of a child," said Jolene DiBrango, NYSUT executive vice president. For some it is a pastime, for some a passion, and for some, it will become their profession, she said. The arts are a reason many students get up and go to school — and the reason many stay in school.

The arts also offer students a creative — and emotional — outlet. Research shows the robust impact of the arts on both mental and physical health, said

NYSUT staffer Terry McSweeney. She facilitates the NYSUT Arts Committee, which hosted the virtual art show.

"As schools return to in-person instruction in the fall and some sense of 'normal' is restored, we need to think how the arts can be part of the recovery process for students and recognize the value of the arts in the fundamental mission of education," McSweeney said.

The virtual show is set up as a gallery tour featuring the work of more than 100 students from nearly 30 schools across the state. NYSUT Arts Committee member Joan Davidson, a retired arts educator and member of the United Federation of Teachers, coordinated the exhibit.

Tour the online exhibit at <http://nysut.cc/virtualarts2021>.



Turner Wheaton
Grade 9
"Mask in Class"
Kelly Fisher
North Syracuse EA



Arianna Jaype | Grade 4
"Front-Liners"
Shulie Cooper | UFT



Arianna Johnson | Grade 2 | "Crazy Coronavirus"
Monica Baker | Webutuck TA



Dante Brooks-Rodriguez | Grade 6
"Friends in the time of Coronavirus"
Erin-Marie Elman | UFT

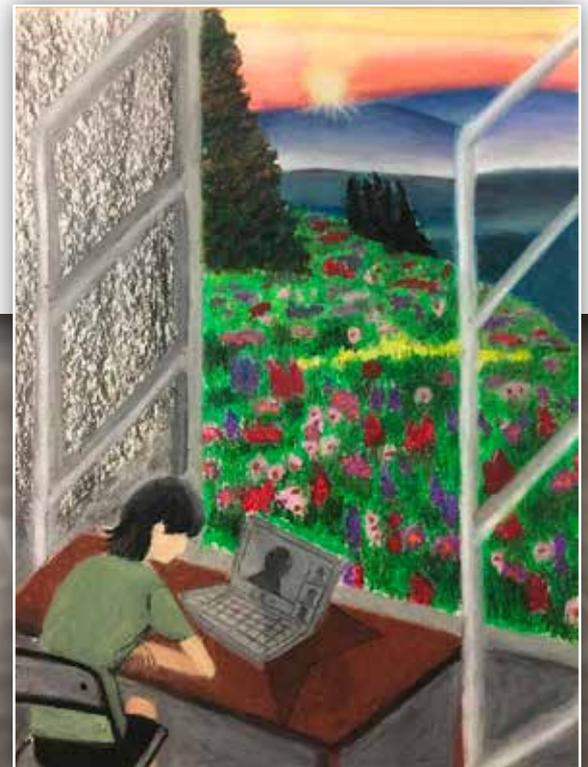
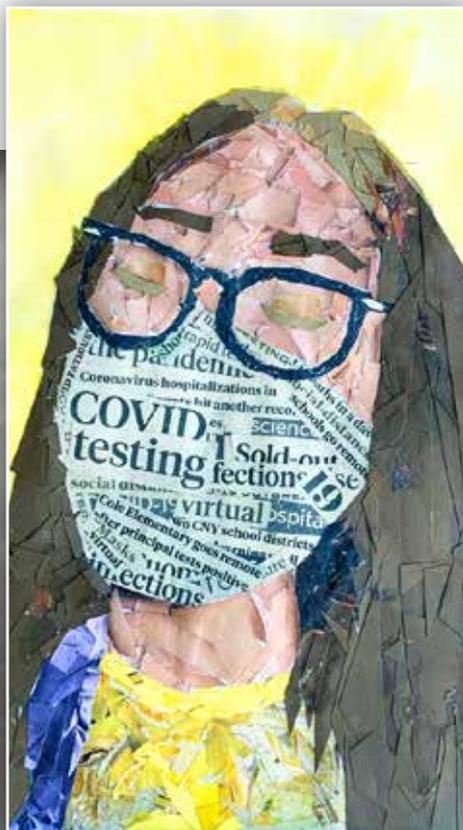


Michael Ewen | Grade 12 | "Consumption"
Jane Judson | United Federation of Teachers

Alexis Castro | Grade 12 | "Breathless"
Matthew Wilson | Chenango Valley TA



Katelyn Hagadorn | Grade 10
"Moving On"
Jennifer Schrader
West Genesee TA



Brynn Amatulli | Grade 10 | "Untitled"
Allison Razzano | Commack TA



PROVIDED

Herstory class opens minds, changes perspectives

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

Learning about women's history empowers Abby. It shows Anastasia that women are important parts of building and progressing our society. And it inspires Safiyyah to want to teach others about women's history.

All three are students at Hamburg High School near Buffalo. And all are part of James Gang's high school elective class, Herstory! Rad Women who Shaped the World, which highlights noteworthy women whose names are seldom mentioned in male-dominated history books. The Hamburg Teachers Association member launched the class this year, after noticing that most history classes don't teach about female trailblazers.

"I felt like curriculums were underserving women," said Gang, a former instructor with the Academy

for Human Rights, a weeklong summer program founded by Buffalo educators to teach about social justice issues. He's also worked with the American Federation of Teachers on a human rights curriculum. As the father of a middle-school aged girl, he does his best to teach her about female historymakers. He wanted to extend the same learning opportunity to other students.

Turns out, he'd tapped an unmet need. "I was surprised by the interest, I got a full class load and lots of new faces," said Gang, noting that his students come from a variety of backgrounds and genders.

After years of courses focused on the male perspective, examining history through a female lens was a welcome change — even for students who enrolled by chance. "I feel like it's a relevant issue that needs to be addressed," said Sidney, who registered to fill a schedule gap but

recognizes the class's importance. "I want to learn how these women were able to make such change in the face of adversity."

To underscore the routine marginalization of women in traditional school curriculums, Gang assigned students to ask former teachers how many women they regularly include in their curriculum. The responses drove home how few classroom lessons feature women, despite women representing 51 percent of the population. "I also had them looking through old yearbooks and noticing when, and how many, females were student officers and school administrators," said Gang. "Until about the late '70s, early '80s, girls were only ever class secretaries or treasurers."

Women didn't hold leadership positions in the district, or on the school board, until the 1990s. Students also mentioned the condescending tone, and sexist language used when

"Herstory! Rad Women who Shaped the World" is proving to be a popular elective with James Gang's students at Hamburg High School.

referring to female teachers decades ago, and that all female teachers were pigeonholed into certain jobs like typing teachers or secretaries. "I think I've angered them a bit by opening their eyes to historical inequalities," said Gang. "But I love that. I want them to have a reaction, whether positive or negative."

Andrew is happy to get a more "fleshed out picture of history" than the one students typically receive in school. "You don't hear many female names in history classes, but women have had just as much of an effect on the world as males."

Ethan agrees. "I'm learning about women who've really changed the world," he said. "And I've never heard their names."



Celebrate, share Women's History

During women's history month, the NYSUT Women's Committee and EVP Jolene DiBrango hosted a #NYSUTchat on Twitter to discuss the lack of women's history in school curricula. The archive of "Making the Case for Women in History" is posted at nysut.org/women. The page includes a variety of Women's History resources.

Download free NYSUT-designed Women's History Month posters at nysut.org/posters.

The National Park Service features a collection of resources on women's history, including women in the labor movement, nps.gov/womenshistory.

For a collection of Women's History lesson plans, visit the American Federation of Teachers' Share My Lesson site, sharemylesson.com/womenshistory.

TAs step up to provide tech help

When computers crash, systems fail, or teachers, parents and students need a fast answer, who you gonna call? Tech TAs!

In the North Syracuse School District, a cadre of certified teaching assistants stepped up and took on a major role when schools suddenly shifted to remote learning. All were classroom TAs providing direct student support before becoming Tech TAs.

“They learned on the job and literally became a lifeline for teachers, families and students during the pandemic,” said Mindy Bristol, president of the teaching assistants unit of the North Syracuse Education Association. “Prior to COVID, members in this job title were primarily focused on hardware maintenance and supervision of computer labs, but all that’s changed in the last year. From



PHIL CLEARY

North Syracuse Tech TA Annette Stein manages nearly 2,000 pieces of equipment and provides educational support for staff and students at the Roxboro elementary and middle school campus.

remote-only to hybrid and everything in between, managing the technology for learning has become an ongoing challenge for all districts.”

When the pandemic suddenly shut down schools last spring, the NSEA Tech TAs helped manage

thousands of Chromebooks, getting them into kids’ hands for learning at home. They provided live support to troubleshoot issues, even helping some families figure out how to connect with their WiFi. They also helped install and maintain classroom teacher stations including computers, video streaming, smart boards, printers and software applications for approximately 850 teachers.

“They move quickly and quietly solving problems before they become major issues,” Bristol said. “They have become tremendous community ambassadors who add greatly to the reputation of our schools.”

As schools move forward to full-time in-person learning, the Tech TAs will continue managing the technology on a building-by-building basis.

Emergency certification extended

By Sylvia Saunders

sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

Teachers and teaching assistants who have Emergency COVID-19 Certificates will have more time to finish up requirements, due to limited test center availability for certification exams during the pandemic.

The State Education Department announced in May that Emergency COVID-19 Certificates will automatically have one year added to their expiration date. Educators should check their TEACH accounts in July

to make sure this has been done.

The union advocated for the continued flexibility so educators are not penalized by the interruptions caused by the pandemic. The emergency credentialing has also helped districts having difficulty finding certified staff in high-need areas.

The Emergency COVID-19 Certificate allows candidates to work for up to two years while taking and passing any required exams. New applications for the emergency certificate must be submitted via TEACH on or before Sept. 1, 2021. Emergency certificates issued in the future will be valid for two years. For

more info, visit higher, nysed.gov/tcert.

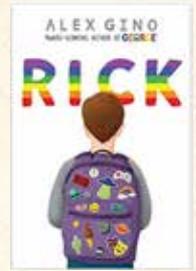
Visit nysut.org/certification to find a guidance presentation with key information on emergency certification and details on how to apply. The site also includes registration information on a new round of certification webinars offered by NYSUT. The webinars cover six specific certification topics, including special education extensions, teaching assistant certification, Career and Technical Education certification and steps required for professional certification. The webinars are being offered from now through August.

Rick

By: Alex Gino

Recommended

by: Rebecca Ekstrom, school library media specialist, Averill Park TA



Suitable for: Grades 4–6

Why I chose it: This book ties in perfectly with the We Need Diverse Books movement, a nonprofit dedicated to diversity in literature. We know it is important for students to “see themselves” in books, yet books that include characters who are LGBTQIAP+ typically make up a small amount of most library collections.

What I like best: I like that this book is written on a reading level most students in grades 4–6 would be able to read independently. Alex Gino does a terrific job showing how the main character, Rick, deals with his homophobic best friend. Rick is just starting middle school and feels unsure about whether or not he should join the Rainbow Spectrum Club. Students who read this book may feel inspired to stand up to bullies and those who want to tear others down. Readers will also see that there are others in their school who will be their friends, allies and support system.

How teachers can use this book:

This book would be a great addition to a teacher’s classroom library and may help signal that this teacher is a safe adult for students to come to who may be struggling with their feelings around their identity.

About the author: Alex Gino also wrote *You don’t know everything*, *Jilly P*, and *George*, a groundbreaking book about a child who is transgender. This book won the Stonewall Award, the Lambda Literary Award, and the Children’s Choice Book Awards. Learn more at alexgino.com.

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

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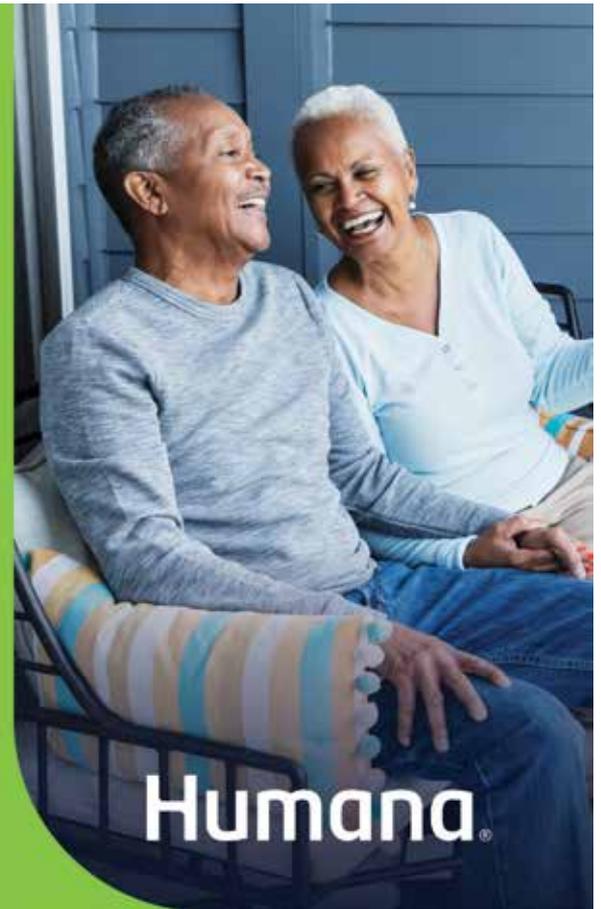
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Back to the basics of workplace health and safety

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

Throughout the pandemic, one of the fundamental challenges has been the disconnect between how school employees identify workplace hazards and how they work with districts to address the problems.

NYSUT's biennial Health & Safety Conference, held virtually in May, taught members the basics — how to identify and document concerns, how to elevate them and, ultimately, how to hold employers accountable.

"Working people have always acted collectively to create change," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "I appreciate all you do to improve health and safety within your workplaces."

Ron Gross, NYSUT second vice president, encouraged members to use the power of their union to advocate for workplace safety. Gross' office handles health and safety issues for the statewide union.

"Your work here today means something, what you're doing is vital and important to improving workplace conditions," said Gross. "And this work is done not just for ourselves, it's done on behalf of everyone, to improve the working and living conditions of all the people we

serve and our society at large."

Eric Ramirez, chair of NYSUT's Health and Safety Advisory Committee, noted that in the midst of the pandemic, employee voices are needed now more than ever. "We must continue the dialogue and momentum of union activism when it comes to health and safety," said Ramirez, United College Employees — Fashion Institute of Technology's vice president for health and safety.

"We are the boots on the ground, we know where issues lie and what needs to be addressed in our workplaces."

Ilyana Frias, United Federation of Teachers, received NYSUT's 2021

site, Frias sounded the alarm about a lack of PPE and poor disinfection protocols.

A slate of workshops covered issues ranging from collecting and keeping track of data, to addressing specific workplace hazards like infectious diseases and indoor air quality. NYSUT's new Health & Safety Assistance program was introduced. The program allows members to digitally fill out a NYSUT-created, "request for assistance" form to report workplace health and safety concerns in their buildings. Completed forms are compiled into a database of local workplace hazards to help members track issues and advocate



NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist Moriah Olsen leads a session on "Health and Safety Labor-Management Meetings: How to Find a Resolution."

Unsung Hero award, given to members who identify, publicize and resolve or significantly improve health and safety issues. Frias, a UFT D75 borough advocate, brought the horrendous environmental conditions at one school to the attention of UFT's Health and Safety Department. The NYC Department of Education later sent teams of contractors to fix the problems over a weekend. At another

for solutions with administrators.

Having a union workplace health and safety committee, and a designated chairperson, is key. Although schools are mandated to have them, many locals either don't have health and safety committees or have ones that rarely meet. NYSUT is encouraging all locals to have active committees.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Every school must have a system for filing health and safety complaints.
- When you see a hazard or suspect something is unsafe, always file a Request for Assistance form.
- Always report injuries and illnesses. Annually request Injury and Illness logs for review.
- Health and safety issues are opportunities for organizing.
- To bring about change, you must be prepared to engage in health and safety labor-management meetings.
- Controlling exposure to COVID-19 in the indoor environment requires attention to engineering controls, such as ventilation. Attention to HVAC is important in addressing indoor air quality, but even more crucial in reducing exposure to airborne disease.
- Request your school's written Hazard Communication Program and the Safety Data Sheet of any chemical you are required to use at work.

WNY retirees help distribute free classroom supplies

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

A group of Western New York retirees are doing their part to help teachers in high-need districts get the school supplies they and their students lack. Members from Retiree Councils 1, 2, 3 and 44 regularly volunteer at The Teacher's Desk, a not-for-profit organization that collects and distributes classroom supplies to pre-K-12 grade teachers in schools where more than 70 percent of the students receive federally free or reduced-price school lunches.



PROVIDED

Rose Ann Heilemann, a retiree from the Niagara Wheatfield Teachers Association, volunteers at The Teacher's Desk warehouse. The not-for-profit distributes supplies to educators throughout Western New York.

"It's pretty amazing; no one ever leaves there unhappy," said Sara Rodland, RC 44 president and a volunteer school liaison for The Teacher's Desk. She got involved

after retiring from the Buffalo City School District in 2010 and helps with a variety of tasks including volunteer recruitment and registering new teachers. At the group's Buffalo warehouse, retiree volunteers prep and pack up donated materials for scheduled curbside teacher pickups on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Rodland staffs the entrance checking in teachers as they arrive. "Every time a teacher shops we ask them to write a thank you note to the companies that donate materials, many do it with their students," she said.

Supply boxes run the gamut from pens, pencils, crayons and classroom décor to stuffed animals, books, disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer and tissues. Every order includes a selection of age-appropriate books courtesy of the National Education Association's Read Across America program. With the AFT, the NEA is one of NYSUT's two national affiliates.

Educators typically receive about \$1,000 in free classroom supplies, explained Rodland. Donations come from individuals, retiring teachers donating no longer needed supplies, and a range of organizations and businesses including the Kids in Need Foundation, NAEIR, Feed the Children, M&T Bank and Geico.

Rodland presented a slideshow about the RCs' volunteer work with The Teachers Desk at the NYSUT Retiree Contiguous ED 51-53 At-Large virtual meeting in May.

"It's a wonderful collaboration,"

said Rodland of the work. "You have retirees volunteering and active teachers benefitting."

John Mika, a retired autoworker and Western New York substitute teacher, founded The Teacher's Desk in 2011 after seeing first-hand the need for basics like pencils, pens and tissues in economically disadvantaged schools. The program annually distributes more than \$6,000,000 in new school supplies to 6,000 educators at 260 schools throughout Western New York.

If you're a full-time teacher at a qualifying Western New York district who's interested in visiting The Teacher's Desk, apply at shopping@theteachersdesk.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, 44
716-634-7132

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

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

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

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

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

Jennifer Shaad-Derby, RC 12, 13
618-797-7977

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

Retirees plan for busy year ahead

The 30th anniversary of retiree councils, and a slow return to normal, were focuses of the 2021 NYSUT Retiree Contiguous ED 51-53 At-Large meeting, held virtually in late May.

In her opening remarks, Florence McCue, ED 51-53 At-Large director, recognized retirees who were honored at the 2021 NYSUT RA. She also saluted retiring NYSUT retiree services staffer GERALYN O'REILLY for her years of dedicated service.

NYSUT Second Vice President Ron Gross thanked attendees for their activism over the past year and encouraged them to "make sure new retirees connect with their councils and chapters." He also saluted Ken Ulric, RC 17, for compiling a detailed history of labor strikes on Long Island and discussed plans for marking the 30th anniversary.

ED 51, 52 and 53 Directors Loretta Donlon, Rosemary Catanzariti and Tom Murphy provided overviews of regional activities over the past year. Participants were encouraged to stay informed about in-service health insurance changes to ensure retirees stay protected. Murphy also presented about the American Federation of Teachers Program and Policy Council.

Pat Puleo, RC 16, introduced The Legacy Fund, a new NYSUT program that enables locals, chapters, retiree councils or members to honor activists with statewide recognition. (See page 10.)

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NYSUT seeking applications for TRS board vacancy

There is currently a vacancy for one of the three teacher-member positions on the NYSTRS Board of Trustees.

NYSUT is accepting applications from NYSUT members who are actively teaching, for consideration to run for election this November. This election will be to fill the final year of former NYSTRS Board Trustee Sheila Sullivan Buck.

NYSUT members wishing to apply should submit a letter of intent and a resume no later than June 25, summarizing how their credentials and background align with the candidate guidelines detailed in the NYSUT Policy Manual. Specifically, candidates should possess:

- A working knowledge of, and experience with, the state Teachers' Retirement System;
- A demonstrated, long-standing interest in retirement matters, such as serving as a delegate to the annual NYSTRS

Delegates Meeting;

- A willingness to run for election for this position in November 2022 for a full three-year term on the NYSTRS Board of Trustees; and

- A willingness to commit to NYSUT's retirement education program and work with the other NYSTRS Trustees.

Candidates who best meet the qualifications listed will be contacted for an interview by NYSUT's selection committee. Virtual interviews will be conducted in mid-July.

NYSUT members who are interested in applying for this position should email their resume and a letter of intent to the Office of the NYSUT President at NYSTRSdelegates@nysut.org.

Please contact NYSUT Deputy Director of Legislation Pete Savage, pete.savage@nysut.org, with any questions.

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NOTICE OF NOMINATION AND SPECIAL ELECTION

NYSUT Board of Directors At-Large Director Election District 37, 38 & 39

A vacancy exists on the NYSUT Board of Directors for the position of At-Large Director for Election District 37, 38 & 39. The vacancy was created by the resignation of Barbara Bowen, effective Sept. 17, 2021.

Pursuant to NYSUT Constitution, Article IX §6(o), the NYSUT Board of Directors is empowered to fill all At-Large Director vacancies that may occur between election year representative assemblies.

Notice is hereby given that a Special Election to fill the At-Large ED 37, 38 & 39 Director vacancy will be conducted by the NYSUT Board of Directors as follows:

Date: September 17, 2021
Time: 5 p.m.
Place: NYSUT
800 Troy-Schenectady Road
Latham, NY 12110

The election will be by roll call vote of the members of the NYSUT Board of Directors.

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 eight (8) in-service or retiree NYSUT members in good standing. The completed and signed Nominating Petition must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (2 p.m.) on Aug. 13, 2021.

To be a candidate to serve as an At-Large Director from a NYSUT clustered Election District, the candidate must be a member of a local which is situated within the clustered Election District. To be a candidate to serve as an At-Large Director for a statewide constituency group, the candidate must be a member of the constituency group.

Nominating Petitions are available by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at elections@nysut.org or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at (800) 342-9810.

At the Special Election Meeting, each candidate shall be given an opportunity to address the meeting for a period not to exceed three (3) minutes at a Candidates' Forum scheduled for 5 p.m., Sept. 17, 2021, at the above location. The Special Election Meeting will remain in session until a successor director is elected.

The candidate elected will serve as successor At-Large Director immediately upon being elected and continue to serve as successor At-Large Director to the conclusion of the 2023 Representative Assembly.

NYSUT Board of Directors At-Large Director Higher Education At-Large

A vacancy exists on the NYSUT Board of Directors for the position of At-Large Director Higher Education At-Large. The vacancy was created by the resignation of Michael Fabricant, effective Sept. 17, 2021.

Pursuant to NYSUT Constitution, Article IX §6(o), the NYSUT Board of Directors is empowered to fill all At-Large Director vacancies that may occur between election year representative assemblies.

Notice is hereby given that a Special Election to fill the At-Large Higher Education At-Large Director vacancy will be conducted by the NYSUT Board of Directors as follows:

Date: September 17, 2021
Time: 5 p.m.
Place: NYSUT
800 Troy-Schenectady Road
Latham, NY 12110

The election will be by roll call vote of the members of the NYSUT Board of Directors.

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 eight (8) in-service or retiree NYSUT members in good standing. The completed and signed Nominating Petition must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (2 p.m.) on Aug. 13, 2021.

To be a candidate to serve as an At-Large Director from a NYSUT clustered Election District, the candidate must be a member of a local which is situated within the clustered Election District. To be a candidate to serve as an At-Large Director for a statewide constituency group, the candidate must be a member of the constituency group.

Nominating Petitions are available by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at elections@nysut.org or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at (800) 342-9810.

At the Special Election Meeting, each candidate shall be given an opportunity to address the meeting for a period not to exceed three (3) minutes at a Candidates' Forum scheduled for 5 p.m., Sept. 17, 2021, at the above location. The Special Election Meeting will remain in session until a successor director is elected.

The candidate elected will serve as successor At-Large Director immediately upon being elected and continue to serve as successor At-Large Director to the conclusion of the 2023 Representative Assembly.

NYSUT Board of Directors At-Large Director Election District 7 & 8

A vacancy exists on the NYSUT Board of Directors for the position of At-Large Director for Election District 7 & 8. The vacancy was created by the passing of William Scott and was effective May 1, 2021.

Pursuant to NYSUT Constitution, Article IX §6(o), the NYSUT Board of Directors is empowered to fill all At-Large Director vacancies that may occur between election year representative assemblies.

Notice is hereby given that a Special Election to fill the At-Large ED 7 & 8 Director vacancy will be conducted by the NYSUT Board of Directors as follows:

Date: September 17, 2021
Time: 5 p.m.
Place: NYSUT
800 Troy-Schenectady Road
Latham, NY 12110

The election will be by roll call vote of the members of the NYSUT Board of Directors.

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 eight (8) in-service or retiree NYSUT members in good standing. The completed and signed Nominating Petition must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (2 p.m.) on Aug. 13, 2021.

To be a candidate to serve as an At-Large Director from a NYSUT clustered Election District, the candidate must be a member of a local which is situated within the clustered Election District. To be a candidate to serve as an At-Large Director for a statewide constituency group, the candidate must be a member of the constituency group.

Nominating Petitions are available by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at elections@nysut.org or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at (800) 342-9810.

At the Special Election Meeting, each candidate shall be given an opportunity to address the meeting for a period not to exceed three (3) minutes at a Candidates' Forum scheduled for 5 p.m., Sept. 17, 2021, at the above location. The Special Election Meeting will remain in session until a successor director is elected.

The candidate elected will serve as successor At-Large Director immediately upon being elected and continue to serve as successor At-Large Director to the conclusion of the 2023 Representative Assembly.

NYSUT Board of Directors At-Large Director Election District 21, 22 & 23

A vacancy exists on the NYSUT Board of Directors for the position of At-Large Director for Election District 21, 22 & 23. The vacancy was created by the resignation of Wayne White, effective July 1, 2021.

Pursuant to NYSUT Constitution, Article IX §6(o), the NYSUT Board of Directors is empowered to fill all At-Large Director vacancies that may occur between election year representative assemblies.

Notice is hereby given that a Special Election to fill the At-Large ED 21, 22 & 23 Director vacancy will be conducted by the NYSUT Board of Directors as follows:

Date: September 17, 2021
Time: 5 p.m.
Place: NYSUT
800 Troy-Schenectady Road
Latham, NY 12110

The election will be by roll call vote of the members of the NYSUT Board of Directors.

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 eight (8) in-service or retiree NYSUT members in good standing. The completed and signed Nominating Petition must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (2 p.m.) on Aug. 13, 2021.

To be a candidate to serve as an At-Large Director from a NYSUT clustered Election District, the candidate must be a member of a local which is situated within the clustered Election District. To be a candidate to serve as an At-Large Director for a statewide constituency group, the candidate must be a member of the constituency group.

Nominating Petitions are available by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at elections@nysut.org or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at (800) 342-9810.

At the Special Election Meeting, each candidate shall be given an opportunity to address the meeting for a period not to exceed three (3) minutes at a Candidates' Forum scheduled for 5 p.m., Sept. 17, 2021, at the above location. The Special Election Meeting will remain in session until a successor director is elected.

The candidate elected will serve as successor At-Large Director immediately upon being elected and continue to serve as successor At-Large Director to the conclusion of the 2023 Representative Assembly.

NOTICE OF NOMINATION AND SPECIAL ELECTION

**NYSUT Board of Directors (two positions)
Election District 37 (CUNY Higher Ed – PSC)
Election District 38 (CUNY Higher Ed – PSC)**

Two vacancies exist on the NYSUT Board of Directors for Election District 37 (CUNY Higher Ed – PSC) and Election District 38 (CUNY Higher Ed – PSC). The vacancies were created by the resignations of Iris DeLutro (ED 37) and Steven London (ED 38), effective Sept. 1, 2021.

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

The delegates and alternates of ED 37 and ED 38 are hereby notified that these vacancies will be filled by a Special Election Meeting to be held as follows:

Date: September 13, 2021
Time: 5 p.m.
Place: PSC Headquarters
61 Broadway – 15th Floor
New York, NY 10006

Pursuant to NYSUT Constitution, Article IX, §4(b) and the approved NYSUT Campaign and Election Procedures, NYSUT members who were reported as elected delegates to the 2021 Representative Assembly representing the members of ED 37 and

ED 38 will be eligible to vote in this Special Election. A reported alternate delegate may vote in the absence of the delegate.

Nominations to fill this vacancy will be accepted in accordance with the Campaign and Election Procedures approved by the NYSUT Board of Directors adopted for the 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 37 and ED 38.

The completed and signed Nominating Petitions must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (2 p.m.) on Aug. 13, 2021. Any member in good standing from a NYSUT local within ED 37 and ED 38 may be a candidate. Only in-service members in good standing from ED 37 and ED 38 may sign a candidate’s Nominating Petition. Nominating Petitions are available by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at elections@nysut.org or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at (800) 342-9810.

At the Special Election Meeting, each candidate shall be given an opportunity to address the meeting for a period not to exceed three (3) minutes at a Candidates’ Forum scheduled for 5 p.m. Sept. 13, 2021, at the above location. The Special Election Meeting will remain in session until a successor director is elected. The number of votes to which a local is entitled will be evenly distributed among that local’s delegates present and voting.

The candidates elected will serve as successor Election District Directors immediately upon being elected at the Sept. 13, 2021 Special Election Meeting and continue to serve as the successor Directors to the conclusion of the 2023 Representative Assembly.

KEEP IN TOUCH!

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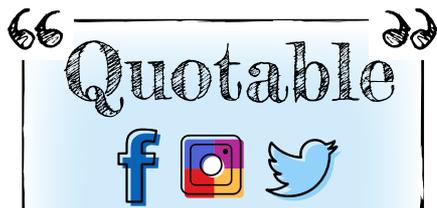


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Janice Klinzing

NYS has taken bold steps towards economic justice to #FundOurFutureNY and provide what our schools, health care and higher ed institutions need during this devastating pandemic. This budget brings hope towards a new revival. #FoundationAID #TAPGAP @NYSUTMAC (@JaniceKlinzing)

Ibram X. Kendi

"What critical race theory seeks to do is expose how racism is embedded in systems, policies and laws," @BLoveSoulPower said. "It helps young people realize if you understand the systems, you can work to change the systems." (@Drlbram)

APSTA

While we are grateful everyday for our amazing nurses, this past year has highlighted even more of their incredible knowledge, patience, and endurance. Thank you, to our @apsta_albany nurses! ❤️ #apsta #unionstrong #nursesday (@apsta_albany)

Robert Reich

I will never accept a system that lets billionaires add \$1,620,000,000,000 to their wealth in 13 months but doesn't raise the \$7.25 minimum wage for 12 years. (@RBReich)

NewHampshire AFL-CIO

"Right to work" is indefinitely postponed in New Hampshire. Today, the workers won. #NHPolitics (@NHAFLCIO)



QUESTIONS FOR...

Monica Baker

NBCT, ENL teacher, Webutuck Teachers Association

1. During the pandemic, you made a special effort to connect with the families of your English language learners. Tell us about that.

I am always looking for ways to increase family engagement. Last year I was about to launch a new family literacy program, which would have taken place in the school building once a month. The anticipated start date was March 2020. The pandemic prevented the program from starting as planned.

I regrouped and decided to try it online. Every Wednesday night, students and their parents joined me on Zoom for bilingual books, discussion, and a hands-on project. The best part — the program grew each week. Younger siblings, cousins, grandparents all started to join in.

It's been the most successful family engagement program I've ever been involved with!

2. What kind of feedback have you gotten from your students?

They love Wednesday nights. One student said she especially liked working on the art projects with her Mom. Another said he loves reading in both English and Spanish. One second grader said, "Wednesdays are special because it's like Ms. Baker is in our house reading us a bedtime story."

3. Will you continue your evening story times next school year?

As long as families keep showing up virtually, I'll keep the program going. Even when the pandemic ends, virtual programs and meetings are an effective way to ensure that families are connected to schools.

In-person events exclude families with limited transportation or childcare, or inflexible work schedules. Hybrid options for families are more inclusive and should continue whenever possible to support family engagement in education.

4. What other kinds of support did you and other English as a New

Language teachers provide during the pandemic?

Educators went above and beyond to support their students. My colleagues and I advocated for our students, volunteered to deliver food and supplies, and applied for grants in order to ensure that students had their basic needs met so that they could focus on academics. As an instructor with NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust, as well as the president of NYS Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, I also saw a tremendous increase in educators seeking out professional development to support their students. The pandemic forced us to reevaluate how we teach and connect and then make adjustments to support our students.

5. What are some of the lessons learned that came out of this crisis?

Virtual learning is not ideal, but it's especially challenging for our multilingual students. Some of my remote students struggled with unreliable WiFi, crowded living conditions and limited resources. We now all recognize that reliable WiFi is not a luxury. It's a necessity.

Many of our students and their families are still struggling with connectivity. We need to continue to advocate for affordable and accessible broadband to tackle the digital divide.



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Official Publication of NYSUT

REAL ESTATE SALES

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VACATION RENTAL

SAINT AUGUSTINE BEACH — Three-bedroom, two-bath condominium. NYSUT discount. rj@jobers.com 716-830-4635.

EDUCATION

ARE CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE problems ruining your teaching career? Make classroom misbehavior a thing of the past! A must book for every classroom educator. Don't wait. Act now! Free copy for UFT-NYSUT members. Write: Free Book, 1941 Edward Lane, Merrick, NY 11566. Or email: teacherservices044@gmail.com (include your name and address).

[RESOURCES FOR YOU]

Social justice programs put teens in driver's seat for a change

With support from NYSUT, the Capital Region Teen Symposium on Human Rights' "Be the Change" program will run virtually from June 28-30. The Academy for Human Rights Summer Symposium, based in Buffalo, will be a virtual event from July 11-16 with the theme "Our Stories Will Change the World."

The institutes were created by Kelley Wetherbee of the North Colonie TA, former Capital Region teacher Thea MacFawn, and Drew Beiter of the Springville Faculty Association in Western New York. Many other educators volunteer to help run the programs.

Last year, the programs drew record

numbers of high school students from eight different countries to hear from international and nationally



recognized advocates. Topics included youth activism, environmental justice, fighting food insecurity, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, providing water, understanding refugee situations, the Holocaust, genocide, domestic violence and women's rights.

Students will learn about existing organizations taking on these issues through legislation, activism and outreach. They will have the opportunity to create art under the guidance of guest poets and artists and take part in a slam poetry workshop.

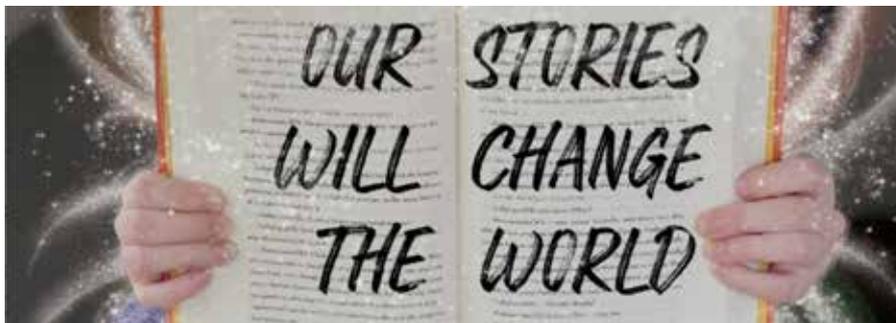
New and returning speakers at the

Capital Region symposium will share information on organizations such as Free Food Fridge, Total Equity Now, Clean and Healthy New York, and Human Rights Advocacy.

For more information on the Capital Region Teen Symposium on Human Rights, visit capitalregionhumanrights.org. Tuition for the summer teen institute is \$75; scholarships are available.

The Western New York event will feature speakers from Help4Refugees and Project SAFE, and authors, activists, and teachers, as well as family members of Holocaust survivors. Tuition is \$100, with a July 5 deadline. Scholarships are available. Visit academyforhumanrights.org for

more information. The organization also offers professional development programs for teachers.

**William "Bill" Scott**

William John Scott died April 24, 2021; he was 53.

A licensed master social worker, Bill was employed with the Syracuse City School District since 2006. He was a fervent advocate for the students and staff. In May 2019, Bill was elected president of the Syracuse Teachers Association after serving five years as fourth vice president, where he represented school-related professionals from four units.

Social justice and advocacy were lifelong passions. He will also be remembered for his service, dedication and love of his hometown. Bill is survived by his wife, Carolyn; his four children, Megan Elizabeth, Amelia Vera, Aiden Cary and Liam Reese; his parents and a host of family and friends.

Doris Berlin | Jan. 26, 2021
United Federation of Teachers

Anthony Cardinale | Jan. 6, 2021
Hewlett Woodmere Faculty Association

Barbara Ann Dinehart | Jan. 31, 2021
Wappingers Congress of Teachers

Elane M. Heitmann | March 7, 2021
Port Jefferson Station Teachers Association

Diane H. Horr | Jan. 30, 2021
Amityville Teachers Association

Barbara Ann Shortz | March 11, 2021
East Irondequoit Teachers Association

Greg Sill | March 26, 2021
Smithtown Teachers Association

Robert "Bob" Simone | Aug. 17, 2021
Port Jefferson Station Teachers Association

Carla D. Sloat | Oct. 7, 2020
Wappingers Congress of Teachers

Keri Stromski | April 6, 2021
Riverhead Central Faculty Association

Gwendolyn Zinermon | April 26, 2021
Substitutes United/Bufalo

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

IT'S WHAT WE DO

Erin McNamara and Danielle Benner,
Guilderland Central TA



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Thanks to the efforts of high school English teachers Erin McNamara and Danielle Benner, pictured left, students are raising awareness and funds to support two peers battling a rare cancer.

High school students Gabe Zullo and Jenna Meier are in treatment for

Ewing sarcoma. About 200 children and young adults in the country are diagnosed each year, according to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

McNamara, current executive vice president and past president of the Guilderland Central Teachers Association, and GCTA member Danielle Benner, started a Sarcoma Awareness campaign and the Rock Walk. A fundraiser effort included T-shirts and masks with yellow ribbons.

McNamara has Jenna in her junior English class. Gabe is a student in Benner's freshman English class. Benner approached school administrators to find out how they could help Gabe. She had no idea her teaching colleague and friend was going through the same questioning for her student. They joined together to create a joint campaign for both families.

For the Rock Walk, students throughout the district painted stones which were fashioned into a ribbon at each school building. The event included information about Ewing sarcoma, which is often mistaken for a sports injury.

To read more about Benner and McNamara's work, visit nysut.org/itswhatwedo.

**On the job and in the community,
NYSUT members make a difference.**

NYSUT Member Benefits is here to help

Whether it's assisting NYSUT members with prudent decisions regarding financial and legal concerns, important choices about insurance coverage or everyday essential purchases, NYSUT Member Benefits is here to help.

In response to the growing number of identity theft cases during the pandemic, Member Benefits recently partnered with Cambridge Credit Counseling to create a customized identity theft webinar for NYSUT members on how to best avoid, detect and resolve identity theft.

The presentation proved incredibly popular this spring with hundreds of members attending multiple sessions. The webinar offered guidance on protecting your personal information, detecting identity theft and the steps to take if you become a victim of this crime. Additional dates will be offered this summer and all NYSUT members are welcome to attend.

While student loan debt remains a major concern, general consumer debt continues to also increase with more than 43 percent of U.S. households carrying a month-to-month credit card balance in 2020. Cambridge can assist NYSUT members with better understanding their general debt consolidation and student loan repayment options, including offering a no-cost, no-obligation, consultation with a certified counselor.

Cambridge is also the provider of NYSUT's Student Loan Debt Webinars.

In recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month and the incredible stressors of the past year, Member Benefits hosted an Everyday Resilience Series in May 2021. The sessions offered strategies for resilience, overcoming challenges and identifying ways to prioritize your own well-being. This series may be offered later in the year if scheduling permits.

MEMBER BENEFITS
nysut
Working to Benefit You

Make sure to visit memberbenefits.nysut.org on a regular basis for updates about the identity theft webinars and Everyday Resilience Series.

It's never too early or too late to create a sound financial plan or adjust your existing plan. Member Benefits endorses a Legal Service Plan and Financial Counseling Program that can offer expert guidance and advice to assist NYSUT members. In addition, the Member Benefits Financial Learning Center presented by Kiplinger's Personal Finance is a helpful resource featuring numerous articles on a variety of financial topics.

When it comes to protecting NYSUT members and their families, Member Benefits endorses competitive insurance programs such as auto, home & renters, term life & level term life, disability, dental, vision and even pet insurance. Many of these programs can be purchased through payroll or pension deduction for greater convenience and savings opportunities.

Finally, for everyday purchases, NYSUT members can save up to 50 percent at more than 700,000 merchants nationwide with the Member Benefits Discounts & Deals program (including 21,000 deals throughout New York state).

Register your account at mbdeals.enjoymydeals.com today to save on groceries and food delivery; restaurant dine-in or takeout; gasoline, oil changes and vehicle maintenance; clothing and shoes; and more. You can even request to have your favorite merchant join the network.

Explore all your union membership has to offer. Learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services at memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101.

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

Disability benefits

As a member of the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS), you have a retirement plan that provides important disability retirement benefits. If you become permanently disabled, and cannot perform your duties because of a physical or mental condition, you may apply to receive a disability retirement benefit instead of a regular service retirement benefit. Your application must be approved by ERS.

There are several different types of disability retirement benefits, but all pay a lifetime pension. Most eligible ERS members can file for an Article 15 disability benefit (as defined in Article 15 of the Retirement and Social Security Law), an ordinary disability benefit or an accidental disability benefit.

Your tier and retirement plan determine the specific benefits available to you. You can find your tier and plan listed in the "My Account Summary" section of your Retirement Online account. Sign in at web.osc.state.ny.us/retire/sign-in.php. You can also find your retirement plan in your Member Annual Statement, which we distribute every summer, or ask your employer. Once you know your retirement plan, check out your plan booklet on our Publications page at osc.state.ny.us/retirement/publications to see the disability benefits available to you, as well as

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

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

important filing requirements.

Some things to remember

You can file applications for more than one type of disability benefit, as well as a regular service retirement application, at the same time.

There are time limits for filing an application. If your application is late, it will likely be denied, and you will not be eligible for a benefit.

You must complete all pages of the application and the accompanying medical information release (HIPAA) form. Your doctors cannot release your medical records to ERS without a completed HIPAA form.

The unfortunate reality of the COVID-19 emergency is that some ERS members may become seriously ill and some may die from the disease. ERS members who become seriously ill from COVID-19 may wish to file for a disability retirement benefit so their beneficiary may be eligible for a continuing pension, rather than a one-time in-service death benefit, in case the member should pass away.

For more information, including filing instructions and what happens after you file, visit our Disability Benefits page at osc.state.ny.us/retirement/members/disability-benefits.

NYSUT ERS consultants

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

Trudi Davis • 914-592-4411
trudi.davis@nysut.org

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

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

The when, and how, of vesting



Q: I'm a Tier 6 member. How many years of membership in the New York State Teachers' Retirement System must I have before I become vested?

A: First a brief definition of vesting. Vested members accrue non-forfeitable rights over their employer's contributions to their NYSTRS retirement plan and are eligible for a future retirement benefit through NYSTRS — provided they haven't transferred or withdrawn their NYSTRS membership. Prior to becoming vested, members have ownership of their personal system contributions, but aren't entitled to employer contributions.

Your tier membership determines when you become vested. Tier 5 and 6 members vest with 10 years of state service credit; all other tiers vest with five years of service credit.

Q: I have five years of membership with NYSTRS as a Tier 6 member and I teach full-time. What would happen to my membership if I left my position before I became vested?

A: If you stay in the teaching profession, you can keep your NYSTRS membership active by working the equivalent of 20 full-time days in a school year for a participating NYSTRS employer every seven years.

However, if you plan to leave the teaching profession, you should probably withdraw your member contributions — and any interest earned — and cancel your membership; remember, members who transfer or withdraw their NYSTRS membership aren't eligible to receive any portion of their employers' contributions.

If you return to teaching at a later date, you do have the option of reinstating your former membership under your former tier. As always, err on the side of caution. Before withdrawing your membership, contact NYSTRS to discuss the implications of doing so, 800-348-7298, ext. 6090.

NYSUT TRS consultants

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

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

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

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



Did you know?

If you withdraw your NYSTRS membership, and later return to teaching and want to reinstate it, you must repay the amount refunded to you from your previous membership. Contact a NYSTRS representative for details, 800-348-7298, ext. 6250.



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Yonkers Federation of Teachers



From left, Yonkers Federation of Teachers President Samantha Rosado-Ciriello and Vice President Lisa Foto staff the YFT table at a school district teacher diversity career fair. “The YFT is committed to excellence in education, and a diverse workforce!” Rosado-Ciriello said.

Central Islip Teachers Association

The Central Islip TA, led by President Michael Romano, this year awarded more than \$100,000 in scholarships to more than 20 deserving seniors. For the last four or five years the local has raised more than \$80,000 annually for the awards solely through donations by in-service and retired members. This year, Romano said, the local raised just over \$103,000 — including a \$17,000 donation from a former student.

“We try to help as many students as possible,” Romano said. “We are a low-wealth district; every little bit helps.” The local requests \$30 per year from members but typically receives much more.

Lansingburgh Teachers Association

The Lansingburgh TA, led by R. Jason Blackmur, has played an integral role in promoting and supporting youth sports in the community. With support from the local, the youth football team was able to purchase necessary equipment. The union’s endorsement also helped to pay for weekly gym time in a secure environment for a basketball clinic for students from first through fourth grade. The LTA also sponsored a little league baseball team. “These opportunities

provided children a chance to develop and grow outside of the classroom setting,” said Lansingburgh TA grievance chair Peter Allen. “It’s times like these when a union can help a community that they love.”

Long Beach Classroom Teachers Association

The Long Beach Classroom TA, see pictures below, raised much-needed funds for local food banks while also showing support for union solidarity and public education. Restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic prevented the local from hosting its annual spring bowling event. Instead, the LBCTA PR Committee, co-chaired by Amy Leder and Beth Prostick, and the PAC Committee, chaired by Jennifer Garrett, worked together to raise more than \$3,600.

Members from each building in the district contributed baskets for an online raffle. Also, throughout the month of March, LBCTA members wore red in support of public education. The LBCTA is led by President Keith Harvey.



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



It’s an honor

Joanna H. Kraus, United University Professions/SUNY Brockport retiree, is a winner in the 2021 national Old Miner Children’s Playwriting Contest for her new play, “Champion.”

Alneeta Moody, Great Neck Paraprofessionals, was recognized

by her local for 50 years of service. Moody was one of the first building reps when the para union was formed in Great Neck.

Harmony Osei, Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, received the 2021 Baruch College excellence award for diversity leadership.

In print

Kathleen Hoekstra, Lakeland Federation of Teachers retiree, has co-authored a book with Thomas O’Connor on the emerging anabolic steroids epidemic among young men. *America on Steroids* is published by Metabolic Promotions.

John Mazarella and **Richard Schiller**, Bellmore-Merrick United Secondary Teachers retirees, have written a series of math and science homework and review workbooks. Visit educationtimeinc.com.

Frank Nappi, Oceanside FT, has written *I Became an Elementary School Outlaw: A Memoir*. Available at thecricketpublishing.com.

Rhoda A. Schoenbaum, United Federation of Teachers retiree, with her graphic artist daughter Laura Schoenbaum, compiled two books of unpublished work by her late husband, New Yorker

cartoonist Bernard Schoenbaum. *More Cartoons: Men & Women & Children and Even More Cartoons: Cats & Dogs & Other Creatures*. Available from authorhouse.com.

Jack Zevin, PSC retiree, has published *Suspicious History: Questioning the Basis of Historical Evidence*, a book about fakes and facts in history. Available from rowman.com.

“Kudos!” recognizes the accomplishments of NYSUT members. Have good news you’d like to share? Email united@nysut.org; include “Kudos!” in the subject line.

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