

# OCTA Advocate

A newsletter for members and friends of the Oswego Classroom Teachers Association



## DECEMBER 2024

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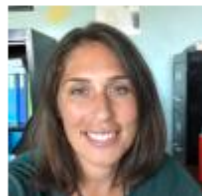
**Meet your 2024-2025 OCTA Officers!**



Carrie Patane  
OCTA President



Kim LeRoy  
VP Grievance



Jess Burrige  
VP Negotiations



Jenn Cahill  
VP Pol. Action



Mike Patane  
Treasurer



Michelle McManus  
Secretary



Dan Rose  
VP Newsletter



### Message from your OCTA President - Carrie Patane

As 2024 turns to 2025, it is important that we take time to relax, recharge and reflect. No matter where you stand on November's election results, it is clear that we must work to move toward a more unifying path. Although there was much division and dissatisfaction in this presidential election, there was one area of common ground among voters that shone through in all states, no matter the party affiliation or economic status: voters overwhelmingly supported public schools and workers' rights. State by state, voters recognized the importance of public schools as a catalyst for opportunity, a means to a more sustainable future and a better way of life. Additionally, voters showed that they understand the importance of a worker's right to join a union and thus gain access to better working conditions, sufficient wages, quality benefits, and a meaningful retirement plan.

In her [most recent column](#), [AFT President Randi Weingarten eloquently speaks to the promising future of public education and union activism](#), as well as the exciting opportunity for republicans and democrats to work together to build more opportunity for working class America.


Along these same lines, it is important for us to understand the historical context that helps shape teacher activism and collective bargaining in our very own state ([Click here to read about a recent victory related to classroom heat](#)). Don't forget to take some time each month to read an article or two from some of our national affiliate magazines to help you stay informed (*click on graphic below to stay informed!*). [NYSUT, the New York State United Teachers](#), has a deep-rooted and rich history, and we, as teachers here, have a certain responsibility to learn more about those who came before us, and those educators who fought so hard to give us the opportunities we have today. I hope you get a chance to watch this short video of the importance of unions in education. [A UNION STORY](#)

NYSUT.ORG

NYSUT Launches Know Your Rights Series

Learn more



NYSUT - A Union of Professionals 

Paid for by NYSUT - A Union of Professionals · 

We've heard your questions and concerns about your rights in and out of the workplace and in response, we've launched a "Know Your Rights" series with videos featuring NYSUT attorneys addressing some of the most in-demand topics for educators right now. The series of videos offers guidance on issues ranging from academic freedom to learning how best to protect your professional rights.

Learn more: <http://nysut.org/.../special-resources.../know-your-rights>

Thank you for all you do to make this district a better place in which to work and grow. Happy holidays, and best of luck in the new year.

In solidarity,

Carrie

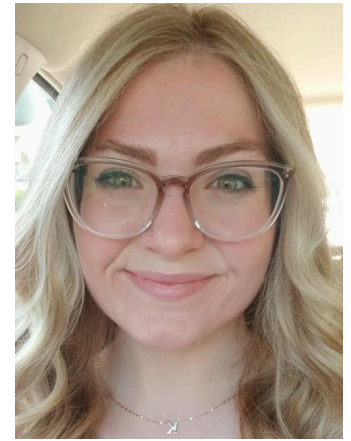
## **Congratulations to our most recent OCTA Spotlight Recipients!**

**We have many new OCTA members this year and want to welcome and introduce them to you!**



**KPS** would like to welcome **Shaleen McMahon** to our building. Shaleen started subbing in May of 2024 for the district and has been at KPS since the beginning of this school year. Outside of school, Shaleen likes spending time with friends and family, and also shopping. Shaleen has 2 German Shepards and loves cows. Shaleen says that being able to see the kids everyday and help them throughout the day is what inspires her the most. Welcome to KPS, Shaleen!

**CER** would like to welcome **Kristen Clapp** to the Oswego City School District! Kristen is from Phoenix NY and graduated from John C. Birdlebough High School, and then Utica University (undergrad), followed by SUNY Cortland (grad school). This is Ms. Clapp's first teaching job and she is currently teaching third grade. Kristen says that being able to make connections with her students is what motivates her to be a better teacher. Outside of school Kristen enjoys playing volleyball, hiking, dog sitting and crafting. Congratulations and welcome to the OCSD, Kristen!



**Minetto Elementary** would like to introduce **Olivia Mangione** as our new Resource

teacher. For as long as Olivia can remember she has wanted to teach and credits all the teachers who have motivated her throughout her life and strives to pass this passion and love of learning on to her own students today. Olivia grew up in the Albany area where both her mom and dad live. She has a younger brother and two step-sisters. Olivia says that her family challenges her and encourages her to be the best she can be every day. Olivia attended SUNY Oswego where she received both her Bachelor's and Master's degree. She loves Italian food and her best form of self-care, shopping. Ms. Mangione also visits the gym regularly and considers it a great decompressor after a long day.

**William Bandla** has always been passionate about working in therapeutic settings with children or the elderly, originally studying Music Therapy before switching to Creative Arts Therapy for more flexible career options. Working as a Special Education Teaching Assistant at **Minetto Elementary** allows him to gain valuable experience supporting children who would benefit from the kind of help he wants to provide in the future. His family is mostly local to the Oswego area and with his siblings away at college, William often visits his grandparents in Minetto for lunch during the week. What motivates William is the continuous learning process, finding new ways to support and teach, and seeing those "Aha!" moments when students finally grasp a



concept. William attended SUNY Fredonia initially for Music Therapy, but graduated with a Theater Arts major and Psychology minor, ultimately planning to pursue Creative Arts Therapy. Outside of work, he is an avid musician, currently involved in several bands and has a room full of instruments. He also enjoys playing video games and spending time with his online community of friends. As for food, one of his favorites is the ham and egg breakfast casserole his mom makes for Christmas morning! We are excited to welcome William to Minetto Elementary and wish him great success.



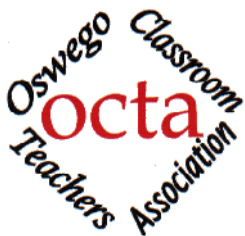
**Fitzhugh Park School** is proud to introduce our new OCTA Member **Hannah Koster**. Hannah has been teaching for two years and while Hannah was our building sub last year, this year she has her own classroom as part of the third grade team! If you ask Hannah why she chose teaching she will put on her big smile and say, “It’s because I love working with children.” Hannah also says that she was inspired by her own elementary teacher. Hannah’s favorite part of her chosen career path is creating relationships with her students and watching their growing excitement in learning. When she isn’t in school, you will find her outdoors and traveling with her family. She is always looking for adventure and loves exploring new places. Welcome to FPS, Miss Koster!

**Deb Geroux (Oswego Middle School)** grew up on a goat farm in Lysander where her mom still lives today. She graduated from CW Baker High School in Baldwinsville and has chosen teaching as a second career. Before teaching, Deb worked as a financial analyst for National Grid and departed after 25 years of service during a downsize. Deb found her way to teaching after landing a job with Career Services at SUNY Oswego in which she taught accounting in the School of Business. Today, Deb teaches Math Enrichment at OMS and loves that she can make a difference in the lives of the next generation. Mrs. Geroux says teaching fills a void that has come about as a result of recently becoming an “empty nester.” In her free time, Deb likes traveling with her family, crocheting, reading, watching nightly television with her husband, and continuing her own education. Deb is looking forward to the birth of her oldest son's second child and spending as much time as possible traveling to Maryland where he lives to watch the babies grow up. Deb’s favorite part of the teaching day is lunch (ha!), time in the halls between classes to say hello to the kids in passing, and any time she has a moment to connect with students, and math drills in contest form during class - serious business when candy is at stake!





**Leighton** is so excited to add a third section of first grade and to welcome our new first grade teacher, **Alicia Helbock!** Alicia grew up as an only child with her parents, and her black lab named Genny, in Central Square. Alicia chose a career in education as a result of an experience she had in high school, volunteering in her former 2nd grade teacher's classroom. Alicia attended St. John Fisher University in Rochester, and majored in inclusive childhood education, and has a concentration in psychology. Fisher gave her a variety of classroom experiences, from preschool to 6th grade, but ultimately, She chose to student teach in first grade and I'm so glad I did, since it prepared me to begin my career in first grade! When she is not at school she enjoys making crafts, doing puzzles, shopping and spending time with friends and family. A fun fact about Alicia is that she was a first-generation college student!



## DENTAL INFO!

Dental Administrator Lindsay Voigt  
[octadentalplan@gmail.com](mailto:octadentalplan@gmail.com)

Have you had a recent address change? Please use the email below to alert Lindsay!

Please feel free to reach out to OCTA Dental at: [octadentalplan@gmail.com](mailto:octadentalplan@gmail.com) should you have any questions about this or anything else dental related!



**Did you know as a Delta Dental Member you gain access to exclusive perks** such as: Virtual Dentistry, BrushSmart, Hearing aids and LASIK discounts, LifePerks, and Wellness resources? Members can easily get all the info on these perks - [just click HERE!](#)

If you need to establish a new dental provider or find a specialist in your area you can search for dental providers by [visiting this link!](#) Click on [this hyperlink](#) to read the most recent issue of Delta Dental's monthly magazine called [GRIN!](#)

[Click HERE to create an account with Delta Dental or log in to your existing Delta Dental account!](#)



## 2025 dental wellness calendar

Delta Dental's [wellness resources](#) let you offer relevant content all year round.



<b>January</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glaucoma Awareness Month</li> <li>• New Year, New You</li> </ul>	<b>July</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Cleft &amp; Craniofacial Awareness &amp; Prevention Month</li> <li>• Independence Day (7/4)</li> </ul>
<b>February</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Heart Month</li> <li>• Children's Dental Health Month</li> <li>• Gum Disease Awareness Month</li> <li>• Valentine's Day (2/14)</li> </ul>	<b>August</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back to School</li> <li>• Dental Implant Month</li> <li>• National Fresh Breath Day (8/6)</li> <li>• Tooth Fairy Day (8/22)</li> </ul>
<b>March</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autoimmune Disease Awareness Month</li> <li>• National Nutrition Month</li> <li>• World Oral Health Day (3/20)</li> <li>• National Drug &amp; Alcohol Facts Week (3/17-3/23)</li> </ul>	<b>September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dental Infection Control Awareness Month</li> <li>• Healthy Aging Month</li> <li>• Family Health and Fitness Day (9/27)</li> </ul>
<b>April</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Stress Awareness Month</li> <li>• National Facial Protection Month</li> <li>• Oral, Head &amp; Neck Cancer Awareness Month</li> <li>• National Prosthodontics Awareness Week (4/20-4/26)</li> </ul>	<b>October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast Cancer Awareness Month</li> <li>• Cold &amp; Flu Awareness Month</li> <li>• National Dental Hygiene Month</li> <li>• National Orthodontic Health Month</li> <li>• Halloween (10/31)</li> </ul>
<b>May</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health Awareness Month</li> <li>• National Physical Fitness &amp; Sports Month</li> <li>• Save Your Tooth Month</li> <li>• Women's Health Month</li> <li>• National Smile Month (5/12-6/12)</li> </ul>	<b>November</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Diabetes Month</li> <li>• National Brush Day (11/1)</li> <li>• Thanksgiving (11/27)</li> <li>• National Flossing Day (11/29)</li> </ul>
<b>June</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alzheimer's &amp; Brain Awareness Month</li> <li>• Employee Wellness Month</li> <li>• Men's Health Month</li> <li>• National Migraine and Headache Awareness Month</li> </ul>	<b>December</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy Holidays</li> </ul>

Click on the image of the calendar to see an enlarged visual!



### OCTA Blast December

Highlights from our December 2024 OCTA Meeting

**Safety:** Carrie is working to ensure that each building is represented at the upcoming District Safety Meeting. It is important that we gather information on any injuries—whether minor or major—that have occurred. Dr. Kilmer needs to be aware of these incidents, as we've noticed that they are sometimes underreported. Fill this out for ALL accidents or incidents! ([Employee's Accident Report for Workers' Compensation](#))

Please make sure that if you or someone in your building has experienced an injury, it is reported to your building's safety representative ( a list of these will be coming soon). The safety rep will then pass the information along for review. Thank you for your cooperation in helping us maintain a safe environment for everyone.

**Professional Development Monies:** If you have already completed 45 hours of professional development this year and were previously denied approval for additional classes, we have good news. Due to additional funds now available in the budget, you are welcome to resubmit your requests for approval.

**Don't Forget NYS Mandated Reporter Training:** - REQUIRED for **ALL** members by April 2025.

[NYS Mandated Reporter Training](#)

**Health Care:** St. Joseph's Hospital has indicated that if they don't reach an agreement with Aetna they will be dropped from their network as of January 1st, 2025. You will still be able to visit a Dr. through St. Joseph's, but they will be considered out of network. St. Joseph's and Aetna are negotiating, however, this may not be settled before January 1, 2025. If you have a provider at St. Joseph's and do not want to pay out of network costs, you may need to begin looking for a new provider.



**Health Insurance:** If you are having difficulties with Aetna be sure to reach out to Assured Partners (was ENV) at (315) 641-5848. They can help you with Benefit questions, claims issues, finding providers, etc. You should also inform Amanda Hamilton at the EDC and Carrie Patane of claim issues so they can pass the information on to the members of the Healthcare Committee. IF you have reached out to Assured Partners and you still have concerns, please let us know that too. **Make sure you are using Teladoc and Express Scripts when possible to help reduce plan costs and to lower our premiums.**

### SAVE THE DATE: Solidarity Events

**Bowling: Date: TBD January or February**

**Volleyball: June 20, 2025**

**FIX TIER 6 - [How bad is it? Get involved!!](#) [Watch a Video](#) [Visit Fixtier6.org](#) - Visit this website to learn more about supporting fixing tier 6.**

### Join the Fix Tier 6 Team

*Fixing Tier 6 is about solidarity, equity and dignity. Our work is important. Our pensions should reflect that.*



Make sure you write out the Oswego Classroom Teachers Association.

### **Employee Assistance Program (EAP): To contact them call**

**(315-470-7447).** The district provides members with services to help with

stress management, family stress, anxiety and panic, workplace issues,

communication barriers and more. The service is provided by Help People. It is a free and confidential service!

Offices are located in Fulton, Liverpool and Syracuse.

**\*OCTA RESOURCE GUIDE: [2024-2025 Resource Guide](#)**

### **Know Your Paycheck Deductions:**

Check your stub to make sure you are receiving the appropriate deductions for each paycheck:

**FICA** is social security

**MEDI** is Medicare

**FEDERAL** is federal tax

**STATE** is state tax

**D/I OCTA** is disability insurance

**HI10F15%** is 10 month family/single health

**MED/DENT** is your flex spending account

**DFBOCTIN** is your OCTA Dental Insurance

**VISFIND** = Vision individual

**OCTA28+** is your union dues

**OPL** is city library contribution

**NYSUT** = member benefits (Life ins, legal, etc.)

**INSREIMB** = Insurance Reimbursement (in Dec) for those off step

**TRS**= money you pay into NYS Teachers Retirement

### **THANK YOU to our OCTA Building Leadership 24-25**

**CER**

Ted Beers  
Holly Babcock

**FPS**

Julie Tubolino  
Cari Joyce

**KPS**

Mary Lynne Maxwell  
Hope Mazuroski

**FLS**

Meghan Harrison  
Amy Armet

**MIN**

Keri Hunter  
Stacie Waterhouse-  
Roberts

**OHS**

Gina Iorio  
Heather Sugar  
Robert Dumas

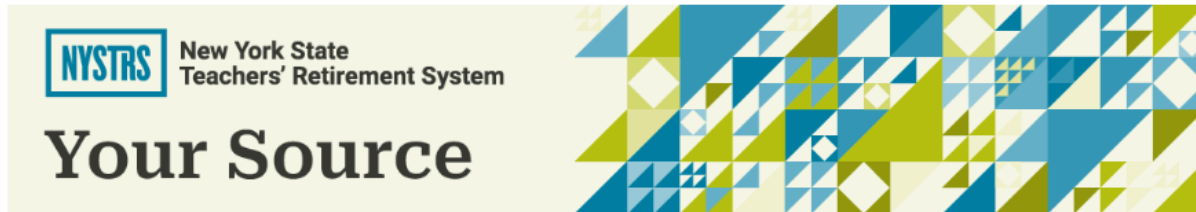
**OMS**

Jeff Brown  
Clare Donovan

**Substitutes**

Ed Stacy

## YOUR SOURCE NEWSLETTER PRESENTED BY NYSTRS



The December 2024 issue of NYSTRS' *Your Source* is now available.

[Download the newsletter \(PDF\)](#) to read the full issue.

### Annual Reports Highlight Steady Gains, Fund's Strength

In a market year of moderate growth amid inflation and interest rate concerns, NYSTRS reported steady and consistent gains, according to the System's 2024 *Annual Comprehensive Financial Report* (ACFR). Among the highlights: The System's 10-, 20- and 30-year annualized net rates of return were 7.8%, 7.8% and 8.7%, respectively, placing NYSTRS in the top 10% of peer public pension plans.



NYSUT urges New York to create

## DISTRACTION-FREE SCHOOLS

NYSUT is leading the growing, statewide call for distraction-free schools. This week, educators, parents, law enforcement officials and students echoed that call in the halls of the state capitol – urging the governor and Legislature to provide consistent, statewide restrictions on cellphone use during the school day. “We have an opportunity to provide children with an average of seven hours each school day to be fully present and free from the pressures and harms of phones and social media,” said NYSUT President Melinda Person. It’s time for New York to put the education and well-being of our students first.



## READ NYSUT UNITED MAGAZINE!

Stay up to date with Union News!



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## Pension & Retirement Education Program



PREP sessions are designed to help members of all ages prepare for retirement.

**Contact Us** →

800-348-7298, ext. 6180

[communit@nysters.org](mailto:communit@nysters.org)

Many retirees wish they began focusing on financial and retirement planning much earlier in their lives. Don't let that happen to you! No matter how far along you are in your career, careful financial and retirement planning are critical. That's why our Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP) seminar is so valuable.

## Have you visited the OCTA website yet? What are you waiting for!?!??

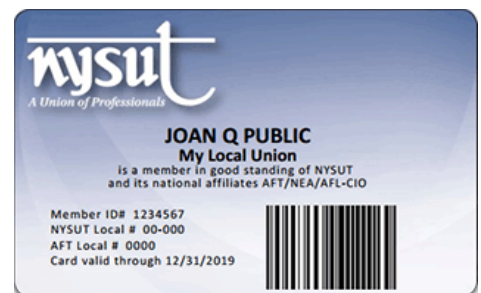
Click on the screenshot of the image below to explore the site! Find quick links to important union documents like the new OCTA Contract, the OCTA building officer list, and the new OCTA resources guide! Click on the image below to link to the [website](#)! **Many of your questions can also be found in the [2024-2025 Resource Guide](#).** **The link to this is ALSO posted on our OCTA Webpage!**



## Need A Quick NYSUT Membership Card?

[Login here and download a PDF of your membership card.](#)

To request a replacement for this card, call NYSUT at 1-800-342-9810  
ext. 6224



*OCTA Advocate* is published by the Oswego Classroom Teachers Association, West 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Oswego, NY. **President:** Carrie Patane, **VP Grievance:** Kim LeRoy **VP Negotiations:** Jessica Burrige **VP Political Action:** Jenn Cahill, **VP Newsletter:** Dan Rose, **Secretary:** Michelle McManus, **Treasurer:** Mike Patane. Affiliated with the New York State United Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.

