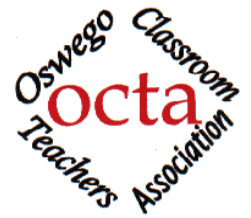


OCTA Advocate

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



JANUARY 2025

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Meet your 2024-2025 OCTA Officers!



Carrie Patane:
OCTA President



Kim LeRoy:
OCTA VP Grievance



Jess Burrige: OCTA
VP Negotiations



Jenn Cahill:
OCTA VP PA



Mike Patane:
OCTA VP
Treasurer



Michelle McManus:
OCTA VP Secretary



Dan Rose: OCTA VP
PR

Message from your OCTA President - Carrie Patane (UPDATED)

Although this persistent lake snow has made for some beautiful Oswego scenery, it has also produced more **school closures** than normal. As you probably guessed, I have been on the receiving end of many questions and concerns about snow day limitations as of late, so I thought I would take a moment this month to clarify what will happen if we exceed our number of allotted emergency closing days.

Per our negotiated contract, we have 5 emergency closure days built into our calendar this year. Right now, we have used 4 out of 5 emergency days, and FPS has used all 5 days. With February - April still to come, it is quite possible that we will exceed 5 snow days. The state regulations allow for the district to negotiate a plan for implementing remote learning in the event that we exhaust our emergency closure days. Although not ideal, FPS will need to deliver remote instruction the next time the rest of the district has a snow day. The details of this plan have been communicated with members in that building. Dr Kilmer and I have also discussed using a Remote Staff Development day if we need a 6th snow day district wide. The calendar change will need to be voted on by the BOE and if this is approved, students will be present on March 10th and the PD will be asynchronous through Vector on the 6th snow day. Details about this plan will be communicated once the calendar change is approved.

Should we need a 7th snow day, our calendar outlines that the first “vacation” day that will become an instructional day will be June 27th. Any additional days will be taken from Spring Break. We will see how the remote learning day goes at FPS before we discuss the possibility of using remote instruction in all buildings versus requiring in person instruction over Spring Break. For now, let’s hope mother nature calms down a bit so we don’t need to worry about that.

Another important question I have received is related to **School Safety**. All buildings should have a school safety team which should be meeting regularly throughout the school year. In an effort to collect data on safety concerns, I have asked each President to identify one individual who will be the building Safety Steward. I have shared a google form with the Presidents and their designee in order to collect data about safety concerns. Your Building President should be sharing the name of your representative at your next building meeting. This person will record any safety concerns and these concerns will be documented and shared with me, Kim LeRoy, and the building presidents, so we can be sure that any issues are reported at the building and district level safety meetings. (NAMES will be kept confidential!)

The Safety Steward will ask you to fill out the [worker’s comp injury form](#) if you received an injury in addition to emailing them or telling them about your concern. The district has only been using data from the injury forms to track safety issues, so this survey will give your union representatives a more accurate picture of your safety concerns. When you report a concern to your safety representative, **please include the following information:**

What are you reporting?

- A. Facility Related Safety Concern (no injury to report)
- B. Facility Related Safety Issue (INJURY to Report)
- C. Safety Incident (threats or unsafe actions of others) with no injury TO STAFF
- D. Safety Incident (threats or unsafe actions of others) with INJURY TO STAFF

Include the following details:

1. Where specifically in the building is the concern.
2. Describe the concern OR incident
3. IF there was an injury - describe the injury - no matter how minor

Did you fill out the Worker’s Comp Injury Form?



Congratulations to January OCTA Spotlight Recipients!

This month's KPS spotlight recipient is **Heather Rice**!



Heather has been a school counselor since 2007 and has worked in Oswego City Schools, Carthage/Black River Schools, and also in Cayuga and Onondaga counties. Prior to becoming a school counselor, Heather worked as an Executive Director of a human services agency. About her role in education, Heather says, "I've taken some time off from school counseling through the years, but what always draws me back is the enjoyment I find working directly with children within the school environment. I believe that in moments of chaos or times when things feel unsettled, that we should stop and look for the helpers. I want others to find me as the helper."

Beyond the school walls, Heather can be found outside at the lake, or in her kitchen. She feels passionately about peoples' ability to change. "I take pride in being a loyal friend and advocate. I love to spend time at my home on the lake and I love to be outside in nature with my rescue dogs any time of year walking or running. I also love to bake." Heather is a licensed mental health counselor and has been in private practice for 20 years. She loves her family (and chosen family) fiercely, and works hard to live an intentional life.

FPS welcomes **Val Orr** this year as a TA in 5th grade!

This is Val's 8th year as a TA. When asked what her favorite part of the job is she says, "I'm always happy to help." Val always has a smile on and is willing to jump in wherever she is needed. Outside of work, Val

loves a peaceful day or even a few minutes by the lake or in the woods. Thanks for joining FPS Val!



Minetto Elementary would like to

introduce **Katie Fierro** as our new building substitute teacher. Katie comes from a long line of teachers. Education has always played an important role in her life. She has always known she wanted to work with children and loves how rewarding teaching is and how there is always something new and exciting every day!

Katie grew up in Oswego and attended schools in the OCS D. She has younger siblings (a twin brother and sister) and currently lives with her mom, dad and dog Phoebe.

Katie attended nearby SUNY Oswego, where she played lacrosse and graduated in May with a Bachelor's degree. She loves Italian food and shopping. Katie loves to hang out with her family and especially her friends.

This January, **Minetto** is also shining the spotlight on **Mandy Donohue**, an inspiring and dedicated Teaching Assistant (TA). Mandy's passion for helping students was sparked by the incredible support she saw her son's TA providing, which motivated her to pursue a career in education. A proud graduate of Oswego High School, Mandy finds her greatest inspiration in her family—her husband Jeremy, and their three children, Orion, Katarina, and Harrison. What drives her every day is the opportunity to make a real difference in a child's life. Outside of work, Mandy enjoys spending quality time with her family, making lasting memories together. She also has a creative side, loving to crochet and even selling her handmade creations at the local farmers market. Mandy's warmth and dedication make her an invaluable part of our team, and we're lucky to have her



Hello! My name is **Jess Bullock**, and I'm excited to be joining **OHS** as the new Earth and Space Science teacher. I graduated from SUNY Oswego with a Bachelor's degree in Geology, and moved to New Jersey to work for an environmental firm specializing in site remediation. I chose to become a teacher and began teaching during the 2019-2020 school year. It was an interesting start to my career (to say the least)! I truly enjoy sharing my passion with students and watching them take interest in it, even if only for a second. Seeing their eyes light up when they grasp a concept or ask a related question is incredibly rewarding. Outside of work I love to ski (I moved to the perfect place!) and run with my dog. I also enjoy trying new crafts but must admit that I rarely finish a project. I'm eager to bring my diverse experiences and enthusiasm to the OCSD team and look forward to contributing

in meaningful ways.

Leighton is so excited to welcome our new third grade teacher **Carla Watson!** Carla is from Fabius, New York and grew up as part of a very close-knit family. Carla began her college career studying conservation biology at SUNY ESF before quickly realizing she wanted to be a teacher. She transferred to SUNY Oswego to complete her B.A. and is currently working on finishing up her Master's Degree from Western Governors University. Carla was a building substitute at Leighton for the 2023-2024 school year and loves watching her students make connections and become more confident. When not in school Carla enjoys spending time with her fiancé, camping, trying new recipes and loving on her rescue dog and two cats. A fun fact is that she recently completed one of her bucket list adventures and went parasailing!



Penny Sweeney (CER) started in Oswego this past September and is originally from nearby Baldwinsville, NY. Penny attended Geneseo for her undergrad before securing a master's degree from SU. Penny also garnered her administration degree from LeMoyne. She was a librarian in Liverpool for close to 10 years, before taking an admin position at BOCES. Currently, Penny is the Librarian at Riley Elementary and says the best part of her job is the "KIDS, KIDS, KIDS!" Penny admits that she loved her job as a library coordinator with BOCES but missed working with kids so much that she came back.

In her free time, you can find Penny reading (of course!), hanging out with her family, and cruising the lake in her boat. Penny's future plans include getting to know the students and staff at Riley better, so that I she can better serve their reading needs, both academic and personal.

Negotiations Update

Submitted by OCTA VP, Jess Burridge

Negotiations is ongoing. Progress is slow and steady. We will keep you posted when there are updates. Please continue to wear your OCTA Shirts and stay positive.

Want to read your current OCTA Contract? Follow the link below to gain access!

[OCTA Contract 2021-24 \(signed\).pdf](#)



Save the Date for a Fun District Bowling Event!



OCTA is excited to invite members of all district unions to join us for a community-building bowling fundraiser event on Friday, February 28th! Come join us for an afternoon of friendly competition and team spirit.

**Start building your teams of 4 now!
Create your team name, build your fundraiser basket, & plan your shirts!**



Event Schedule:

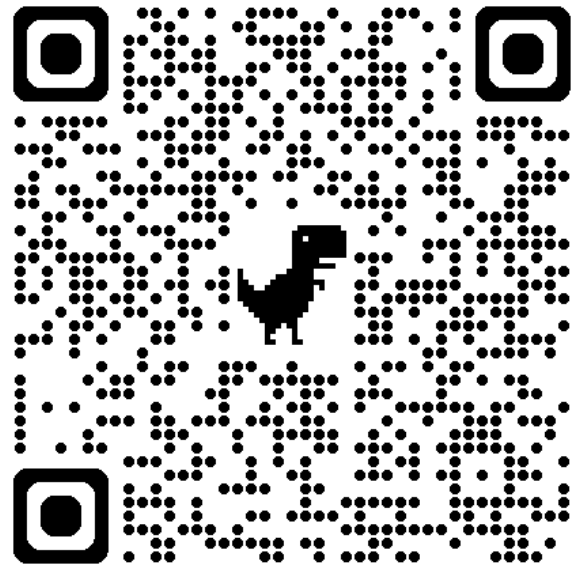
Secondary Faculty & Staff: 2:45 PM

Elementary Faculty & Staff: 4:15 PM (approx)

The registration fee will be \$60 per team (\$15 per player) which includes shoes, pizza, and a pitcher of soda. All team members must be district employees and union members. Spectators and cheerleaders should plan to make a minimum \$5 donation at the door.

A portion of the fundraising will be dedicated to Blessings in a Backpack. More details, and registration information will be shared soon. Look for emails from Michelle McManus!

Use the QR code to the right to access a Google Form that will allow you to sign your team up for the bowling tournament (NOTE: you have to sign in to your google account to access the form).



Let's roll together and build connections across our district – we can't wait to see you there!

OCTA Blast January 2025

Highlights from our January 2025 DOCTA 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. ([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 (see below) 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.

CER- Ted Beers
FLS- Kate Bowman
KPS- Carolyn Slobodian
MIN- Don Fronk
FPS-Cari Joyce

OMS-Dan Rogers
OHS- Gina Iorio

RMS Survey- Please take a moment to complete the RMS Climate Survey. Your honest feedback is crucial for fostering improvement and growth within our district.

SAVE THE DATE: Solidarity Events

Volleyball: June 20, 2025

Bowling: February 28, 2025

OCTA is excited to invite members of all district unions to join us for a community-building bowling fundraiser event on Friday, February 28th! Come join us for an afternoon of friendly competition and team spirit. Start getting your teams of 4 now! Create your team name, build your fundraiser basket, & plan your shirts!

Event Schedule:

Secondary Faculty & Staff: 2:45 PM

Elementary Faculty & Staff: 4:15 PM (approx)

The registration fee will be \$60 per team (\$15 per player) which includes shoes, pizza, and a pitcher of soda. All team members must be district employees and union members. Spectators and cheerleaders should plan to make a minimum \$5 donation at the door. Fill out [this form](#) to sign up.

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

NYS Mandated Reporter Training

For those of you who are looking to see if your certificate is updated on the Teach account

1. Complete course. Give it a few months to show up.
2. Go to <https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/teach/>
3. Login in and follow this path: Inquiry links> Account information> Workshops

FIX TIER 6 - [How bad is it?](#)

[Get involved](#)

[Watch a Video](#)

Join the Fix Tier 6 Team

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



[INDOOR Rally to Fix Tier 6!](#) Please RSVP by clicking this link **[What: Fix Tier 6 Rally!](#)** When: Thursday, Feb. 6 at 4:30 pm
Where: Syracuse Teachers Association, 450 W Kirkpatrick St., (parking in back) This **indoor rally** is the first in a series of events that will take place across the state on the 6th of each month during this year's legislative session and **we in Central NY are kicking off this fight for fairness!**

[Visit Fixtier6.org-](#) Visit this website to learn more about supporting fixing tier 6. Make sure you write out the Oswego Classroom Teachers Association.

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.



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 of 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

Please support the OCTA Scholarship Fund in our Fundraiser in February (2/10-2/14)!

You are invited to wear jeans for the week!

Sticking with tradition, suggested donations are:

\$10 to participate for the week

\$5 to participate on Friday

VENMO: @laurie-kelly-10

Any and all donations are appreciated!



Please Venmo or you are asked to put money in the rep's mailbox for your building. (See Below)

- T. Shannon - MIN
- L. Kelly - FPS
- H. Mazuroski - KPS
- J. Cahill - FLS
- M. Wilson - EDC
- M. Donabella/K. LaDuc - OHS
- K. McCrobie - CRS
- OMS - no volunteer - pls Venmo!

Thank you in advance for your support!

Korrine LaDuc & Meghan Donabella

OCTA Scholarship Co-Chairs

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@nystrs.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. The PREP seminar will help you understand your NYSTRS benefits while also providing essential retirement-planning tips. This information will help you develop a plan to achieve your retirement goals and dreams.

Topics covered during this half-day seminar include:

- **NYSTRS Benefits:** Your pension, disability coverage, loans, vesting and death benefits.
- **Financial Planning:** Saving early, catching up, withdrawals and financial advisors.
- **Social Security:** Benefits, eligibility rules, when to collect and earning limits.
- **Estate Planning:** Wills, trusts, powers of attorney, health care proxies and living wills.
- **The Retirement Process:** Retirement options, "resigning" vs. "retiring," choosing a retirement date, retirement checklist, monthly payments, taxes and earnings limitations on NYS public employment.

Seminars are held from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., with registration beginning at 8 a.m. There is no fee to attend and your spouse/companion is welcome to attend, but you must make a reservation in advance. (Note: These seminars are not designed for individual retirement counseling.)

[PREP seminars often fill up, so book early. Can't attend a seminar now? We begin taking reservations for our three PREP schedules during the year in: mid-September \(fall schedule\); mid-December \(winter/spring schedule\); and, mid-May \(summer schedule\).](#)



Dental Benefits Reminder!

Dental Administrator Lindsay Voigt octadentalplan@gmail.com

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

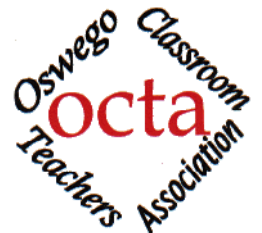
Also, please feel free to reach out to OCTA Dental at:

octadentalplan@gmail.com should you have any questions about anything 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!](#)



DELTA DENTAL

Delta Dental of California, Delta Dental Insurance Company, Delta Dental of Pennsylvania and affiliates

Shop for insurance | Find a dentist | Careers | Contact us | Log in

Members ▾ Dentists ▾ Employers ▾ Brokers ▾ Administrators ▾

Member perks for your smile and beyond

Delta Dental members have access to perks like educational articles and exclusive product discounts.

Enjoy these benefits

FOR FREE!

NYSUT Member Benefits strongly believes in the importance of making quality benefits easily accessible to the NYSUT membership. You may be interested in the following options:

1. Premium Calm Subscription:

All in-service and retiree members receive unlimited free access to the popular Calm app's full library of sleep, meditation, and relaxation content. Members can add up to five dependents (age 16 or older) to receive their own premium Calm subscription.

2. Peer Support Line:

Whether you're facing a specific stressful situation or would just like to speak with a supportive voice, this confidential helpline is free to all NYSUT members and their families. Call toll-free 844-444-0152 to connect with a peer.

3. AD&D Insurance Benefit/ Travel Assistance Services:

All in-service and retiree members are automatically provided with a \$5,000 accidental death & dismemberment insurance benefit, along with free travel assistance services from AXA Assistance.

4. New Member Life Insurance:

All new members are eligible to receive a free term life insurance policy providing coverage for up to \$25,000 for one year, guaranteed renewable at the end of the year.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Member Appreciation Event is back!

NYSUT Member Benefits is excited to announce that Member Appreciation Event will be held this March! This celebration will feature prizes donated by Member Benefits and our endorsed program providers. To be eligible to win, you must be a participant in our MAP Alert email service.

If you're not already a MAP Alert participant, simply scan the QR code, visit memberbenefits.nysut.org, or call 800-626-8101 to sign up. You'll then receive weekly updates about endorsed benefits, information about new programs, and be able to take part in special prize drawings such as Member Appreciation Event.

SCAN ME



MEMBER
BENEFITS
nysut
Working to Benefit You
January/February 2025



January 23, 2025

Gov. Hochul to students: Put down your cellphones

Author: Molly Belmont

Source: NYSUT Communications

Today in Guilderland Central School District, NYSUT President Melinda Person joined Gov. Kathy Hochul as the governor announced a proposal to create distraction-free learning environments across New York.

As part of the governor's 2025-26 executive budget, Hochul is proposing \$13.5 million for school districts to implement bell-to-bell restrictions on student cellphones and other smart devices, with approved exceptions that include management of a student's healthcare, emergency events, and translation services. Each school district would be required to adopt a written policy that includes methods for on-site storage where students can keep their devices during the school day. [READ the REST HERE](#)



What's Tier 6?

The New York State Teachers' Retirement System and the New York State and Local Retirement System, which represents most School-Related Professionals, has six retirement tiers. Your tier membership is based on your hiring date. If you were hired on or after April 1, 2012, you're in Tier 6. [CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO](#)



LABOR NIGHT

AT THE CRUNCH

**FEBRUARY
22, 2025**

7 PM

**Onondaga County
War Memorial**



For tickets, contact Joshua Ludden:
jludden@cnylabor.org / 315-704-8777

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


Click on the screenshot of the homepage 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!

Oswego Classroom Teachers' Association

[Home](#) [Officer Updates](#) [Benefits](#) [Newsletter](#) [Photo Gallery](#) [Helpful Information](#)

Educating Everyone Takes Everyone

[QUICK LINKS!!](#) [OCTA CONTRACT](#) [BUILDING OFFICER LIST](#) Questions? Email [Contact Us](#)



Welcome to The Oswego Classroom Teachers' Association.

This Association has been established to promote the best interests of the teachers and other members of the professional staff within the district.

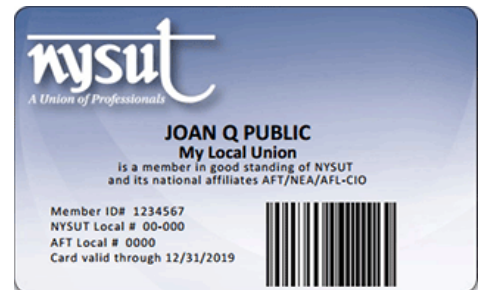
Welcome to new, current, and retired members!

To the right, you will find the brand new OCTA Resource Guide full of useful information related to your union and your contract! Feel free to browse and read at your leisure. Have a question and don't know who to ask? Use the yellow 'Contact Us' tab (in the upper right hand corner of this screen) to get in touch with your OCTA officers.

OCTA
MEMBER
RESOURCE
GUIDE

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 1st 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.

