Welcome 2019!

Submitted by FTA President Dave Derouchie

Welcome back and Happy New Year! The FTA is optimistic that as a new year unfolds, the district will work towards building a true collaborative work environment. Below are some highlights the FTA views as opportunities for this to occur as well as areas that we will be advocating, working towards and monitoring in the year ahead.

1. With some fresh New York State Senators in place, APPR will likely be on the forefront of the political agenda. The FTA anticipates this will be followed up locally with discussions of how we can get away from the test and punish agenda for teacher evaluations and return to choices for educators to improve their craft and increase student achievement in all areas.

2. Teacher input for elementary grade level and assessment meetings. Teachers are the unsung heroes in the trenches who truly see what instructional strategies and programs are successful and those that are not. All educators welcome meaningful, constructive feedback and the FTA encourages members to reach out to their instructional and technology integration coaches for continued support.

3. The secondary 8 period schedule is seen by many secondary staff as a failed experiment. We have surveyed all affected staff and the data is clear. We hope the administrative team and instructional leaders listen and use their leadership teams effectively to provide a schedule that is good for students and staff alike for 2019/20.

4. Paid Family leave continues to be a topic that would be beneficial to both the district and the association. We will continue to update the progress of this through our monthly meetings.

5. The cutting of the Special Class supervisor position continues to be a concern for those affected classrooms. We will continue to advocate for assistance for these members and the high needs that these classrooms bring. It has become clear that this position is a necessity.

6. Pupil personnel issues also continue to be discussed and we are optimistic that these will be settled in the month ahead.

7. Coaching and extended season pay is another topic the FTA anticipates will be resolved in the month ahead.

8. Put out an end of year schedule for K-8 staff- Yet another perfect opportunity for collaboration between FTA & administration! The current state education spreadsheet makes planning easy. All educators realize things may need to be adjusted pending weather conditions ahead.

In closing, the FTA thanks you for your continued support as we address the many issues we all face. We also would like to express that employees who feel valued, work hard for a healthy, productive and safe workplace. They are also more likely to stay in the district and perform better and will be more committed to the great work that lies ahead for student success.

“Leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves.” Stephen Covey

The FTA wishes you all a safe and healthy new year!
Resource Reachout

As we enter a “New Year”, I wanted to take this opportunity to share some of the Human Resources all teachers have available to them. The district implementation of 1:1 chromebook device usage for all students has been a bit haphazard in terms of planning & rollout. While we had all hoped for a successful digital transition in the classroom, it still remains a work in progress and likely will for several years to come. That being said, instructional tech coaches can & will work side by side with teachers in classrooms using technology for teaching to meet learning goals. Their role is to help & support teachers with technology to differentiate & personalize learning for all students. They are also responsible for:

- assisting teachers with embedding technology into instructional practices
- working with the director of technology to identify, prioritize, & integrate hardware or software into instructional programs
- helping teachers learn how to manage technology in the classroom
- Working alongside teachers to determine which technology resources are the best for their students’ needs
- conducting focused classroom demonstration lessons

Perhaps you’d like to implement a new instructional tool or digital method but are hesitant about doing so. Ask a coach to model it for you or co-teach that lesson with you. I encourage all members to reach out and use the technology coaches as a guide and expert with competence in technology integration and lesson design in the classroom.

Coaches are there to support you and to work with you to boost student achievement, not to evaluate or judge you based on what you may or may not know. Coaches love to talk to teachers - do not be afraid to ask questions!
RESOURCES INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES CAN PROVIDE:

- Planning—whether it be lessons, student groupings or cross content integration, instructional coaches will help!
- Teach together—this allows you and your coach to learn from each other & enables you each to utilize your strengths and grow in your areas of weakness with a partner to support you. The give and take of co-teaching can be a perfect format for trying new things and approaching difficult tasks.
- Analyze Data—work with your coach to interpret results of assessments and look for gaps in similar areas & then plan small group support for those students—the who, what, where, & when. Celebrate what is working!
- Join a Study Group—This is a great way to connect with your coach and with other teachers, often from a variety of grade levels. You can learn more about professional resources, work with vertical teams, and develop a group of friends along the way.
- Reflection—coaches can provide help and support as you reflect on your teaching practices and strive to overcome obstacles. Coaches can help identify barriers and assist with a plan.
- Ask Questions—If you have questions about students, resources, lessons, or other content-related topics, your coach is a go-to resource. Often these questions are the seeds that lead to collaboration!

The primary purpose of an instructional coach is to help teachers increase their effectiveness which can only lead to one thing—student achievement. I encourage all members to invite coaches into their classrooms and use them to identify areas for potential growth and feedback.

"Close your eyes and think back to what inspired you to become an educator. As the year goes on, don’t lose that vision and purpose—it will provide direction to you throughout all that you do. Remember your why."

-Rachael George
Free Eaters

Submitted by FTA 2nd Vice President for Grievances: Bob Morse

Imagine your meals each day were communal and your ability to eat was equally shared amongst all community members whom each brought with them their fair share of food from which all meals were prepared. The system has been in place for many years. It provided a unifying tie to all in the community and served the community well as evidenced by the culinary prosperity of the members when compared to communities that lacked this communal bond.

It is reasonable to assume that from time to time a member of the community, let’s call this person “X”, would fall upon hard times and be unable to bring their share of food to a meal. Each of us would gladly overlook a free eater from time to time in the spirit of humanity and in the hopes that we too would be welcome to be free eaters in our time of need.

But what if X showed up for each meal, year after year, and contributed nothing while feasting with the rest of the members who sacrificed in their own ways to provide their fair share of the food to the communal meals. It is likely that widespread animosity would rapidly build toward X, especially if X did not sacrifice luxuries in their life knowing they could rely on good natured members to feed them each day. And if X was not a long standing member of the community, that animosity would likely be even greater as members grumble amongst themselves saying “who is this stranger who has the nerve to come into our community and eat for free while the rest of us work, as is our tradition, to support the communal meals”.

New members continually move into the community. What if many of them saw how well X ate each day without contributing. What if many of them thought they too would follow X’s lead and take advantage of this great opportunity to eat without contributing? What if some longtime community members got fed up with the ever growing number of free eaters and began saying “Why should we sacrifice and contribute when we too can eat for free?” Before long, there would not be enough contributors to feed all the members. Meals would become meager and the once culinary prosperous community would collapse into hunger; all because one member, X, did not bring their fair share of food to the communal meals.

Those closest to X may be more understanding, but likely many of X’s friends would have secretly harbored an ever growing animosity. Perhaps it would have been better for X to ask their friends and family to contribute, up front, extra food on their behalf rather than for X to expect, without asking, that each member of the community contribute more, or eat less, so they could eat without contributing. Maybe it would have been better for X to live in a community that did not have communal meals. Many exist and are always looking for new members. Though the meals in those communities are routinely meager, at least X would not have destroyed a communal system that benefited so many, so well, for so long.

As a Union, our strength and success in earning small, gradual increases in salary, benefits, and working conditions depends on our ability to do it as a coherent, cooperative community. A Union is not its own entity. It IS its members. Clearly the moral of this Aesopian fable was a warning of what a union has to lose if all of its members fail to work and contribute together.
Is your former partner or one of your parents still your beneficiary?

Submitted by FTA 3rd Vice President and TRS Delegate Pat Armet

One of the things I have heard a lot about this year when people have been discussing Teacher Retirement System (TRS) benefits and life insurance purchased through the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust is outdated beneficiaries. Stories about a former fiancé or spouse being listed as the beneficiary have been shared at meetings and conferences. Young teachers who initially named their parents as their beneficiaries but have been married for 10+ years and have children of their own but have not changed their beneficiary is another common one. The TRS must pay the death benefit to the beneficiaries selected by you that they have on file. If you were to die suddenly while still working your family does not receive a pension from NYSTRS. This is true if you have two years of teaching service or 36 years. The benefit your family receives if you are actively working is the death benefit. If you are living with a terminal illness there are other NYSTRS options to consider.

With all the things going on in life it is easy to forget to verify and update your beneficiaries if needed. This doesn’t just apply to the TRS and NYSUT life insurance programs. You should check, and update if needed, any investment accounts and other accounts that let you name a beneficiary.

Your TRS beneficiary can be anyone of your choosing. They do not need to be related to you. You can also name more than one primary beneficiary or contingent beneficiary. There are instructions on the back of the form that will help guide you through the process. As always, the best step if you have questions is to call NYSTRS at (800) 348-7298.

You can verify your beneficiary for your TRS benefits by checking the annual Benefit Profile that you should have received during the month of November. You can also register for a MyNYSTRS account by going online to www.nystrs.org and then clicking on the MyNYSTRS Login and following the links to register. You will need your id number from the Benefit Profile to register. If you need to add or change a NYSTRS beneficiary you will need to complete the Designation of Beneficiary form which is available here: https://www.nystrs.org/NYSTRS/media/PDF/Forms/net11-4.pdf.

If you would like information on what the value of your personal in-service death benefit is from NYSTRS, it is listed in your benefit profile and available on your MyNYSTRS account. If you are wondering how they come up with the value it is explained here: https://www.nystrs.org/Benefits/Death-Benefits

If you need to add or change a beneficiary for a policy you have purchased through NYSUT Member Benefits you can find the needed contact information online by starting at: http://memberbenefits.nysut.org/program-service/insurance and then selecting the link for the product you have. Most life insurance products sold through NYSUT member benefits send out annual statements listing the current beneficiaries and premiums you are paying.

Take the time to check your current beneficiaries and ensure that your wishes are being followed and that your loved ones are taken care of if anything should happen.
DID YOU KNOW?

★ No NYSUT dues dollars are used to support candidates or campaign committees.

★ NYSUT has a voluntary fund called VOTE-COPE. Members can elect to contribute if they want to support candidates and campaign committees that are pro-public education and pro-labor.

Meanwhile wealthy special interests are fighting to take away Our Voice, Our Values and Our Union.

Strong unions mean higher pay, better benefits, a secure retirement and a voice in the workplace.

LEARN HOW YOU CAN FIGHT BACK
visit www.nysut.org/janus
Our Union Dues Work for You

Every dues dollar helps defend Our Voice, Our Values, Our Union

54% Negotiating contracts that provide Better Pay, Good Benefits and a Secure Retirement

12% Providing legal support to help members Defend their Rights and Enforce their Contracts

8% Providing professional development tools, training conferences, and assistance with certifications for Members and Local Leaders

8% Amplifying Our Voice and advocating for Our Professions in the media and online

6% Fighting to ensure Our Voice is Heard in the halls of power

6% Providing Regional Offices with the resources and technical infrastructure to Support Our Locals

4% Providing direct assistance to SRPs, Small and Rural Locals, Health Care Professionals and Retirees

2% Partnering with state and national unions to Amplify Our Voice and Defend Our Values

100%
I'M STICKING WITH OUR UNION

BUT
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MEMBERS... DON'T?

A Wisconsin Horror Story

MEMBERSHIP DROPS 53%

WEAC lost 53% of its members between 2011 (when Act 10 passed) and 2015.

Likely due to deteriorating work conditions, the number of public schools teachers leaving the profession rose 64% after Act 10 was passed.

TEACHERS LEAVING THE PROFESSION RISES 64%

BENEFITS DROP 21%

average value of healthcare & pensions for Wisconsin teachers

2006 $29,000
2011 $24,888
2016 $21,971

ACT 10 PASSES

Research shows the weakening of teachers’ unions causes a drop in test scores at already-struggling schools of 2/3 30%

OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS POST-EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS TRIM OR END

TRIM OR END FOR FUTURE RETIREES

30% of a standard deviation
Benefits designed exclusively for NYSUT members

NYSUT members and their loved ones have access to dozens of endorsed shopping, travel & personal programs available through NYSUT Member Benefits, including discounts on hotels & vacations; car & truck rentals; international group tours; sports & concert tickets; theme parks & attractions; and more.

Whether you are participating in one of our shopping/entertainment/travel offerings; auto, homeowners or life insurance plans; or financial or legal services, NYSUT members have the "Power of the Union" behind them ready to serve as their advocate.

The following is just a sample of the endorsed programs available to NYSUT members:

**Bose** -- NYSUT members receive special educator pricing on high-end, high-quality electronics such as music systems, headphones and bluetooth speakers. You must contact Bose toll-free at 877-709-2073 and mention "educator pricing" to receive this exclusive pricing.

**Orlando Employee Discounts** -- NYSUT members save up to 30% on unforgettable Orlando, FL excursions to Disney World, Universal Studios and many other attractions.

**Grand Circle Travel** -- NYSUT members can enjoy a number of unique travel deals on international river cruises and other travel opportunities with Grand Circle's small ship cruise tours, river cruises and land tours.

---

**Member Appreciation Month is back!**

One of our most popular annual events is set to return this February. The 2019 Member Appreciation Month celebration will be filled with a series of prize drawings for items donated by NYSUT Member Benefits and our endorsed program providers -- including gift cards, iPads, Echo Dots and more!

As a MAP Alert member, you are eligible to win prizes every single day throughout the month of February.

All MAP Alert members are already entered to win; if you have colleagues who would like to be eligible to win, they simply need to sign up for our MAP Alert service on the Member Benefits website. Prize winners will be listed daily on the Member Benefits website.

---

To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) or call 800-626-8101.

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