



Oneida Teachers' ASSOCIATION

Partners for a Better Community

September/October
2022
Newsletter

www.oneidateacher.com

OTA - Facebook Page

Volume 51—Issue #1

A Message from our President - David Wright

Welcome to all returning and new staff. The new school year is well under way; hopefully, it has been a smooth start and things are going well. On September 14th we had the opportunity to welcome new members to the OTA. During the new member meeting we talk about many different topics that revolve around the benefits of belonging to a union, health insurance, compensation and a stable schedule. One question that arose after our new member meeting that I would like to share some information on is tenure. What is it? When did it start? Below are a few summary points taken from NYSUT explanation of the tenure laws.

Tenure, simply put, is a safeguard that protects good teachers from unfair firing. Once a teacher is granted tenure — a right that must be earned after three years or more of service, oversight and evaluation — a teacher cannot be fired without a fair hearing. Tenure does not mean a job for life. It means simply that a teacher has the right to a fair hearing on charges that could end a career. This is a fundamental due process, an American value enshrined in our Bill of Rights.

Because tenure exists, teachers in New York state can speak out freely on issues such as over-testing, cuts in academic programs, inappropriate programs and services for students with disabilities. Tenure also provides teachers freedom to advocate for their students without fear of reprisal.

Teachers' unions do not negotiate tenure. The first tenure statute in New York state was enacted in 1897 — 70 years before public-sector unions had a right to bargain here — in recognition of society's deep interest in safeguarding its teachers from unfair firing and political pressure. Tenure ensures good teachers cannot be fired for reasons of race, gender, age, religion, handicapping condition or sexual orientation. Before tenure was in place, teachers could — and did — lose their jobs for arbitrary and politically motivated reasons, or for no reason at all.



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UPCOMING MEETINGS:

OTA Representative Meeting (Second Tuesday of the month) ALL ARE WELCOME!

Next Meeting:	Sept 13th	3:30 pm TBD
	Oct 11th	3:30 pm Rm 100 OHS
	Nov 8th	3:30 pm Willard Prior Elementary
	Dec 13th	3:30 pm Seneca Street Elementary

Any special meeting dates will be announced through e-mail.

Board of Education Meeting (Second Tuesday of the month)

Sept 13th	6:00 pm Costello Transportation Center
Oct 11th	6:00 pm Costello Transportation Center
Nov 8th	6:00 pm Willard Prior Elementary
Dec 13th	6:00 pm Seneca Street Elementary
Jan 10th	6:00 pm Otto Shortell Middle School

Board of Education Meetings

The Oneida City School District Board of Education will meet on the second Tuesday of every month.

The meetings are generally held at one of the buildings in the district and begin at 6 pm.



We all need to remember that it is our job, our livelihood, that is constantly scrutinized. Make every effort to attend a meeting to show solidarity in the OTA. Remember, it is in your best interest to know what is going on in your district.

Donations and Contributions

The 2022-23 donation year is about to begin!

Last year we raised close to \$5000,

Lets see if we can beat that.

Monthly Casual Fridays happen

On the 1st Friday (usually)

Of each month.

Help to support local charities

And events!

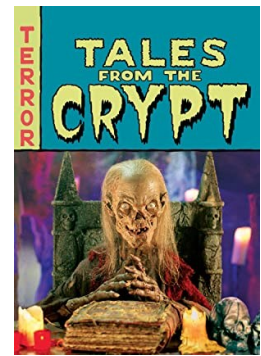


TALES FROM THE CRYPT

Back to School Edition

The members of the Oneida Retired Educators Association remind you that we are alive and well and still active on the educational scene in Oneida.

OREA members have received an intriguing invitation from the OTA...we will visit the schools, have lunch and check out the current technology being used in district classrooms. It should be a fun day, and retirees who haven't been in the schools for a while are sure to get an eyeful! I subbed for eight years after retiring in 2007, I had a taste of the great tools teachers were using, but will be interested to see the latest.



so

I do have a personal connection to school technology right in my house. While cleaning a cupboard recently I found a sleeve of 12 boxes of good old white chalk. I was lucky to be in attendance one day when Oneida Castle School was being cleaned out prior to its closing, and scored the chalk for my grandkids' home chalkboards. (Omg, I hope this doesn't cause trouble with the OCSD Archives...nothing had been written with the chalk, it was just the chalk!) When I retired I was still using plenty of chalk, and had only had a few unpleasant experiences of using permanent markers on the whiteboards that had begun to appear. (Someone somewhere may still be learning that at 10:00 the sixth graders will be having Math.)

Many of the Oneida teachers actually were on the cutting edge of technology, and in the late '80s and '90s we used the newly acquired computers for amazing projects, taking the students beyond the stick-figure math games on those floppy disks in the computer bus. I involved my class in an email-based weather project called Kids as Global Scientists, which included gathering weather data and sharing it with other classes worldwide. Each morning I would stop at OHS and get Earth Science teacher Tom Donegan's floppy disk from his weather station and use it as the basis for the day's activities. After inserting the disk, pressing a few buttons, extracting it and reinserting it on the other side, the students would record the data and get started. Good grief!! It was a great project...at the urging of Media Director Barb Stahl and with the help of ace student Randy Carnevale, we entered our work in the WCNY "Using Technology in the Classroom" contest and won first place!

As we look forward to getting a look at some of the latest hardware and software in the schools, it's important to remember the importance of teachers standing together to obtain the best materials and equipment for the benefit of the students. While it may be a stretch to claim that the OTA is responsible for all the equipment teachers have at their fingertips today, it is valid to point out that in the '70s the schools were not equal. Some schools allotted teachers \$50 a year for a budget, barely enough to buy those sleeves of white chalk and a few packs of construction paper, while others were told to order everything they wanted. With the development of the OTA and the knowledge that the teachers were standing together, the buildings became more equal. That's just one more reason to always remember the importance of the OTA.

The OREA wishes you all a successful 2022-2023 school year!

Happenings in and around the OTA

OHS Retirees Finally get a send off



2022—Patty Vaccaro, Dona Fiedler, Matt Ware & Maggie Schoeneck

Oneida High School had a Retirement Party on June 10th, 2022 that honored three (3) years of retirees. For the retirees in 2020 and 2021, no “festivities” were held due to COVID. So, last year, the Sunshine Club at OHS provided a Retirement gathering that honored all three years. Congratulations and Happy Retirement to all of you!



2020—Bob Straczuk, Cyndi Bobo & Scott Fallon



2021—Jeff Skibitski & Leanne Youngkrans

NYSTRS News

Here is the latest news from New York State Teachers' Retirement System. Any questions, reach out to our NYSTRS representative John Zamperetti (jzamperetti@oneidacsd.org)

- Vesting for Tier 5 and 6 members has been reduced from 10 years of service credit down to five years of service credit.
- Tier 6 contribution rate is changing. The first three years are total compensation, the next two years are based on annual base wages only, not including extracurricular programs.
- Finally, the suspension of the \$35,000 cap restriction has been extended for retirees working in public schools through the end of this school year (and probably future years as well).

Thinking About Retirement?

Whether you are 1, 3 or 5 years out, you want to check out NYSTRS. There is an abundance of information for you to collect, digest and use to your benefit. Don't forget to sign up for one of their retirement seminars. There's still time!!!

NYSUT Retirement Seminars - go on NYSTRS to sign up for one



Happenings in and around the OTA



NYSUT Leadership Conference

On the weekend of October 28th, four members of the OTA will be attending the annual NYSUT leadership Conference in Clayton, NY. Each of the members will be attending various workshops that include:

*Legal/TRS updates,
Student Debt/Member Benefits,
Building Rep Training,
Negotiations, and
Reinventing your Local.*

OREA Retirees Day!

A cooperative effort between the OTA and the District to have a day where OREA Retirees could visit their old buildings, have a tour provided by the building Principal, meet with former colleagues, sit in on a class or two and then enjoy lunch.

The planned event is set for **October 21st from 10:30 to 1.**

If you are a Retiree or know of a Retiree who may be interested, have them contact **Dewayne Cronk** (dcronk@oneidacsd.org) at the High School.

Some Things to Remember

- ◆ Annual training through Safeschools.com is due by October 31st 2022
- ◆ Do NOT sign off on your observations until you are sure you have all the “points” possible for APPR
- ◆ Approval is necessary for any Graduate work you would like to get reimbursed for (deadlines are May 15, September 15 and January 15)
- ◆ Salary adjustments for blocks of 6 credit hours must be submitted by October 1st and March 1st.



Social Media update:

Don't forget that the OTA has their own Facebook page. As you are working in your classes and your buildings, if you have something you would like to share, send it on to Jen Armlin (jarmlin@oneidacsd.org).

The OTA Newsletter is a publication of happenings in and around the OTA that goes out every two months. Again, if there is anything you would like to share with your colleagues, send it to me at bleo@oneidacsd.org

OTA New Member's



Danielle Crawford - For the last 8 years I taught Special Education in a private school. I made the move to public school this last year and so far I have really enjoyed the experience. I am currently in **OSMS**, running the testing accommodations room. I look forward to what the school year brings!

Outside of work, I am passionate about domestic and wildlife rescue so animal rescue, training, and rehabilitation takes up much of my time outside of work. I am a certified Reiki Practitioner and Animal Reiki Practitioner. I have one daughter who is currently attending college for Environmental and Wildlife Conservation. My motto in life is to always stand up for what is right and fair, even if you are standing

alone.



My name is **Jessica Moore** and I am the new **Nurse** at the **High School**. I have been a nurse for 18 years, 3 at St Josephs in Syracuse and the past 15 at Oneida Healthcare. I have worked all over but my favorite department would probably be the ICU.

I have my BSN from SUNY Canton.

I have a wonderful husband, two children, boy 11 and girl 5, and an 8 month old puppy named Lucy. I like to hang with my kids on my off time and when I get a free minute I love to go to Target. My other favorite thing is iced coffee from dunkin.



Larissa Brenner is a **School Library Media Specialist** teaching at **Durhamville and Willard Prior Elementary schools**.

Larissa earned her Bachelor's degree from George Washington University in international affairs and political science, as well as a Master's degree from Syracuse University in public administration and international relations.

Larissa worked in the New York State Assembly and then took several years off to raise her children and volunteer throughout the community, including as a library helper at Mott Road elementary school in Manlius and as a Girl Scout leader for the last 7 years.

In 2020, she returned to school by enrolling in the University at Buffalo to earn her M.S. in Library and Information Science program, with a focus on School Librarianship. Larissa is completing her student teaching under the NYS internship certificate this year and plans to complete her degree and certification in May 2023.

Larissa is married to Jay and has a 14-year-old son Hudson and a 12-year-old daughter Skylar, as well as a 2-year-old puppy named Sherlock. Larissa loves to hike, bike, sing, read, travel, and spend time with her family.



Hello, my name is **Sheryl Whipple** and I am the new **4th and 5th grade Special Education Teacher** here at **Durhamville Elementary**.

I received my Bachelor's Degree from SUNY Oneonta in Birth through 6th General and Special Education and completed my Master's Degree from Touro College with a Masters in Special Education

I have two children in elementary school. We enjoy camping and exploring new places. I also enjoy challenging hikes in the Adirondacks. I am also a proud OCSD alumni from prek-12th grade!

OTA New Member's



My name is **Susan LaFountain** and I have been working as a **Special Education Teacher** for 11+ years and will be continuing here at the **High School**.

I received my Master's degree in teaching from SUNY New Paltz in 1999. My husband Tom and I reside in New Hartford, New York. I am a mother of 3 children and have lived in New Hartford my entire life. My daughter Grace, an avid tennis player, recently graduated from high school and is going to school at Bates College in Maine. My twin boys Luke and Patrick are in 7th grade. They love sports, especially baseball, football and golf. I consider myself to be a very creative person. I love to cook, prepare creative deserts, make wreaths and explore other crafts. I also have a love of photography. Last but not least, I love to spoil our pet Pomeranian Dash who is the baby of our family! I am so excited to be here at Oneida High School and look forward to an amazing experience here!



Hello! My name is **Erin Richards** and I am the new **Occupational Therapist** here at OCSD. I am currently working at Willard Prior primarily, but I am also at OSMS and at St. Pats.

I attended college at University at Buffalo where I received my BA in Psychology and Community Mental Health. I Utica College; MS Occupational Therapy. Worked at Elmcrest SPICE in Syracuse My husband Keith owns 7 Hamlets Brewing in our hometown, Westmoreland. We have a 15 month old daughter, Alice. In my free time, I spend time with my family, bake and read.



Hello! My name is **Brianne Wilcox** and I am a **Teaching Assistant** in 6:1:1 Class at **Willard Prior Elementary**.

I went to Springfield College in Massachusetts and am a certified Teaching Assistant.

Prior to coming to OCSD, I was the Conservation Educator at the Great Swamp Conservancy here in Canastota. I have two rescue dogs, Ziggy (lab mix) and Willow (beagle). I spend my free time walking my high energy dogs, paddle boarding and camping.



Hello, my name is **Jon Silkowski** and I at the **High School** as a **Special Education Teacher (Resource and Project Life)**. I went to Niagara University and graduated in 2009 with a Degree in 7-12 Social Studies and 7-12 SWD, Social Studies. I received my Master's Degree from LeMoyne College in Students with Disabilities in 2010.

I had been the high school special education teacher at Madison Central School since 2011 before finally making it back to my Alma Mater (2005 Grad)!

I am married to Erica and have two twin daughters – Amara and Evelyn. Fortunate to still live in same community as my parents; grandparents get to be a large presence in my kid's lives.

Avid sports fan – go Bills, Blue Jays, and Orange! Original Dixie fantasy football member since 2005, which brings me to the sports I participated in High School, track and football. Chicken wing aficionado – co-creator of world-renowned “Wings World”. I am a retro video game nerd, still own all the systems from the 90's (SNES, Sega Genesis, Sony PS1). Proud to announce I am a 36 handicap golfer and a former karaoke champion.

OTA New Member's



Hello, my name is **Hannah Cleveland**. I am the **1st Grade Teacher at Willard Prior Elementary School**. I received my Bachelor's Degree from SUNY Oneonta with my certification in Childhood Education (1-6) and Literacy (B-6). I continued at SUNY Oneonta for my Master's Degree in Literacy. This is not my first year at Oneida! Last year I was a Long Term Substitute at Willard Prior. With my free time I love to spend time with my family and friends.



Hi! My name is **Megan Lawlor** and I am teaching **English as a New Language (ENL) at Seneca Street Elementary School**. I received my Bachelor's of Art Degree from SUNY Potsdam and then got my Master's in Education from SUNY Cortland. I am certified in Childhood Education and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Before I came to OCSD, I was teaching adult ENL at RISE (Refugee and Immigrant Self Empowerment) a nonprofit that helps the local refugee and immigrant community in Syracuse. In my free time, I like to relax by reading, knitting and painting. I also like to travel when I get the opportunity.



Hello, my name is **Shelby Weaver** and I am the **4th and 5th grade 12:1:1 teacher at Willard Prior Elementary School**. I went to college at Cazenovia College and received my certification in Elementary Inclusive Education. I am currently studying for my Masters at Russell Sage with the emphasis on studying Applied Behavior Analysis and Autism. For the last three years I was a 6:1:1 Middle School Autism teacher at Madison Oneida BOCES. I have two older brothers and a 15-month-old niece I enjoy spending most of my time with. In addition, I was just married on October 9th! I enjoy spending time with my black lab. During my time off I enjoy crafting and baking.



Hi! My name is **Amy Leahey** and I am the **Art Teacher at Durhamville Elementary and Willard Prior Elementary**. I attended Roberts Wesleyan College and received a Bachelor's of Science in Studio Art. I then completed my Master's Degree through Utica College with a degree in Childhood/SWD 1-6. Prior to coming over to OCSD, I was working at Utica City Schools (from 2020-22) and UCP Rome Tradewinds (from 2019-20). I am married to Jeffrey Leahey and we have 6 kiddos, three of them have graduated from Oneida (Jeff's parents also graduated from Oneida). I am that person who loves high ropes, ziplines and roller coasters! Hanging with the family is always part of my "off" time. I also like to visit State Parks, walking with my friends and traveling.



Hello, my name is **Nicole Winegard** and I am the new **Elementary General Music & Chorus Teacher at Seneca Street Elementary and North Broad Elementary**. I attended college at Hartwick College and received my Bachelor's Degree in Music Education. I then proceeded to get my Master's Degree from Syracuse University in Cultural Foundations of Education. Before I came here to OCSD, I was teaching K-12 General and Vocal Music at Madison Central School (Hi Jon!) I have two kids, Sophia who is 9 and Kate who is 2. On my time off I love to travel, spend time with my family, and craft!



Hello, my name is **Trevin Robinson** and I am the **World Languages Teacher at Otto Shortell Middle School**. I received my Bachelor's Degree from SUNY Oneonta in Spanish and Adolescent Education. Over the past year I have been substitute teaching, looking for that full-time position. I do love the languages and I am always trying to learn more. My current favorite spot to travel is to Peru (thank you Ms. Gleason).

OTA New Member's



Hello, my name is **Wendy S. Roberts** and I am a **Special Education Teacher** at the **High School and at Otto Shortell Middle School** working with a student with a visual impairment I Graduated from Trinity College of Burlington, Vermont (1993) and am certified NYS Students with Disabilities 1-6 and 7-12. I got my Master's Degree from Grand Canyon University in Special Education (2010)

For the past 7 years, I was a 12-1-1 special education teacher for the Skills Development Program with Madison-Oneida BOCES. I taught mainly English along with a variety of other classes including social studies, life works, and Read 180. I worked at SVCS as a Teaching Assistant for 10 years and then decided to return school to earn my masters degree and certification as an older adult (lol)all while working full time with 2 young children. This was hard but very proud that this goal was accomplished!

I am a 1988 graduate of OHS. I have been happily married to my husband Chris for 24 years. He is a 1988 VVS grad. He is an Operations Manager at PJ Green, Inc in Utica, NY. We have 2 wonderful children. Our daughter Kailey is 22 and a graduate student at Ithaca College studying to be a Physical Therapist. She danced for 11 years and played soccer and volleyball in high school. My 19 year old son, Collin, went to Modern Welding in Schenectady after graduating from high school. He is a welder in Syracuse at CNY Fabrication. Collin raced quads as his sport. He was a part of the NEATV-Mx. He won many championships and even a national race at Unadilla (450B class). We have a new puppy named Pepper who is 7 months old. He is a Husky, Shephard, St.Bernard and Malamute mix. He is a fun living puppy!! I needed to fill my empty nest sadness with a new dog!!

In our spare time, our family loves to spend time outdoors as well as with family and friends. We enjoy going on hikes, family land, 4-wheeling, and hunting/fishing. Some interesting facts about me include being an OHS cheerleader for my 9-10th grades. went sky-diving, lived in Alaska for a summer, and my first time water skiing was in all my clothes in a remote lake in Alaska.



Hi! My name is **Kelsey Wilcox** and I am the **Elementary General Music & Elementary Chorus Teacher** at both **Willard Prior & Durhamville Elementaries**.

I did my undergraduate work at Grand Valley State University and received a Bachelor's of Music Education with a minor in Philosophy and I am certified K-12 Music.

For the past 4 years I was teaching elementary general music and elementary chorus to about 600 students K-5 in a rural district in West Michigan, just 15 minutes off the coast of Lake Michigan. I also worked part time teaching oboe lessons and worked in a non-profit thrift shop where all the proceeds went to our local Humane Society.

When I'm not teaching or engaging with music, I like to hike, take pictures, play boardgames, and browse secondhand shops.

My entire family is located in Michigan and I am looking for a change. I recently moved to Syracuse this past July with my boyfriend who is a PhD student studying Earth Sciences at Syracuse University.



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