

Member Advocacy Needed

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March marks the one-year anniversary of the COVID closures in our schools. It has been a year like no other. We struggled to stay connected last Spring. We spent an anxious Summer preparing for an uncertain return to our buildings. We spent the Fall worried about safety while attempting to provide a semblance of normalcy to our students. The Winter brought with it the weariness that comes from balancing remote and in-person responsibilities, simultaneously. Soon it will be Spring once again with it's promise of rebirth and renewal.

To commemorate one year of working and teaching through a pandemic, our Association is in the process of creating a video highlighting some of the challenges our members have faced. Thank you to those who have contributed by sending in video clips and editing the video. It will be a testament to the tireless work that all of us do. In addition to our membership, the video will be shared with our administration and Board of Education so that they too understand our challenges and the good work that is being done.

This time of year also marks the annual NYS budget fight in Albany. Funding for

education seems to be constantly on the chopping block. NYSUT sponsors several Lobby Days during this time to ensure that members of the NYS Assembly and Senate understand how important public education is to our future and to a healthy democracy. One day is set aside to highlight the role of BOCES across the state. It is a joint effort that NYSUT and BOCES administrations embark upon together. Here at Questar it is a chance for our Association and Dr. Cruz to work collaboratively for the good of our programs and our students. I have had the pleasure of participating with students from my social studies classes for the past several years.

This year looked different as we met virtually with lawmakers over Zoom instead of the cramped quarters of the Legislative Office Building. Three seniors from the Sackett Educational Center spoke about our programs and how they have benefited from them. It is always touching to hear first-hand the impact that we have had.

The perils to education this year are real. Please consider contacting members of the Assembly and Senate

to advocate for education funding in general and BOCES Aid in particular. NYSUT's website has a member action center that can help you get started. (<https://mac.nysut.org/issues>) Two specific areas of concern deal with the bundling of BOCES Aid with other funding as well as the Executive Proposal to use federal money as a replacement of state education funds instead of as a supplement as intended. When advocating for funding the following NYSUT "Asks" might be helpful:

NYSUT urges the Legislature to reject the Executive Proposals to:

- condense expense-based aids into a "Services Aid," including BOCES Aid; and
- allow federal education funds that were approved in December 2020, to supplant state support of schools, through the creation of the LDFA.

In solidarity,

Joal Bova

President

RCG BOCES Teachers' Association

Union Updates

- **For NYSUT Coronavirus Updates**
Visit: <https://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources-sites/coronavirus-toolkit>



NYSUT Statement on State COVID Vaccination Plans

ALBANY, N.Y. Jan. 8, 2021 — New York State United Teachers' President, Andy Pallotta, released the following statement today regarding the state's announcement that those in the 1b COVID-19 vaccine priority group, including education professionals, will be able to begin scheduling a vaccination beginning Monday.

"We have advocated that all education professionals — both teachers and support staff, who provide critical services to their communities — be given priority access to the COVID vaccine should they choose to receive it. So it's welcome news that they can begin scheduling a vaccine appointment next week as part of the state's 1b priority group. We understand that it will take

time to immunize the millions in the 1a and 1b priority groups, and we look forward to the opportunity to learn more from the state on Monday about how NYSUT, as a union, can play a role in ensuring our members have reliable access to immunization."

<https://www.nysut.org/news/2021/january/media-release-vaccine>

Know Your Contract

Article 13: Association-Agency Liaison

13.1

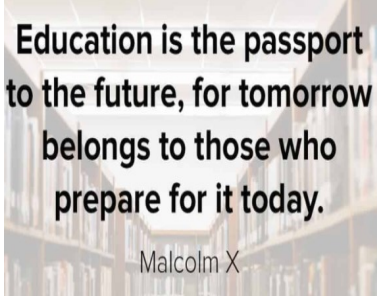
The Association and the Agency recognize the need for communication to resolve issues of concern to either or both of the parties. To facilitate such communication, there is hereby established a Liaison Committee consisting of the Executive Officer or his or her designee and the President of the

Association or his or her designee. The Committee shall meet as reasonably required to deal with issues as they arise. Except in an emergency, at least three days notice of the need for a meeting shall be given, and the request for the meeting shall identify its subject matter. The Executive Officer and the President shall have the right to bring such additional

persons as they require to meetings of the Committee.

13.2

The Liaison Committee may consider matters of concern to the Agency and to the Association. It shall not be authorized to consider or negotiate any change in the provisions of the Agreement.



Shared Success

“Life is more fun if you play games.” -Roald Dahl

WINNING AT BINGO

What started as a remote learning ‘Fun Friday’ event has turned into a weekly occurrence. Every Friday, since the start of summer school, the high school NYSAA classes at Columbia and Columbia-Greene Educational Center have been joining together to play BINGO via Zoom. The game has gotten much more organized since it first began; students sign on with their Questar III iPads, wait patiently for their peers to join, and give a thumbs up when they are ready to go. The students are muted throughout the entirety of the games (usually we play straight BINGO and coverall) and only talk to yell “BINGO” (along with the incessant

“goodbyes” and “have a nice weekend” that come at the end of every Zoom call).

The students in both classes look forward to these games every week. But fun is not the only purpose they serve! These BINGO games allow for our students to work on a variety of important life and academic skills. Benefits include improving functional math skills, speaking and listening skills, learning to take turns, participation in a group activity, improving independence with technology use, following a routine and schedule, and improving leisure time skills, to name a few.

These skills greatly benefit the students at this age level as they transition into adulthood. Generally, there is one winner for each game, but some weeks we have had up to 3 at the same time!

In these trying COVID times, we haven’t had as much to look forward to. But something good has come out of these never-ending Zoom calls! A chance for a little routine excitement and peer interaction that our students so deeply crave! It seems as though this will be a game we keep playing, long after COVID is through!

~Emily Bluhm-Allen, Teacher
Columbia HS

We Must Make Black Lives Matter at School Every Day

By: Cecily Myart-Cruz

Black Lives Matter at School is celebrated with a week of action every February — but I say we should celebrate Black Lives Matter every week. Especially with the recent racial uprising, from the raid on the Capitol to continued violence against Black people, Black Lives Matter is the order of the day, the order of the year and the order of the minute.

How do we embed this concept into our lives as educators? For one thing, ethnic studies has never been more top of mind. We should always offer children content that is relatable

to their lives, with approaches to learning that are more relatable, too, and that build them up.

Kids crave this. When I hear students talk about centering their own experiences and I hear educators acting as facilitators, I see such a beautiful kaleidoscope of what our world can really be when we let kids lead, when we let Black people lead. This is what it takes to create real change — a shift away from white-centered learning and toward more multicultural perspectives.

Ibram X. Kendi says, “The opposite of ‘racist’ isn’t ‘not racist.’ It is ‘antiracist.’” And if you’re antiracist, that means you are going to be breaking down systems, policies, directions. For white people that means moving past being an ally. As a Black Latina woman, I don’t need an ally. We need co-conspirators in the work. We need white people standing up and saying, “I am going to take this on,” not centering themselves, but actually allowing Black voices to lead in this moment.

Read the Full Story [HERE](#).



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Member Benefits Quick Guide

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In solidarity,
J. Philippe Abraham
Chairperson, NYSUT Member Benefits Trust



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



To learn more about our endorsed programs and services, please visit:

memberbenefits.nysut.org

NYSUT Member Benefits

800 Troy-Schenectady Rd. Latham, NY 12110-2455

PH: 800-626-8101 FX: 518-213-6413

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