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Opportunities and Reminders

This Spring and Summer our Association will be working with NYSUT to streamline the process of onboarding new members and strengthening the structure of our Association. As part of this process we hope to identify members who are interested in taking on new roles in the Association. We are stronger together, but we are only as strong as the support that we have from our membership.

This effort comes at a good time since we are holding board elections in April and contract negotiations are still several years away. This allows time for new voices to be heard and new members to become active. As part of this process we plan to reinvent the building rep

position, streamline our member onboarding process, and fill positions on our board and agency wide committees. Please let us know if you are interested in taking part in this process!

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- It is our responsibility to ensure that the number of **graduate credits** Questar has on file is accurate. Check to ensure that you have reported all graduate hours. If you have hours that you have not reported, do so ASAP. Credit hours impact your earnings.
- If you do not receive health insurance through Questar please make sure that you complete the **Opt Out paperwork** each year during the Spring open enrollment. You must do this every year to receive the payout differential.
- For those with Highmark/Blue Shield, make sure that you are utilizing lab and other services **in-network** to avoid costly bills later. Highmark is stricter now than Blueshield has been in the past. Check with your provider prior to lab work. You can also go to the Highmark website, create an account and search for providers online.
- If you receive notice that a prescription is not covered under the **prescription formulary**, please talk with your doctor about options. Your doctor can initiate an appeal if necessary. Questar has set up a fund to cover out of pocket expenses during the appeal process.

- Any member with one year or more of service can join the **sick bank**. All current and new members will be asked to contribute one day in the Spring of 23 to remain (or enroll) active.
- Keep in mind that you can access a digital version of our current contract at <https://www.questar.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/teachers-21-26.pdf>.

Thank you for all that you do to support our Association.

In Solidarity,  
Joal Bova  
President, RCG BOCES Teachers' Association

**We want to make sure that you are getting all that you can out of your membership. Make sure you are receiving communications from us through a personal email. Check out our website at <http://rcgboces.ny.aft.org/>. Follow us on Twitter, @BocesRcg. If you have not already created an online account do so at [www.NYSUT.org](http://www.NYSUT.org). Our Local is RCG BOCES Teachers' Association and we are Local 10175. Once you log in you will have access to a variety of membership benefits.**



After 37 years in education and the labor movement, NYSUT President Andy Pallotta has announced his retirement at the end of his term in April.

Here's his recent letter to local union presidents making the announcement.

Dear NYSUT Family:

After 37 years in education and the labor movement, it is with mixed emotions that I announce my retirement as President of New York State United Teachers at the end of my term in April. Thirty-seven years is a long time! But from my first day in a classroom in Brooklyn as a brand new teacher, until today as your President, I look back with pride knowing I gave my life to a worthy cause.

Over my 14 years at NYSUT, I have been privileged to stand side-by-side with local leaders from around the state representing NYSUT's values and fighting for a better future for all New Yorkers. We have grown into a more powerful union – nearly 700,000 strong.

Our members are relentless in their advocacy, and they have been resilient in the face of adversity. In the past decade alone, we have faced constant attacks on public education and unions; financial crises on the federal, state and local level; Supreme Court decisions that challenged the way we reach our members; and a global pandemic that thrust healthcare and public school employees on the frontlines as they cared for the most vulnerable among us. Through it all, we remained steadfast, and we came out stronger than ever.

I am grateful for the support of our Board of Directors, past and present, for their dedication to our union and their willingness to work together towards a common goal. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to you, our local leaders, who work tirelessly to ensure that the voices of our members are heard, and their needs are met. Your unwavering commitment to public service and your members has been the driving force behind NYSUT's success.

Last year, we celebrated NYSUT's 50th anniversary, looking back on our union's noble beginnings and the

many brave members who laid the foundation for our success. As we look ahead to NYSUT's next 50 years, I am confident that the future of our union is in good hands. NYSUT's leadership team carry with them a strong record of results, a dedication to NYSUT's mission, and an understanding of the responsibility to be good stewards of NYSUT's future.

We have come so far – we have been through so much together – and I am so proud of the impact we have made in the lives of our members and their families. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as NYSUT's President -- it has been the greatest honor of my professional career.

In strength and unity,

Andy Pallotta, NYSUT President

Read the full article here: <https://www.nysut.org/news/2023/february/pallotta>

“Music is a therapy. It is a communication far more powerful than words, far more immediate, far more efficient.” -Yehudi Menuhin

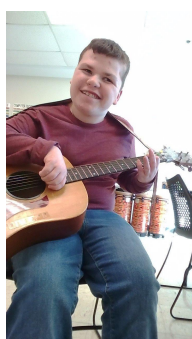
**The Many Benefits of MUSIC THERAPY**

Success is defined as the outcome of an undertaking, the accomplishment of a purpose, the condition of meeting a range of expectations. It can come in a variety of sizes and shapes, and for so many of our special needs students, it comes slowly and gradually, in sometimes very small increments that may not be detected by the casual observer. These students work hard for things that may seem insignificant to most, but beam when they make progress even if they can't verbally say it. To pick just one student who has had success this year in their Music Therapy program is daunting when they all work so hard! So, I would like to introduce a few of the many students with whom I have the pleasure of working.

First, meet Marck. He has a ton of energy and can be willful and vocally loud, traits not always conducive to a typical classroom setting. But give him music, and he can settle down and use his hands to explore work materials related to a songbook story. He can match numbers just sung about in a verse or a pattern just played on a rhythm instrument, and he can find patterns of instruments or sounds and locate the next one to go in sequence. He listens to songs intently and then begins playing in time with it, switching between the main beat to half time or double time depending on his mood. He can then switch to match what I am playing, or if asked, maintain his pattern of play while I play something

different. He can change how he is playing to match what he hears and go from loud to soft, or change instruments when he hears a new sound introduced. If I finish a song before he is ready for it to end, he will often hum phrases back to me as if to say, "I'm not ready yet." When Marck returns to the classroom, he is often calmer and able to meet classroom expectations, maybe not long term, but at least for a while before needing a break.

Now meet Jason, a friendly mid-teen who loves country music.



He has significant impairments on his right side but is still learning to play guitar, drums and piano in a modified way. Because he can't isolate his fingers and has limited strength on that side, we turn the piano upside down so that his right hand can get the piano's

pre-programmed chords started and his left hand can play individual notes. When it comes to guitar, he is able to stretch his right hand over the body of the guitar to strum, while his left hand uses a chord buddy (involves pressing a single button instead of multiple strings) which allows him to concentrate more on what his right hand has to do. As for the drums, he is still working on figuring out how to best grasp the stick, and we are experimenting with different sizes of mallets, but after every session he smiles and

says how proud he is that he kept trying and he can't wait to do it again next time.

And finally, meet Nay Nay, a spunky pre-teen who often has difficulty transitioning from one activity to the next and likes to be in control or a leader of activities. In previous years this meant refusal to complete a session as different tasks were presented or taking materials back out that I had put away, stopping in the hallway on the way back to class if something hadn't gone quite right during the session, or fussing about leaving the classroom to attend music in the first place even though she loves to drum and improvise on the piano. This year, I think there has only been 1-2 occasions where she needed a prompt to come, but once there she did everything I asked, even if it wasn't her preference of activity. Now, she even asks if pictures can be taken to show her teacher or mom what she has been working on!

There are so many others I could talk about – James, who will be graduating this year and is most responsive, engaged and interactive when music is present. Nellie, an older teen who smiles wide when she uses a song to help her organize the steps to tying a bow. Tym, an upper elementary student who loves to be creative and write new verses to songs. Shyla, a younger elementary student learning to string words together to ask for music activities. All of their accomplishments make me love what I do and strive to be a better, more creative therapist on a daily basis.

-Mary Holliday, QIII Music Therapist

**KNOW YOUR CONTRACT**

**ARTICLE 11- TEACHING CONDITIONS**

**11.27 MASTER TEACHER**

Questar III shall establish a Master Teacher Program to recognize the special skills and talents of experienced teachers while enhancing their professional development through his program.

Members selected and completing the full program shall have \$3,000 added to base salary. The program will accept up to five (5) teachers each school year. A joint committee of Administrators and Teachers shall meet to discuss criterion and selection for the Master Teacher Program. The program will sunset for future applicants on June 30, 2025, or at the end of the term of this agreement, whichever is sooner, unless the parties mutually agree to extend its terms.

# Check out all your union membership has to offer!

## LEGAL SERVICE PLAN

Plan benefits include:

- Crucial estate planning documents (a Simple Will, Health Care Proxy, Living Will & Durable Power of Attorney)
- Free telephone consultations
- Guaranteed maximum fees for specific legal matters

## FINANCIAL COUNSELING PROGRAM

Plan benefits include:

- Unbiased objective advice
- Free telephone & virtual consultations
- Assistance with retirement planning, 403(b) savings, college savings, tax planning and more

MEMBER  
BENEFITS

**nysut**

Working to Benefit You



Learn more by scanning the QR code to the right,  
visiting [memberbenefits.nysut.org](https://memberbenefits.nysut.org)  
or calling 800-626-8101.