



New Members Bulletin

*Everything you ever wanted to know about **GNTA** but were afraid to ask.
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The Great Neck Teachers Association
The Cottage - 343 Lakeville Rd. Great Neck, NY 11020

Welcome!

The Great Neck Teachers Association is happy to welcome you as our newest colleagues. We want to assist you in any way possible to make your years in Great Neck rewarding.

New Members Bulletins will be published several times during the year, each on a different topic (Benefits, Staff Development, and Terms and Conditions of Employment) to give you information that is helpful, concise, and easy to understand.

If you have suggestions for additional bulletins, please send them to the editor and **New Members Coordinator, Kirsten Kuhn**. I am continually seeking new ways to help you.

This first edition is devoted to helping you understand the purpose, organization, and functions of GNTA. I hope that you will be proud to be a member!



Why Does GNTA Matter?

If you've had a chance to read the contract you received, you may have noticed how well protected you are. You've certainly noticed that your salary is good. So why, you might wonder, do you need a union? Why should you pay union dues and be a member?

The Great Neck Teachers Association was founded in 1938 in response to the dismissal of four teachers at the high school and the resulting student protest strike. Organizing was done in secret, because no laws at the time recognized teachers' rights to unionize. That same year, the state legislature enacted a teacher tenure statute, which helped to protect the fledgling Association as it sought to protect teachers' rights and to establish a working partnership between teachers and administration.

Throughout the 1940's and 50's, GNTA took an active role in writing to legislators, participating in community service projects, and promoting the educational needs of Great Neck students. It wasn't until the 1960's, however, that legislation was passed giving teachers the right to bargain collectively regarding terms and conditions of their employment. When it was passed, GNTA was ready.

Since that time, our contract has been renegotiated every three years, on average. GNTA prepares carefully for these negotiations, seeking input from all members, and negotiations are never easy. Every aspect of your professional life has been considered, and the benefits and protections you enjoy have been hard-won.

What has GNTA done for you—before you even got here?

- Negotiated one of the highest salary schedules in the nation
- Guaranteed that you will have preparation time built into your day
- Negotiated formal procedures and protections for you in case you ever face a difficult situation with administration

-Guaranteed you a voice in decision making through BRC (for building issues), BCG (for curriculum), Selection Committees (on which teachers participate equally with administrators)

-GNTA-designated membership on every district-wide committee empowered by the Board of Education and the State of New York

-Negotiated funds for all the benefits you have, other than Health Insurance, as well as the right to administer these funds through the GNTA Benefit Trust Fund

This is just a partial list, but you get the idea. The most important thing to remember, however, is that a contract is just a collection of paper. It is only powerful if it is enforced. GNTA's vigilance is your only guarantee that the contract will be adhered to.

GNTA needs every one of its members to remain powerful enough to effectively represent them. It also needs your membership in order to remain flexible.

GNTA has changed greatly over the years in response not only to outside forces, but also to the needs of its members. The New Members Program, for example, was initiated several years ago because the faculty of Great Neck was experiencing a period of tremendous turnover.

GNTA relies on the active participation of all of its members, both veteran and brand new, so that established goals continue to be met and new goals are created. Again, welcome and join in!



How GNTA Works

In addition to our almost 750 rank and file members, GNTA consists of the Executive Board and the Delegate Assembly and is represented on the building level by the BRCs (Building Representation Committees).

The Executive Board is composed of ten members, six officers, and four directors. Each serves a two-year term and is elected directly by members of GNTA.

GNTA Executive Board:

Jim Daszenski-President

Frank Bua-Vice President for Administration

Jennifer Snyder-Vice President for Professional Rights & Responsibilities

Kim Semder-Vice President for Contract Improvement

Elaine Brendel-Vice President for Professional Development

Maxine Bazzani-Treasurer

Sandra Kaufman-Elementary Director, Grades PreK-2

Luci Legotti-Elementary Director, Grades 3-5

Jeffrey Bernstein-High School Director

Dan Isaac-Middle School Director

What Does Our Executive Board Do?

The Vice President for Professional Rights and Responsibilities advises GNTA members if they believe their professional rights have been violated.

The Vice President for Administration assists the President in carrying out his duties, runs GNTA elections, takes minutes at DA meetings, updates our website, and edits the GNTA Newsletter.

The Vice President for Contract Improvement convenes and chairs the Contract Improvement Committee for each round of negotiations; she also administers the Summer Scholarship Program.

The Vice President for Professional Development is GNTA's liaison with The Inservice Institute and the Teacher Center; she also administers GNTA's participation on Selection Committees.

The Directors for Elementary and Secondary Education serve as liaisons between the teachers on their respective grade levels and GNTA when issues arise specifically affecting those levels.

Our **Treasurer** is responsible for managing GNTA's funds in collaboration with our bookkeeper, accountant, and independent auditors.

And the **President** coordinates all of GNTA's initiatives in political action, member engagement, and community outreach, as well as representing us to the Board of Education, the district administration, AFT, NYSUT, and the Great Neck community.

The Delegate Assembly is the policy-making body of GNTA and is composed of members from each building's BRC.

The Building Representation Committees are made up of representatives elected by you, the members, who also serve as DA members. They are the key to providing answers to questions you may have. They function as the liaisons between the building faculty and administration and have a major responsibility in protecting your professional and personal rights. Make sure you know who your BRC Chairperson is by

visiting our website, www.gnteachers.net! The BRC is responsible for setting up a **TAC (Teacher Assistance Committee)** for each probationary teacher and regular substitute. Volunteers to this committee have agreed to assist you in any way possible with your day-to-day questions and concerns. In most buildings, the TAC will match you up with a buddy; in other buildings, the arrangement may be more informal. If no one has approached you yet, ask your BRC Chair about this! One of the primary functions of the TAC is to assist you in preparing for the observation process. It's important to know that at no time is the TAC involved in evaluating any probationary teacher.

To add to the alphabet soup of committees, each building has a **BCG (Building Curriculum Group)**. Faculty members and the principal work together on curriculum matters.

And then there is **SDM (Shared Decision Making Committee)**. These are building-level committees mandated by New York State on which parents, teachers, administrators (and students, on the secondary level) meet to establish building goals and develop strategies to improve the instructional program.

GNTA has a number of other standing committees:

GNTA Benefit Trust Fund: Our major medical insurance is administered through the district offices (516-441-4052). However, dental, vision, hearing aid, life insurance, excess medical, long-term disability, and legal services benefits are administered through the GNTA Benefit Trust Fund office (516-829-9086). The Fund is overseen by trustees from GNTA, SAGES (the administrators' union) and the Office Staff Association. Any GNTA member may volunteer to serve as a trustee or an observer. Although major medical benefits are paid in part by you, Trust Fund benefits have been negotiated for you by GNTA at no additional cost to you.

Selection Committees:

GNTA has negotiated the right for teachers to be involved in the hiring, selection, and promotion of professional staff members. Although you may have been too nervous to realize it at the time, some of the people on the committee who hired you are now your colleagues! Any GNTA member may volunteer to serve on these committees; mandatory training for this responsibility is provided by GNTA.

CIC (Contract Improvement Committee):

This committee, under the leadership of **Kim Semder**, begins to formulate proposals a year before negotiations open. The committee is made up of GNTA representatives from each of the buildings. It's helpful to have input from many different points of view, so participation of new members is encouraged.

MEG (Member Engagement Group):

MEG is the "boots on the ground" for our union. Members try to have monthly one to one conversations with their assigned colleagues (usually 7-10) to share information and hear concerns. The goal is to have each GNTA member be informed and feel part of a community. There is one MEG training/meeting per year. Please reach out to **Joan Greenberg** for more information.

SOC (Social Outreach Committee):

The **SOC** was created with the purpose of increasing GNTA membership involvement and building bridges with the community. Chaired by **Cindy Pavlic**, this committee includes representatives from each school building. The **SOC** plans fun and engaging social events throughout the year (like Paint Nite, Color Run, etc.) Keep an eye out for our next event!





Let Your Voice Be Heard: Join a Committee

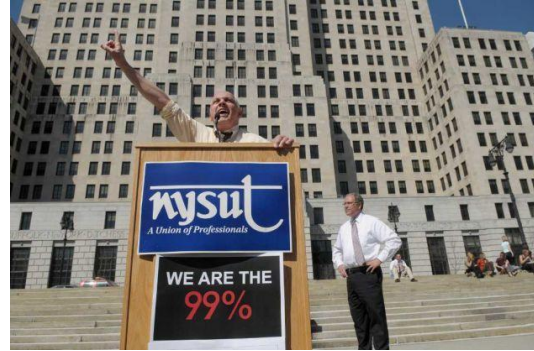
Virtually all meetings are open: check with the Chairperson of the committee you're interested in to see if you can sit on one. Consider getting involved as soon as possible. The Social Committee, which exists in every building, is fun for starters! You'll feel more like a member of the school community—and your union—when you do!



New York State United Teachers

GNTA is one of more than 900 autonomous locals in the **New York State United Teachers**, the largest professional employee union in New York. **NYSUT**, though headquartered in Albany, maintains regional offices around the state, including one located in Woodbury, which serves GNTA. Each local is assigned a Labor Relations Specialist. **Christine Corbett** advises GNTA and assists in handling local grievances and contract negotiations.

Another major benefit of affiliation with NYSUT is the political and legislative clout we generate independently. NYSUT has won important gains for our members in areas like tenure laws, collective bargaining laws, retirement, state aid to education, and unemployment insurance, to name only a few. NYSUT mails an informative newsletter to every dues paying member.



The Representative Assembly

Every two years in April, GNTA members vote for delegates to attend the NYSUT Representative Assembly, called the RA, for the following two school years. The RA meets each year in Albany. All NYSUT locals have the option of sending delegates to the RA.

Throughout the RA there are speakers, awards, musical presentations by students from the host city, and all kinds of legislative business.



The most important business of the RA is the presentation and discussion of legislative initiatives on the following topics: College and University, Educational Issues, Legislative/ Political Action, Organization, and Pension and Retirement.

Once resolutions pertaining to these areas pass through their respective committees, they are brought to the floor of the convention, where they are voted upon.

Typically, over 100 resolutions are debated and voted on, as well as NYSUT constitutional amendments and special orders of business.

These resolutions establish the goals of NYSUT, direct the NYSUT Executive Board, and most importantly, set forth the NYSUT legislative agenda.



The **American Federation of Teachers** is the national teachers union in Washington, D.C. It is responsible for helping to set a national agenda for the direction of education in America and for speaking on behalf of its members where federal legislation affecting education is involved.

VOTE-COPE

VOTE-COPE is the NYSUT committee for political action, the **non-partisan** arm of our statewide union (it is not a political party, nor is it tied to any political party).

VOTE-COPE collects voluntary contributions from NYSUT members and distributes these funds in support of candidates who have been endorsed by NYSUT on the basis of their legislative record on education and labor. Contributions are also used for lobbying efforts on behalf of such benefits as increased state aid to education, protection of tenure rights, teacher centers, and improved retirement benefits.

Your VOTE-COPE money is so important!

Our Member Engagement Group will be in touch with you concerning your voluntary contribution if you haven't signed up yet. GNTA suggests a \$5.00 per paycheck contribution, which can be made through payroll deduction, as our commitment to these efforts.



Visit GNTA Online!
www.gnteachers.net