

New Members Bulletin



*Everything you ever wanted to know about GNTA but were afraid to ask.
Volume 16, Number 1, 2014-2015*

The Great Neck Teachers Association
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.

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 Jodi Rauch at:

JRauch@greatneck.k12.ny.us

We are continually seeking ways to help you.

This first edition is devoted to helping you understand the purpose, organization, and functions of GNTA. We 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 or an agency fee?

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' right 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 40'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, is only fourteen years old, and was initiated 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 long time and brand new, so that established goals continue to be met and new goals are created. Again, welcome and join in!



Alphabet Soup- How GNTA Works



GNTA consists of the **Executive Board** and the **Delegate Assembly** and is represented on the building level by the **BRCs (Building Representative Committees)**.

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



GNTA Executive Board:

Sheila Scimone-President
James Daszenski-Vice President for Administration
Jennifer Snyder-Vice President for Professional Rights & Responsibilities
Kim Sender-Vice President for Contract Improvement
Elaine Brendel,-Vice President for Professional Development
Maura Carroll, Treasurer
Donna Peirez, Director Elementary Grades PreK-2
Luci Legotti Director Elementary Grades 3-5
Jeffrey Bernstein- Director High School
Frank Bua- Director Middle School

WHAT DOES OUR EXECUTIVE BOARD DO?

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

The Vice President for **Administration** assists the President in carrying out her duties, takes Minutes at DA meetings, 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 levels and GNTA when issues arise specifically affecting those levels.

And the **President** runs the whole show, as well as representing us to the Board of Education, the Administration, NYSUT, and the world!



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 is your BRC Chairperson.

The BRC is responsible for setting up a **TAC (Teacher Assistance Committee)**. 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.

PR&R (Professional Rights and Responsibilities):

What do you do if you think you may have a contractual problem? See your BRC Chairperson. She/he will advise you and assist you in protecting your contractual rights. If necessary, she/he can put you in touch with a GNTA Executive Board member to further assist you.



GNTA Benefit Trust Fund:

Our medical insurance is administered through the district offices (441-4052). However, dental, vision, hearing aid, life insurance, excess medical, long-term disability, and legal services benefits are administered through the GNTA Trust Fund office. The Fund is overseen by trustees from GNTA, as well as the administrators and office staff associations. Any teacher may volunteer to serve as a trustee or an observer. Although 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 teacher may volunteer to serve on these committees: 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 teacher representatives from each of the buildings. It's helpful to have input from many different points of view, so participation of new teachers is encouraged.

New Members Committee:

Established by GNTA in 1998, this committee is currently chaired by Jodi Rauch (New Members Coordinator). Our goal is to seek ways to help new teachers adjust to the demands of teaching in Great Neck and to introduce new members to our union. Contact us at the Cottage if you'd like to be included or have ideas for us.

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**, with **GNTA and the World Headquarters** in Albany, maintains regional offices around the state, including one located in Woodbury, which serves GNTA. Each local is assigned a Labor Relations Specialist. Peter Lanzo 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 newspaper, *The New York Teacher*, to every dues paying member.



The Representative Assembly

Each year in April, GNTA members vote for delegates to attend the NYSUT Representative Assembly, called the RA, for the following school year. The RA meets each year somewhere in New York State. Every other year it meets in New York City. All NYSUT locals send delegates to the RA.

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



The most important business of the RA is the presentation and discussion, which occurs in the Resolution Committees on the following topics: College and University, Educational Issues, Legislative/ Political Action, Organization, and Pension and Retirement. These committees meet simultaneously, so our GNTA delegates split up to cover each committee.

Once the resolutions pass through the committee, they are brought to the floor of the convention, where they are voted upon.

Last year, over 100 resolutions were debated and voted on, as well as 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 Program.



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 a 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 VOTE/ COPE Chairperson, Michael Norberto, will be in touch with you concerning your voluntary contribution if you haven't signed up yet. GNTA suggests \$5.00 per paycheck contribution, which can be made through payroll deduction, as our commitment to these efforts.



GNTA is Online!
www.gnteachers.net



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.



(New Members Coordinator and Bulletin Editor: Jodi Rauch)