



The Member Ship



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An Agreement Reached on Learners Edge: What it Means for You, By WGTA President John Mannion

The WGTA and WGCSD Administration recently reached an agreement regarding the approval of, and salary compensation for, graduate-level courses offered through Learners Edge, an organization that offers professional development and continuous learning courses. As many of you know, the district questioned the rigor of some of these courses due to the completion of multiple courses over a very short period of time by some of our members. The district responded to these concerns by creating a new policy that limits the number of total courses that could be completed to three and these courses could only be taken through Augustana University. In response to this change, the WGTA negotiated a compromise with the district that allows for our members to take courses beyond just three. Please see a section of the actual agreement below:

Professional development is important for intellectual growth and we want to ensure that it is of the highest quality. To that end, we have agreed that courses offered by Learners Edge and accredited through Colorado State University Pueblo, Augustana University, and Marygrove College will be accepted as acceptable, high quality, graduate level professional development under the following provisions:

- *A maximum of three (3) Learners Edge courses can be taken and approved for graduate credit through Colorado State University Pueblo provided that the proper pre-approval takes place and the proper transcript is provided.*
- *A maximum of three (3) Learners Edge courses can be taken and approved for graduate credit through Augustana University provided that the proper pre-approval takes place and the proper transcript is provided.*
- *A maximum of two (2) Learners Edge courses can be taken and approved for graduate credit through Marygrove College provided that the proper pre-approval takes place and the proper transcript is provided.*
- *The maximum number of Learners Edge courses that will be approved for graduate credit in total, will be eight (8) courses, the equivalent of twenty-four (24) credits.*

This agreement, made on March 28, 2017, signifies the beginning of the arrangement stated above. Courses previously approved will continue to be approved and compensated. The WGTA and the District will review this arrangement on an annual basis to ensure that the institutions listed above continue to maintain their proper accreditations.

Here is what the agreement is saying:

1. The maximum number of credits anyone can take through Learners Edge is 24.
2. Courses should be taken only through the colleges and universities that are listed above and should not exceed the maximum number of courses per institution stated above.
3. If teachers have taken more than 24 credits they cannot be compensated for any future classes taken through Learners Edge, however, no salary or banked graduate credits will be taken away.
4. Online courses can still be taken through other universities and institutions, including NYSUT ELT (VESI courses) and through National Board Certification but still require pre-approval.

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My Years With the WGTA

By WGTA Vice President Mary Weaver

As of this June, I will be no longer part of the executive cabinet in the West Genesee Teachers' Association. I will be starting my 30th year as a teacher and a NYSUT member in June, my 25th year at West Genesee CSD and my 23-or 24th year as a member of the WGTA.

In the beginning of my membership in the WGTA, a since-retired teacher asked me if I wanted to take over the refreshment committee at the cabinet meetings, and I agreed. I was then putting grapes, nuts and other types of refreshments out during the meetings. Along with that I was voted as building representative of our school (WGMS). At first, I listened as Jim Ridgeway, Mel Taber, Lynn Davis, Dave Smithson and Ray Fuller filled us in on the latest concerns of members and how they planned to rectify these concerns. This is where I learned about arbitration, memorandums of agreement and the grievance process. I also realized that mediation was the first step in the process and other negotiations were always attempted to alleviate a situation.

Those first years, I learned a lot. I tried very hard to be a support for our members. If I didn't know an answer I directed teachers to a person that could answer the question. Those first years were a learning experience. During those days, I saw teacher leaders continue to enhance the conditions of our employment through mediation, arbitration and other negotiations.

The initial language in our contract today is based on the hard fought negotiations of the past. There were times when I would bring our contract to NYSUT conferences and their representatives would praise the language in our contract. They would also go on to say that we should never change certain parts because they were so important to our members and their employment. Through the course of the years, I have seen WGTA Presidents and leaders establish practices that are always for the good of our members. Intentions were positive and we as a union moved forward. Eventually, there was a period of time when I wasn't active as union representative. I was focusing on other aspects of my life.

My level of union participation changed again when I met John Mannion. A friend of mine told me about a man that came to her building in hopes to gain support in the coming elections of the WGTA. He had spoken to teachers there and teachers were coming away feeling confident in his goals for the West Genesee Teachers' Association. I then heard he was coming to WGMS.

Our teachers came to hear him speak at other buildings and that confidence in him grew across our district. I felt a new drive to support our membership. He asked me to come on board as his elected Vice President. I was impressed and honored to be thought of as someone with the knowledge that could continue to advance the WGTA. I had the great opportunity to work with John as elected Vice President from 2013 to now. His guidance and foresight has moved our union forward.

I have had the honor to participate in re-instituting the Superintendent's Liaison Committee. It has allowed for a vigorous dialogue between representatives from perspective schools and Dr. Brown. I appreciate the participation of its members. Another responsibility of the WGTA Vice President also was the opportunity to sit on the Directing council of the West Genesee Teaching Center. Its mission has allowed for valuable continuation of hours of professional development for certifications. I enjoyed being part of both committees. I was pleased to be part of the negotiations of the last contract. Those negotiations were highly professional and provided essential guidelines for those working for our district.

My initial WGTA executive cabinet consisted of John Mannion, Sue Marshall, Keith Newvine, Katie Williams, and myself. We have had some changes along the way, but the focus has still been the same. The West Genesee Teachers' Association has provided support and continued enhancement for the conditions of employment for our members. I have had the pleasure of acting as Vice President of this fine union. Even though I won't be returning as VP, I will always be a proud member of our union and a member of NYSUT. I appreciate all the people I met along the way. I am assured that the progress we have made will continue under the guidance of John Mannion and those who serve with him. Thank you all for your continued support and I am always proud to be a WILDCAT.

***Thank you for all of your years of
service Mary!
Your work will continue to have a
lasting impact as we move forward.***



Join The Conversation, *By WGTA Treasurer Mary Gotham*

“[We The Educators](#)” is a group of renowned educators from around the world that have joined together to provide a global forum on public education. This newly formed international organization is a resistance movement against corporate education reform. We The Educators [research](#), investigate and advocate against the corporate reform push to use education technology for personalization, standardization, privatization and the datafication of education.

Sign up and join the conversation about the future of public education at <https://wetheeducators.com>.

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<https://greatschoolwars.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/literature-review-we-theeducators-english.pdf>.

West Genesee Teacher Wins Millions in State Lottery!

By WGTA VP of Grievances Michael Perkins



Sorry, that is a low down dirty trick drawing you in with fake news. Now that I have your attention, I'd like to encourage you to donate to our political action fund VOTE-COPE. **Wait!** Please, keep reading! We need your help!

We are under attack as educators. big business and power hungry politicians are targeting your profession and your pension. The only way we're going to survive is if we fight back. Fighting can be as easy as donating \$5 a month to VOTE-COPE.

The money that you donate to VOTE-COPE is used to sway Albany legislators to consider our interests through lobbying. In addition, up to 40% of our VOTE-COPE funds are used locally to educate the public and politicians on educational issues.

If you're interested in protecting your rights as a union member and you want to donate to VOTE-COPE you can do either of the following:

1. Sign up for automatic deductions to VOTE-COPE when you get the flyer
OR
2. E-mail or call Mike Perkins at beakerperkins@gmail.com / (315) 243-1862

If you've made it this far you deserve a million dollars. Keep buying those lottery tickets.



The retirement rush has begun! Those planning to retire July 1 have already begun filing their retirement applications with NYSTRS.

Whether you are considering retiring this year or in the near future, there are several steps you should take to prepare. Here are the six things everyone should do before filing their retirement papers:

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1. **Attend a PREP Seminar.** These free seminars, offered year-round and open to all, cover NYSTRS benefits, financial planning, Social Security, estate planning and more. The seminar [schedule](#) is posted on our website and summer dates will be added soon.
 2. **Schedule a Consultation.** Meet with a NYSTRS representative, in person or by live video, to discuss your retirement questions. Run estimates for different retirement dates and discuss the various payment options available to you. See the online version of the Benefits Consultations [schedule](#).
 3. **Understand Your Payment Options Before Choosing.** Members who select the wrong payment option often face difficult financial and emotional challenges later. Avoid this mistake at all costs! Thoroughly [review](#) the difference between each and consider discussing them with a NYSTRS representative before making your selection. Also watch our two-part video “[Your NYSTRS Benefit Payment](#)” found in the Videos > Member Information section of the Library at [NYSTRS.org](#).
 4. **Apply for Retirement With NYSTRS.** Retiring from your employer does not automatically trigger retirement benefit payments. You must also file an [Application for Retirement](#) (RET-54) with NYSTRS in order to receive your monthly pension payment.
 5. **Know When to File Your Retirement Application.** File too early (more than 90 days before your official date of retirement) and the application will not be valid. File on your date of retirement if you wish, but make sure your date of retirement is at least one day after your contract with your employer expires. File by early June if you want to receive your first payment in July.
 6. **Note That You Have a Limited Window for Withdrawing or Changing the Terms of Your Retirement.** From your date of retirement you have 14 days to withdraw your retirement application and 30 days to change your benefit payment option. State law does not allow for exceptions.

If questions arise during the planning process, call [800 348-7298, Ext. 6250](tel:8003487298) to speak with a NYSTRS representative. Retirement is one of your biggest life events so it is important to ensure you have all the facts before making decisions.

Something We Can All Agree On, *By WGTA VP of Grievances Michael Perkins*

Whether you're a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or otherwise, we all have an issue that we can agree on this coming election season. We all will vote **NO** on the proposal to open the New York State Constitution through a Constitutional Convention process.

In New York State we have a special Amendment to our Constitution that requires New Yorkers to vote on conducting a Constitutional Convention every 20 years. The establishment of this article to the Constitution originally had honorable intentions to allow citizens to have greater voice in their government. However, in today's political climate big business and political action groups much larger than NYSUT are licking their lips ready to take advantage of an open New York State Constitution.

So, what do we have to worry about? "Imagine, a day when the state of New York has no obligation to educate its young people; a day when it is relieved of its pension obligations to retirees; a day when you have no rights to collective bargaining or even to join a union. Imagine a day when the Adirondacks are no longer "Forever Wild." Or a day when the governor of New York dictates the state's annual budget with no requirement for input or approval from the Legislature."(*) This doesn't sound too good, does it?

A Constitutional Convention is an invitation to rob New Yorkers of their wealth. Over the past ten years we have seen organizations such as the Gates Foundation (Microsoft), Bloomberg Philanthropies (Bloomberg L.P.), and Pearson Education pushing to change and control educational law in New York State. These profiteers in the guise of philanthropy are ready and waiting to pillage New York State educational funds as well as your pension.

So what can you do to prevent these drastic changes to our New York State Constitution?

1. On November 7th, Vote NO to a state constitutional convention.
2. Get the word out. Tell your family and friends to vote NO.
3. Consider donating to VOTE-COPE our political action fund.

(*) Ned Hoskin NYSUT UNITED

Albany insiders are planning a taxpayer-funded party



Ten Reasons to VOTE NO to the New York State *Constitutional Convention*

1. Say goodbye to your pension
2. Adirondacks will be forever sold
3. Say goodbye to your gun rights
4. No more Department of Environmental Conservation
5. No more free education for New Yorkers
6. King Cuomo will have total control of the budget
7. School districts could lose local control
8. We don't need no collective bargaining
9. Spending \$47,000,000 for a 3 year party is a waste
10. Hello!! Your pension!!!!

[Check out the WGTA on Facebook!](#)



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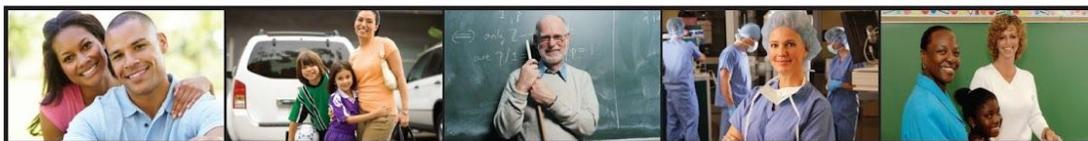
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NYSUT Member Benefits offers savings, advocacy

Your union is steadfast in its fight for better contracts, safer working conditions, fair pay, advocacy and upholding the labor rights of the dedicated women and men proudly working in the education and health care industries on a daily basis.

But your NYSUT membership does so much more! It also provides you the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the more than 40 endorsed programs & services offered by NYSUT Member Benefits. Look to Member Benefits for crucial insurance programs such as auto, homeowners, life, disability, or long-term care insurance along with a variety of travel, entertainment & shopping options.

And participation in Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services gives you the added protection of knowing you have a trusted advocate on your side. Each of our endorsed offerings are regularly reviewed and monitored to ensure member satisfaction. Member Benefits is here to help if you should ever have any issues or concerns with any of these programs.

The following is just a sampling of the endorsed programs & services available to NYSUT members & their families:

- Homeowners Insurance
- Auto Insurance
- Legal Service Plan
- Financial Counseling Program
- Life Insurance
- Vision Plan
- Abenity Discounts
- Office Depot/OfficeMax
- Car & Truck Rentals
- Wyndham Hotels
- TripBeat by Endless Vacation
- Premier World Discovery



To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit ***memberbenefits.nysut.org*** or call **800-626-8101**.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

May/June '17

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If you would like to be a part of this FREE Directory, please send your name, Email address and WG status (school name / retired / WG staff, etc.) to Lynn Davis at: DavisRetired@gmail.com.

Email address are only shared with other members of the Directory.

We want to advertise for you! Please contact John Mannion at mannionforwgta@gmail.com if you have a service you would like to advertise in the MemberShip.