



# THE MEMBERSHIP

The Newsletter of The West Genesee Teachers' Association <http://www.wgta.net>

## Resignation

John W. Mannion  
President, West Genesee Teachers' Association  
December 9, 2020

To: West Genesee Teachers' Association Cabinet Members

WGTA Cabinet Members,



(Photo by Jennifer Mannion)

I would like to inform you that I will be resigning as President of the West Genesee Teachers' Association, effective immediately.

I have enjoyed my time as president and found it very rewarding. The relationships that I have formed with my current and past Executive Officers, as well as current WGTA Cabinet Members has been the most rewarding aspect of my tenure.

I was driven to run for this office because of my deep belief that the teaching profession is a calling, a vocation. Teachers are rarely built, they are born and then drawn to this important vocation. It is also my belief that the majority of teachers are not activists or advocators, with the exception of advocating for their students. Teachers have a specific skill and personality set that compels them to do all they can for the good and advancement of their students. They tend to follow the rules and take on more than they should physically or mentally endure. As I have witnessed teachers in trauma, typically put on by placing their students as priority, ahead of their own health and well-being or that of their family members, I left the comfort of my role which I love, with students, to support those I have the utmost respect for. I have also witnessed how that trauma can be exacerbated by outside forces and because of that, I refused to sit quietly.

It is with a range of emotions that I submit this letter, bittersweet being one of them. I hope you find that upon my departure, myself and the others that had faith in me that helped me, have left the teachers of this district in a better place and accordingly, they can continue to provide an enriched and varied education for the students under their purview. If I can be of any assistance, please let me know, I am glad to help.

"One person can make a difference, and everyone should try". - John Fitzgerald Kennedy

Sincerely,

John W. Mannion

## **President's Notes** by Michael Perkins

### **COVID COVID COVID**

At the time of writing this message to you, we are almost a month into the new year, and unfortunately COVID and the constant hurdles that we all have to face this year continue to complicate our lives. We're now dealing with a botched vaccine roll out, changes in federal legislation related to COVID quarantine, and constant interruptions to education as the result of COVID spread in our community. In my opinion, this is the result of poor leadership in the federal government and the failure of our state and local officials to effectively work together.



In responding to these challenges, we have been working with the West Genesee Central School District to find solutions to these new problems as they arise. We have recently developed several agreements that will help to resolve some of the COVID related issues that many of you have been concerned with.

The first agreement, signed December 10th gives you protections while providing live video instruction. Live video instruction will not be used as a primary means for teacher evaluations and cannot be used for disciplinary actions against our members. In addition, students and parents will be prohibited from recording live video instruction sessions. The district is developing a form that parents and students will complete that reminds them that misuse of live video instruction can result in disciplinary actions and/or removal from participation in live video instruction.

During the first week back after the holiday break we developed another agreement with the district that resolved the problem of the FFCRA (Families First Coronavirus Response Act). This new agreement allows teachers to use their sick time in cases where they're forced to quarantine because of contact with the Corona Virus outside of the work environment and for childcare related to school closures. The attached link below was developed by the WGTA to help you answer questions related to this topic.

#### [Teacher COVID Quarantine Protocol](#)

On the topic of COVID vaccines we have witnessed a system of confusion and an extreme lack of planning. We all know why there's a lack of competent leadership at the federal level. At the state and local level there has been a lack of communication between the two which resulted in the botched transition from phase 1a to phase 1b. On Sunday, January 10th we had a plan in Onondaga County for distributing vaccines to teachers. This plan was organized by the county executive and was implemented on Monday, January 11th. Two days later, Onondaga County decided to throw that plan out the window and replace it with an every man for himself plan. I do not blame the West Genesee Central School District for this at all. It is a failure of government from the top down.

We are currently advising all teachers in the WGTA to use the multiple methods to acquire an appointment to get your COVID vaccine. We have listed some of them below in links. We're finding that the best day to sign up for a vaccine is on Thursday.

(continued on next page)

[NEW YORK STATE of Health LINK](#)

[Onondaga County COVID Vaccination Link](#)

[Kinney Drugs COVID Vaccination Link](#)



## **NON COVID NEWS**

In some lighter news, I'd like to thank and congratulate both Keith Newvine and Conor Murphy in their additional leadership roles. Keith Newvine has agreed to act as the WGTA Parliamentarian. Conor Murphy has been appointed as our new Vice President of Grievances.

We are currently updating our contact information for working members. If you get a chance, please complete the form updating your information with us. It is attached below.

[WGTA Contact Update Form](#)

If you're a retired WGTA member we are planning to add a new section to our newsletter called "Where are they Now?" and we would love to hear from our retired friends and colleagues. If you want to share and update us on how you're enjoying not working at West Genesee, please complete the attached form below. We will be sharing one or two retired members each newsletter.

[Where are They Now? - Form](#)

The next time I write to you I hope we're all vaccinated and life is starting to return to normal. For now, stay safe, stay home and stay healthy.

Yours in solidarity.

Michael J Perkins  
WGTA President



# Filing "For Protection Only"

## NYS Teacher Retirement System Disability Pension

(This is **not** about your new WGTA Voluntary Group Disability Insurance)



**Q:** When should members file for NYSTRS disability protection?

**A:** If you face a potentially life-threatening illness or surgery, filing a disability retirement application for protection provides a safety net for you and your beneficiaries. In most cases, the lump-sum retirement payment a beneficiary would receive if something happens to you would be significantly more than an in-service death benefit. Contact NYS Teachers' Retirement System Disability Unit at (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6010 for estimates and additional information before making decisions. You can also visit the Disability Retirement page under the Benefits tab of their website: [www.NYSTRS.org](http://www.NYSTRS.org).

A member filing for protection must complete the forms Application for Disability Retirement and Medical Information Summary. Both are found within the Disability Retirement Application Package available at NYSTRS.org.

On the application, you must note that you are "**Filing for Protection Only**", indicate the medical condition necessitating the retirement, leave the requested date of retirement **blank**, and select the Largest Non-Declining Lump Sum Option (Tiers 2-6) or the Declining Reserve Option (Tier 1). Your diagnosing **doctor will have to sign** the medical information summary. It also will need to be **notarized**.

We sincerely hope you will not have to use the option, but it is good to have available to us.

By Mary Beth Smith  
VP Negotiations



# Beth Chetney Shares Wisdom on the Retirement Process



WGTA, WG TAs, and WG Admin union members are invited to a virtual

## Retirement Meeting

on **Tuesday, January 26, 2021**

**at 3:00-4:30pm, followed by 30 min Q&A**

presented by

NYSTRS Board Member, Baldwinsville Teachers Union President, Onondaga County Teachers Association President and Baldwinsville English Teacher

## Elizabeth Chetney

Beth will present essential retirement info and resources with wisdom and good humor! For more clear, helpful information contact the NYSTRS at 800-348-7298 or go directly to [www.nystrs.org](http://www.nystrs.org). The Library section has at least twenty excellent videos. Especially helpful for beginners are the “NYSTRS Benefits Parts 1 through 4” series and the “Retirement Countdown”: Autumn, Winter, Spring, and Summer series. You deserve the best possible retirement benefits.

***It is never too soon to begin planning for retirement!***

- Keep track of your Annual Benefit Profile;
- Check out the terrific NYSTRS.org website;
- Create a myNYSTRS Account to learn your various payment options;
- Download the NYSTRS App for quick access to NYSTRS.org.
- Register for a PREP -Pension & Retirement Education Program-seminar;
- Call for a personalized Benefits Consultation: 800-782-0289, Ext. 6110
- Learn about filing an Application for Disability Retirement “For Protection Only” prior to facing a potentially life-threatening surgery or illness

By Mary Beth Smith, Dawn Personte, and Mary Gotham,  
West Genesee NYSTRS Delegates, 2019-2021

## [Teaching in the Pandemic: “This is Not Sustainable”](#) by Natasha Singer

Summarized by Mary Gotham

Merriam Webster’s dictionary defines **burnout** as “exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration...”



*Synonyms: Noun* collapse, exhaustion, fatigue, frazzle, lassitude, prostration, tiredness, weariness

*Synonyms: Verb* break, bust, do in, do up, drain, exhaust, fag, fatigue, frazzle, harass, kill, knock out, outwear, tire, tucker (out), wash out, wear, wear out, weary”

Does any of this feel familiar to you right now?

You are not alone.

Natasha Singer describes the devastating impact teaching through the pandemic has had on teachers across the country in her article [Teaching in the Pandemic: “This is Not Sustainable”](#). Singer shares stories from teachers, many are physically and emotionally drained. Some start their day with children in the classroom, providing curriculum instruction, encouragement and motivation and answering questions, while also calming children suffering from pandemic disruption and stress that they are also feeling. At the same time, constantly monitoring for COVID safety infractions, reminding students to maintain distance, adjust masks, and curb sharing of supplies. All from a socially safe distance and making sure to disinfect between classes; that is just the morning. Once in-person students leave, remote teaching begins. Others may teach in person part of the week, distance learning the rest of the week, while providing instruction for both each and every day and redesigning instructional curriculum to flow between the different forums. It is exhausting.

Teachers have had to entirely redesign instruction to fit the distance learning model. Singer describes the many forms remote teaching takes and the challenges and exhaustion that comes with it: one-on-one via video, Zoom instruction for a group, prerecorded instructional videos, back to back group video lessons, hybrid programs that require simultaneous in-person and remote instruction, all while trying to meet the individual academic, social emotional needs of their students, some of whom are also struggling with feelings of anxiety, depression and isolation. The emotional strain is wearing. Teachers are working evenings and weekends creating lesson plans and adapting lessons to online environments. It is exhausting. **“This is not sustainable.”**

The pandemic teacher burnout has contributed to a flood of early retirements and not just among older educators, seasoned young teachers are also leaving the profession. Education staffing problems are a reality districts are dealing with now and the mass exodus of educational professionals paints an ominous picture for staffing once things return to normal.

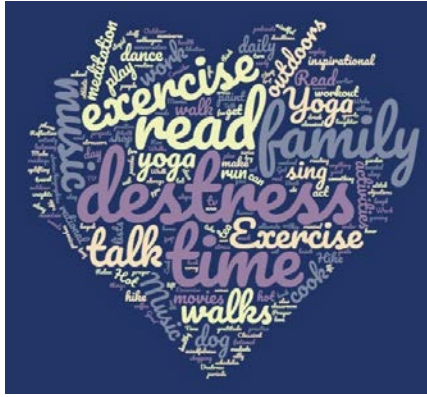
What can be done? Some districts, aware of the toll this is taking on teachers, are not just urging self-care, they offer counseling resources, provide more daily planning time or even provide one full day a week for “pandemic lesson planning.”

[Read the full article here:](#)

Singer, Natasha. “Teaching in the Pandemic: ‘This Is Not Sustainable.’” *The New York Times*, 30 Nov. 2020, [www.nytimes.com/2020/11/30/us/teachers-remote-learning-burnout.html?smid=em-share](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/30/us/teachers-remote-learning-burnout.html?smid=em-share). Accessed 2 Dec. 2020.

Image: <https://insight.ieeeusa.org/articles/fighting-burnout-and-covid-19-at-the-same-time/>

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On a helpful note, the HS Social Workers shared this. In her article, [Seven Ways to Cope with Uncertainty: What should we do when everything feels so out of control?](#) Christine Carter, Ph.D., shares seven strategies for how best to cope when everything feels out of control:

1. Don't resist
2. Invest in yourself
3. Find healthy comforts
4. Don't believe everything you think
5. Pay attention; check in with yourself
6. Stop looking for someone to rescue you
7. Find meaning in the chaos

[Read the full article here:](#)

Carter, Christine. "Seven Ways to Cope with Uncertainty." *Greater Good Magazine*, University of California, Berkeley, 27 July 2020, [greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven\\_ways\\_to\\_cope\\_with\\_uncertainty](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven_ways_to_cope_with_uncertainty). Accessed 8 Dec. 2020.

### Contact Your WGTA Executive Officers

<http://www.wgta.net>

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Your guide to services, deals, and promotions for the  
WG education community

We want to advertise for you! Are you an artist, a carpenter, a house painter looking to advertise your services? Advertisements in “The Member ship” are provided free to West Genesee Teachers' Association Members and their family.

Please send your advertisement to Shana Michel (WGHS) at [shanamccaffrey@gmail.com](mailto:shanamccaffrey@gmail.com). The only other advertisements that are run in “The Member Ship” are those provided by NYSUT, AFT, or the AFL-CIO.

The Member ship is published by the West Genesee Teachers' Association-3106, P.O. Box 417, Camillus, NY, 13031-0417.  
Affiliated with the New York State United Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers, NEA, AFL-CIO.



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



Jan./Feb.'21