

# INFORMATION, NEWS AND SUPPORT SPEAK OUT! PITTSFORD DISTRICT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION



## PDTA's Future is Bright Dwayne Cerbone, President

The Pittsford District Teachers Association is recognized throughout Monroe County and the state for our strength, unity, and effectiveness. Not unrelated to this, we have a long history of developing and equipping member leaders through our union's positive relationships, collaboration, shared leadership, and compensation structures. As the presidency transitions to Stephanie Warchol, some members may naturally wonder about the future of our union. I am pleased to share that I have full confidence that the PDTA is well poised for the continuance of our most valued attributes and, of equal importance, is prepared to responsively mitigate any challenges that may arise. I assure you; this belief is not the overly optimistic musings of an outgoing president. This is the natural conclusion based on my profound respect for Stephanie's leadership skills, confidence in the entire leadership team, and trust for the robust organizational structures that support us when navigating change.

While many units struggle in these challenging times to acquire and maintain leaders, the PDTA is powered by a dynamic Representative Assembly that is nearly 50 members strong. I wish you each had the opportunity to observe the purposeful dedication and excellence these teacher and SRP leaders exhibit during our meetings and through their daily representation of our members. I have immense respect and appreciation for each of them as they provide diverse voice for our

800 members. This core foundation of our union is an asset in these times of transitions as the primary responsibility for the direction of our union is distributed among those most connected to the daily work of our members. The PDTA President's role, though the most public and forward facing position in our union, has a constitutionally directed reliance on the guidance of these elected officers, representatives, and committee chairs.



When I first became President of the PDTA in 2017, I had the privilege of following two incredibly respected predecessors, Barbara Shapiro and Jolene DiBrango. These dynamic women served as mentors to me and are directly responsible for all that came prior and indirectly for all we have accomplished since. I can attest to their vast personal and professional strengths, easily identifying how each leveraged their unique leadership styles to propel our union forward. Yet, as I reflect on this, I am quite cognizant that I have served in a manner that many would attest to be significantly different from each of them. As these former presidents and

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I have discussed, this is as much correlated to the distinct times in which we served as it is to our own attributes. With this in mind, I am excited that Stephanie, as the next in line, is committed to holding strong to what makes us great but is also well prepared to expeditiously lead this union through the next unique phase. To quote Katie Brown, a close colleague of Stephanie who messaged me following the announcement of the election results, "I think that when people read how you described her, they will know that we have the perfect person taking over for you. I cannot wait for those who don't know her to see her shine in this leadership role. She is all of the things we need in a President." This sentiment is echoed by all who know Stephanie and I could not agree more.

Stephanie and I are already planning for the coming months. We are committed to a successful and seamless transition. We have aligned our schedules to ensure she is fully involved in the union's activities that are most relevant to the upcoming school year. This is an exciting time and I remain confident that the PDTA's future is bright!



# Executive Vice President Stephanie Warchol

On a personal note, I am grateful for all of the love, support, and kind words I've received in the past week and am so excited to begin this next chapter of my career as the PDTA President-Elect. What gives me confidence to take on this integral role is knowing that PDTA has the best leadership team, hands down. Our previous Presidents, Barb and Jolene, modeled for me what it looks like to be strong, steadfast, female leaders, and Dwayne, who is a staunch advocate and collaborator, has quite literally shaped the leader I am today. I am incredibly proud to represent you, the nearly 800 PDTA educators who show up in Pittsford, day in and day out, and do your very best so that our students have access to high quality educational and extra-curricular opportunities. In return, I'll do my very best to advocate on your behalf so you can continue to do the AMAZING things you are already doing! Thank you for your trust, encouragement, and patience as I transition into the role.

ways to combat bias in the contract. After conversations about micro-aggressions and intersectionality, we had the opportunity to dive into other locals' contracts and work together to find problematic procedures or bias. We then decided how we could change it to be more inclusive and presented our suggestions to the entire group. I then attended a presentation on school finance and budgeting. Due to my involvement on DPT, Advocacy, and attending all of the Board of Education budget workshops, I actually had a great working knowledge of the topic. It was beneficial to see how NYSUT can prepare a budget analysis document for PDTA ahead of our next round of negotiations.

After lunch I attended a workshop on health insurance, which was dually presented by representatives from NYSUT and Excellus BCBS. They reviewed health insurance concepts, types of plans, components of the plans, and thoughts for future negotiations. They compared the RASHP (Rochester Area Schools Health Plan) rates from 2016 and now in 2025, and within that timeframe they increased at a rate of 77.13% - 102.34% depending on the plan. They made a point to say that many members look at their contractual wage increase in just pay alone and wonder why the percentages are low when the amount districts are contributing to our health insurance has significantly risen. The entire compensation package needs to be taken into consideration.

For the final workshop of the day, I worked with PDTA's own Labor Relations Specialist (LRS), Shelly Clements, on social justice within unionism. Through this workshop we were able to imagine the possibilities of what our locals could look like when leading through the lens of social justice. As I begin to consider the future of PDTA as an organization and my role as the leader of it, I see connections between the work we have been doing with our students in recent years and how that can translate to the work we do for one another and within the wider PCSD community.



## 2025 Rochester Regional Office Winter Conference

At the beginning of the month, I had the opportunity to attend this year's NYSUT Rochester Regional Office Winter Conference with six other dedicated PDTA leaders. Ahead of the conference, we coordinated efforts when choosing presentation topics, to maximize the amount of content we could bring back to the Association. The main topic of the winter conference is traditionally negotiations. Workshops included collective bargaining basics, an SRP contract exchange, addressing bias in the contract, building power through contract action teams, and bargaining better through budget analysis. There were workshops on a variety of other topics too, including school board elections, effective branding for your local, creating safer schools, civil service law, health insurance, and social justice within unions.



We began the day with remarks from the new Rochester Regional Director, Heidi Miller, and then broke off into our respective conference rooms at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Rochester. I started the day learning about



## SRP Newslink Connie Maust

On Saturday, March 1st, I had the opportunity to attend the NYSUT Rochester Winter Conference. It was my first time attending a NYSUT conference. The topics were relevant and the presenters were extremely knowledgeable. I learned from both the presentations and the conversations with other members.

The morning session I attended focused specifically on contract language for SRPs. Three times the presenters had us switch seats to be with different units from different schools. The groups represented were EA/paras, aides, bus drivers and office support. Each time we switched groups, we were asked to discuss talking points with specific contract features: whether it was included in our current contracts, if it was positive, or if it was something we would like to change in the next negotiation. It was a chance to exchange ideas and share the pros and cons of our contracts compared to other school districts. It was interesting to hear how other schools are managing the sub shortage, health benefits, sick leave bank, etc.

I was proud to talk about our contract and have others taking notes as ideas for their next negotiations. With each group and each discussion, I had a greater appreciation of all the hard work of our negotiation team and the benefits they negotiated on our behalf.

The afternoon session was Creating Safer Schools. The two presenters for this session provided information and requirements from the NY Department of Labor and the NY Department of Education. They were introducing the best practices to integrate regulatory changes into schools, focusing on the rights of students with disabilities under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the intersections with new Workplace Violence Prevention Program works (WPVA). Both presenters stressed the importance of compliance with both acts and completing required documentation, including the new WPVA form. If there is no or limited documentation of a continuing issue, it is hard to request changes and/or support. If you would like more information, [click here](#) for resources available on NYSUT's website.



### Reminders:

- Members considering retirement in June who are eligible for the Career Award are encouraged to review the contractual provisions and adhere to the related timelines. Please contact the PDTA office if you have any questions.
  - o SRP Members: Letter to HR by April 1st
- The Para Academy Spring catalog is available. These courses are paid learning opportunities.
- Retirement Party at Ravenwood Golf Club: Thursday, May 22, 2025, at 4:30PM
- Key Election Petition Deadlines:
  - o Tuesday, March 25, 2025 – Officers & District Level Petitions due to PDTA Office
  - o Thursday, April 24, 2025 – Assistant Building Representative petitions due to PDTA Office
- For those assigned to a District Based Program or a student with unique responsibilities, you should have received your Stipend Contract for the second semester. Please follow up with your building representative if you have not.





# Resolution Specialist

## Kim Chesko

In my role as Resolution Specialist, I receive many questions about leaves of all kinds. Leaves nearly always involve the use of some kind of “sick day,” and the names and uses of these types of days tend to get confusing. As such, this article is meant to provide some clarification and guidance. In writing this, I pulled directly from the contract with some added context, so it might be helpful to have [your contract](#) on hand when reading to look things up. Enjoy!

### Personal and Family Illness days (Contract sections 3-1, 29-1, 49-1)

- 15 granted to each employee, each year.
- These accumulate year-over-year to a maximum of 200 days.
- These are used when you are sick or physically not able to work, or an immediate family member is sick/needs care.
- Absences longer than 4 consecutive days may require medical documentation.

### Personal Leave Days (Contract sections 3-9, 29-8, 49-8)

- These come from the same “bucket” as Personal and Family Illness days.
- Use when you need to conduct emergency or personal business which cannot be scheduled outside of the workday.
- The Contract sections shown above for each unit provide a non-exhaustive list of appropriate uses of Personal Leave days.
- Personal days shall not be granted for days immediately preceding or following school vacations except in extreme emergencies. We recommend discussing such requests with your building representative in advance.

### Prolonged Illness (Contract sections 3-2, 29-2, 49-2)

- Granted in chunks of 25 days at the end of your third, eighth, thirteenth and eighteenth years of service. If you are a part-time employee or are curious if you have accrued these days, check the appropriate contract sections noted above for your unit and the WinCap portal. These are used automatically when you are absent due to personal illness or disability for more than 15 consecutive days: on the 16th consecutive day absent, any Personal Illness days used will be returned to your totals and Prolonged Illness days deducted in their place, then used until you return or run out.
- These days will accumulate if not used.

### Sick Leave Bank (Contract sections 3-3, 29-3, 49-3)

- Employees can enroll in the Sick Leave Bank during open enrollment, and only need to do so once.
- The total of these days varies on how long you have been enrolled, and if you have used any days within the current school year. You can email Tracy Castleberry to see if you are enrolled and how many days are available to you if the need arises.
- These days can be used when you are absent for an extended period due to personal illness or disability and have exhausted all but 10 Personal Illness days. More guidelines for use found [here](#).
- You must send [this form](#) to the PDTA office to request use of these days.

### Non-Sick, Non-deduct Absences (Contract sections 3-8, 29-7, 49-7)

- Read this section of the contract for more information on instances where we are granted paid leave without deduction from accumulated Sick/Personal Days, like bereavement, jury duty or religious observance.
- Our practice is that there are various other instances such as being on interview committees, department/grade level meeting days, induction, and many others when members are granted paid leave without deduction. Many of these are listed on the drop-down menu when you put an absence into the sub system.
- If you are wondering if your absence is non-deduct – ask your building representative!

### One more thing!

There have been a number of recent scenarios where PDTA learns that a member has “waived rights” guaranteed by our contract. For example: a member is asked by an administrator if its alright to take on an extra student over their class maximum and the teacher agrees.

Please understand that your union is legally required be the only party to negotiate a situation where your contractual rights are being infringed upon. This serves to protect individual and unit rights as such actions could inadvertently establish past practice. It is our responsibility to protect you in these situations and you should always first consult with your building representative if one of these scenarios arises.

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15% of all sales go directly to our PDTA Student Scholarship Fund. We've raised over \$345 since the program began!

All products are embroidered.

Purchases are done online through the company and shipped directly to your house. Keep an eye out for sale codes and free shipping deals which are frequently offered.

Link will always be open - make purchases whenever and as often as you like.

Makes a perfect gift for yourself or your favorite PDTA member- feel free to share the link with friends or family.

[pdta.logosoftware.com](http://pdta.logosoftware.com)

## Important Information and Dates:

- 3/25: Officer and District level position petitions due to the PDTA office
- 4/24: Assistant Building Representative petitions due to the PDTA office
- 5/20: Budget Vote and Chicken BBQ Fundraiser at CRMS
- 5/22: Retirement Party at Ravenwood Golf Club (note location change)
- 5/31: Deadline to complete Professional Development hours for Certificated Staff



**Speak Out! is edited and compiled by Murie Gillett. Feel free to contact me with any questions at [murie\\_gillett@pittsford.monroe.edu](mailto:murie_gillett@pittsford.monroe.edu).**

## SPEAK OUT! Ads

You and your family members are invited to place ads in future issues of SPEAK OUT!  
Rates for members and family (price is for one issue):

1/8 Page: \$12.50   ¼ Page: \$25.00   ½ Page: \$50.00   Full Page: \$100.00

Above rates are for copy ready advertising. If additional design or set-up is required, an additional fee of \$25 will be assessed. Space for ads is limited per issue. Checks should be made out to PDTA and mailed to the PDTA Office. **Ad proceeds will support PDTA charitable efforts.**

Send copy and questions directly to [murie\\_gillett@pittsford.monroe.edu](mailto:murie_gillett@pittsford.monroe.edu).

## Your PDTA Representative Assembly 2024-2025:

**President:** Dwayne Cerbone \* (SHS)  
**Executive Vice President:** Stephanie Warchol \* (CRMS)  
**Vice President for Negotiations:** Dennise Zobel \* (BRE)  
**Secretary:** Alyson Hallett \* (ACE)  
**Treasurer:** Ryan Domina \* (SHS)  
**Resolution Specialist (non-voting):** Kim Chesko \* (JRE)

### Allen Creek Elementary

Michele Riedl, Building Representative \*  
Alyson Hallett, Assistant Building Representative  
Susan Benson, Assistant SRP Representative

### Jefferson Road Elementary

Bret Burrows, Building Representative \*  
Patty Steeley, Assistant Building Rep.  
Julie Pellegrino, Assistant SRP Representative

### Mendon Center Elementary

Jen Villareale, Building Representative \*  
Nina Dezio, Assistant Building Representative  
Trisha Sullivan, Assistant Building Representative  
Deborah Ricketts, Assistant SRP Representative  
Rebecca Tan, Assistant SRP Representative

### Park Road Elementary

Spencer Jones, Building Representative \*  
Allison Luta, Assistant Building Representative

### Thornell Road Elementary

Greg Bischooping, Building Representative \*  
Kelly Sanderson, Assistant Building Representative  
Radhika Ramesh, Assistant SRP Representative

### Barker Road Middle School

Kristen Dolan, Building Representative \*  
Ann Conciardo, Assistant Building Representative  
Ellen Fox, Assistant Building Representative  
Karen Grace, Assistant Building Representative  
Connie Maust, SRP Representative \*

### Calkins Road Middle School

Melissa Althouse, Building Representative \*  
Sophie Spyra, Assistant Building Representative  
Jessica Wojcik, Assistant Building Representative  
Farida Patrawala, Assistant SRP Representative

### Mendon High School

Samantha Hyde, Building Representative \*  
Mindy Emmerson, Assistant Building Representative  
Mike Madden, Assistant Building Representative  
Brandon Mauks, Assistant Building Representative  
LaShanda Clark McCadney, Assistant SRP Representative

### Sutherland High School

Amanda Marshall, Building Representative \*  
Marc Hellems, Assistant Building Representative  
Brian Shafer, Assistant Building Representative  
Jeff Wing, Assistant Building Representative  
Kelly Nanavati, Assistant SRP Representative

### Non-voting:

Irene Hopp, Retiree Representative & Amy Lamb, Ancillary Representative

### Standing Committee Chairs:

Communications: Murie Gillett, SHS  
Extracurricular: Katie Shea, SHS  
Membership: Paul LeVan, SHS  
Political Action: Karen Grace, BRMS  
Professional Advancement: Dennise Zobel, BRE  
Professional Growth: Nicole Barry, BRE  
Public Relations: Kelly Jordan, PRE, and Allison Luta, PRE  
Safety and Wellness: Emily Natoli-Burns, SHS  
Special Events: Erica Bonin, MHS

### Delegates:

1. Dwayne Cerbone
2. Kimberly Chesko
3. Katie Shea
4. Karen Grace
5. Stephanie Warchol
6. Jennifer Simons
7. Vacant



\*Indicates Executive Committee Member



**NYSUT members have access to programs and services from NYSUT Member Benefits that can help them save money, protect their family, and assist with planning for the future.**

With our **Legal Service Plan**, you will receive crucial estate planning documents (Simple Will, Health Care Proxy, Living Will & Power of Attorney); free attorney consultations; and guaranteed maximum fees for personal legal matters. Plan participants receive guaranteed hourly rates along with discounted prices for referral attorneys.

Our **Financial Counseling Program** offers access to certified financial planners that provide fee-based financial counseling services. Participants can get help with retirement planning, 403(b) & 457(b) plan advice, debt management, savings, budgeting, and more.

Check out **Synchrony Bank** for some of today's most competitive interest rates on certificates of deposit, money market, and savings accounts. An optional automated savings program (which makes transfers from your checking account at another bank to your money market or savings account at Synchrony Bank) is an easy way to build your balances in higher-earning accounts.

Our online **Financial Learning Center - powered by Kiplinger's Personal Finance** - offers numerous articles designed to assist NYSUT members with achieving their personal financial goals and better understand the nuances of insurance, savings, investing, and more. This free resource is updated on a monthly basis.

Do you have student loan or general debt concerns? Our **Cambridge Credit Counseling program** is available at no cost to assist NYSUT members with better understanding general debt consolidation and student loan repayment options. Members can take part in a free consultation with a certified Cambridge counselor or sign up for a no-cost student loan debt webinar provided by Cambridge.

**Take back your financial independence and protect your family for whatever the future may bring.**

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March/April 2025