

2021

New Teacher Survival Guide

Provided by:

*R-H Employees' Association (RHEA)
Teachers' Chapter*

<http://rhea.ny.aft.org>

<http://www.facebook.com/RHEATeachers>

<http://www.twitter.com/RHEATeachers>



New Teacher Induction Committee
Rush-Henrietta Central School District
Fall 2021

Who's Who in RHEA

Officers:

President..... Brian Usselman
1st Vice President..... Mike Fantauzzo
2nd Vice President..... Lisa Langlois
Treasurer..... Jill Flood
Secretary..... Kim Glanton
Administrative Assistant..... Robin Day

Union Business Point of Contact People:

Grievance Committee..... Keith Butler
Human Rights &
Social Responsibility Committee..... Janice Hargrave
Negotiations Committee..... Brian Usselman
Education Committee..... Kim Glanton
Legislative and Political Action..... Rene Kazacos, Marcie Rush
Special Events Committee..... Heather McAllister
Webmaster..... Lisa Langlois

Union Business

What does “RHEA” stand for?

RHEA stands for Rush-Henrietta Employees' Association. It is the sole negotiating and bargaining agent for all employees. The goal of RHEA is to maintain and enhance a fair working environment to ensure the most productive working environment for our staff. In this effort we always seek a collaborative approach with the Rush-Henrietta School District.

your collegial coach. It is your contractual right to add a written addendum to your observations outlining anything you may dispute in the administrator's report.

Who is my direct supervisor?

Your building principal sees you daily. This is the person to whom you report for building issues, student/parent issues, taking a day off, and classroom supplies. Your director will stop by to check on curriculum and departmental issues.

What if I must miss a department or staff meeting?

You should avoid doing so except in the case of an emergency. If missing a meeting appears imminent, you should notify your building administrator and the administrator in charge of the meeting as soon as possible. It is a professional obligation and expectation that you obtain the information from these meetings or complete any professional tasks from these meetings. The schedule of meetings for the year is issued to teachers no later than the first teacher workday of the school year. Sometimes we are at the mercy of doctor's offices for appointment times, but generally, it is not advisable to schedule doctor's visits or other personal meetings or appointments on meeting dates.

As a new teacher you have lots of support around you! Be sure to ask lots of questions, you will grow into this career as fast as your willingness to do so. ANY concern you have can always be taken to a RHEA union representative!

One of the primary responsibilities of RHEA is to negotiate and protect the contract. This role involves:

- Contract year negotiations;
- Safeguarding members rights within the contract;
- Working through a spelled-out process (called "grievance") when RHEA and the district disagree about the interpretation or proper execution of contract language;
- Ensuring due process is followed in the event of disciplinary action by the district.

Why should I join?

The union is only as strong as the solidarity it represents. All employees are not only encouraged to join, but to involve themselves in the work of the union. Besides the above-mentioned work, RHEA committees exist to promote social and political action within our community, as well as charitable involvements. You are encouraged to attend the RHEA union member meetings held in your building. Regular meetings are scheduled for the last Monday of each month. Updates about the ongoing work of the union are provided, as well as opportunities to become involved.

How are my dues paid?

Your dues are paid by payroll deduction.

What do my dues go towards?

Your dues support 3 affiliations:

- 1) AFT (American Federation of Teachers) which lobbies for improved educational practices at the federal level and supports candidate for elected office that are on record as pro-public education.
- 2) NYSUT (New York State United Teachers), which allows access to legal counsel, labor relations specialists, workshops, and training. Due to your affiliation, you will occasionally be offered money saving benefits on such things as insurance products, mortgages, and health products/services. You can find out much more at www.nysut.org
- 3) RHEA, which negotiates and protects the local contract, sends members to leadership training, and maintains our local employee's organization.

What are Building Reps?

Building Representatives are elected in each building each spring. They serve as the “front line” of the union. Concerns about contractual rights or obligations, any disciplinary action, the APPR/evaluation procedure, or any other concern should be taken to building reps. They may be able to address your concern directly, or they may direct your concern to the proper person. Any time you meet with your supervisor, you are entitled to have that time scheduled so that a building rep may accompany you if you so wish. These people also serve as liaisons between the members in your building and union leaders.

RHEA Building Representation

Crane: Cheryl Barr, Jodi Connell

Fyle: Jess Krupa, Beth Wood

Leary: Diane Downer, Jacqueline Repp

Winslow: Val Cekuta, Karen Lebel

Sherman: Rob Civiletti, Mike Kipp, Amy Pugsley

Vollmer/WHEB: Yolanda Joseph, Dawn Finewood, Dawn Pixley

How do I minimize the chances of a poor evaluation or denial of tenure?

You will be observed at least twice a year until you receive tenure. These observations will be from your building principal and your director. These two people do meet regularly to discuss your progress. Prior to an “Announced” observation (one that results in written notes from the administrator) you will have a pre-observation meeting. You can rehearse this pre-observation with your collegial coach. Your collegial coach may suggest items that are included in the building/school improvement plan (SIP), state standards and/or the current professional development initiatives that you may have overlooked. It is okay to ask questions during your pre-observation or to ask for clarity. The formal observation will follow. The building principal or your director may be a quiet observer or an active participant during the time in your classroom. Do not second-guess your lesson plan but make mental notes of what went well and what you could improve on. During your post-observation meeting LISTEN to what is being said. Principals and Directors offer constructive feedback; their suggestions will help you improve, making you a better teacher. It is your choice to discuss the observation with your collegial coach. What is discussed is confidential. Immediately start planning your lessons with the suggestions given to you from your observation. Directors and Principals can conduct an “Unannounced” observation and remain for less than 20 minutes at any time. They may be looking for the implementation of these suggestions.

What do I do if I disagree with statements made in an evaluation?

You should immediately discuss this with a union building representative. If you are not sure who these people are, ask

that colleague, but unfortunately, this doesn't always happen. A faculty room is a place to take a break from the classroom, not a place to discuss students, colleagues, or administrators.

Is my collegial coach a friend?

Just as we tell the students, "I am your teacher, not your friend". A coach's first job is to mentor you, to show you the tricks of the trade, and the friendship part may or may not develop later. Collegial coaches understand confidentiality and each party involved should not misuse this.

What is a collegial coach and what can I expect from one?

A collegial coach is someone who checks in with you both professionally and socially. This coach is aware of the "1st year emotional curve" that all new teachers eventually feel. Your personal collegial coach may or may not be teaching the same subject or grade level as you. If your coach is unable to give you an answer to any of your questions, they will either direct you to someone who can or investigate the answer for you. You will have a set weekly meeting time with your collegial coach, and they will observe 2-3 lessons during the school year. These observations stay between the two of you with no written record kept. Your collegial coach will not share any information about you to the building principal or your director. Your conversations are kept confidential.

Burger: Mike Hohman, Tammi Loftus, Charlie Meyer
Roth: Joe Decker, Kristina Durityza, Nicole Walton
High School: Heather Bradstreet, Jim DeWald Aaron Fraver,
Steve LaPlaca, Caron Lindstrom,
Webster (Alternative HS): Todd Jones

What is VOTE/COPE? What does it do?

VOTE/COPE is a non-partisan political action committee formed by NYSUT to work in Washington and Albany on behalf of its members' interests. It is funded entirely by voluntary donations. *No union dues money is spent on any political activities.*

VOTE/COPE endorses candidates regardless of party affiliation, considering only their stance on issues directly related to education, labor, and health care. In addition, VOTE/COPE rebates a portion of the money from each local union back to that local to use in school budget campaigns or school board elections.

RHEA strongly encourages your participation. We aspire to 100% involvement of our members. Even a small donation of \$1 per pay period goes a long way if we all participate. You may set up your donations via payroll deduction, and your building reps have the form to set this up with you. Your building rep will discuss this at more length in your building at an appropriate time.

Financial Information

When do I get paid?

You are paid on the 15th and last business day of each month, or the business day most immediately preceding these dates if they fall on a weekend.

You may opt for a 10 month pay option, which divides your salary into 20 equal portions. Or you may opt for the 12 month option, which divides your salary into 24 equal portions. This is a good option if you are concerned about budgeting for the summer months.

See details in the Teacher's Contract.

Can I get help with my student loans?

Neither RHEA nor the district offers any help with loans. However, the government offers several opportunities for deferment or forgiveness of student loans to those working in qualifying school districts. These especially apply if you are teaching a "Title I" school. Some Rush-Henrietta schools are Title I schools, depending on the year. Check with your principal.

Refer to the following websites:

www.studentaid.ed.gov

www.staffordloan.com

Are there ways to earn more money?

There are several ways to earn extra pay. These include curriculum work, taking more graduate hours of schooling, obtaining a master's or doctoral degree, tutoring, working summer school, being an instructor for in-service workshops, supervising extra-curricular events, advising clubs, or coaching a sport.

The details of these options are outlined in the Teacher's Contract.

Emailing students should be limited to information on class lessons or homework only. Please remember that anything you write using email or internet can be passed onto many others. Think ahead, not just in the moment.

How do I handle the situation of my cell phone ringing during class?

Cell phones should not be used for personal business during district-directed time.

What is the proper way to use my district laptop?

These computers belong to the district and the district can legally access everything on them at any time. You should not use them for personal business.

How invested should I become in events beyond teaching?

There are multiple ways to extend your role as a professional, whether by attending sporting, music, and art events, chaperoning a dance, or becoming involved in a building committee. Though not required, investing at least some time in this fashion builds stronger relationships with your students, colleagues and administrators, and opens many doors.

How much can I share in the faculty room?

Remember the old saying "you never know who is listening." Many parents and relatives work in our buildings, and this makes us vulnerable to what can be taken out of context. We want to believe that what you share with a colleague stays with

Professionalism

Is there a dress code?

There is no “official” dress code that has been negotiated between the district and the teachers’ union. However, we need to be role models for our students, and dress in a manner that respects the profession you are a part of.

Does anyone see you coming in late or leaving early?

Yes. It may not be the building administrator, but your colleagues and students notice. We need to be role models to our students. Tardiness or early departure sends a signal that your job may not be your top priority during working hours and can be a cause for a disciplinary conversation.

Does anyone see you arrive early or leave late?

Yes. Again, it may not be the building administrator but your colleagues, students and your body do. Make sure that you are making time in the day for you, your health, your family and your interests. If you are arriving early and staying late, are you still bringing work home? You should not. Talk with your collegial coach or your classroom neighbors. Teaching becomes a balancing act in your first 3 years. You must make time for your well-being.

How does social media affect my position?

Students like to “google search” their teachers. It is not advisable to post anything on social media sites that would cause embarrassment or concern if a student or one of their parents were to see it. It is also not advisable to “friend” students, or to have their phone numbers in your cell phone.

Health Coverage Options

The district will pay the premium cost equivalent to 86% of the BluePoint 2 Value policy, regardless of which policy you opt for. Details are spelled out in the Teacher’s Contract. Further details about plan options are provided to you by the Human Resources Office.

You may opt out of health benefits if your family situation allows. In this case the district will provide you with a \$1500 stipend, half of which will be paid in October and half in February.

Flex spending vs. Benefit resource

All employees have a fund set up by the district with Benefit Resource Inc. This fund ranges in size based on your family size, up to \$1350 per year. This fund can be used to fund such things as dental work (the district DOES NOT provide dental coverage), optometry visits and products, and doctor and prescription co-pays.

If you foresee a lot of un-covered or un-reimbursable health and/or childcare costs, you should talk to personnel in the Business Office about setting up a Flexible Spending Account (FSA). These accounts allow you to deduct pre-tax monies from your salary into a specially designated account, via payroll deduction, thereby reducing your tax liability. There are special rules that govern the use and dispersal of funds from these accounts, so make sure you are educated about these beforehand.

What do I do if I am sick?

If you are sick, call in to the substitute service as directed in the “How to obtain a Substitute” pamphlet as soon as possible. You will be instructed to leave a voicemail with pertinent details about your building and teaching assignment. DO NOT leave details about the reason you are taking the personal leave day – these are personal and should not be asked for.

It is a professional obligation to provide substitute teaching plans when you are ill. A wise practice would be to set up a folder with the routines and schedule for your teaching day and students, as well as a set of plans made in advance for emergency situations when it may not be possible to get plans done.

How many personal leave days do I have?

You have 12 personal leave days per year. Any unused personal leave days accumulate for future years of employment. In our current contract, once you accumulate 40 personal leave days you will be eligible to sell up to 7 days back to the district for \$90 each at the end of the employment year. Upon retirement, these days may have a monetary value. Currently the district pays \$85 per unused personal leave day to the retiree. Certain conditions apply.

What if I use up my personal leave days?

Sometimes due to extended illness, surgery or accidents, teachers need more personal leave days than they have. The district maintains a personal leave reserve for such use. Periodically, you may be asked to voluntarily donate one day to this reserve. New teachers are encouraged to donate one day by the end of September in the first year of employment. If you donate a day, you are eligible to use the reserve, up until such time as another donation request is made. The procedure for use of the reserve is outlined in the Teacher’s Contract.

When should I start planning for retirement?

You should educate yourself about the NY State Teachers Retirement System and benefits. Use the info at www.nystrs.org to set up an online account to manage your personal information. As soon as you are employed, you start accruing retirement benefits and years of service. A small percentage of your salary is deducted into this fund from each paycheck; the district adds funds to this account as well. Your final retirement pay is a function of years of service and final salary, but NOT the number of dollars you personally contribute. All teachers hired at this time are considered a “Tier VI” employee and should study the details pertaining to this retirement Tier.

What is a 403b account?

You can set up a 403b account through payroll deduction. It is wise to start saving money this way as soon as possible. 403b accounts are funded pre-tax, meaning they defer your tax liability on any money invested until those monies are drawn upon in retirement. A 403b fund will supplement your NY State Teachers Retirement.