



# 1274 NEWSLINE



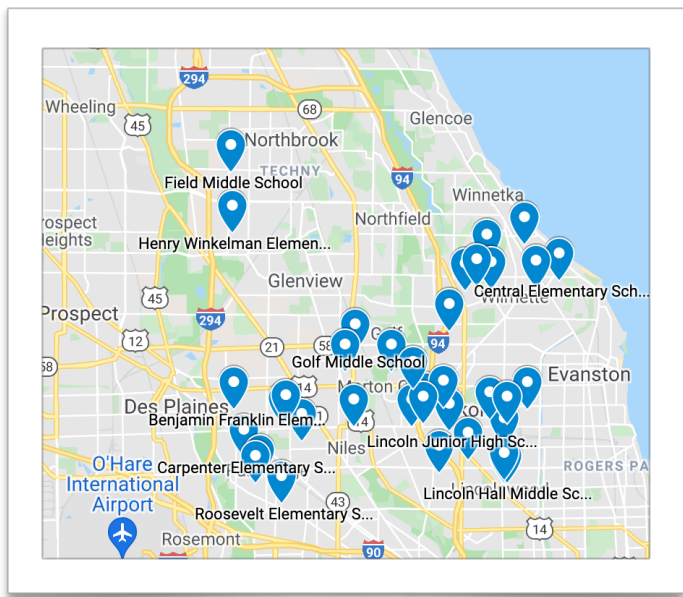
North Suburban Teachers Union – Local 1274, CFL, IFT/AFT, AFL-CIO

## NSTU Welcomes Two New Chairs to the Executive Board

Last summer, the NSTU Executive Board voted to add the positions of social media chair and defense chair. The social media chair is responsible for engaging NSTU members on a variety of social media platforms and will focus on increasing communication and engagement with NSTU members. The defense chair will work with council leaders and IFT field reps Lenny Nieves and Deb Takehara to assist with creating and filing grievances. We are pleased to welcome Rachel Gross as the social media chair and Joe Edwards as the defense chair.

Rachel Gross has taught English at Nil West High School for 17 years. In the past, she served on the NTFT Executive Board as the Education Co-Chair and the Communications Chair, and was on the negotiating team for the 2012 contract agreement. Joe Edwards has taught social studies at Nil West High School for 22 years and has served on the NTFT Executive Board as the Building Representative and as the Grievance Chair.

They both bring years of valuable union experience to their newly-formed positions and we are lucky to have them on board!



## Councils of NSTU

- District 31 West Northfield Teachers Association
- District 39 Wilmette Support Staff Union
- District 38 Support Staff Council
- District 64 Support Staff Council
- District 67 Golf Teachers & Support Staff Association
- District 69 PSRP Council
- District 70 Park View Council
- District 71 Nil West Council of Teachers and Support Staff
- District 72 Fairview Teachers Association
- District 73 East Prairie Council
- District 73.5 Support Staff Council of Skokie
- District 74 Lincolnwood Support Staff Union
- District 74 Lincolnwood Teachers Association
- District 219 Nil West Township Federation of Teachers and Support Staff
- District 234 Ridgewood Teachers Association
- District 807 Nil West Township Federation of Special Education Educators



@NSTU1274

<https://twitter.com/NSTU1274>



## Local 1274 Member Justin Johnson is Named 2021 Illinois Teacher of the Year

Congratulations to Justin Johnson, Illinois Teacher of the Year! Johnson is the Director of Bands at Niles West High School (D219), where he has been instrumental in helping the district with its focus on hiring more diverse staff and has mentored new teachers for the past five years.

The Teacher of the Year honor comes with a year-long paid sabbatical that gives Johnson the time and resources to mentor and inspire teachers through speaking engagements and professional development. The sabbatical also means a one-year teaching fellowship for a newly licensed teacher who will teach Johnson's classes and be mentored and guided by Johnson himself.

Johnson has been a major influence on students and educators at Niles Township District 219, and now the rest of the state will benefit from his expert knowledge and leadership. According to Johnson, "The sabbatical will allow me to dedicate myself more fully to making an impact. I will use this experience to not only become a better teacher myself, but to help uplift the teaching profession across the state during a pivotal time for our teachers, students, and families."



## IFT LEAD Committee

This summer, Local 1274 became the first local to participate in the [IFT Lead Program](#) (Leadership Education and Development). The IFT, in partnership with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and Cornell University, offers the LEAD program to help local union and council teams establish strong relationships with their members and the community. The focus is on the critical work of anti-racism, equity, and inclusion.

The Local 1274 LEAD team is coordinated by Lenny Nieves, our IFT Field Service Director, and contains teachers and support staff from East Prairie D73, Fairview D72, Wilmette D39, and Niles D219. In July, six members attended their first training session at IFT headquarters in Westmont. They will continue to work this coming school year to work on developing and implementing antiracist, justice-centered goals for our local.



Members attending the LEAD training session in July: Jessica Garcia (Niles 219), Kirsten Pasia (East Prairie 73), Breanna Anderson (Fairview 72), Sarah Espinosa (Wilmette 39), and Billy Joyce (Wilmette 39).



## Governor Pritzker Travels to a Local 1274 School to Sign the TEAACH Act

Beginning in 2022, Illinois will be the first state in the nation to require elementary and high schools to teach students about Asian American history. Local 1274 member Albert Chan (D219) worked with his students to provide testimony and advocate for the bill. His students were so instrumental to the passage of the TEAACH act that Governor Pritzker came to Chan's district to sign the act into law on July 9th.

Chan teaches the Asian American Studies Course at Niles North and Niles West. He connected several of his students to the [HANA Center](#), a local organization that worked with a coalition headed by [Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Chicago](#). Activist Jiyeon Song worked closely with his students to write narratives and statements in support of the TEAACH act. Two students -- Kiana Kenmotsu and Sammie Fajardo -- were chosen to speak directly to legislators. Kiana spoke to the Senate Hearing committee in session via Zoom. Sammie spoke to Representative Gong- Gershowitz at her Asian American Caucus event to help educate her and the community about the importance and current lack of Asian American history in our schools. According to Albert, "The words of these two outstanding students were so convincing and powerful that the legislators themselves were moved to vote nearly unanimously to support the TEAACH act. Without our students' voices, I don't think there would have been as much interest and support."

Chan and his students will continue their work with the Asian American Caucus and the Asian Americans Advancing Justice Coalition. Several ISBE committees have been formed and Chan will serve on the committees and share what he's done with his Asian American Studies courses.



*Niles North student Kiana Kenmotsu speaks at the Niles West High School TEAACH Act signing ceremony.*



*NSTU President Pankaj Sharma (center) at the signing with D219 teacher Albert Chan. On the left is Josina Morita (along with her daughter). Morita is the Commissioner of the Cook County Metropolitan Water Reclamation District and the Asian American Caucus Chair.*



Did you know that all Local 1274 members are eligible to enroll in the Partnership Financial Credit Union? PFCU is a member-owned credit union serving more than 15,000 members and dedicated to maintaining close, personable relationships with members.

[mypfcu.org](http://mypfcu.org)





## NSTU AFFINITY SPACES

The NSTU Equity Committee has created affinity spaces so that members can talk to others going through similar experiences. This is especially important for members whose identities are unique within their council and are without affinity spaces affirming those identities. By offering Local-wide spaces, we are hoping to give all of our members the opportunity to find a common space.

Affinity spaces are designed for people who share a common identity to be able to discuss and support each other and share experiences, struggles, accomplishments, and strategies in a space that limits the stereotypes and marginalization that can occur in other societal spaces. White ally spaces are for people who identify as white to work together towards antiracist practices that dismantle white supremacy.

### APIDA Affinity Space

*Asian Pacific Islander Desi American*

### Black Affinity Space

### Jewish Affinity Space

### Latinx Affinity Space

### LGBTQ+ Affinity Space

### MENA Affinity Space

*Middle Eastern / North African*

### White Ally Affinity Space

*The White Ally Affinity Space will meet on Tuesday, November 9 via Zoom? Fill out [this survey](#) if you are interested in attending.*

Fill out [this form](#) if you are interested in joining or facilitating the group that aligns with your identity. If an identity you hold is not represented here and you would be interested in starting a new affinity space, please reach out to equity chairs Mari Garvonado and Imee Reichel at [nstuequity@gmail.com](mailto:nstuequity@gmail.com).



## Northeastern Illinois University & North Suburban Teachers Union

### New Benefit!

## Northeastern Illinois University Tuition Discount for Local Members

Local 1274 has entered into an agreement with Northeastern Illinois University to provide our members with a 40% tuition discount for a [Master of Arts in Community and Teacher Leaders](#) (10 classes), or a [Teacher Leader Endorsement](#) (5 classes). Discounted tuition for each course is \$1,000.

This is a highly regarded university where many of our members have gotten their Masters or endorsements. If you are interested in pursuing the master's degree, you can begin taking electives in the spring semester. Act quickly though. **The spring application deadline is November 1, 2021.**

### [NSTU-NEIU Information Flyer](#)

For more information, please contact:

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Dr. Eleni Makris, [e-makris@neiu.edu](mailto:e-makris@neiu.edu)

## *Your Union at Work!*

### Training for New Council Leaders

On August 23, Local 1274 President Pankaj Sharma and several executive board members led a training workshop for newly elected council leaders. The goal was to help our new leaders learn effective strategies to be successful as council leaders. Council leaders learned about contract enforcement, grievance management, communication with administration, budgeting, equity, communications, and union engagement.

## From the President: The Challenge Continues



As educators and unionists working and living through our third school year impacted by a global pandemic, this stretch has likely been the hardest challenge that most of us have faced during our careers. The same has been true for our students and families. Although many of our students and colleagues are finding this year to be more satisfying and similar to what school has meant in the past, we continue to face serious challenges ahead. The pandemic has made more appreciative of in-person learning. We've all missed the opportunities to make in-person connections and memories, and nothing has made us value our schools and classrooms more than having to try and replicate them virtually or over Zoom.

This pandemic has made us appreciate the strength and vitality of our union more than ever before. Our union membership gave us the opportunity to come together with a single voice to advocate for the health and safety of our students, their families, and our colleagues. We have also used that voice to make sure that our schools are as safe as possible and that we can meet the changing and expanding needs of our students and families as they struggle through month after month of this pandemic. There are glimmers of hope at the end of the tunnel, and we all look forward to better and more normal days ahead. Hopefully, one of the things we can take from this most challenging time is a renewed appreciation for our profession, our schools and classrooms, and our union for helping us navigate the most difficult days of our careers.

In solidarity,  
Pankaj Sharma

### *Your COPE Dollars at Work!*

IFT Led the Way in Passage of COVID Paid  
Time Off and Paycheck Protection Bill

After thousands of IFT member contacted their legislators, the [Illinois House passed Bill 2778](#) on October 28, which provides COVID wage and benefit protections for school employees.

#### **Action Still Needed!**

[Go here](#) to contact Governor Pritzker and ask him to sign this important bill!

October is the month that once-a year COPE contributions are deducted from member paychecks. Because union dues are not used for political activities, members make voluntary contributions to COPE (Committee on Political Education), which is the PAC (Political Action Committee) of Local 1274. The standard contribution is \$20 per year, although many members choose to give more.

Your COPE contributions are used to engage the political process at the local and state level to advocate on issues that we value: supporting public education, protecting workers' rights and retirement security, and creating a fair economy. At the local level, our COPE activities help fund pro-worker area legislators and organizations. At the state level, COPE funds lobbying efforts on our behalf in Springfield. See the IFT's [End of Session Legislative Highlights](#) for details on the spring legislative session.

#### **1274 Newsline**

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