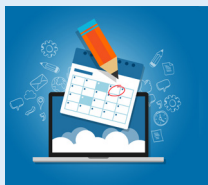




A newsletter for  
active members of  
the NYS Teachers'  
Retirement System

## IN THIS ISSUE

- P2** Beware of  
Unemployment Fraud
- P3** Disability Retirement  
For Protection  
Offers Safety Net to  
Members' Families
- P4** Defined Benefit  
Pensions Boost  
Economy and Jobs
- P5** Special Supplement:  
*NYSTRS Centennial  
Stories* - Reflections  
from members in  
honor of our 100th  
anniversary



### **NYSTRS' Annual Delegates Meeting will once again be a half-day virtual event.**

The meeting will be held Fri., Oct. 29. While the main role of delegates is to elect teacher members to the NYSTRS Board of Trustees, delegates will also be able to attend educational seminars and submit questions for the Delegate-Board/Staff question and answer session.

Elections for delegates for the 2021-2023 term ended on June 1. Districts have until July 1 to report the results to NYSTRS. Stay tuned for more details on the meeting.



# YourSource

## June 2021

### NYSTRS' Funded Status Ranks High In National Study of Public Pensions

NYSTRS ranks well above the average funding level for public pension plans across the country, according to a new survey by the National Conference on Public Employee Retirement Systems (NCPERS).

NYSTRS also exceeds the national average for revenue coming from investment earnings, according to the survey. Both factors are key indicators of the strength of the System.

The average funding level for public pension plans was 75.1% in 2020, up from 72.4% in 2019, the 2020 *NCPERS Public Retirement Systems Study* found. In contrast, NYSTRS has a funded ratio of 98.9% using an actuarial value of assets and 97.3% using a market value of assets, according to our latest valuation as of June 30, 2020.

In addition, the national survey found that average earnings on investments accounted for 71% of public retirement system revenues, while employer and employee contributions provided 20% and 9%, respectively. Again, NYSTRS exceeds that average with 84% of revenue coming from investment earnings and just 16% coming from employer and member contributions over the past 30 years.

Hank H. Kim, NCPERS executive director and chief counsel, noted that public defined benefit pensions – like NYSTRS – owe their strength to funding responsibility being shared by employers and employees and to prudent investing for the long term.

[See NYSTRS' Funded Status Ranks High... page 4](#)

## Albany Banking Executive Elected Newest Member of NYSTRS Board



**Ruth Mahoney**

Ruth Mahoney, a banking executive from Albany, has been elected by the New York State Board of Regents to a three-year term on NYSTRS' 10-member Retirement Board.

Mahoney succeeds Daniel J. Hogarty Jr., a retired bank executive from Troy, who stepped down after serving on the Retirement Board for 16 years.

Mahoney, who serves as market president and regional executive for KeyBank's Capital Region market, is a prominent member of the banking community with more than 30 years of experience in the industry. She leads KeyBank's economic and community development efforts and oversees retail bank operations in the Capital Region.

Mahoney also served as a sales leader for KeyBank's Capital Region and Hudson Valley markets. Prior to that she was president of the Hudson Valley/Metro New York Market and sales leader for that region. She also worked for Bank of America (formerly Fleet Bank) in Albany, where she served as private bank senior vice president and city executive.

A graduate of Marist College, she is a former Board member of the New York State Bankers Association and currently serves on the Albany Medical Center board and the boards of several area economic development organizations.

[See Albany Banking Executive Elected... page 2](#)

## YOUR *Source*

**NYS Teachers' Retirement System**  
10 Corporate Woods Drive  
Albany, NY 12211-2395

**NYSTRS.org**

### Office Hours

Monday - Friday: 8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.

#### Summer Hours:

Monday - Thursday: 8 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.

Friday: 8 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

### Telephone

(800) 348-7298

Albany-Area Calls: (518) 447-2900

Beneficiary Information	Ext. 6130
Benefits Consultations	Ext. 6100
Direct Deposit	Ext. 6230
Disability	Ext. 6010
Domestic Relations Order	Ext. 6200
Earnings After Retirement	Ext. 6150
General Information	Ext. 6250
In-Service Death Benefit Info.	Ext. 6110
Legislation	Ext. 6200
Loans	Ext. 6080
Member Service Credit	Ext. 6075
Membership Withdrawals	Ext. 6090
Military Service	Ext. 6060
MyNYSTRS	Ext. 6085
PREP Seminars	Ext. 6180
Prior Service	Ext. 6030
Reinst./Retro. Membership	Ext. 6070
Report Fraud	Ext. 2846
Retirement Estimates	Ext. 6020
Transfer-In	Ext. 6040
Transfer-Out	Ext. 6050

### Automated Hotline

(800) 782-0289

### RETIREMENT BOARD

David P. Keefe, *President*

Dr. L. Oliver Robinson, *Vice President*

Elizabeth A. Chetney

Dr. Phyllis S. Harrington

Eric J. Iberger

Jennifer J. Longtin

Ruth Mahoney

Christopher Morin

Nicholas Smirensky

Thomas K. Lee

*Executive Director & Chief Investment Officer*

### FRAUD COMPLAINT?

Email [investigations@nystrs.org](mailto:investigations@nystrs.org) or call the Report Fraud number listed above.

# Protect Against Identity Theft

NYSTRS urges you to continue to be on alert for personal identity theft, including unemployment fraud. While we place the highest priority on keeping your information secure, you can help us help you.

If you think your personal identity has been compromised, contact us immediately at (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6190 to discuss options for adding a theft of ID flag to your System account. This will notify staff to take extra care in authenticating your identity before sharing specific information over the phone or processing any transactions.

For example, you may want to consider adding a theft of ID flag if you believe you have been the victim of unemployment insurance fraud. If you get a notice from the state unemployment office or your employer about a supposed unemployment application, you should also act quickly to stop the fraud.

- Report the fraud to your employer.
- Report the fraud to the state unemployment office by visiting the [Report Fraud](#) page at the NYS Department of Labor website, or calling the state Labor Department at (888) 598-2077.
- Visit [IdentityTheft.gov](http://IdentityTheft.gov) to report the fraud to the Federal Trade Commission and get help with recovery steps, including placing a free, one-year fraud alert on your credit, getting your free credit reports, and closing any fraudulent accounts opened in your name.

## NYSTRS Among the Largest Public Retirement Systems

A recent national survey ranks NYSTRS among the 10 largest public retirement systems in the country based on total assets.

*Pensions & Investments* financial journal, which surveyed the 1,000 largest public and private U.S. retirement plans, found that NYSTRS is the 10th largest public retirement system and the seventh largest among defined benefit public plans.

The survey also found that the 1,000 largest U.S. retirement funds ended the most recent fiscal year with strong assets despite the stock market volatility caused by the ongoing pandemic. The largest funds collectively saw their assets grow 6.6% to a total of \$12.1 trillion, the survey said.

The survey concluded that the strong growth in assets was due to the fast recovery of the stock market in the second quarter of 2020 plus federal action on interest rates.

NYSTRS ended the fiscal year on June 30, 2020 with net assets totaling \$120.5 billion. During the same period, NYSTRS paid about \$7.5 billion in benefits to retirees and beneficiaries.

For more details on the System's finances and investments, see the 2020 *Comprehensive Annual Financial Report* or the 2020 *Popular Annual Financial Report* found on the [Annual Reports](#) page of [NYSTRS.org](http://NYSTRS.org).

## Albany Banking Executive Elected... (from page 1)

Hogarty, the former vice chairman and director of First Niagara Financial Group, had been a member of NYSTRS' Board since 2005. He recently served as chair of the Board's Investment Committee, and as a member of the Board's Audit, Compensation, Disability Review, Executive, and Risk Committees.

"On behalf of our staff, I thank Dan for his valued service on the Board. He was steadfastly focused on protecting the long-term fiscal health of the Retirement System," said NYSTRS Executive Director and Chief Investment Officer Thomas K. Lee. "We welcome Ruth to the Board and look forward to her stewardship in ensuring retirement security for our members."



# Disability Retirement For Protection Offers Safety Net to Members' Families

If you are facing a life-threatening medical condition or surgery, consider filing a disability retirement application "For Protection Only." Doing so provides an important safety net for you and your beneficiaries while allowing you to stay on payroll with your district.

If your condition improves and the protection is no longer needed, you may withdraw your application by notifying NYSTRS in writing.

In all cases, we suggest you speak with a NYSTRS representative before making any decisions about your pension. Contact NYSTRS at (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6010.

Generally, if you are critically ill and under age 55 with 10 or more years of service, you should immediately file a "For Protection Only" disability retirement application. In most cases, the lump sum payment a beneficiary would receive in the event of your death would be significantly more than the in-service death benefit paid out had you not filed for protection.

With this protection, benefits will be paid to a beneficiary if you pass away as a result of the illness or condition listed on your application and you are otherwise eligible for a disability retirement.

If you are 55 or older and eligible for a service retirement, call the System so we can provide you with service retirement and disability retirement estimates to compare. Retiring immediately under a service retirement may provide a much larger benefit to your beneficiaries than a disability retirement benefit. However, your specific circumstances and the benefit options you select may have a large impact, so we strongly urge you to call the System before filing your application.

To file for protection, you may use the online disability retirement application in your secure [MyNYSTRS](#) account

under the My Retirement tab. The online form does not need to be notarized and instead uses an electronic signature.

Or you may use a paper *Application for Disability Retirement* (RET-54.1) and *Medical Information Summary* (RET-54.1B) from the [Disability Retirement Application Package](#), available on the [Retirement-Related Forms](#) page of NYSTRS.org or by calling our Disability Unit at (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6010. When filing for protection, only these two forms need to be submitted. The paper forms can be mailed to NYSTRS at 10 Corporate Woods Dr., Albany NY 12211 or faxed to (518) 431-8797.

When using a paper form, please:

- Clearly write "For Protection Only" on the top of the application.
- Indicate the medical condition or surgery necessitating the protection.
- Select either the Declining Reserve Option (Tier 1 only) or Largest Non-Declining Lump Sum Option (Tiers 2-6).

The paper application must be notarized and received by NYSTRS prior to your death. If NYSTRS receives a document sent by certified or registered U.S. Mail, it will be considered received on the date it was postmarked.

For more details, see our publication [If You Are No Longer Able to Work](#) and watch our video "[Filing for Disability Protection: What You Need to Know](#)," both available at [NYSTRS.org](#).



## State Extends COVID Accidental Death Benefits

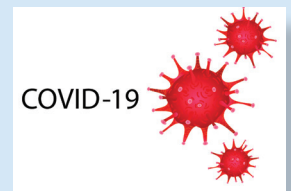
A COVID-19 accidental death benefit for state public employees, including NYSTRS members, that was first enacted last year has now been extended through 2022. The law offers protection for families of NYSTRS members who contract COVID-19 on the job and later die from the disease.

Under the law, eligible beneficiaries may receive an accidental death benefit instead of the ordinary in-service death benefit. The accidental death benefit is an annual payment to an eligible beneficiary that is equal to 50% of the regular salary earned during the last year of service.

The enhanced COVID-19 death benefit would apply to NYSTRS members who meet all the following conditions:

- The member reported to work on or after March 1, 2020, as directed by his/her employer, at the member's usual place of employment or at an alternate worksite other than the member's home or residence.
- The member contracted COVID-19 within 45 days of the last day the member reported to work.
- The member dies on or before December 31, 2022, with COVID-19 causing or contributing to the death.

To claim the COVID benefit, the family needs to let NYSTRS know the member's death was COVID-related and provide an original death certificate with documentation showing COVID-19 as the cause of death. NYSTRS will reach out to the employer to confirm the dates that the member reported to work. For more details, see our website for the [COVID-19 Accidental Death Benefit Fact Sheet](#).



See [State Extends COVID Benefits...](#) page 4

# Defined Benefit Pensions Boost Economy and Jobs

Defined benefit pensions, like the one you will receive from NYSTRS, provide a huge boost to economic output, jobs and tax revenue in all levels of the U.S. economy, according to a new study by the National Institute on Retirement Security (NIRS).

Retiree spending of pension benefits in 2018 – the most recent year studied – generated \$1.3 trillion in total economic output, supporting about 6.9 million jobs across the country and adding \$192 billion in tax revenue to government coffers, said the report, “Pensionomics 2021: Measuring the Economic Impact of Defined Benefit Pension Expenditures.”

In New York alone, expenditures stemming from state and local pensions in 2018 generated \$48.2 billion in total economic output, supported 247,876 jobs that paid \$17.6 billion in wages, and poured \$8.3 billion into federal, state and local tax revenues, according to the report.

Especially now with the economy under severe pressure, “retirees’ spending of their pension income is critical for sustaining and stabilizing consumer spending,” said Dan Doonan, NIRS executive director. Retirees with a pension can count on steady income every month, even in volatile times, which means they can continue their usual level of spending.

Ilana Boivie, NIRS researcher and report co-author, explained that pension expenditures have a ripple or “multiplier” effect in the economy, as one person’s expenditures become another person’s income.

“Retirees haven’t lost their jobs and they’re not relying on the stimulus,” Boivie said.

The analysis also found that each dollar paid out in pension benefits supported \$2.19 in total economic output nationally. In addition, each taxpayer dollar contributed to state and local pensions supported \$8.80 in total economic activity nationally.

“Virtually every state and local economy across the country benefits from the spending of pension checks,” the report said. “Pension expenditures may be especially vital to small or rural communities, where other steady sources of income may not be readily found if the local economy lacks diversity.”

Find the full report at [www.nirsonline.org](http://www.nirsonline.org).

## State Extends COVID Benefits... *(from page 3)*

To report an active member death to NYSTRS, please call us at (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6110.

Generally, NYSTRS members who die while they are in active public service are eligible for an in-service death benefit, which provides their beneficiary or beneficiaries with a single, lump sum payment worth up to three years’ salary, in addition to receiving the member’s contributions balance. Restrictions may apply based on age and years of service.

For more information on NYSTRS’ death benefits, see the Benefits > [Death Benefits](#) page at [NYSTRS.org](http://NYSTRS.org).

## NYSTRS' Funded Status Ranks High... *(from page 1)*

“The data show that a long investing horizon uniquely positions pensions to provide safe, reliable retirement income for millions of public servants,” Kim said. “Employers and employees play critical roles by paying into pension funds, but patient, long-term investing is what truly differentiates public pensions from other retirement vehicles.”

The NCPERS survey was conducted between September and December 2020 in partnership with Cobalt Community Research and covered the most recently concluded fiscal year.

## NYSTRS Board Meeting Highlights

### April 29, 2021

- **Renewed** the agreement with JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A., to act as an agency securities lender for a portion of the System’s public securities assets, for one year, effective July 1, 2021.
- **Renewed** the agreement with LSV Asset Management to manage (1) a portion of the System’s assets as an international equity manager benchmarked to the MSCI ACWI Ex-U.S. index and (2) a portion of the System’s assets as a global equity manager benchmarked to the MSCI ACWI index, for one year, effective July 25, 2021.
- **Renewed** the agreement with Wellington Management Company LLP to manage a portion of the System’s fixed income portfolio in a global aggregate fixed income mandate benchmarked to the Bloomberg Barclays Global Aggregate Float Adjusted Bond Index, for one year, effective June 20, 2021.
- **Renewed** the agreement with Adelante Capital Management LLC to manage a portion of the System’s assets by actively investing in securities of real estate investment trusts (REITs) and real estate operating companies (REOCs), for one year, effective July 1, 2021.
- **Renewed** the agreement with Aon Hewitt Investment Consulting to provide Board self-assessment services, for one year, effective May 1, 2021.
- **Authorized** the Executive Director and Chief Investment Officer to contract with Abacus Capital Group to act as an Eds and Meds focused multi-family separate account adviser.
- **Authorized** the Executive Director and Chief Investment Officer to renew the contract with StepStone Group LP to serve as the System’s private equity and private debt consultant for a period of one year.
- **Approved** the Retirement System’s operating budget and the System’s internal audit plan for the 2021-22 fiscal year.
- **Adopted** a resolution honoring Daniel J. Hogarty Jr. for his 16 years of service as a bank executive on NYSTRS’ Retirement Board.





# NYSTRS Centennial Stories

June 2021

**E**ducation has greatly changed over the past 100 years from one-room schoolhouses to modern buildings and from slate tablets to Chromebooks. What hasn't changed is teachers' devotion to children and their dedication to enhancing the skills and potential of the next generation.

As part of our year-long celebration of NYSTRS' 100th anniversary, we have been gathering stories, reflections and photos from our members about their teaching careers. We will be publishing several installments of stories in our newsletters and at NYSTRS.org. Here is the first installment for your enjoyment!

## Janice Ogden

"I graduated from SUNY Brockport in 1953. That year they were crying for teachers. I opted for a Long Island school at \$3,000 (a year) — an unheard of salary in my upstate rural area. Then my hometown offered me \$3,000 to stay in Prattsburgh. I did and ended up with 44 students! It was the age of petticoats and I couldn't wear mine because they wouldn't fit between the desks!"

Janice Ogden is a retired teacher from the Prattsburgh Central School District in Steuben County.



Ogden, (far right) with her first class, still meets two girls in the class for lunch once a year.

## Alice Ganz

"I began teaching in 1965. My first position was in a double kindergarten in Long Island City, sharing a classroom with an experienced teacher. She was the lead teacher of the morning class of 48 students with my assistance, while I taught the other 48 students who attended in the afternoon with her assistance. Every afternoon a long, noisy freight train passed within feet of the window, shaking the building. Rather than wasting precious teaching time trying to ignore this disturbance, I taught my students to identify each type of freight car and what it carried. When the last car passed, we all sang 'The Little Red Caboose.'"

The years between 1965 and 2013 were the best years of my life. I taught preschool, then called nursery school. With my husband and two young sons, I moved from Westchester to Suffolk County, where I taught kindergarten and grades one through six in the Longwood Central School District, where I served as a union representative and a member of the negotiating team for the Middle Island Teachers Association.

In 1980, I was selected to participate in the Long Island Writing Project, a branch of the National Writing Project. That summer and during the following few years, I was exposed to the latest research in the writing process and whole language instruction. I went on to share this knowledge with many other teachers through in-service courses and professional conferences. The National Council of Teachers of English published my first journal article in 1983 and later awarded me two teacher-researcher grants.

I retired in 2002 after completing my doctoral dissertation and became a college professor (at St. Joseph's College and at Touro College) and student teacher supervisor for another eleven years."

Alice Ganz retired in 2002 after teaching in Long Island City and in the Longwood Central School District. She wanted to be a teacher ever since she started kindergarten.



Ganz and her Longwood third-graders in 1993



Ganz; second row, third from right; in kindergarten in 1949

**"I became a teacher because a teacher who I had when I was a student made me feel valuable and capable."**

Estelle Sandler retired in 2002 after teaching 31 years in Yonkers public schools.



# NYSTRS Centennial Stories

## Richard Siegelman

Richard Siegelman, who taught for 37 years in the Oyster Bay-East Norwich school district, is a huge fan of President Theodore Roosevelt.

Since Roosevelt's Sagamore Hill home is in the school district, Siegelman devoted many lessons to Roosevelt's history and frequently took students on field trips to Sagamore and to Roosevelt's gravesite in Youngs Memorial Cemetery.

Siegelman loved to motivate his students with Roosevelt's inspirational quotations, such as: "Nothing in this world is worth having or worth doing unless it requires effort."

His elementary school students launched a letter-writing campaign to Congress and the White House that ultimately secured a U.S. Medal of Honor in 2001 for Roosevelt's heroics during the Battle of San Juan Hill. Due to their special interest in Roosevelt, Siegelman and 22 students from assorted grades were given small roles in a 2003 History Channel documentary, *TR: An American Lion*, that was partly filmed in Oyster Bay in 2001.

Siegelman is also a big fan of the Encyclopedia Brown boy detective book series by Donald Sobol. He frequently used the books to encourage his students to read and to think critically by trying to figure out the mysteries.

"I loved the Encyclopedia Brown books because I soon began to realize that thinking, both critical and creative, was an even more basic, more important skill or ability than the classic three R's of reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic," Siegelman said.

He began writing to Sobol during his first year of teaching and later met him in person. Sobol eventually dedicated one of his books, *Encyclopedia Brown and the Case of the Carnival Crime*, to Siegelman, his "Number One Fan among school teachers."

*Richard Siegelman retired in 2003 from the Oyster Bay-East Norwich school district after teaching elementary school and programs for gifted children.*



*Siegelman at Sagamore Hill with his third grade class in 1996*



*Siegelman with his fourth grade class in the Oyster Bay-East Norwich school district in 1967*

**"Intelligence is multifaceted and developmental. All children can learn."**

*Edward J. Corallo retired in 1998 after 35 years in the Jericho school district where he was a teacher and principal.*

**"To me, NYSTRS has been a 'life-saver,' especially after my husband died. The reliability of it and the fact that the pension system is so stable is wonderful. When one reads about many other public retirement systems, they cannot compare at all to ours.**

**Those who manage this System, the multiple investments, and continuing value of the System is indeed a blessing!"**

*Mary E. Coleman retired in 2002 after teaching at several community colleges, including Clinton Community College in Plattsburgh.*

# NYSTRS Centennial Stories

## Bob Kersch

"After graduating from Buffalo State in June 1956, and a whirlwind tour of the United States that lasted several months, I began my teaching career in the Niagara Falls school system in October 1956.

As a permanent substitute when I started teaching, I taught all levels (K-12) during the first several months. First day I taught was at my old high school (in Niagara Falls).

I walked into the office, and the secretary, Gloria Tonetti, took one look at me and said, 'What are you doing here?' As a 20-year-old, I didn't know quite how to respond, but the huge grin on my face spoke volumes.

I knew Mrs. Tonetti reasonably well. As a high school senior, I called in one morning, said I was my dad, and said that I would not be in due to illness. I felt guilty later that morning and figured I should hightail it into school. When I walked into the office to sign in, Mrs. Tonetti looked at me, smiled and simply said, 'Thanks for the phone call, Bob.' Nowhere to hide.

Yes, I knew Mrs. Tonetti.

My brief stint as a permanent substitute in the district was

followed by assignments at 39th Street School, Niagara Street School and then 95th Street School.

I was later elected vice president of the Niagara Falls Education Association. I also served on the Niagara County Republican Executive Committee, where I worked with State Senator Earl W. Brydges, who was then presiding officer of the New York State Senate.

In the early 1960s, teachers could contribute to an annuity in addition to the pension, but they could not borrow from their contributions. I felt this process was unfair and Sen. Brydges agreed. He enlisted the support of another Niagara County legislator, Assemblyman Ernest Curto, and the Brydges/Curto bill was introduced in both houses of the state Legislature. It passed both legislative bodies and was signed into law by then Governor Nelson Rockefeller (in 1963).

I was, and still am, very proud of this accomplishment."

*Bob Kersch retired in 1991 after teaching in Niagara Falls and Lindenhurst and serving as an assistant superintendent in Lindenhurst.*

**"If a student asks you something and you don't know the answer, be honest and say so. 'Gee, I don't know,' I used to say. 'Let's look it up.'"**

*Sandy Drahushuk (Miss D) retired in 2011 after teaching art in schools in Albany, Troy and Hudson for 33 years.*

## Alfred J. Schutté

"Serendipity! Upon returning home, after serving as a medic in the U.S. Army's occupying force entering Japan at the end of WWII, I returned to the pre-med program at New York University. In my anthropology course, the professor was discussing the development of animals in their pre-birth state. It so happened that I was the only one studying this in my comparative anatomy course. I was required to place a number of cat embryos mounted in a jar of formaldehyde, thereby showing their progressive development. When mentioning this to the professor, he immediately asked me to bring this into the next class session. At this point, I didn't realize that this effort would change my life.

In the next class, he presented the topic and asked me up to explain these embryos to the class. (It must be noted, that in high school senior English, I could hardly get up and talk about a book review.) After the presentation, it turned out instead of the two minutes, it was over 10 minutes. The professor said that I should consider teaching, since I had a gift and shouldn't let it go to waste.

My educational career took me in an eclectic path that included: teaching science in high school; adjunct professor at Hofstra University and Adelphi University; co-founder and president of the Nassau County Science Supervisors Association; secondary school administrator; member of the President's Commission on Schools of Excellence; and researcher for the United Nations Development Program in Egypt, Israel and the Bahamas.

When all is said and done, my greatest title was and is - teacher."

*Alfred J. Schutté, Ed.D., taught at Sewanhaka High School and the Herricks School District, and retired from the Wantagh School District.*



*Schutté with his biology class at Sewanhaka High School in Floral Park in 1953*



## Miriam Kasenoff

"In the 1950s, when I started teaching kindergarten, a good portion of the time in class was allotted to 'free play.' I learned more about the children's abilities and personality from watching them at 'free play' than any tests or other activities I can think of. The children were free to choose what they wanted to do. And there was a lot to choose from: We had shelves of large and small maple wood blocks and many toy trucks and cars. The children could paint at the easels, pound at the clay table, put together wooden puzzle pieces, use scissors and paste and construction paper and crayons, and they could play in the doll house.

I remember one year when three or four little girls almost always chose to play in the doll house. Charlie would ask them on many occasions if he could play there too. They always answered: 'No. You can't.' One day I suggested to the girls that maybe it might be a good idea to let Charlie play with them and that he might have some good ideas. Susan said: 'OK.' When Charlie came over to play, Susan told him: 'All right, Charlie. You can play. You can be the butcher and we don't want any meat today!' (A born politician, that little Susan.)

I remember at story time one day I was reading the book *The Man Who Didn't Wash His Dishes* to the class. When I came to the part where he had a house full of dirty dishes, dishes on the bed, dishes on the floor and on all of the tables and chairs, I then paused and stopped reading the story. I asked the class: 'Well, he's in a terrible fix. What do you think he should do?'

'He has to get married!' said Michael.

Well, I could share that one with my fellow teachers at our lunch break. Lunch with my colleagues was another one of my favorite activities.

Music and dancing were another big part of my program too. In order to teach kindergarten in New York City in the 1950s, you had to be able to play the piano. You had to take a piano test! I thought that I'd be teaching in New York City, so I took methods courses for kindergarten teachers. However, I wound up teaching on Long Island instead, where playing the piano was not a requirement.

Of course, there were many indoor and outdoor activities and games. We also used to put on a play every year that the parents would come to. The parents also made the costumes. The play was usually a dramatization of a familiar story which incorporated singing and dancing. It was a gala event for the end of the kindergarten year.

I believed, and still do, that children ought to have a happy childhood. And I tried, while they were in my class, to enrich their lives as much as I could.

I enjoyed my years of teaching. Of course, over the span of 40 years there were bumps along the way and some sadness too. But I look back fondly on those days and I sometimes wonder if any of those thousands of children, who now are elderly too, can recall being so young and happy and having as good a time in kindergarten as I did."

*Miriam Kasenoff was a teacher in the Levittown school district for 40 years.*

**Visit [NYSTRS.org](https://www.nystrs.org) for more reflections and stories about our 100th anniversary.**

**"Love your kids and be affectionate and warm.  
Don't show any impartiality; love them all.  
Make sure you have patience and be kind."**

*Marilyn Diamond retired from Brentwood schools in 1985. Her favorite classroom memories include teaching her students math skills by using balloons and performing a math-themed play.*



*Diamond with her class in Brentwood in 1970*