Annual Report

Old Town Teachers Organization
For the period July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026

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Table of Contents

A Note from Our Officers 3

Co-Presidents, Dona Benkert & Renée Nanzer 3

Secretary's Report, Will Fancher 4

Committee Reports 5

BIPoC Committee: Mars Caulton 5

Communications: Michael O'Toole 5

Defense: Will Fancher 5

Governance: Michael O'Toole 6

Grievance Committee: Dona Benkert 6

Finance Committee: Dona Benkert and Renée Nanzer 7

On-Boarding Committee: Rick Veras, Will Fancher 7

Stewards: Carey Farrell 8

Statement of Activities 9

Statement of Financial Position 10

A Note from Our Officers

Co-Presidents, Dona Benkert & Renée Nanzer

The past year has been a period of strong growth for OTTO, even as we continue to navigate a strained relationship with school management. Despite these ongoing challenges, we remain committed to advocating for our members and fostering a more productive dialogue with the administration.

Along with holding general membership meetings each session, some of our key accomplishments include:

- **Member Rights and Advocacy:** Ensured teachers were fully supported and received their Weingarten rights during investigatory meetings.
- **Governance:** Amended our Constitution to simplify financial reporting procedures.
- **Leadership:** Implemented stipends for union officers and steering committee members.
- **Financial Operations:** Partnered with GemNumerics to establish formal accounting procedures.
- **Strategic Initiatives:** Worked closely with the steering committee to advance core priorities.
- **Community Building:** Co-sponsored the 3rd Annual May Day Sing-along Celebration along with the Resource Center.
- **Member Milestones:** Sponsored "Bill is Back" event to celebrate the return of Bill Brickey to teaching following his recovery from major health issues.
- **Union Representation:** Represented OTTO at the Illinois Federation of Teachers Convention and served as union representative in key organization meetings, including joint OTTO/Management, Education Committee, and Strategic Planning Committee.

Secretary's Report, Will Fancher

To ensure OTTO runs seamlessly day-to-day, the Secretary focuses on strengthening our administrative systems and digital communication channels. Major accomplishments include:

- **Meeting Records:** Documented accurate minutes for Steering Committee, Officers and general administrative meetings.
- **Written Content:** Drafted and refined emails, letters, and union updates.
- **Digital Infrastructure:** Facilitated and managed OTTO's Zoom account to support remote meetings.
- **Membership and Roster Tracking:** Reviewed the Week 4 Union Lists and regularly updated Google Contacts and email lists to track teacher statuses (new hires, terminations, active vs inactive members).
- **Data Management:** Monitored, organized, and routinely audited OTTO Gmail and Google Drive accounts to maintain clear recordkeeping.
- **Social Media Management:** Maintained active oversight and engagement across OTTO's primary social platforms, including Facebook and Instagram.
- **Union Representation:** Represented union interests as OTTO liaison during administrative and OTTO/Management meetings.

Committee Reports

BIPoC Committee: Mars Caulton

The BIPoC Committee focused on amplifying the voices of People of Color within the Old Town School community through key initiatives:

- **Highlighting Local Arts:** Distributing newsletters focused on community events featuring artists of color.
- **Broadening Reach:** Expanding our mailing list to connect with a wider, more diverse audience.
- **Elevating Voices:** Producing and sharing podcasts that feature People of Color across various departments within the Old Town School.

Communications: Michael O'Toole

The Communications Committee focused on enhancing internal and external messaging to keep members and the broader community informed about OTTO's initiatives. Key efforts included:

- **Member Engagement:** Designed and launched an all-member census survey to capture vital feedback, gauge community needs, and inform future committee strategy.
- **Membership Communications:** Provided clear, consistent communications to keep members informed throughout the Constitution Amendment process and election.

Defense: Will Fancher

The Defense Committee focused on standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our union partners to actively fight anti-labor initiatives and champion worker rights. Key actions included:

- **Coalition Building:** Worked with regional labor unions to coordinate joint action strategies.
- **Public Mobilization:** Informing OTTO membership about rallies and demonstration to support labor rights.
- **Advocacy and Education:** Raising awareness within our community regarding anti-labor regulations and their impacts on workers through email notifications.

Governance: Michael O'Toole

The Governance Committee focused on updating organizational structure and streamlining administrative processes. Key achievements included:

- **Document Restructuring:** Spearheaded the initiative to separate our governing document into a distinct Constitution and Bylaws for greater clarity and efficiency.
- **Constitutional Amendments:** Led the election to amend OTTO's Constitution, successfully streamlining financial reporting requirements, and simplifying the selection of union delegates to parent organizations.

Grievance Committee: Dona Benkert

The Grievance Committee provides comprehensive support to our teachers, safeguarding their contractual rights and serving as a dedicated advocate on their behalf. Key achievements this year include:

- **Arbitration Victory:** Secured a total victory in arbitration for a wrongfully accused teacher, resulting in a ruling 100% in favor of the union.
- **Legal Collaboration:** Worked closely with legal counsel to prepare and present strong cases for formal grievance hearings and arbitration proceedings.
- **Representation and Prep:** Prepared and guided teachers through critical formal proceedings including investigatory meetings, grievance hearings, and arbitration.
- **On-the-Ground Support:** Provided union representation to protect teachers called into investigatory meetings.
- **Member Advocacy:** Successfully defended teachers across a broad spectrum of concerns including attendance disputes, misconduct allegations and student complaints.
- **Proactive Problem-Solving:** Partnered with administrators, when possible, to address and resolve conflicts early, minimizing the need for formal grievances.
- **Contract Enforcement:** Filed formal grievances, information requests, demands for arbitration, unfair labor practices whenever necessary to uphold member rights and interests.

Finance Committee: Dona Benkert and Renée Nanzer

The Finance Committee oversees the financial health, compliance, and a fiscal accountability of OTTO. Key accomplishments this year include:

- **Budgeting and Fiscal Planning:** Prepared and finalized the FY 2026-2027 budget to guide future organizational operations and financial health.
- **Financial Infrastructure and Support:** Partnered with a professional accountant to strengthen financial oversight and streamline internal reporting procedures.
- **Compliance and Reporting:** Managed and submitted all required federal, state, IFT and AFT legal filings as well as routine financial disclosures.
- **Leadership Compensation:** Successfully established and executed payroll for Officers and Steering Committee members for their union service.
- **Database Management:** Maintained accurate and up-to-date OTTO membership records to ensure proper dues tracking and organizational reporting.

On-Boarding Committee: Rick Veras, Will Fancher

The On-Boarding Committee is dedicated to welcoming new teachers, informing them about the benefits of joining our union, and actively encouraging non-members to join. Key accomplishments include:

- **Membership Growth:** Successfully brought 10 new members into OTTO through dedicated outreach initiatives.
- **Member Welcoming Program:** Sent personalized welcome letters to every new OTTO member immediately upon joining.
- **New Faculty Outreach:** Maintained consistent contact with new teachers, sharing information on the benefits and low cost of joining OTTO along with link to our digital membership card.
- **Targeted Recruitment and Follow-Up:** Conducted focused email outreach to non-member teachers and kept faculty informed about membership resources available in the teachers lounges.
- **Improved Physical Accessibility:** Partnered with Elaine and Renée to place paper membership cards in teacher's lounges – complete with an example guide created by Renée – to ensure non-digital sign-ups are easy and accessible.

Stewards: Carey Farrell

Our stewards serve as frontline advocates and support for OTTO members. Key accomplishments and contributions this year include:

- **Member Support and Advocacy:** Acted as the primary point of contact for teacher concerns, providing guidance and connecting members with appropriate resources and support.
- **Communication and Engagement:** Distributed regular updates to keep members informed of critical OTTO news, initiatives and upcoming events.
- **Event Leadership and Promotion:** Promoted and supported major union events and campaigns including the Constitution Amendment election, May Day celebration, Celebrate Our Stars, and the "Bill is Back!" campaign and celebration.
- **Outreach:** Conducted ongoing outreach to non-union faculty.
- **Leadership Growth:** Recruited new stewards to strengthen our advocacy team.
- **Leadership Acknowledgments:** We extend our deepest gratitude to all who are currently serving or have previously served as stewards for their invaluable dedication and leadership. A special thank you to Alicia Lees, who wrapped up her time as chief steward this year. Thank you, Alicia for all your exceptional leadership, commitment, and hard work on behalf of our membership!

Thank you to every member for your continued support and solidarity over the past year. We look forward to another strong, productive year ahead!

Old Town Teachers Organization

Statement of Activities

For the Year Ended June 30, 2026

Revenue and Support:

Program Income	
Membership Dues	$45,784.88
Program Service Fees	$ 153.00
Total Program Income	**$45,937.88**
Investments:	
Interest – Savings, Short Term CD	$ 21.24
Total Investment Income	**$ 21.24**
Total Revenue and Support	**$45,959.12**

Expenditures:

Supporting Services	
Accounting	$ 4,271.75
Bank Fees	$ 1.98
Hospitality Food & Beverages	$ 751.60
Outside Contracted Work	$ 1,528.34
Payroll & Payroll Taxes	$11,078.16
Postage and Mailing Services	$ 234.00
Printing & Copying	$ 175.00
Stipend for Union Work	$ 1,150.00
Supplies	$ 95.61
Telephone & Telecommunications	$ 521.05
Travel & Meetings	$ 647.28
Total Support Services	**$20,454.77**
Total Expenditures	**$20,454.77**
Net Operating Revenue	**$20,454.77**

Old Town Teachers Organization

Statement of Financial Position

As of June 30, 2026

Assets	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
BUS COMPLETE CHK	41,066.36
CHASE BUS TOTAL SAV	30,000.92
Total for Bank Accounts	$71,067.28
Total for Current Assets	$71,067.28
Total for Assets	**$71,067.28**
Net Assets with Restrictions	
Restricted Net Assets	30,000.00
Unrestricted Net Assets	15,562.93
Net Revenue	25,504.35
Total for Equity	**$71,067.28**

Old Town Teachers Organization operates on a Cash Basis and therefore reflects no current receivables or liabilities.