Summer 2026

COMMUNIQUÉ

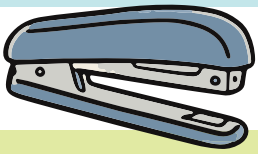
Publication for Members of Central OEA/NEA • Jim Templeton, President

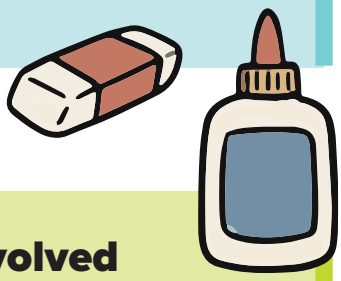
Member Resource Guide

Who and What is Central OEA/NEA

- How to Connect with Us
- Who is Central and what do we do?
- The 2026-27 Central Executive Board and Roles

sections highlighted in blue





How Does Central OEA/NEA Support its Members and Locals

- Free Professional Development and CEUs
- Conferences and Scholarships
- PowerUp!
- Grants, Grants, Grants, and Incentives!
- Membership Doesn't Cost – It Pays
- Know Your Weingarten Rights
- OEA Launches AutoPay Incentive Program

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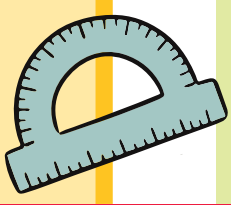

How You Can Get Involved

- Why Me? Should I be a delegate to the Representative Assembly?
- Serving on a Central Committee
- Sign up for Central's Advocate for Children and Education (ACE) Emails
- Join an OEA Caucus
- Join the Emerging Leaders Program!
- Public Education on the ballot
- What Exactly is The Fund

sections highlighted in green

A Shared Commitment to Ohio's Public Schools

Jim Templeton (Northeastern EA), Central OEA/NEA President

As we begin another school year, I want to take a moment to sincerely thank each of Central OEA/NEA's 23,000 members. Every day, you teach, guide, transport, counsel, feed, protect, encourage, and support Ohio's students. Your work often goes far beyond your job description and continues long after the school day ends.

Because of your dedication, students have opportunities, families have trusted partners, and communities are stronger. Whether you work in a classroom, office, cafeteria, bus, library, or support position, you help create the conditions in which students can learn, feel safe, and succeed. That commitment deserves recognition, respect, and support from leaders at every level.

Our union includes members from many different backgrounds, communities, and political viewpoints. That diversity is one of our strengths. We will not always agree on every issue or every candidate, but I believe we all share a commitment to students, educators, and Strong Public Schools. As the upcoming election approaches, I hope we can begin with that common ground.
The decisions made by Ohio's governor, members of Congress, state legislators, and other elected officials have a direct impact on our schools and our professions. They affect school funding, educator pay, collective bargaining, retirement security, student services, class size, school safety, and whether public dollars remain accountable to the public. Elections are not distant political events. The results reach into our schools every day.

OEA has endorsed Dr. Amy Acton for governor and Sherrod Brown for the United States Senate. These endorsements are based on their records, positions, and commitments to public education and working families. I encourage every member to look closely at the candidates, review where they stand on the issues that matter to our schools and consider who will be a dependable ally for Ohio's students and public education employees.

The upcoming election could be decided by a small number of votes. With 23,000 members, Central OEA/NEA can make a real difference simply by participating. Please make sure you are registered, learn what will be on your ballot, talk with family and colleagues about public education, and make a plan to vote.

Thank you again for everything you do. Your work matters, your voice matters, and your vote matters. I also encourage you to take part in the many Central OEA/NEA events held throughout the school year. These events give us opportunities to learn, connect, support one another, and strengthen our collective voice. I hope to see many of you at our Central events in the months ahead. Together, we can continue working toward an Ohio where every student has access to an excellent public education and every education professional is respected, supported, and heard.

In solidarity,
Jim Templeton
President, Central OEA/NEA

COMMUNIQUÉ

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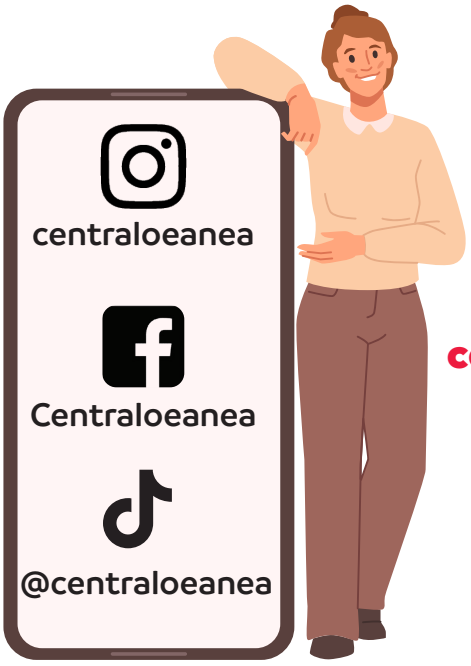


How to Connect with Us

You can find Central OEA/NEA on the web

centraloeanea.org

Who Is Central and What Do We Do?

You Belong to One, You Belong to All

As a member of your Local Association, you are also a member of Central OEA/NEA, the Ohio Education Association, the National Education Association, and Education International. Central is one of ten districts within OEA. We are your link between your local and OEA.

We are divided into five services areas and eight OEA Units (Area # in parenthesis):

Unit 1
Chillicothe EA (4)
Circleville EA (4)
Greenfield Ex. Vlg. EA (4)
Huntington Local EA (4)
Jonathan Alder EA (4)
Logan Elm CTA (4)
Miami Trace Assn (4)
Miami Trace SS (4)
Paint Valley Local TA (4)
Pickaway Ross TA (4)
Southeastern Local TA (4)
Tolles EA (4)
Union Scioto Assn/OEA (4)
Union Scioto EA (4)
Washington EA (4)
West Jefferson EA (4)
Westerville EA (5)
Westerville SSA (5)
Westfall EA (4)
Zane Trace EA (4)
Zane Trace SSPA (4)

Unit 2
Amanda-Clearcreek EA (1)
Amanda-Clearcreek SSA (1)
Berne Union TA (1)
Bloom Carroll EA (1)
Eastland EA (5)
Fairfield-Union EA (1)
Forest Rose EA (1)
Groveport-Madison EA (5)
Lancaster EA (1)
Lancaster SSA (1)
Liberty Un. EA (1)
Pickerington EA (1)
Pickerington SSA (1)
Reynoldsburg EA (5)
Reynoldsburg SSA (5)
Walnut Township EA (1)

Unit 3
Bexley EA (5)
C-TEC TA (1)
Canal Winchester EA (5)
Gahanna-Jefferson EA (5)
Granville EA (1)
Heath EA (1)
Heath ESSA (1)
Johnstown EA (1)
Lakewood AC (1)
Lakewood TA (1)
Licking Heights EA (1)
Licking Hgts. Loc. ESP (1)
Licking Valley EA (1)
North Fork EA (1)
Northridge EA (1)
Plain Local EA (5)
Southwest Licking EA (1)

Unit 4
Big Walnut EA (2)
Big Walnut Prof SS (2)
Buckeye Valley TA (2)
Delaware City EA (2)
Delaware JVS EA (2)

Unit 5
Dublin EA (5)
Dublin SA (5)
North Union EA (2)
S.C.O.P.E. (5)
Worthington EA (5)
Worthington ESP (5)

Unit 6
Bellefontaine E. A. (3)
Benjamin Logan E. A (3)
Clark Co Voc Assn Of Se (3)
Clark Co Vocational E.A. (3)
Clark-Shawnee Local E.A. (2)
Fairbanks E. A. (2)
Graham E. A. (3)
Indian Lake A C E (3)
Indian Lake E. A. (3)
Elgin EA (2)
Marion EA (2)
Olentangy TA (2)
Pleasant AT (2)
River Valley EA (2)
River Valley TA (2)
Tri-Rivers EA (2)

Unit 7
Franklin Co. BD of DD EA (5)
Grandview Heights EA (5)
Grandview Heights ESSA (5)
Hamilton Local EA (5)
South-Western EA (5)

Unit 8
Adena EA (4)
Hilliard EA (5)
London City EA (4)
Newark TA (1)
Ridgedale TA (2)
Teays Valley EA (4)
Upper Arlington EA (5)
Whitehall EA (5)

Higher Ed
Columbus State EA (5)

Central OEA/NEA has four main goals

1 Meeting Local Needs
- Recognize leadership development needs of all locals and provide strategies to support them.
- Promote understanding of and commitment to diversity in our membership.
- Offer grant programs to meet the needs of our locals.

2 Political Action
- Provide training and support to increase local awareness and participation in the political process.
- Have a media program to promote public education.

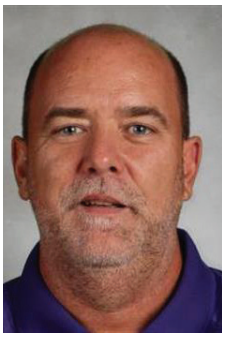
3 Training
- Provide quality professional development.
- Expand opportunities for leader involvement beyond the local level.
- Train members in leadership roles.

4 Communications
- Provide communication between Central and its local leadership and members.
- Collaborate with and improve relations with other OEA districts.

Central OEA/NEA

2026 - 2027 Executive Board

Jim Templeton, President
Jim teaches band at Kenton Ridge High School in Springfield.



Greg Moore, OEA Unit 2
Greg is a Business Teacher for Pickerington Local Schools at Pickerington Central High School.

Karen Via, OEA Unit 6
Karen is an Integrated Preschool Teacher at Northwestern Local Schools. She currently serves as the local president.

Linna Jordan, NEA Director, Vice President
Linna is an EL teacher in Hilliard City Schools where she is also full-time release President.

Paige Harding, OEA Unit 3
Paige is a vocal music teacher for Middle School East in Gahanna Jefferson.

Jennifer Avery, OEA Unit 7
Jennifer works at Hamilton Local Schools as a science teacher.

Joie Moore, NEA Director
Joie is an ESP at Pickerington Local Schools. She is the President of Pickerington Support Staff Association.

Jessie Keplinger, OEA Unit 4
Jessie teachers HS science at Olentangy Berlin High School.

Sherise Thompson, OEA Unit 8
Sherise is an educator for Hilliard City Schools. She teaches 7th grade social studies. She is also HEAs secretary and Membership Chair.

Molly Wassmuth, OEA Unit 1
Molly is a Spanish Teacher at Westerville City schools and full-time Release President for Westerville Education Association.

Janet Carter, OEA Unit 5
Janet is a Career Tech teacher at Madison Correctional Institution, teaching Business Office Services Support and a Board Member for S.C.O.P.E.

Barb Summers, Area 1 Rep
Barb is President of Lancaster Education Association with half-day release time. Teaches 6th—8th grade Gales Online Academy students in-person the other half day, and a Ohio Air National Guard Veteran.

Juliet Litzel, Area 2 Rep
Juliet is a math & science intervention specialist at Bunsold Middle School in Marysville Schools. Juliet is a Building Rep

Mark Brugger, Area 5 Rep #2
Mark is a 4th grade teacher at McVay elementary in Westerville City Schools, and a building rep for WEA.

Diana Long, ESP Rep
Diana works at Thomas Worthington High School as the ALS support educator.

Jeff Caivano, Area 3 Rep
Jeff is a Middle School satellite instructor for Springfield-Clark Career Technology Center (CTC)

Nicole Marsano, Area 5 Rep #3 and SCOPE Representative
Nicole is and a career technology teacher at Marion Correctional Institution. She has been the SCOPE President for 18 years, NEA Delegate 22 years, OEA Legislative Committee 6 years and a US Navy veteran.

Dwayne Marshall, Retired Rep
Dwayne recently retired from Gahanna City Schools. He was a Social Studies Teacher at Gahanna Lincoln High School who taught Government and African American History.

David Jardot, Area 4 Rep
David teaches social studies at Tolles Career and Technical Center in Plain City, and is the Tolles Vice President.

Kim Cooper, Area 5 Rep #4
Kim teaches ELL at Herbert Mills STEAM Elementary. She is the Treasurer of Reynoldsburg Education Association.

Kristina Newton, Area 5 Rep #1
Kristina is a kindergarten teacher at Stiles Elementary in South-Western City Schools. She is SWEA's Negotiations Chair. Kristina also chairs the OHIO Leadership Council, is a Member Organizer for OEA, and a Campaign Lab Coach for NEA.

The Executive Board is supported by staff members

Russell Hughlock (Organizing and Communications Coordinator),
Mark Hill (Fiscal Manager) and
Amy Grittani (Project Manager).

Central Board Member Roles

The President and Vice President are elected by delegates to the Central Representative Assembly. The President is the executive officer and spokesperson for Central, presides over all meetings of the Executive Board and Representative Assemblies, and appoints all committees and their chairpersons with the advice and approval of the Executive Board. The Vice President assumes the duties of the President in their absence and perform other duties as directed by the President and the Executive Board.

Ohio's **NEA Directors** are elected by delegates to the OEA Representative Assembly. Their role is to represent Central members as they lobby in D.C., taking concerns to our federal lawmakers and acting as a liaison between the NEA Board of Directors and OEA's Board and membership.

OEA Directors are elected by delegates to the OEA Representative Assembly. Central has nine OEA Directors in Units 1-8 and an Education Support Professional (ESP) At-Large Director. Their role includes representing Central on all matters before the OEA Board of Directors and acting as a liaison between the Central Executive Board and the OEA Board of Directors.

Central Area Representatives are elected by delegates to the Central Representative Assembly from their specific area. Areas 1-5 are based on counties within the Central OEA/NEA District. Their role includes acting as a liaison with their area association leaders and membership and reporting concerns to the Central Executive Board.

ESP Representatives are elected by Central's ESP members. The number of ESP representatives reflects the proportion of Central's ESP members. Their role includes acting as a liaison between ESPs and the Central Executive Board.

The **Central Board** also includes a Retired Representative, a SCOPE Representative and a Student Representative, all appointed annually by the Board.

Supporting the Board are the **Fiscal Manager, Communications & Organizing Coordinator** and **Project manager.**

Why Me?

Should I be a delegate to the Representative Assembly?

I'm sure most of you have seen OEA's document on the Top 10 Reasons to Belong, which outlines some of the best reasons to become members of OEA. But let's talk about why you should become a delegate to the OEA's Representative Assembly (RA).

The RA is the policy-making body of the Association. The OEA RA meets twice a year, typically in December and in May, in Columbus to establish OEA's policies and objectives, elect officers, establish dues, adopt the Association budget, adopt/evaluate a legislative program, act on resolutions and new business items, and conduct other necessary for the business of the OEA.

The RA is made up of members who have been elected as delegates to represent their Local Associations. Suppose you haven't been elected as a delegate and want to see what happens at an RA. In that case, you are welcome to attend the OEA RA as a guest, but according to the OEA Constitution and Bylaws provisions or policy, as a guest, you are unable to debate and vote on any of the issues.

So, why me?

POWER

You will have voting power. Your local is not like any other local in Ohio. We all have similarities, but like we are as individuals, all locals are unique. Being a delegate to the RA allows us to vote for things that matter to our locals, whether large or small, in a rural or urban area. You can vote for things that matter to YOUR local. You get to add your voice to over 121,000 other voices across the state.

VOICE

As educators, we are the experts when it comes to knowing what is best for our students. As a delegate to the RA, you can use your voice to move action items to ensure state policy provides those students with a quality public education. Your voice allows you to be a part of selecting who represents us at the state and national levels. You can share your personal experiences as an educator with others from around the state, and those collective voices matter and make a difference!

NETWORKING

As a delegate to the RA, you have the opportunity to network with other educators from across the state of Ohio. You can talk with members from locals who have problems similar to your local. You can get ideas from different locals and share what has been successful with your locals. As a delegate, you realize that you are not alone. We are all in this together and can be successful together.

KNOWLEDGE

When you attend the OEA Representative Assembly (OEA RA), you are the person who becomes the point of information. You will return to your Association's members with knowledge about the goals all OEA members have charged OEA leadership with for the upcoming year. Members will look to you to keep them informed about OEA's business, legislative issues, and political agendas.

So, why me? Why wouldn't you?

Conferences and Scholarships

Central OEA/NEA offers members scholarships to attend Central, OEA, and NEA conferences and events promoting leadership, involvement, diversity, and local support. Central conferences are free for any Central member and include the Diversity Conference, Power Up Conference, Presidents Training, Treasurers Workshop, Building Rep Training, and the Local Association Retreat. Members must apply online at **www.centraloeanea.org**.

Scholarship Opportunities

NEA Conference Scholarships: Deadline November 30. Apply for any NEA conference scholarship at **www.centraloeanea.org**.

NEA RA Delegate Funding: Deadline May 10. Central funds members elected as NEA Representative Assembly delegates.

Student Scholarship ($1,000): For a child of a current Central member pursuing an education degree. **Apply January 1 - February 28.**

Professional Scholarship ($1,000): For a current Central member enrolled in study supporting their professional role. **Apply January 1 - February 28.**

OEA & NEA Conference Opportunities

Apply by November 30 for all NEA conferences unless otherwise noted.

OAESP / State ESP Conference
Oct. 2026
Leadership skills and practical knowledge for emerging local association leaders.

NEA Minority & Women's Leadership Training (EAST)
January 24–25, 2027
Prepares NEA members to lead and advocate for students, communities, and the profession through racial and social justice.

OEA Advocacy & Organizing Institute (AOI)
Feb. 2027
Training on negotiating and strengthening collective bargaining for local leaders.

NEA Retired Conference
March 1–3, 2027
Trains retired members to organize communities in support of public education.

NEA Leadership Summit
March 12–14, 2027
Holistic content on national issues and a competency-based model for developing great leaders.

NEA ESP Conference
March 19–21, 2027
Builds ESP member skills to impact student achievement, community relations, and stronger locals.

American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Caucus Conference
Usually April
Advocacy, networking, and addressing education issues affecting Native communities.

LGBTQ+ Social Justice & Leadership Conference
April 9–11, 2027
Advances safe, inclusive schools free of anti-LGBTQ+ bias for educators and students.

Hispanic Caucus Leadership Conference
Usually May
Professional development, social justice advocacy, and cultural empowerment for educators.

OEA Summer Academy
June 2027
Leadership development and practical knowledge for emerging local leaders.

Black Caucus Leadership Conference
Usually June
Leadership development and advocacy for educators and students – preparing for today, leading tomorrow.

NCUEA Caucus Conference
June 26–29, 2027
Speakers address organizing, advocacy, racial/social/economic justice, and professional practice.

NEA Racial & Social Justice Conference
June 29–July 1, 2027
Unites educators, students, families, and community leaders for the advancement of Justice in Education.

NEA Representative Assembly
July 1–5, 2027
Central funds members elected as NEA RA delegates. Scholarships available as funds allow.

NEA Joint Ethnic Caucus
Usually summer
Unified platform addressing education equity, social justice, and collective power for communities of color.

Asian & Pacific Islander Caucus (APIC) Conference
Date TBD
Independent training; generally, participates in NEA Joint Ethnic Caucus Conferences.
Apply online at www.centraloeanea.org

2027 POWER UP Conference

CENTRAL OEA/NEA PD

Jeff Caivano (Clark Co Vocational E.A.), Membership Development Chair

Saturday October 24

Central's annual Power Up! conference returns this year - We are heading to a new location but offering the same exciting professional development opportunities for all of Central's educators and support professionals. Mark your calendars for **Saturday, October 24th** (don't worry - it is a bye week for the Buckeyes) and come to the Innovative Learning Center in Hilliard. This free event is open to all Central members and will offer a variety of sessions with a plethora of topics to fit anyone's curiosity.

The following sessions are tentatively planned to be provided to our members.

PBIS - More than Points and Parties - How does PBIS play a part in and out of the classroom and what does effective implementation look like? These questions and more will be answered during this session. PBIS can change the culture of a school in a positive way, so make sure your district is implementing it correctly.

Student Discipline - What to know when protecting your members - Get a better understanding on the legal implications of student discipline, assault leave, and emergency removal. This session will give a better understanding of the risks our members face with student discipline and how to navigate a stronger policy within your school and district.

Strengthening Communication Within your Locals - Looking to improve communication and keep members in the loop? This session will provide ways to strengthen communication techniques within the local and your membership, as well as ways to avoid ineffective practices.

How to use Social Media and Digital Communication to strengthen your local - Using social media appropriately has always been a challenge for many locals. This session will provide you with tools and resources to maximize your effectiveness in using social media and strengthening your digital communication within your local association.

Election 2026 - What to know and how to help - With the election around the corner, having a better understanding of what is at stake and how you can be a part of that change is paramount during an election cycle. These sessions will address those issues and give you the opportunity to support pro-public candidates.

Grants and Awards - How can you bring money back to your local and its members - Maximizing your dues dollars and making sure they come back to your local and members is vitally important. Taking advantage of Central grants and seeking out awards for our members, is the perfect way to do that. This session will provide you the opportunity to do that, while understanding the available resources with the different grants.

Wellness - How to help your members stay healthy and happy - Staying positive and mentally strong is sometimes a challenge as the school year progresses. This session will provide you tools to destress and potentially bring ideas back to your local association so your members can do the same.

ESP Roundtable - A perfect opportunity to talk through issues and get feedback from other ESP members to help strengthen your local association. An open forum where guided discussions will provide people with the tools to strengthen their local.

CEUs will be awarded for attending this conference and it is open to all members at no cost. We will be hosting a social function after the conference located near the school. So please register at **www.centraloeanea.org** and we look forward to seeing you this October.

Grants, Grants, Grants and Incentives!

It pays to get involved...literally! Up to $1250 in Local Participation Incentives can be earned for each Local this year! Ask not what your union can do for you, but what you can do for your union. You can run as a delegate to the Central and OEA Representative Assemblies, attend Area meetings, or attend one of Central's professional development opportunities. We are happy to help you get started and support you in any of these activities—just ask! Check out our website for activities and register there.

Central OEA/NEA'S Public Relations Grant is designed to provide support to Locals whose members are engaging with the community. Grant funds can be used for a variety of items, or activities including, but not limited to apparel, awards, banners, buttons, fair/festival booths, involvement in community charitable events, sponsoring youth events, races, community parades, or yard signs to welcome kindergarteners or honor graduates. If you have an activity that will bolster the image of your Local in the community, please share your ideas with other Local leaders! Central's Locals are eligible for a Public Relations Grant of up to $500 once every three years.

Central's Growth & Development Grant is as easy as ever, and there is no limit to the number of times or the amount for which a Local can apply. We want to keep your Local strong and build leadership. To that end, the online application now includes a menu of growth and development activities based on activities proven to develop new leaders and engage members. As a union member, we encourage you to volunteer to work with your Local leadership to check out the menu and choose a few activities for the year, then apply. These may be activities that your Local has wanted to try but lacked the funding to get started, or things you've done in the past that are tried and true. Let us help you get the ball rolling. Your Local's GDG coordinator can earn a stipend from Central.

The Local Emergency Grant Program was created to assist Local Associations with projects of an immediate or urgent nature. Community initiatives such as a school district levy or bond campaigns are examples of activities that align with the intended target of these grants. Some funding has been used for: postcards, postage, printing costs, refreshments for levy committee meetings, support to the levy committee, etc. This grant is available to all of our Locals once a year, and Local Association leadership may apply for this as needed.

As a member, you can work with Local leaders to assist in the application process. Central grant applications are reviewed monthly throughout the school year, and Locals may apply for each type of grant. We look forward to seeing your Local applications soon! There is more information on our website, www.centraloeanea.org, where you will also find the online applications. You can contact our project manager, Amy Grittani, at **pm@centraloeanea.org** if you have questions or need help completing applications.

Membership Doesn't Cost — It Pays: 30 Years of NEA Member Benefits in Ohio

Guy Kendall-Freas, NEA Member Benefits Affiliate Relations Lead for NEA Region 3

They say that time goes fast when you're having fun. For nearly 30 years, I've had the honor... and fun... of serving members and locals in Ohio as the Member Benefits representative. Not exactly the path I expected considering I didn't join for the first months as a new teacher simply because I didn't think I could afford the $285 dues when I would earn just $14,280.

If I knew then how NEA Member Benefits can save members' more money than dues cost, I would have beaten a path to my local membership chair to join. Over the 42 years since being a first-year teacher, I've compared the cost of membership over 42 years with the savings I get from NEA Member Benefits and found that I have save two and a half times the cost of dues.

Some NEA Member Benefits are no cost, including NEA Introductory Life and NEA Complimentary Life Insurance. But you need to designate your beneficiary - easy to do here: NEA Complimentary Life Insurance (**www.neamb.com/products/nea-complimentary-life-insurance**).

Discount programs include NEA Wireless with plans starting at just $20, NEA Discount Tickets provides discounts to any venue requiring a ticket for admission ...except traffic court, but the NEA Attorney Referral Program can help with that! The new NEA Shop & Dine Program can save on everyday shopping, gift cards and dining NEA Shop and Dine (**www.neamb.com/products/nea-shop-and-dine**). The NEA Travel Program promises the lowest cost for hotels & resorts, car rentals, airfare, cruises and tours. NEA Travel Dollars further reduced travel costs but those have transformed to NEA Savings Dollars – you should have $2,500 - which can also be used to reduce costs at NEA Shop & Dine. And the NEA College Benefit makes higher ed more affordable for members AND their families (**www.neamb.com/collegebenefit**), often eliminating the need for loans and minimizing out-of-pocket costs.

With NEA Member Benefits, membership doesn't cost – it pays!

Know Your Weingarten Rights

Every OEA member is guaranteed the right to union representation during an investigatory interview conducted by his or her employer if the interview could in any way lead to discipline, including termination, or could affect the member's personal or working conditions. In this situation, the member should request that an association representative or officer be present at the meeting. Without this representation, the member has the right to choose not to answer any questions per the United States Supreme Court case of NLRB v. J. Weingarten, Inc., 420 U.S. 251 (1975). It is very important to remember that the employer does not have to advise an employee of his or her rights under Weingarten.

OEA suggests that representation occur any time the purpose of the meeting is any of the following:

- Any type of disciplinary action;
- Investigation meeting;
- Reprimand;
- Infraction of a work rule or board policy;
- Questions concerning a request or use of any leave;
- Allegations of abuse; and
- Parental, student or community complaint.

Members should ask their principal, supervisor, or other management personnel to clarify the purpose of the meeting to determine if association representation is needed. We recommend using the following language to ensure your rights:

If the discussion I am being asked to enter into could in any way lead to my discipline or termination or affect my personal working conditions, I ask that an association representative or officer be present at the meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions. That is my right under a U.S. Supreme Court decision called Weingarten.

When the employee makes the request for an Association Representative to be present, the employer can do any of the following: (1) stop questioning until the representative arrives; (2) cancel the interview; or (3) tell the employee it will cancel the interview unless the employee voluntarily gives up his or her rights to representation. No member should ever waive his or her right to representation.

For more information about your rights as an OEA member, speak to your Labor Relations Consultant.

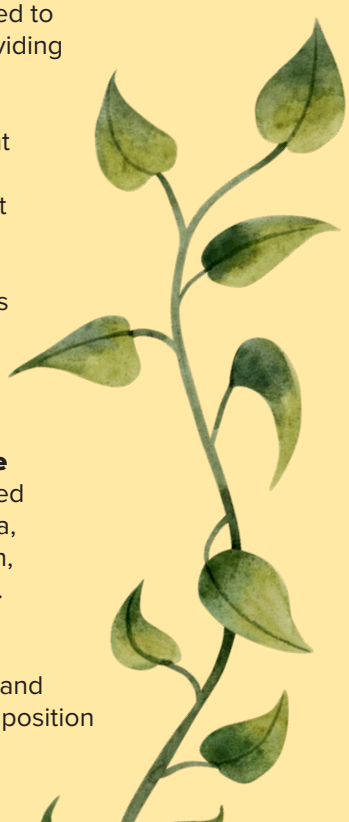
Free Professional Development and CEU's

Over the course of the year, numerous professional and Union growth opportunities are provided to all members, free of charge, while also providing CEUs and networking opportunities.

Power Up is an annual conference, brought to you by your Membership Development Committee. Earn CEUs while learning about various topics such as Implementing PBIS Correctly in Schools, Student Assault and Altercations. This year the conference takes place on **October 24.** See page 8 for details.

The Diversity Committee is excited to present the virtual **Diversity Conference on February 6.** Past sessions have educated members on diverse topics such as dyslexia, economic and social justice, rural education, second language learners, and much more.

Mark your calendar for **Thursday, June 10, 2027** - Local Leadership Training and Treasurers' Workshops. Regardless of your position in your association, this provides a deeper insight into the roles and responsibilities of local leadership found within your association, while providing an opportunity to learn how other locals function and handle issues of the day.



The Local Retreat is scheduled for **Tuesday and Wednesday, June 8 and 9, 2027.** This offers a time and space for locals to work, organize, and address the most pressing needs of their association. Teams can work on negotiation prep, planning for the next school year, work on budgets, update C&Bs, or just take the time to bond as a team. The time is yours and how you plan it is up to you.

NEA has a program that allows educators to earn micro-credential certificates. The micro-credential program has the benefit of being personal, flexible, and performance-based for the educator. Learn more at **www.nea.org/professional-excellence/professional-learning/micro-credentials**.

2026 OHIO ELECTIONS

Public Education is on the Ballot

The next Governor and Ohio Legislature will control school funding, educator pay, collective bargaining rights, and the future of Ohio's public schools — for the next four years.

WHY 2026 MATTERS FOR EVERY EDUCATOR

- **The Governor controls the education budget.** Every dollar for Ohio schools, educator salaries, and programs flows through the Governor's office.
- **The Legislature sets your rights.** Collective bargaining, class sizes, STRS Ohio retirement rules — all decided in Columbus.
- **School funding is still broken.** Courts ruled Ohio's system unconstitutional. Who wins in November decides whether real reform finally happens.
- **Close races are won by small margins.** Several Ohio legislative races in 2024 were decided by fewer than 1,000 votes. Educators tip those elections.

WHAT YOU'LL RECEIVE AS AN ACE

- **Weekly email updates** every Wednesday, from late August through Election Day
- Candidate news — **who's on our side and why**, vetted by your own colleagues and fellow members
- **Shareable social media graphics** — ready to post, no design skills needed
- **Ohio voting guides** — deadlines, early voting, and absentee how-to
- **Action opportunities** — postcard writing parties, text banks, and more near you

BECOME AN ACE

Advocate for Children and Education

Central OEA/NEA's network of politically engaged educators

↑ SCAN TO SIGN UP

centraloeanea.org/political-action/be-informed

2 minutes to sign up. All fall to make a difference.

Follow Us

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Candidates Endorsed by OEA Members

Amy Acton	Sherrod Brown	John Kulewicz	Allison Russo
for Governor	for U.S. Senate	for Attorney General	for Secretary of State

www.centraloeanea.org

CENTRAL OEA/NEA

Education is on the Ballot

Your Vote. Your Voice. *The Fund.*

What Is The Fund?

The **OEA Fund for Children and Public Education** — now known as **The Fund** — is a non-partisan political action fund supporting candidates who champion public education. **The Fund gives educators a seat at that table.**

We Believe…

- Teachers and support staff are committed to the success of **every child**.
- Students must be at the center of education policy.
- Teachers, students, parents, and politicians must all be held accountable.
- The Fund is ultimately about **issues**, not candidates.

Issues We Fight For:

- Class Size
- Salary & Benefits
- Working Conditions
- Retirement Security
- Fair School Funding

How Does the Candidate Endorsement Process Work?

The screening process is **non-partisan, objective, transparent, inclusive of members, and thorough.** Recommendations are never based on party affiliation — only on candidates' records and positions on education and organized labor issues.

Statewide Offices	Interviewed by The Fund State Council — reps from each of OEA's 10 districts, OEA's Retired affiliate, and the OEA Board of Directors.
Ohio House & Senate	District-level interview teams include reps from each OEA local and a five-member District Screening Council.

- To receive an endorsement from the OEA Fund, a candidate must complete a written questionnaire and interview covering school funding, employee rights, retirement, and privatization. Candidates who decline are **not eligible** for endorsement.
- Any member may watch a candidate screening, but only members serving on the interview teams may ask questions.
- To learn more about which districts your association is eligible to screen, please contact your labor relations consultant.

Did You Know?

- **Dues dollars cannot be used for political contributions.** The Fund relies entirely on voluntary member donations.
- **25% of local contributions** can be used in local school board and municipal races.
- **Your collective bargaining rights** depend on who sits in the Ohio Legislature.
- **Local members make endorsement decisions** — not OEA staff or officers.
- **Electing pro-education candidates** can reduce the need for local school levies.
- **Every education decision is a political decision** — The Fund is your voice as an education professional in the political marketplace.

How to Contribute to The Fund

Payroll Deduction
Start with just **$1 per pay period** — speak to your local President.

Online
Contribute by credit card — scan the QR code or visit **ohea.org**.

Scan to donate

By Mail
Contact OEA or your Central OEA/NEA local representative for forms and information.

www.centraloeanea.org

Serving on a Central Committee

Your experience, expertise and voice are needed and can help shape the direction of Central's many programs.

If you are interested in participating in one of the following Central committees, you can apply on our website here **www.centraloeanea.org/for-members/committee-interest.**

Committees typically meet once a month, with most meetings held virtually. Central provides a meeting stipend.

Here are the committees you can apply to serve on:

Awards Committee
Designs an award program for effective Local Associations and outstanding association leaders and nominating potential award recipients.

Constitution and Bylaws
Periodically reviews the governing documents and makes recommendations for changes. Handling the details of preparing ballots, conducting elections, and other election-related responsibilities.

Convention Planning
Plans and implements the annual Representative Assembly.

Diversity Committee
Plans and implements strategies for engaging a diverse cross section of members in Association leadership.

ESP Advisory Committee
Recommends programs and services that address the needs of Educational Support Professional locals and members.

Finance Committee
Recommends an annual budget and oversees expenditures, administering grant programs, and fiscal oversight of the Association.

Member Communications Committee
Makes recommendations related to effective communications between the Association and its members.

Membership Development Committee
Plans conferences and workshops for local leaders and membership designed to meet Local Association needs and personal professional growth.

Organizing Committee
Reviews the NEA competencies on organizing to determine how to best serve our members. Mobilizing members into action to become education advocates.

Retired Advisory Committee
Makes recommendations related to the effective recruitment and involvement of retired members in the Association.

You can also apply to serve on OEA committees.
Learn more and apply to serve by visiting
www.centraloeanea.org/for-members/committee-interest

Sick Days, Twin Boys, and a Resolution That Passed Overwhelmingly

Jessie Keplinger (Olentangy EA),
OEA Board of Directors

My name is Jessie Keplinger, and I am a member of the Olentangy Teachers Association and science teacher at Berlin HS. I am also going into my fourth year as the Central Unit 4 Representative on the OEA Board of Directors. Before moving to Olentangy, I served as president of the Elgin Education Association, where I helped lead our local through a difficult bargaining campaign that resulted in historic gains for educators and students, all while raising twin boys who turn seven this summer.

Moving from being president of a small local to a rank-and-file member of one of the largest locals in the state left me feeling a little lost. My voice no longer carried the same weight in local conversations, and I was not sure where I fit or how to make an impact. One way I stayed connected was by serving as an OEA Representative Assembly delegate for OTA.

This spring, a conversation with a colleague, also a mom of two young boys, sparked something in me. We talked about how little sick leave we had left after maternity leave, caring for sick children, family emergencies, and (gasp) getting sick ourselves. I realized we couldn't be the only ones. After researching OEA policy, I found there were no resolutions related to paid family leave. After talking with a friend who had experience speaking at the RA, I drafted both a Resolutions amendment and a new business item directing OEA to support paid family leave legislation and help locals bargain for it. I'm happy to report that both passed overwhelmingly at the Spring RA.

My experience reminded me that we all have a voice in OEA. You don't have to be a local president or board member to create change. Get involved. Speak up. It may seem overwhelming at first, but there are so many people who are willing to help you (several whose pictures are in the front of this magazine). This fall, I will start my fifteenth year of teaching and will continue to advocate for my fellow educators and our students every step of the way.

Join an OEA Caucus

Joining a caucus is a great way to meet and advocate with like-minded educators. Typically, there is a membership fee to join, but all members are welcome to participate in each caucus. If you would like to join a caucus, you should email the contact person for more information on how to get involved.

OEA BAT Caucus (OEABAT)

Karen Linch - Chair
Allison Ellis - Vice Chair
Brittany Alexander - Treasurer
buckeyegirl.alex@gmail.com
Website:
sites.google.com/view/oeabatcaucus/home

Doris L. Allen Minority Caucus (DLAMC)

Marshall, Dwayne – President, E-mail: marshall.133@icloud.com or marshalld@ohea.org
Daniels, Cassandra – Vice President,
E-mail: **danielsc@ohea.org**
Arthur Lard – Secretary,
E-mail: **arthur.lard@gmail.com**
Website: **www.dlamcofohio.org**

OEA Hispanic Caucus (OEAHC)

Jordan, Linna – Chairperson,
E-mail: **jordanli1973@gmail.com**
Jordan Santamaria - Vice Chairperson
Rita Chata Gonzalez - Secretary

Oea Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus Caucus (OEA-LGBTQ+)

Rachel Hara Nicholson, Chairperson.
Email: **rachelhara33@gmail.com**
Austin Syar, Vice Chairperson
David Grimes, Secretary
James Templeton, Treasurer. Email: **jrt747@aol.com**

OEA Women's Caucus (OEAWC)

Daniels, Cassandra – Chairperson,
E-mail: **cdaniels0102@gmail.com**
Belinda Dixon- Vice Chair
Kiera King – Secretary

Curious About Getting Involved in the Union? Join the Emerging Leaders Program!

If you are looking to get more involved in your local association but don't know where to start, Central OEA/NEA offers interested members an Emerging Leaders program to get you on your way.

Come learn about...

- The many layers of the Association
- Learn what your Leadership Style is
- Issues you will encounter as an Association Leader
- Skills you will need as an Association Leader
- How you can become more involved in your Association
- How to become an OEA or NEA delegate to Rep Assembly and why
- What does OEA Headquarters look like....

Led by:
joie Moore, Pickerington SSA

If you Are Interested:
If you are interested in learning more about the program or wish to join, send an email to:
emerging.leaders@centraloeanea.org

Free Contact Hours
Upon completion of the program, participants will be awarded a certificate detailing the number of contact hours earned.

OEA Launches AutoPay Incentive Program — Here's What You Need to Know

The Ohio Education Association (OEA) has introduced an AutoPay Incentive Program, offering you a simpler way to pay your dues while putting money back in your pockets. Here's a breakdown of what the program offers and how to take advantage of it.

What is the AutoPay Incentive Program?
Beginning April 13, 2026, OEA members can convert to electronic dues payment for the 2026-2027 school year. Members have two options: a twice-a-month Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) — 20 payments running from October through July — or a single one-time annual payment by credit card or EFT. Local associations will be set up to support electronic dues payments on a schedule of their choosing, with local dues transferred via direct deposit each month.

What's in it for Individual Members?
Members who enroll in AutoPay between April 13 and September 30, 2026 will receive a one-time $50 rebate payment. Members already enrolled in AutoPay before the program launched will automatically receive the same rebate. For those using twice-a-month or annual EFT, the rebate will be deposited directly into the bank account on file. Members paying by credit card will receive a paper check. Rebates are issued the month after sign-up — or, for new members, after their first October 2026 payment is received.

What About New Members?
Starting with the 2026-2027 school year, payroll deduction will no longer be available for new members. All new members will be required to use AutoPay and can enroll through the OEA Join Now Portal. Those who complete a paper form will need to wait until they receive their membership number before completing AutoPay enrollment.
Incentives for Local Associations

Local associations stand to earn a one-time $2,600 rebate payment for the 2026-2027 school year. To qualify, locals must conduct an AutoPay Membership Campaign and convert at least 20% of their members to AutoPay by September 30, 2026. Locals already at or above 20% AutoPay enrollment before the program's creation will automatically receive the payment. Associations must submit their required dues deduction dates and banking information to OEA by September 1, 2026.

A Few Things to Note
Members who switch to AutoPay must notify their school district treasurer to stop payroll deductions after their last 2025-2026 dues payment — OEA will provide a notification letter to assist with this.

To enroll, visit the OEA AutoPay Portal using your Member ID and ZIP code, or contact the OEA Membership Department at 1-844-632-4636 or **membership@ohea.org.**

Auto Pay Program

Scan the QR code

SIGN UP

Or click here to sign up

Welcome Our New Fiscal Manager

Before we introduce our new fiscal manager, we would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to our retiring Fiscal Manager, Mary Kennedy. Mary Kennedy joined our board in 2011 and has been a steady presence ever since. After retiring from Hilliard City Schools, where she served as president of the Hilliard EA, she took on the role of Fiscal Manager in December 2021. She handled our finances with integrity and diligence, and we were lucky to have her. Mary, thank you for everything you gave to this organization. Enjoy your retirement — you've earned it.

We would like to welcome Mark Hill as our new Fiscal Manager.
Mark is a retired middle school math teacher from Worthington City Schools. He has served in many roles that bring a wide range of experience in association finance to his new role as Central Fiscal Manager. Mark served as President of the Worthington Education Association from 2010- 2018, as a member of the OEA and Central Board of Directors from 2010-2024, and as OEA Secretary-Treasurer from 2018-2024. Additionally, Mark was the chair of the Central Finance Committee from 2017-2018 and served on the State Teachers Retirement System Board from 2010-2018.

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THANK YOU

for being a member of Central OEA/NEA

You are the true expert in education!

You deserve a voice
in how best to educate our students.

We are here to support you.

Jim & Linna
Central Leadership

Association Benefits

Free CEUs
Liability Protection
Improving Professional Practice
Professional Networking

Dates of Note

8/19/26	Back-2-School
10/24/26	Central Power Up! Conference
11/20/26	Central All Area & Delegate Briefing
12/5/26	OEA Fall RA
2/6/27	Central Diversity Conference
3/12/27*	NEA Leadership Summit
3/19/27*	NEA ESP Conference
4/23/27	Central Representative Assembly
5/14/27*	OEA Spring RA
6/8/27*	Central Local Retreat
6/10/27	Treasurers Workshop
6/10/27	Central Local Leadership Training
7/1/27*	NEA RA

*Multi-day event. First day listed.

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