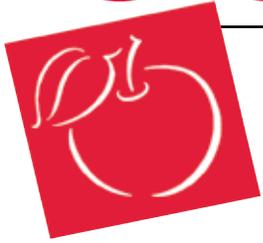


Winter 2022

# COMMUNIQUE

Publication for Members of Central OEA/NEA • Adrienne M. Bowden, President



**Looking Forward to 2022**

**Teaching in the Era  
of Unfounded Fear**

**POWER UP!**

**The Journey to Justice  
Continues - Central OEA/  
NEA Diversity Conference**

**Members  
in Action**

**Central Educator  
for a Day**

**With Member  
Engagement  
Came Record  
Success**

# Looking Forward to 2022

Adrienne M. Bowden (Pickerington EA), Central President & NEA Director

With the reflection and celebration of the holiday season behind us, Central OEA/NEA is energized and ready to assist you as you serve the students and families of Central Ohio. Our goal is to support you with your professional development needs and education advocacy. As we move into the new year, our plan is to get back to our typical format of services. The following are a few highlights as we move into 2022:

- Central OEA/NEA enters the year with a strong team. In December, Central OEA/NEA welcomed its new Fiscal Manager, Mary Kennedy! Ms. Kennedy is a former member leader and current OEA- R member with a vast array of knowledge and skills that will benefit our locals and members. This completes Central's staff roster and shores up our organizational capacity to better serve you in the upcoming year. We are very excited to have Ms. Kennedy on board!
- Join Us! NEA Leadership Summit and Conferences. Moving into the new year, the National Education Association is planning to host all of its conferences in person. With this news, Central will again offer scholarships to assist members in attending the various professional development opportunities. If you have an interest in attending any of the upcoming national conferences, please check out our website to learn how to apply for a scholarship. These are great opportunities to learn more about yourself as a leader, the Association and how to advocate for the students that we serve.
- This is an important year for advocacy. Every year we remind you that elections matter. This past year and the upcoming year are no different. We have seen wins in education funding and student loan forgiveness thanks to the Biden Administration. We watch heated local school board battles over topics that will shape how our students

learn for decades to come. This year elections will have similar, if not of greater importance. We will need your voice to help elect pro-public education candidates at all levels. If you have done so already, please consider serving as your local's Education Advocate Leader. The application and more information can be found on our website.

- Conferences and Professional Development. This year we will once again host a Diversity conference later this month and Power Up! in February. These opportunities will provide you with information to assist you on your personal journey as an educator and skills to better advocate for your students in and outside of the classroom. These are no-cost events that will provide you with contact hours you can use towards recertification. Please see our website for more details on both events.

I know that this past year has been difficult. Thank you for all you do each and every day to support our students, their families and our community. We look forward to all that we can do together this year!

Adrienne M Bowden  
President, Central OEA/NEA

## The OEA Fund

What is The Fund (formerly FCPE)?

The Fund is a non-partisan, political action fund for candidates who support the values of public educators.

The law prohibits members' dues dollars being used for contributions to candidates for office; therefore, the voluntary Fund contributions members make are one of the ways we tell the story of what we believe.

We believe...

Teachers and Support Staff are committed to the success of every child. Students need to be at the center of education reform.

To ensure the success of every child, teachers, students, parents, and POLITICIANS need to be held accountable.

The Fund is ultimately about issues, not candidates. If you care about any of the following issues: Collective bargaining rights, pensions, school funding, testing, class sizes, charter schools, vouchers, school takeovers, privatization...

Then The Fund is important to you, too.



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# Teaching in the Era of Unfounded Fear

**Jarrod Weiss (Marysville EA)**

Teacher life has always been demanding: planning and instructing, meetings, grading, finding the time to go to the bathroom — it ain't easy being a teacher. However, our jobs have become exponentially more difficult due to the pressures of working in an “era of unfounded fear.”

Following the death of George Floyd and the rapid growth of the “Black Lives Matter” movement in the summer of 2020, a rising fear of indoctrination in public education quickly spread. Claims of schools teaching “Critical Race Theory” and pushing “divisive” topics on students have painted teachers as the enemy and classrooms as laboratories of alienation.

As a high school government teacher, I know the social microscope is aimed squarely at what I do and say in the classroom. Other educators are facing the same intrusive examination of their educational practices — English teachers are having their reading choices scrutinized from all angles, and elementary teachers' libraries are becoming trending topics on local Facebook groups. And while I am lucky enough to be in a supportive district, that isn't always the case.

Honestly, most of us had to Google “Critical Race Theory” when the term started to be used in School Board testimonies, and topics we had never — and still do not — consider “divisive,” causing uproars from parents and communities. While we struggled just to keep our heads above water during a raging pandemic, we became political enemy number one to a significant portion of the country.

Teachers have gone from doing everything we can to give students the tools to be global citizens and helping families navigate school during a pandemic to being labeled divisive indoctrination experts whose only goal is to fill the minds of young people with hate and false history. My only indoctrination goal is to indoctrinate my students to turn in their work on time.

This movement against academic freedom has already changed the way we teach and how we view our profession. In the classroom, I have always believed that my ability to remain impartial and bring to light important and sometimes controversial issues is one of my best assets as a teacher. Yet, in this new era, I am concerned that if I say the wrong thing or my words are taken out of context I am going to be vilified in the court of public opinion.

While Americans who have not seen the inside of a classroom for decades are worried about “Critical Race Theory,” I'm in my classroom worrying about giving my students the tools to be “critical thinkers.” While many are worried about “indoctrination,” I'm worried about making sure my students understand the world around them. Adding this unfounded paranoia to the already stressful work of teaching is only straining our ability to build relationships with our students.

Now, this “era of unfounded fear” has moved beyond our local schools and has found its way to the Ohio Statehouse. Proposed legislation aimed at stopping “divisive” education will only prove to impede the true teaching of history and pile on to the towering burdens already placed on all of us. Studying history means studying the divisions of our past and, while that may make some uncomfortable, the truth is still the truth.

There is one truth that cannot be stifled — the truth that we have each other's backs. We know what we do for our students is not “indoctrination,” and we are not “divisive” in our desire to teach our students to be global citizens and decent human beings. It may add to our stress, but we will continue to fight for academic freedom and to do what is right for our students.

# Central OEA/NEA Diversity Conference – The Journey to Justice Continues

Sean McCullough (Licking Heights EA) and Joie Moore (Pickerington SSA President), Membership Engagement Co-Chairs

January 22, 2022, will be our annual Central OEA/NEA Diversity Conference and we are proud to bring three tremendous speakers to you. First, here are the details: The Diversity Conference will begin at 8:45 a.m. and you will have fifteen minutes to hear from Joie and Sean about the speakers, why they are here, and what they will teach you today. The conference will last roughly four hours, in which, if you stay until the end, you will be eligible for CEU's toward renewing your license. We hope to be done by 12:30 at the latest.

Our first speaker will be Makia Burns from The Ohio Education Association. Makia is an excellent source on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equality. In our first session, Makia is going to focus on happenings at the State House and how future bills could impact us as staff.

Ernest White from Licking Heights Education Association will be our second speaker. Ernest will talk about his role as the Strategies for Intervention and Prevention Program, a new way to help students who are facing disciplinary issues, and tips on how he can help.

Aneeka Farrell will be our last speaker and she is coming from the west coast as a member of the Washington Education Association, just in time for her first cup of coffee and your refill. Aneeka will discuss in-class techniques to help students with diversity on a one-to-one level and give great insight on how to deal with specific situations to help you out with situations.

Each member will have Question and Answer Sessions at the end of their session so please ask questions, talk scenarios, and use personal situations and ask our panel as to how they can help you and your teammates in the future. See you on January 22!

The conference will be virtual over Zoom. Registered attendees will be sent the Zoom information two days before the conference.

## To register

- Log in to your Central account (or create an account if you don't have one)
- Scroll down to the "Diversity Conference" event and click "Attending"
- Wait a short moment for it to register. That's it.

# POWER UP! Central OEA/NEA Professional Development Conference

Linna Jordan (Hilliard EA President), Membership Development Chair

Well, we thought we had made it past the worst. We were sure when we left our classrooms last spring that things just had to be better this year. But despite public opinion, we didn't just go back to normal. Students have had significant interruptions in socialization skills. Quarantines and extended absences are still happening. The stress and demands we adrenalized through last year are still there. We have had another year of pushing through the struggle. We have also learned more about what works and what doesn't. And, hopefully, we've learned more about prioritizing in and out of the classroom.

Please mark your calendars and join us virtually on March 5, 2022, for Central OEA/NEA's Power Up! conference. Earn CEU's, network with colleagues, and recharge! Through this conference, Central OEA/NEA offers professional development and CEU's which can be used toward license renewal. As with all of Central's conferences, this is free to all Central OEA/NEA members.

Attendees will have access to relevant and timely sessions. Whether you are a teacher, school counselor, paraprofessional, etc., there will be options appropriate for your professional growth. We are planning the following sessions:

**OTES 2.0** – what have we learned about HQD and PGP's. Mindfulness/Wellbeing – using mindfulness and movement to recenter.

**Being Safe & Legal in the Virtual World** - free speech & first amendment rights with social media.

**Paraprofessionals Institute**- professional growth for paras. What are your True Colors? –identify your strengths and work with them.

**The Perils of Privatization** –what it means and how to organize against it.

We hope you can join us on March 5, 2022, for the Power Up! Conference. Encourage a colleague or two to join you.

To register, which is required, visit [www.centraloearnea.org](http://www.centraloearnea.org).

- Log in to your Central account (or create an account if you don't have one)
- Scroll down to the "Power Up! Conference" event and click "Attending"
- Wait a short moment for it to register. That's it.



# Members in Action

From candidate forums to community events, running for office or helping those who ran, Central OEA/NEA members were active in 2021 fighting for quality public education, students and educators.

According to OEA, statewide, pro-public education candidates, including a large number of educators, came out on top in their respective school board races, winning more than 80 percent of the contests in the November elections.



# Thank You, Tim!

Our Central OEA/NEA Fiscal Manager, Tim Skamfer, will be retiring on January 14. We want to extend our sincerest thanks and best wishes for his years of dedicated service to our organization.

Tim served with distinction on the Central Executive board as an Area Representative and OEA Director from 2006-2014 winning the Central President's Award in 2008 and the Richard J. Hensler Meritorious Service Award in 2014.

Hired as the Central Fiscal Manager upon his retirement from teaching in Gahanna Jefferson Schools in 2014, he became a second-time winner of the Central President's Award in 2021 for his work helping to guide the association through the pandemic.

Thanks for all your service, Tim.



# Central Educator for a Day

## Invite Your Legislator to Your School

Central is looking for members who are interested in hosting a legislator at their school this spring.

There is no better way to illustrate the experience of being a school employee than to let a legislator see that experience firsthand through the Central Educator for a Day program. By bringing public figures into the schools, and having them witness the real-life, everyday education environment, we can continue to build a great public education for students.

### What is Central Educator for a Day?

Central Educator for a Day is a program that allows legislators to experience an entire school day, under the guidance of a regular school employee. The “guest educator” performs duties such as teaching class, reading to a class, supervising recess, serving meals in the cafeteria, cleaning up an accident in the lunchroom, answering phone calls in the office in the morning and tending to sick students, among other duties. Central has developed a toolkit which will give you all the guidance you need to launch a Central Educator for a Day program in your district.

### What do I do now?

Contact [russell@jointhefuture.org](mailto:russell@jointhefuture.org) to express your interest. We will setup a Zoom call for all interested educators to go over the toolkit and answer any questions you might have.



# Thinking About Running for Local Office or School Board?

**Molly Wassmuth (Westerville EA),  
Grandview Heights school board**

Do you ever find yourself thinking about a recent board decision or newly-passed city council ordinance, wondering why did they do that? Ever wonder how decisions that are made for educators and city planning are done without an educator’s perspective? Have you ever caught yourself thinking about getting more involved in local elections and offices?

If you answered YES to any of the above questions, YOU SHOULD RUN FOR LOCAL OFFICE.

Where does one begin even thinking about what to do next, or how to go about the daunting task of running for public office? ASK OEA!!

Guess what is even better, you do not have to do it alone. OEA can help you through the process in a few easy steps!!

First step: Reach out to Zach Roberts (OEA-Political advocacy consultant) for help. He will help you with figuring our resources, looking at election cycles, and getting the first and biggest step to starting: beginning the process.

Second step: Attend a candidate training program. The Political advocacy consultant can help you find and sign up for invaluable training from OEA, NEA, and LEAD OHIO.

Third Step: Reach out to the local associations, local presidents, and field representatives or OEA’s Labor Relationship Consultants (LRC). These people and associations can give you much-needed general advice on the running process, help with campaigning, and resources; possible financial and people to help with literature drops, canvassing, phone banking, etc.

Having successfully run and been elected not once but TWICE, I can tell you how helpful these resources and training were from first-hand experience. I attended training for both campaigns and it was invaluable to hear from other candidates, build relationships with what would become future fellow elected leaders, find resources, and build grassroots campaigns involving my fellow OEA members. I would not have been as successful without this support. Having an educator in public office is critical and so important as we move through these political times. Community members value and trust educators. Let’s put educators on the ballot and help support public education and our communities!

# With Member Engagement Came Record Success

**Brittany Alexander (Hilliard EA Vice President)  
and Ashley Lambacher (Hilliard EA)**

Now that the election dust has settled, hindsight is clearer. In 2021, societal issues were elevated, and in many cases exploited in our local elections. In many areas, the frenzy over mask requirements and other public health measures employed by districts and ongoing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work caused educators concern about their school board races. Educators embraced the moment to engage in the dreaded realm of politics for the sake of public education for all students. This was the case not only in Central but across the state and even nationally.

Some educators even decided to run for school board seats. While seemingly an obvious fit, putting oneself “out there” during such turbulent times is most definitely brave. Having an educator’s first-hand perspective in the broader decision-making of a school board is to the entire community’s advantage. This level of engagement is certainly not for everyone, but perhaps it’s more important now than ever before.

Educators found a variety of ways to be involved in their local elections. Some volunteered their time to participate in candidate screening and recommend endorsements for their locals. Many Central locals saw increased interest from members to serve on a screening committee. This process is critical to organizing members around the strongest pro-public education candidates. Some educators engaged directly with candidates to make contributions, display yard signs, and talk to voters about their candidacy. Still, other educators attended events with candidates, helped to register voters, and canvassed for endorsed candidates.

But it wasn’t just individual educators who jumped into this work; local unions played a key role in engaging members in the political process. Many locals found success in utilizing a variety of strategies to show support for their endorsed school board candidates. These strategies included:

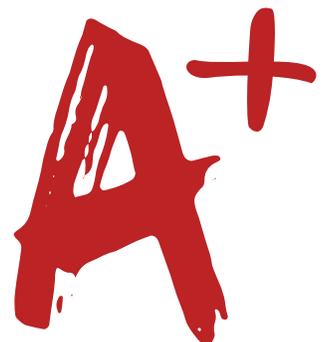
- Organizing lit drops and sending reminders to membership encouraging sign up
- Canvassing
- Postcards to OEA members in the district, as well as personal messages on postcards the candidates were going to send out to general voters

- Social media posts and advertisements (particularly Facebook and Instagram)
- Working with OEA to get tips and ideas on how to help endorsed candidates
- Financial donations to candidates from PACs
- Phone banks and using the Hustle app to contact voters in the district
- A targeted newsletter to union members with all important endorsement information, including how to support candidates
- Meetings held to encourage voting or to introduce endorsed candidates to voters
- Candidate forums where voters can ask questions of the candidates

While outcomes varied from district to district, using multiple strategies allows for the chance of greatest reach to voters. It was also key to engage the membership in these endeavors.

Engagement matters. Over 100 OEA members or families of OEA members ran for public office across the state. Thirty-five locals coordinated with the OEA Government Relations Department to conduct member-to-member campaigns in support of endorsed candidates. Hundreds of educators got involved with the process to support public education locally. It is only because of the efforts of educators that statewide victory rates for levies were 80% and locally endorsed school board candidates were 85%.

Fighting for all students and their needs will always be the top priority for educators, and we saw it again in OEA members’ passion and persistence in local elections in 2021. Ohio educators will continue to pursue what is best for students at all levels in the future, and we can all proudly look to 2021 as another defining moment of that dedication. Our greatest strength is in one another, regardless of who sits on our school boards.





# 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.

Adrienne & Jim,  
Central Leadership



## Association Benefits

- Free CEU's
- Liability Protection
- Improving Professional Practice

## Upcoming Events

- 1/22/22 Diversity Conference\*\*
- 3/4/22 Presidents Meeting
- 3/5/22 Power Up Conference\*\*
- 4/22/22 Central RA
- 5/13/22 OEA RA\*
- 6/4/22 NEA Delegate Briefing
- 6/13/22 Central Local Retreat
- 7/2/22 NEA RA\*

\*Multi-day event. Start Date shown. \*\*Virtual