

Education Focus

We must be the voices of change

*“Not everything that is faced can be changed,
but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”*

— James Baldwin

When Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence 244 years ago, he included the phrase we all know: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

It was ‘self-evident’ only in America’s ambition, not its reality.

Slavery was America’s original sin and one which the author of those words perpetuated.

The idea that “those were just the times” ignores every person who gave themselves to the struggle of racial equality in America. Repeatedly, patriots, alongside the enslaved and oppressed, have attempted to suture our racial wounds. The hard fought bandages throughout history have never cauterized the wound, though.

“Those were the times” also blinds itself from the fact these gashes remain.

We mourn for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks and Ahmaud Arbery, all unarmed and defenseless. We mourn for others like them who continue to be killed – most without a cell phone video to tell their story.

We mourn for our students of color, who live in communities that are over-policed and under-resourced.

As educators, we know these wounds of trauma cannot be healed through inaction.

We have the power to advance humanity into a more just world. We can choose a peaceful cooperation in life and not reserve ourselves to a culture of moral atrophy. We do not have to sit back and let the inertia of hopelessness overwhelm our decision making.

Right now there is energy. Right now it feels like we can change the world.

But what happens a week from now? A month from now? When complacency sets in and we wait for another tragedy to spark us? How do we break that cycle?

The very fact that there’s something sustainable about this movement, makes it feel different.

However, Black people and a smattering of allies cannot keep pushing this boulder of justice alone.

At some point, the news will stop covering the latest murder of a Black person by a police officer. At some point, the protests will stop. At some point, that momentum will come to a rest. And, at that point, we all have to realize it’s not enough to be “not racist” anymore.

We have to be actively anti-racist.

Some people may purposefully misconstrue the entire point.

They are voices shouting into the void of history.

We have to put ourselves in positions where many of us have to look at ourselves and cringe.

Because, the truth is, to make a difference, we must work at it every day.

Doing the work that is invisible. And without thanks.

While protests and massive displays of solidarity have incredible



Photo by Jason Elmquist, Stillwater News Press.

importance, they cannot do it alone.

Progress must also be made in the mundane. In both our micro day-to-day relationships and in our macro systemic institutions.

We have to decide that we will hold a different standard for our friends. Our relatives. Ourselves.

OEA is here – ready to work and ready to listen.

Black lives matter.

**An OEA member-led process has already begun where educators can share their stories and use those experiences to work towards tangible policy goals and training recommendations, so that every student reaches their fullest potential. Not just some people’s children.*

*Stay plugged in for potential opportunities through the OEA, along with the rest of your sphere of influence, to contribute your listening power and voice.**

Bill Guy's career spanned two continents, four states

By Doug Folks

Few education careers cover as many miles and experiences as the 46 years Bill Guy spent teaching, supporting, prodding and uplifting students, teachers,

support professionals, administrators and members of the association.

Bill, organizing specialist for the Oklahoma City Metro region, retired earlier this month after his second stint at the Oklahoma Education Association.

"My career has just been the most rewarding thing," Bill said. "I've just felt so fortunate to have had the experiences I've had and to work in a profession where I've been able to make such a difference in people's lives."

Bill's career started and ended in Oklahoma, with stops in Australia and three other states in between. After starting his journey teaching in Holdenville, he taught four years in Australia. He returned to Oklahoma where he taught and worked at El Reno Junior College (now Redlands Community College) and then taught English at El Reno High School.

Bill joined the OEA Communications staff in 1991. He would later work in communications for the Massachusetts Teachers Association, the Tennessee Education Association and the California Teachers Association before returning to OEA in 2014.

Along the way, he was part of some historic education events. In Massachusetts, he was in a meeting with other MTA colleagues and U.S. Sens. Ted Kennedy and John Kerry when they first began

discussing No Child Left Behind with the association. In California, he assisted local associations with their communications efforts and helped guide three locals during strikes. One was especially ugly when the Capistrano School Board wanted to decrease teacher pay by 13%. The Capistrano Unified Education Association held a successful strike and flipped the school board from a group who were determined to undermine the public school by pushing for vouchers.

As president of the El Reno Education Association, Bill was a big part of the rally for HB 1017 and the famous Four Days In April. Two years ago, he was part of OEA's communications and organizing efforts around the historic teacher walkout for better pay and school funding.

"I really felt like I had come full circle," Bill said, comparing the 1989 and 2018 walkouts.

Retirement looks to be just about as busy as his career. Bill plans to stay involved with education advocacy through the Oklahoma Retired Teachers Association. Soon, he will receive certification as



Bill Guy

a life coach with a specialty in working with families who have someone in recovery or needs to be in recovery from substance abuse. His certification for recovery assistance comes from the BALM Institute, the only such program recognized by the International Coaching Federation.

"Bill's contribution to OEA members over years has been noteworthy," said OEA Executive Director Jim Keith. "Bill has served our educators through organizing, communications, and served as the staff rep on our Human and Civil Rights Committee, helping navigate many hard conversations in a changing Oklahoma. Bill's polite presence will be sorely missed, but we wish him the very best in his next journey."

Retirees: join OREA now, delay dues until 2021

Newly retired education employees have an opportunity to join the Oklahoma Retired Educators Association and not pay dues until next year.

Retirees who sign up for dues deduction on their Teachers Retirement System payment will have their dues delayed until January 2021.

The monthly dues deduction is only \$3.50 for OREA dues. The offer is part of an effort to help retirees during the coronavirus pandemic.

OREA dues are \$42 a year. NEA-Retired dues are only \$35 a year but cannot be deducted from the TRS payment. New retirees who have insurance policies through NEA Member Benefits must join NEA-Retired and OREA to keep those policies.

To join using the promotion, call the OREA at 405.525.2230 or 800.310.2230. Explain you are new retiree and want to sign up for the COVID-19 dues deduct.

The Education Focus

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OEA Oklahoma Education Association
putting education first.

Pastor Frailey leads active support of public education

The state of Oklahoma public education in 2017 was, perhaps, at its lowest point ever. Funding cuts over the previous decade were nearing \$1 billion and teachers were being blamed for all of society's ills.

At that same time, Clark Frailey was among a small group of pastors who were becoming increasingly troubled with how public education and teachers were being treated. The group decided to step up and Frailey helped cofound Pastors for Oklahoma Kids. Today, the group continues to advocate, educate, and network

a grassroots response across Oklahoma's clergy in support of public education.

In honor of his advocacy and leadership to improve Oklahoma public education, the OEA Board of Directors has named Frailey the association's 2020 Friend of Education, OEA's highest honor.

Frailey is the lead pastor at Coffee Creek Church, a nondenominational church in Edmond. He holds a bachelor's in religion/philosophy from Oklahoma Baptist University and a master's of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Under his leadership, Pastors for Oklahoma Kids has been a very vocal and active participant in the state's conversation on public education. Specifi-

cally, the group has been a very loud critic of voucher programs in whatever form they take.

Frailey joined the OEA in calling for a statewide school closure that resulted in the historic 2018 teacher walkout. During the walkout, he organized and led a prayer rally at the Capitol. The event included speakers, music and prayer in support of teachers.

"Since the prayer vigil during the walkout, I have been inspired by the activism that Pastor Frailey has shown in the fight for public education," said OEA President Alicia Priest. "His video trying to track down who is behind the push for voucher schemes in Oklahoma, his messages to get out and vote public education, his push to increase funding for public education, and his inherent want to make things better for kids are a few of the reasons Pastor Frailey is the perfect choice for OEA's Friend of Education Award."

Pastors for Oklahoma Kids has published its "Roadmap to Become A Top Ten State in Education." The document that outlines how Oklahoma can lead the nation by following these four tenets:

- Stop the movement to privatize public education (no state-funded vouchers)
- Begin to fully invest in our public schools
- Drop unnecessary mandates (e.g. high stakes testing and unfunded mandates)
- Elevate the teaching profession in Oklahoma with competitive pay, educational opportunities, respect and resources.

A Declaration on Public Education on its website has been signed by 124 pastors/clergy and 126 Friends of Oklahoma Pastors.



Pastor Clark Frailey speaks during an OEA press conference prior to the 2018 teacher walkout. (Photo by Doug Folks.)

The oddest of sessions

COLA highlights pandemic-shortened legislature

A cost-of-living adjustment for state retirees – the first in a dozen years – highlighted a session shortened by the coronavirus pandemic. The session also produced bills that improved the transparency and accountability of virtual and charter schools.

It was perhaps the oddest of years at the Capitol because of the shutdown forced by COVID-19. Legislators met only 36 days and several votes in the House were cast via proxy, with Minority Floor Leader Emily Virgin (D-Norman) casting votes for Democrats and Majority Whip Terry O'Donnell (R-Catoosa) voting for Republicans. Some senators voted during Zoom meetings.

Because of the compressed time to meet and the budget shortfall, legislators did not have the time or luxury to consider most of the 3,006 bills filed in January. Instead, they dealt with the most important bills, leaving many measures to fade into oblivion (for now).

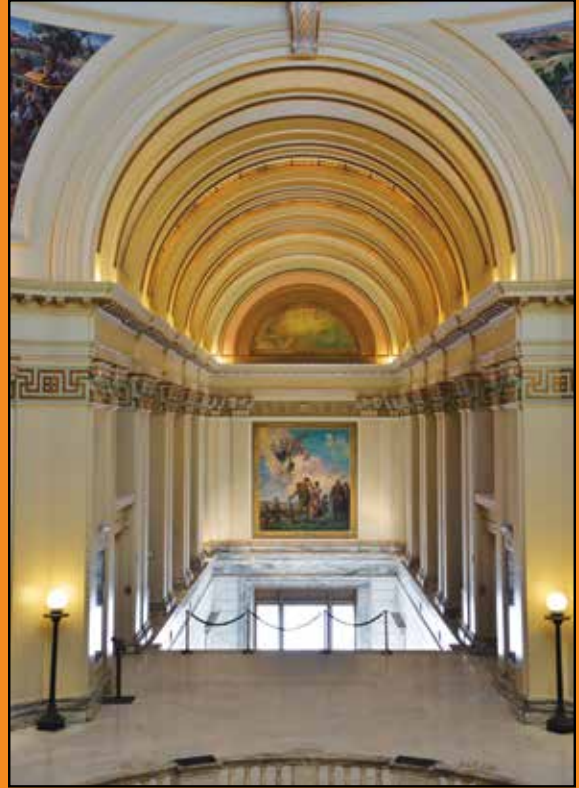
Following are education bills that became law. (*House bill numbers are followed by the House and Senate authors in parentheses, while the Senate bills are followed by the Senate author first.*)

HB 2804 (Sanders/Bice) – Dyslexia. Beginning with the 2022-23 school year, any K-3 student found to not be meeting target reading levels shall be screened for dyslexia. Beginning June 30, 2023, districts will submit data related to screening and interventions to the State Department of Education (SDE).

HB 2905 (Dills/Pemberton) – Virtual schools. Students will be allowed to apply for an open transfer from their resident district to a virtual school only once per year. Increases the number of instructional activities required per quarter to be considered in attendance from 40 to 72. Redefines instructional activities to exclude non-instructional meetings with school staff or simply logging in to a curriculum or program. Defines truancy as 15 school days with no assignment completions. Students who are truant twice are permanently dropped for the year, and the resident district must be notified.

HB 3142 (Provenzano/Pemberton) – Certification. Waives the school principal certification requirement of completing an education administration program approved by the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation if the candidate completed a master's degree program in education before July 1, 2005, that included competencies substantially equal to those in the approved programs.

HB 3350 (Frix/Thompson) – Retirement. Provides a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to state pension recipients who have been



retired at least two years as of July 1, 2020. The COLA is 4% if the recipient has been retired for five or more years as of July 1, 2020, and 2% if retired two to five years as of July 1, 2020.

HB 3369 (Echols/David) – Charters. Reduces the amount of state aid a charter sponsor can retain from the charter school for administrative services from 5% to 3%. Requires the charter sponsor to provide the SDE financial records documenting retained funds for the previous year. Also creates a fund that may be used by the SDE for the purpose of reimbursing charter school sponsors for costs incurred due to the closure of a charter school. Requires each charter to pay a \$5-per-student fee into the fund each school year unless the fund balance exceeds \$1 million.

HB 3398 (Nolan/Pemberton) – Background checks. A district employee without a background check on file has until July 1, 2022, or the next renewal of his or her teaching certificate to get one. There is an exception for those eligible to retire.

HB 3400 (Baker/Stanišlawski) – Curriculum. Requires all public high schools in the state to offer a minimum of four advanced placement courses beginning with the 2024-25 school year.

HB 3466 (T. West/Stanišlawski) – Textbooks. Makes provisions for membership, duties and processes for the State Textbook Committee beginning in 2021. The majority of members on the State Textbook Committee will be classroom teachers.

HB 3964 (Caldwell/Stanišlawski) – Carryover mandate. Waives the penalty for Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020) for school districts that exceed their statutorily allowed general fund carryover balances.

HB 4153 (Wallace/Thompson) – Budget limits. Specifies how the SDE can spend part of the education budget. Highlights include: Reading Sufficiency Act is reduced \$1 million, alternative education

funding is reduced \$1 million, and Imagine Math is added as a new \$1 million line item.

SB 212 (Stanislawski/Baker) – Funding. The intent of this bill is to make mid-term funding adjustments less extreme. The 1.333 funding weight for virtual schools will now only occur in the school's first year of operation. Removes the language directing the weighted membership of nonresident, transferred students enrolled in online courses to be based on the weighted average daily membership of the preceding school year. The bill also states that the weighted calculation for a statewide virtual charter school that experiences a significant decline in membership (15% or more) is to be based on the first nine weeks of the current school year rather than the preceding school year or the second preceding school year.

SB 661 (Howard/McCall) – Open meetings. Allowed meetings of public bodies to take place via teleconference or video conference until the governor terminated the state of emergency.

SB 1115 (Sharp/Sterling) – Certification. Allows the State Board of Education (SBE) to renew the emergency or provisional certificate of a person who has been employed by a school district for at least two years, has not passed competency exams and submits a portfolio of work including evidence of progress toward standard certification. The bill specifies that holders of emergency/provisional certifications are not career teachers and therefore are not entitled to due process protections. The bill also allows the SBE, in consultation with the Commission for Educational Quality and Accountability (OEQA), to grant an exception to the subject area examination requirement in a field

that does not require an advanced degree if the candidate has an advanced degree from an accredited institution that is relevant to the subject area assessed.

SB 1125 (Pugh/McCall) – Certification. Removes most barriers to teachers certified to teach out of state or out of country. It directs the SBE to issue a certificate in the grade level and subject area most closely aligned with their certificate and prohibits the individual from being required to take any competency exams.

SB 1198 (Standridge/Conley) – Student athlete safety. Requires school districts to coordinate with local emergency services to develop a plan for emergency medical services at school athletic events. The plan must be updated annually and placed on file with the emergency service provider and the district.

SB 1436 (Stanislawski/Miller) – Certification. Creates a new certificate for special education called comprehensive, which includes certification for both mild-moderate disabilities and severe-profound disabilities. Creates a pathway to move from mild-moderate disability certification to severe-profound disability certification for those who complete an SBE-approved micro-credentialing program.

SB 1921 (Thompson/Wallace) – Funding. Appropriated \$243,668,709 to the SDE from the Constitutional Reserve Fund (Rainy Day Fund).

SB 1922 (Thompson/Wallace) – Funding. This is the general appropriations bill, which appropriates money to all state agencies. The legislature appropriated the SDE funds equating to a 4.58% (\$110.8 million) decrease from the previous year, with an increase in Flexible Benefit Allowance of 6.5% (\$32.8 million).

TOGETHER WE'RE STRONGER

Together We're Stronger, OEA's three-year legislative organizing plan, concluded with the end of this legislative session. Here's a look at the results of your hard work since 2017.



Classroom
Funding

**\$125
million**



Teacher Pay
Increase

\$7,320



Support Pay
Increase

\$1,250



Retiree COLA

2% - 4%

Mustang ESP's Jennifer Thomas serves on all levels

A quick glance at Jennifer Thomas's daily schedule and one might think she never leaves school. Whether she's performing her job, working for her local association or volunteering as a parent, Mustang Public Schools is benefitting from her service.

Jennifer recently received the OEA's 2020 Education Support Professional Award for her many contributions to education in Mustang.

By day, she serves as secretary of Riverwood Elementary. As a parent, she's active in her sons' education and activities in the district. And in her spare time, Jennifer is treasurer for the Mustang Education Support Professionals (MESP), a local affiliate of the OEA.

Winners of the OEA ESP Award are automatically nominated for the Oklahoma ESP of the Year and the National Education Association ESP of the Year awards.

In her letter recommending Jennifer for the award, Riverwood Principal Alisha Suffield wrote, "She is welcoming, encouraging and builds relationships with kids that extend beyond classroom walls. She is a professional (who) is committed to excellence and has the heart of a servant as she strives to meet the needs of students and patrons alike."

In addition to her duties as school secretary, Jennifer has served on the district's handbook committee for two years.



Jennifer Thomas

MESP recently won bargaining rights with the district and Jennifer played an important part in the process.

Winning the bargaining election, "would not have been possible without Jennifer's resourcefulness, dedication, perseverance and exemplary attitude," said Margaret Brown, MESP vice president. "She has worked tirelessly along with other members of our executive committee to bring MESP to where we are today."

VOICE is dedicated to alleviating injustices

From facilitating candidate forums to fighting for common sense education reforms, Voices Organized in Civic Engagement (VOICE) is a nonprofit dedicated to the betterment of the community as a whole.

In honor for its continuing work to improve the lives of all citizens, VOICE has been chosen the winner of OEA's 2020 Tuskahoma Brown Miller Award. The award is presented to a business or group that has contributed significantly to the improvement of education. VOICE has made a "... significant contribution of time, money, or material for the advancement of education" and "demonstrates a commitment to equal educational opportunity," as outlined by the award's criteria.

OEA has worked frequently with VOICE over the last few years, including unique "accountability sessions" for candidates for public office and the association's A Child Is More than a Test Score Campaign.

In addition, VOICE has pushed for an alternative school report card that reflects real issues and concerns parents have about schools, elimination of unnecessary utility fee rate increases, and



Lead organizer Kris King and friends at a VOICE event. (Photo provided.)

reforms for criminal justice and payday lending practices.

"As an educator ... I witness the effects of economic, legal and discriminatory injustices on students, the families, as well as my educator colleagues and their families, on a daily basis," said Heather Sparks, an assistant principal in Mid-Del, in her nomination letter of VOICE. "I have firsthand knowledge of VOICE's dedication and effort to alleviate (those injustices).

Heather Boyle leads with passion



Heather Boyle talks with her Bartlesville colleagues during the 2018 teacher walkout at the state Capitol. (Photo provided.)

H

heather Boyle is a passionate teacher. She does not hesitate to fight for her profession or her students.

Under her leadership, Bartlesville Public Schools were at the forefront of 2018's teacher walkout. Not only did Heather rally her colleagues to the cause, but she worked with the community, school administrators, legislators and others to ensure the walkout was a success at the capitol and back home.

Heather has been named winner of the OEA's 2020 Kate Frank Award in honor of her passionate leadership. One of the association's four Human and Civil Rights awards, the Kate Frank Award is presented to an OEA member and/or local association rendering outstanding and significant service to advancing the cause of member welfare, rights and professionalism.

While securing competitive pay for teachers was important to Heather, she knew that closing school for an indefinite time could be more than just difficult for some of her students. So, she worked to see that children were fed and supervised during the walkout, easing the burden on parents. Heather secured donations to feed her Bartlesville colleagues as they marched around the Capitol and secured transportation to and from Oklahoma City.

Heather also worked with her church to open its doors to teachers who could not be in Oklahoma City. They used the church as a base where they made phone calls to legislators and rallied before holding signs on street corners around town in support of the walkout.

Today, Heather provides her passionate leadership to BPS's Academic Therapeutic Learning Alternative Setting (ATLAS) program. ATLAS pulls students from the district's six elementary schools who are not academically successful because trauma has impacted their lives.

Joe Williams, a management consultant and member of the Arvest Bank board, perfectly sums up Heather's abilities.

"In my career, I've learned that remarkable things are done by remarkable people. Heather is one of the most remarkable people I have ever been associated with," Williams said in his letter of recommendation.

"She is a fearless leader ... Because of her voice, she has given teachers throughout the state a collective voice, a confidence that their voice means something, that their profession means something. What makes her remarkable? Her love for children, and specifically her love for children who march to a different drummer."

OEA nominates Boyle for NEA Foundation's prestigious ATE

Heather Boyle is known as a strong advocate for her students, especially children at risk, as well as for her profession. That passion and leadership are why she is OEA's nominee for the 2021 NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence, the highest award presented by the NEA Foundation.

"Heather believes in the power a teacher possesses to touch and impact the future, and she drives herself to better the profession on every front," said Gail Stone, a colleague of Heather's, in her nomination letter.

Heather was a driving force leading up to and during the teacher walkout in 2018. She rallied her colleagues, her administration and the Bartlesville community to embrace the need for drastic, collective action.

Academically, Heather is setting a new standard for children who have experienced trauma. She was instrumental in making the Academic Therapeutic Learning Alternative Setting (ATLAS) program a reality.

ATLAS brings together 24 elementary students from around the district for special pullout services for half of every school day (12 in the morning, 12 in the afternoon). Heather, the lead teacher, is joined by a paraprofessional, a therapist and a counselor.

Every day starts and ends with a community circle because, she says, "the single most important objective each day is that every student feels accepted, valued and loved."

Heather communicates with parents everyday with a positive email, a text, a phone call or a note.

The mother of one fifth grader told her recently that it was the first time she had heard something nice since the child was in kindergarten. Another parent said that she had never seen her second grader smile at school until she had spent time in the ATLAS program.

Food pantry fills a need

A

fter a series of unfortunate events, including the death of her husband and the loss of her job, a Tulsa teacher found herself in a difficult financial situation.

With three college degrees, she obtained an emergency certification and began teaching sixth grade.

But, medical bills, unexpected expenses and a significant drop in income put the teacher and her daughter in a crisis. With no food in the house, she turned to her professional association, the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association.

When teachers are only paid once a month, some of them are bound to run into hard times before the next paycheck arrives. The Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association recognized that need and established Mama J's Pantry, a food pantry for TCTA members and support employees of Tulsa Public Schools.

In recognition of this heart-felt action, TCTA has been named the winner of OEA's 2020 Glenn Snider Human Relations Award. It is one of the association's four Human and Civil Rights Awards. The Glenn Snider award is presented to a school district, individual or organization best exemplifying the practice of effective human relations and concerns for human rights.

The award includes a cash donation of \$250, paid for from interest of the Glenn Snider Fund.

"I thank God for TCTA!," said the teacher in her letter of recommendation for this award. "Through their generosity I was fortunate to obtain groceries from their pantry, which sustained my daughter and me through an incredibly rough period. I honestly don't know what I would have done without TCTA."



Mama J's Pantry offers TCTA members a helping hand when it's needed most. (Photo provided.)

Mama J's Pantry is named after the TCTA member who developed the idea and put the plan in action - Julie Reagle. The pantry is stocked almost entirely by donations from TCTA members.

"(TCTA is) focused on one thing - supporting teachers, whatever it takes," said State Rep. Melissa Provenzano, a former teacher and administrator with TPS, in her nomination letter. "They have never failed to advocate for the highest quality employee workplace conditions that they can obtain, often doing the legwork themselves to make sure teachers have what they need to do their job successfully."

OKC Metro Zone B repeats as Stan Bryant Award winner

The Stan R. Bryant Political Action Award is presented annually to the OEA Zone with the largest per member contribution level to the OEA Fund for Children and Public Education.

Oklahoma City Metro Zone B won the award for 2020 with an average donation to FCPE of \$5.55 per member. OKC-B has won the award six consecutive years, and 11 of the last 12 years.

In the photo to the right, OEA President Alicia Priest presents the 2019 version of the award to OKC-B Zone Director Vicki Vaughan (left) and Dawn Dille, OKC-B Zone Fund Representative.



Maternity leave, dental insurance highlight Vinita bargaining success

Maternity leave, dental insurance and a \$1,220 raise for all teachers were three items in a successful bargaining season

for the Vinita Classroom Teachers Association in 2019-20.

In honor of the team's hard work leading up to and the success of negotiations, VCTA has been named winner of the OEA's 2020 Collective Bargaining Award. The VCTA negotiations team takes a big-picture approach to bargaining, prioritizing language that is beneficial not only for teachers but for the district as a whole. They even try to negotiate items that will benefit the support staff, which does not bargain with the district.

Last year, VCTA negotiated that the district pay for the first five days of maternity or adoption leave for any teacher who has been with the district for at least two years. Sick leave may be used after the first five days. District-paid maternity leave is a rare item in local contracts and

VCTA believes its language is unique to northeastern Oklahoma.

In addition, VCTA

- secured 100% district-paid dental insurance,
- added \$1,220 to each column of the salary schedule,
- added a Step 34 to the salary schedule, and
- procured a \$150 bonus for all district employees.

The team also clarified personal business leave language and updated the school employee dress code.

Joy Doggett, VCTA vice president, said the negotiations team works to protect the rights of employees and to ensure that students receive a quality education.

"In an era of teacher shortages and budget cuts, VCTA maintains a strong and open relationship with the district's administration," Doggett said. "As such, VCTA's negotiations team has sought to negotiate items that

make Vinita Public Schools an attractive workplace for new employees as well as assist in retaining current employees."

Vinita teachers also are aware of just how effective VCTA is at the bargaining table. Jennifer Zagar, a Pre-K teacher in the district, was a POE member but left that organization and joined VCTA/OEA.

"We now have better benefits that we do not have to pay for, we have more time to spend if someone dear to us passes away, we've (received) pay raises and bonuses due to (VCTA) spending time bargaining for all of these things and a whole lot more," Jennifer said.

"If it wouldn't have been for all of the hard work that I have seen our VCTA doing for us, I would never have changed (organizations.)"



Vinita bargaining team (from left) Barbara Stecklien, Sherri Callahan and Beckie Bandy (Photo provided.)

Dunnington in unique position to fight for civil rights

While many people – both well-known and anonymous – actively work for equal treatment and justice, Rep. Jason Dunnington is in a somewhat unique position to take decisive action.

As a legislator, Dunnington has the ability to write and push legislation that improves human and civil rights. He has done so throughout his legislative career, which has earned him OEA's 2020 F.D. Moon Educational Award. It is one of OEA's four Human and Civil Rights Awards.

The award was established in 1972 in honor of F.D. Moon, principal at Oklahoma City's Douglass High School



Rep. Jason Dunnington

for 21 years. Moon was elected to the Oklahoma City Board of Education and wrote several human relation studies on teacher integration. OEA presents the award to an individual who has contributed significantly to the advancement of education for students.

Dunnington has written legislation to ban the death penalty, increase the minimum wage, ban LGBTQ conversion therapy practices, prohibit wage discrimination based on gender, paid sick leave, criminal justice reform and more.

"Rep. Dunnington's passion for helping make things better for his constituents is demonstrable when you see the issues emphasized in both the legislation he authors and that (which) he supports," said Melissa Pelletier, OEA-OKC president, in her letter recommending the Oklahoma City legislator for the award.

"He is also a strong supporter of public education. He is active in getting out in the community and school district, attending events, working with coalitions and meeting with his constituents to gain personal knowledge of their lives and families to better inform his work on their behalf."

Heather Davis inspires students with a U.S. civil rights movement unit

Bartlesville's Heather Davis hopes her six-week unit on the civil rights movement gives her seventh graders a desire to learn more and make the world a better place.

"Overcoming – the Civil Rights Movement in America" teaches her students about this important time in our country through history, literature and research. The unit has earned Heather the OEA's 2020 Excellence in the Classroom – Teachers Teaching Students Award.

Heather is a seventh grade English teacher at Bartlesville's Central Middle School. A National Board Certified teacher, she holds a bachelor's of English, a master's of education in teaching and a library media specialist degree all from Northeastern State University. Heather's teaching philosophy is to ensure the time spent with her students is as meaningful and productive as possible.

"I must figure out the best way for each student's whole being to not only be engaged but impassioned so that they are filled to capacity in my classroom," she says, "and leave with an insatiable desire to learn more and more for the rest of their lives, making the world a better place."

With the Overcoming unit, Heather wants her students to become critical thinkers in terms of civil issues. Activities include watching a video of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, reading the book "White Socks Only" and listening to Heather read aloud the young adult novel "One Crazy Summer."

The culminating project for the unit is community members who have read the same book as the students join the class for discussions on the content of the books.

"Many of the adults who come in bring with them life experiences and say things like, 'I remember when Dr. King was assassinated...' and 'The Black Panthers have gotten a bad rap. Let me tell you

about what they did in my community ...' and 'I got to go to a rally in California once ...' Heather said. "These are primary sources that the kids get to sit with at a table and have conversations. They also demonstrate that adults read for pleasure and that learning never stops."

Heather, who is president of the Bartlesville Education Association and a member of the negotiations team, said this unit is her favorite to teach every year.

"For me, it's about kids learning that this battle to end racism and bring about equality is ongoing and has been around for as long as we've been a country. It's



Heather Davis

also about them seeing that the activists we study and read about are regular people who saw the need for change and acted toward that end."

Rep. McBride stands up for public education legislation

After 10 years of neglecting education funding, the Oklahoma Legislature has taken big steps to correct the problem over the last three sessions. From historic teacher raises and better funding for the classroom, to support professional raises and a cost-of-living adjustment for retirees, funding and overall legislative support for public education is much improved.

Rep. Mark McBride (R-Moore) has played an important role in making that improvement happen. As chairman of the House Appropriations and Budget Education Subcommittee and the Assistant Floor Leader, he brings a great deal of influence through his leadership positions.

In honor of his continual support for public education, McBride has been named winner of the OEA's 2020 Outstanding Legislator Award.

McBride was instrumental during the 2018 walkout in bringing Democrats back to the table for budget negotiations. He also helped craft legislation that garnered three-fourths of the House necessary to pass a funding package for historic education funding.

Since then, McBride has continued to fight for education funding, and for better education policy. He introduced bills that improved accountability and transparency for virtual schools and the Lindsay Nicole Henry Scholarship voucher program. He also sponsored legislation that increased National Board Certification stipends.

"Rep. McBride maintains regular contact with the leadership of The Education Association of Moore and reaches out for our input on specific legislation throughout the session," said Zach Grimm, TEAM president and OEA Zone Director for Oklahoma City Metro A.



Rep. Mark McBride

Supporting students' mental health

By Linda Mayberry, M.Ed.

Students will need additional support for re-entry into school in August. In a normal school year, feeling connected and welcome is essential to developing a positive, strong sense

of trust in others and in themselves.

COVID-19 has made making these connections at school more difficult.

Wearing a mask puts up a barrier. Students cannot read facial expressions or see smiles. Young students in particular gain support from hugs and physical touch. COVID-19 has made that a thing of the past without a vaccine. Consider utilizing clear masks – masks that do not obstruct facial features yet still provide protection following CDC guidelines.

Instead of hugs, use elbow bumps or air handshakes and waves. Make it fun and engaging for you and your students. These personal connections are important to enhance and create a strong sense of belonging.

Teachers should help monitor social/emotional functioning of students by

recognizing behaviors that may need further support and follow up by school counselors. We are just getting to know our students and may not know if certain behaviors are typical for that student or if there is a need for further support. This is where a referral system in place is necessary for targeted support by school counselors and mental health professionals within the community.

We need to understand that a student's home may not be a safe place for them and have a plan in place for identifying and supporting those students.

We should have in place a plan to identify and support students that have been impacted by COVID-19 and experienced trauma or stress from it. We should gather data from students including the loss of someone close to them, experienced financial difficulties due to the virus by a lost job or income within the family, food insecurities, students with a history of trauma or chronic stress or pre-existing mental health insecurities, known exposure to abuse or neglect, additional impacts our students already face such as disabilities, English language learners, low socioeconomic status or homelessness. This data will help for intervention purposes.



Linda Mayberry

Teachers should understand that students may not want to discuss their individual situation forthright and implement strategies to allow them to safely open up such as restorative circles, advisory groups and journaling.

Schools should facilitate classroom meetings with counselors to allow students to process their experiences upon return to school. These may need to occur more often and repeated if additional school closures occur. Added social/emotional learning lessons should occur to help identify students that may need targeted support and further interventions.

We should all understand that COVID-19 has changed everything for our schools and communities. We don't know what our school year will look like. Until there is a vaccine, school will be different. The way we interact with our students will need to change as well. We should anticipate significant academic and social/emotional regressions but try to build on what we do know and any positive and unique learning experiences the students had at home.

We are going to get through this. If you are feeling distress from COVID-19, understand and know that you are not alone. Reach out and tell someone. We care about you and want to help in any way we can. Call the Disaster Distress Helpline at 800.985.5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.

Linda is an OEA member and a counselor at Elk City Intermediate School in western Oklahoma.

2020 OEA Election Results

OEA Zone Directors

(3-year terms, expires 2023)

Zone OKC-B – Amber Ball, Putnam City ACT

Zone OKC-D – Kelly Craig, Mid-Del ACT

Zone SE-B – Lawrence E. Train Lane, Checotah CTA (unopposed)

Zone SE-C – Sharon Hill-Wooten, Idabel City EA (unopposed)

Zone SW-B – Brittany Arnold, Professional Educators of Norman

Zone TM-B – LeeAnne Jimenez, Tulsa CTA (unopposed)

Zone TM-D – Brendan Jarvis, Union CTA

(2-year unexpired term, expires 2022)

Zone SW-A – Laura Nicholas,

Professional Educators' Association of Lawton (unopposed)

(1-year, unexpired term, expires 2021)

Zone TM-E – Michael Horn, Jenks CTA (unopposed)

2020 NEA Representative Assembly Delegates-at-Large

NEA Retired (successor only)

Stephen Smallwood, Rattan ACT, SE-C

Category 1 Delegates-At-Large Southeast Region

Krista Farris, Shawnee ACT, SE-A
Lawrence E. Train Lane, Checotah CTA

Southwest Region

Megan Smith, Professional Educators of Norman, SW-B

Congratulations to the 2020-21 OAEA officers



President
Elizabeth Conner
University of Central
Oklahoma, Junior,
Elementary Education



Vice President
Kylie Irvin
Northeastern State
University, Senior, Early
Childhood Education



Secretary
Torrie Johnson
Cameron University,
Sophomore, Early
Childhood Education, with
a concentration in Special
Education



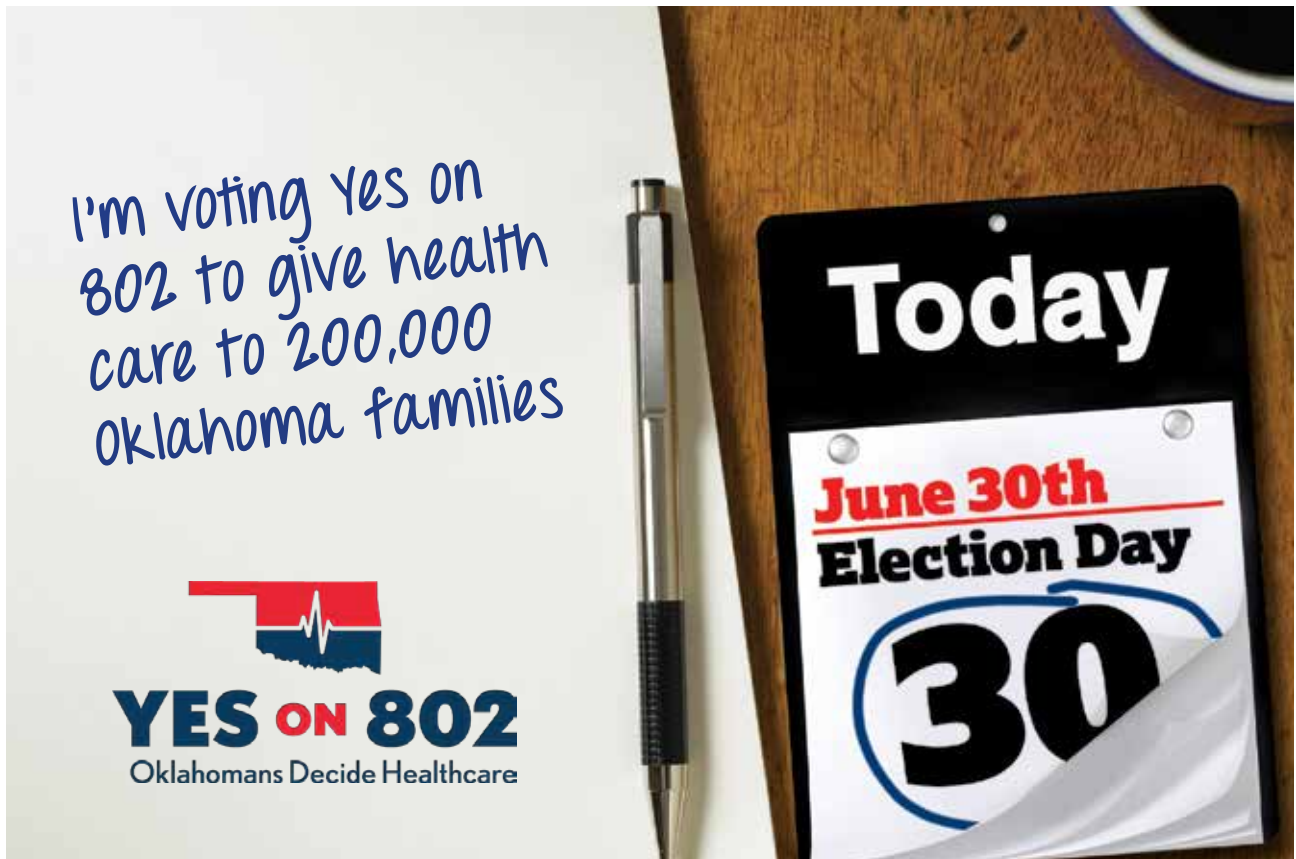
**Legislative
Representative**
Yesenie Cano
Oklahoma Panhandle
State University, Junior,
Mathematics, with a minor
in Education

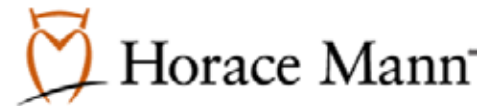


**International/Cultural
Ambassador**
Ciria Avalos
University of Central
Oklahoma, Senior,
Elementary Education



**OEA DA/NEA RA
Delegate Representative**
Breanna Baker
East Central University
Senior, Elementary Education





Teachers consistently say that they pay for needed classroom supplies out of their own pockets, because they want to make sure their students have the resources they need to excel. Horace Mann, an approved OEA vendor, is a longstanding national sponsor of DonorsChoose, a non-profit organization that connects teachers in need of classroom resources with donors who want to help. Horace Mann representatives can help bring you a four-step solution, and it starts with registering with DonorsChoose.

1. Start a DonorsChoose account.
2. List a fundraising project with a reasonable goal. (DonorsChoose says projects costing \$400 or less are more likely to be completely funded.)
3. Use Facebook and Twitter to promote your project.
4. Email your students' parents. They can donate as little as \$1 toward your project, and whatever they give will help them feel that much more invested in their children's success.

Would you like to learn more?

Contact your local Horace Mann representative to help you learn more about DonorsChoose. They can walk you through the process of creating a project and help you get donors across the country and our local community involved in funding your projects.



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Moore
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Tim Cook Ins.
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Paul Copeland
Paul Copeland Agcy
Oklahoma City
405-200-1661



Nickey Lee
Lee Ins. & Fin. Svs.
Tulsa
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Andrew McGowen
Andrew McGowen Agcy
Tulsa
918-574-5616

The Last Word

with Pres. Alicia Priest

***“Do all the good you can,
by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can, in
all the places you can, at all
the times you can, to all the
people you can, as long as
ever you can.”***

– John Wesley

As I reflect on the time since Spring Break, I am amazed and filled with pride in what actions the OEA and our members have taken, have participated in, and have accepted the leadership of!

In the words of John Wesley, OEA, you are doing the good!

When we found out that schools were switching to distance learning, we maneuvered to help our members. Hundreds of OEA members dialed in to digital check-in meetings to let us know how they were and what supports they needed. As a result, our advocates went to work on helping develop negotiable items that were requested.

Our teaching and learning staff went to work creating and organizing online professional development to best meet those needs that were voiced. Professional development was provided by both staff and members who had expertise in the needed areas – everything from digital platforms like Google Classroom and Canvas to issues like Social Emotional Learning.

OEA also pulled together a cadre of amazing educators who created and filled content into six newly developed Facebook pages called The Bridge. Each page was designed specifically to help educators and parents with distance learning. We have pages for PreK-2, 3-5, Middle School, High School, English Language Learning and Special Education.

Within each of those pages we have posts for core subjects and electives like

art, music, physical education and world languages. Those who have used the pages have commented on how helpful they have been. And, even though we have transitioned into summer, cadre members have continued to add content to those pages. If you haven't joined those pages, you really should!

Our members are also meeting to discuss how education and the OEA should address the ideology of systemic racism that has been perpetuated on our people of color. Elie Wiesel said, “We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”

The OEA Human and Civil Rights Committee and the leaders of the OEA Black Caucus have been meeting to develop an action plan to help members talk about racism in education and in our communities. We are looking both internally and externally to choose lessons and actions to help make a difference for our members, our students, and our schools. Our students need to know that school is a safe place for ALL.

Additionally, our students need to be able to look to their teachers and support staff and see themselves and the possibilities of their futures. OEA Resolutions, our belief statements, speak of our belief that improved human relations are essential to the school and community environment. We urge the elimination of discriminatory statutes and practices that limit the rights



Alicia (right) recently joined Princes 'Sai Johns (left), OEA members and others in Idabel for a march in support of Black Lives Matter. (Photo provided.)

of the individual. Policies that exploit and oppress people of color and serve as detriments to racial justice cannot be tolerated.

We have a duty to not be silent – but to speak out. Our students lives and futures are depending on us to know better and do better. They our counting on us.

As you can see, we have accomplished much; and, we have much more work to do. I hope you all take time for self-care this summer. Our students need us more now than ever. Keep fighting the good fight for public education.

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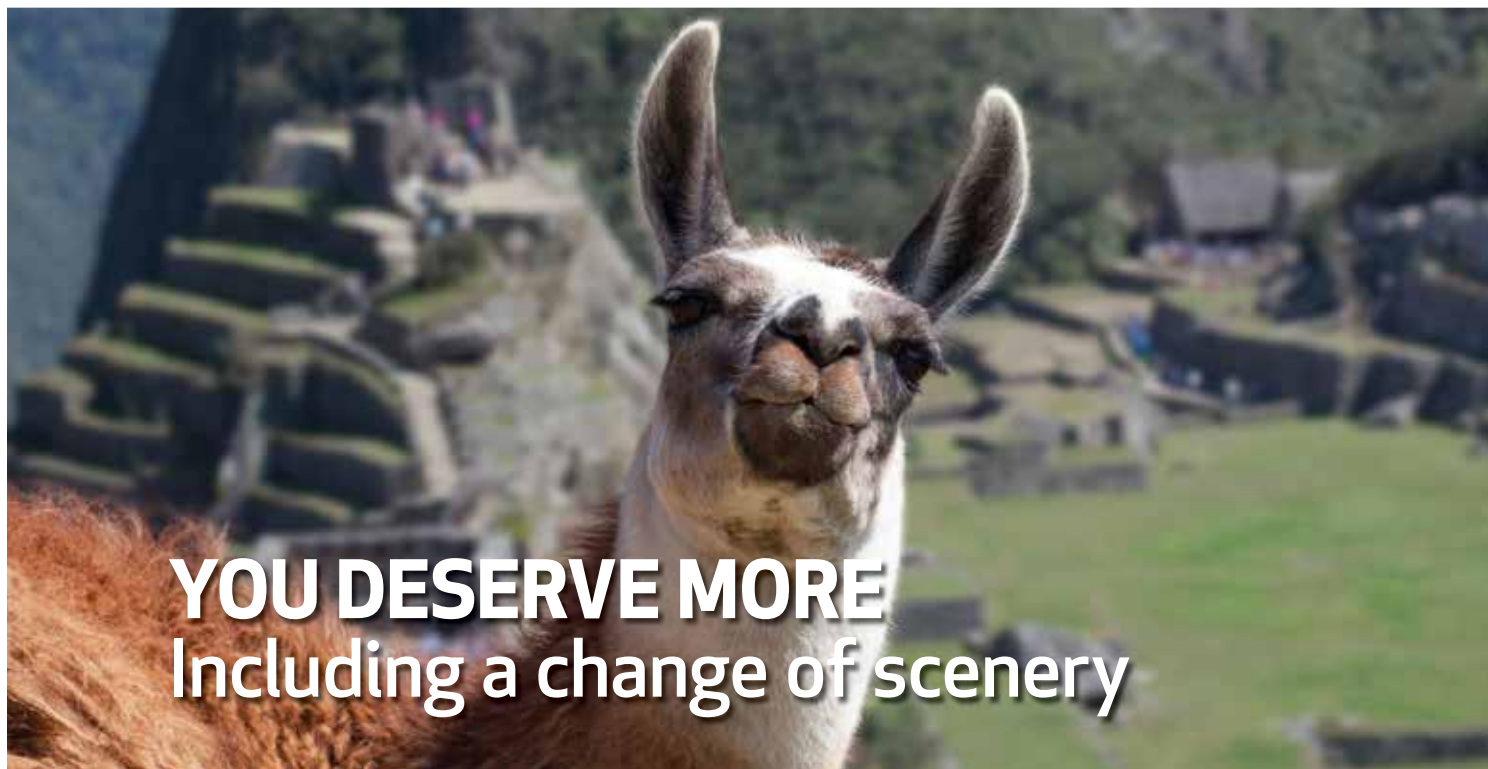
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