

Education Focus

Carolyn Crowder returns as interim executive director

By Doug Folks

A familiar face has returned to the state, bringing with her a wealth of knowledge to help the Oklahoma Education

Association transition into new leadership.

Former OEA president Carolyn Crowder has been named interim executive director by the Board of Directors. She replaces Jim Keith, who resigned in mid-November.

“I am thrilled to get to work with Carolyn in this interim capacity,” said

OEA President Alicia Priest. “She was OEA president when I was a new leader in Yukon. She was and continues to be an inspiration and a mentor. I have been lucky to get to keep in touch and watch her career through the years. She is well respected across the country and brings a wealth of knowledge that will keep us moving forward.”

Crowder will serve as OEA’s interim executive director for the next few months as the association holds elections that will choose new statewide officers and conducts a national search for the next executive director.

Many OEA members will remember Crowder as president from 1997-2003.



*Interim Executive Director
Carolyn Crowder*

Prior to being elected to the association’s highest office, she taught for 20 years. After a year as artist-in-residence for Oklahoma City Public Schools, she spent 19 years in Mustang – nine as a music teacher and 10 as a fifth grade teacher.

As OEA president, Crowder helped form the Oklahoma Education Coalition, bringing together the state’s largest, most influential education organizations. Among the early successes of the OEC were increased salaries for educators, including the largest pay raise in history to that point. The coalition was also successful in lobbying for state-paid health care premiums for education support professionals and certified employees.

Crowder was elected to the NEA Executive Committee following her tenure at OEA president. As a full-time release officer from 2003-09, she worked with other NEA elected officials on national education issues and represented American teachers at education events around the world.

Please see “Coming Home” on Page 8



Carolyn Crowder charges up the crowd during the 2003 Save Our Schools Rally at the State Capitol. As OEA president from 1997-2003, she helped form the Oklahoma Education Coalition. (Photo by Doug Folks.)

Make a purchase. Get cash back.

By David Glenn
NEA Member Benefits

Hello everyone, I think that this has been one of the most interesting years that I can remember and it has been full of so many different first-time experiences. I would like to thank each of you for all that you do every day. I also would like to truly thank you for being members.

As we are approaching the upcoming holidays, I wanted to take a moment to make sure that you are aware of some new things that have occurred with your access to benefits.

On October 19, NEA Member Benefits established the NEA Discount Market Place featuring Rakuten. This benefit offers enhanced value for each of you.

Instead of just earning points, you will earn cash back when you shop and save on brand-name merchandise from over 2,500 top retailers, online stores and local restaurants and shops. (Discount Market replaces Click 'n Save, which members have used for years.)

Your cash back can arrive in a check or through your PayPal account. In addition, the program features exclusive deals for OEA/NEA members on a rotating, monthly basis. Please take a look at this brand-new benefit. It provides additional value for you as you continue to explore and utilize the many benefits that are available to you as OEA members.

To get started saving money, visit www.neamb.com/start to register and utilize your NEA benefits, or simply to stay informed of all the things that are available to you and your family. I hope that you have a wonderful Holiday break and find the time to relax and enjoy yourself.



David Glenn

Save These Dates – NEAMB Zoom Meetings for Members Only

4:30 p.m., Jan. 18 – Are You Tired of Student Debt Weighing You Down?

How to get help paying off your student loans, including how you can get a year of free membership in the SAVI student loan forgiveness program.

4:30 p.m., Jan. 19 – NEA Member Benefits Overview

An overview of the many benefits that come with OEA/NEA membership – from complimentary life insurance to discounts on entertainment, shopping and dining.

Get help buying your first home

Teachers who are first-time homebuyers could be eligible for 3.5% down payment assistance at closing with a reduced mortgage rate from the Oklahoma Housing Finance Authority.

To qualify for the program, the homebuyer must hold a current Oklahoma teacher's certificate and be under contract with an accredited Oklahoma school.

Other eligibility requirements include:

- First-time homebuyer with no homeownership interest in the past three years. (This requirement is waived in certain areas.)

- Income limit is based on county and household size.

- Maximum debt to income ratio of 45% and a minimum credit score of 640.

The assistance is available for new and existing homes purchased statewide, up to a maximum purchase price of \$294,600. Lot sizes up to 10 acres are eligible.

For more information and to determine if you qualify, visit <https://www.ok.gov/ohfa>. Contact OHFA at 405.419.8207 or email ownahome@ohfa.org.

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You are not alone

By Doug Folks

Even in the best of times, educators will tell you that teaching is a hard job. Rewarding, for sure, but often very difficult.

The strains placed on teachers come from many directions – managing a classroom, preparing tomorrow’s lesson plan, working with parents. Throw in a personal life of family, bills and a global pandemic, and it’s easy to see how educators are finding themselves overwhelmed.

Lately, more educators are coming forward with stories of mental health struggles.

“I suffer from panic attacks, anxiety, and depression. I am so tired, exhausted, and drained,” an Oklahoma teacher shared in an email. “I am struggling to get students to engage and submit work. I feel like a total failure as a teacher. This is in addition to the failure I currently feel as a parent because the current environment is causing me to take so much time away from them. Finding the work-life balance this year seems next to impossible.”

She is not alone – her experience is similar to teachers and support professionals statewide, as well as people outside of education.

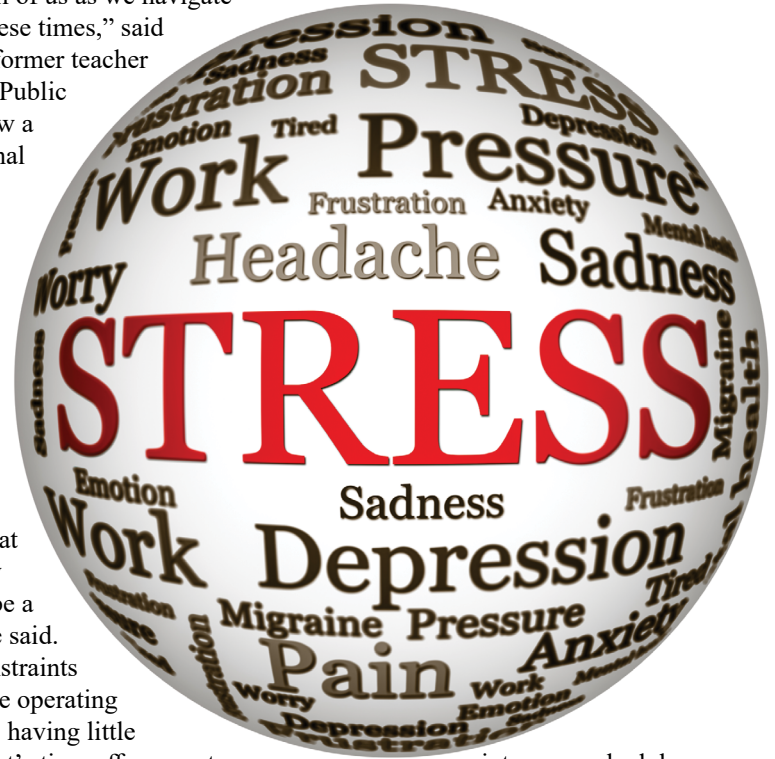
“We are all going through this collective trauma in our culture and our world – experiences of exhaustion, depression, anxiety, all contributing to and promulgating negative beliefs, all are common

and pervasive in all of us as we navigate our lives during these times,” said Brandt Ratcliff, a former teacher in Oklahoma City Public Schools who is now a licensed professional counselor.

“We tend to overemphasize the times when things go wrong and underemphasize our successes. Because of this tendency to focus on the negative, many times we begin to believe that the lesson not only failed, but I must be a failure as well,” he said. “In reality, the constraints under which we are operating (distance teaching, having little control over student’s time off-screen to complete homework, preparing workable lessons for this medium, learning and teaching not only the lesson but the technology, and all the rest!) are added points of stress taking tolls on our mental health that we aren’t used to or can even foresee.”

Ratcliff says there are many activities and techniques we can employ when we struggle. The problem becomes making time to utilize these techniques.

“I suggest using these (techniques) throughout your day and integrating them



into your schedule so as to not make this a chore,” he said, and added these activities can be taught to your students, as well.

Talk to Yourself. I utilize this strategy with all of my clients as the most effective in what I call “self-leadership.” When emotions control us, I coach clients to begin leading these emotions instead of being hijacked by them. When you are feeling something big (frustration, anxiety, stress): 1. Take a deep breath (or two). 2. Connect and focus on the physical feeling in your body (for example, anxious is sometimes in your chest or stomach, sadness is sometimes in the eyes) and place your hand on that body part. 3. “Tell” that feeling you notice it and “ask” that feeling to relax. 4. Stay with it until it relaxes.

Practice Presence. So much of our lives is lived wasting the present moment. I find that we are either past- or future-oriented instead of being fully present. While there are many ways to become present oriented, utilizing mindfulness is my favorite and most effective. To practice present mindfulness, 1. Take some

Please see “Self Care” on Page 8

Finding help

Reach Out

Reach-Out is a 24-hour, toll-free information and referral hotline of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. A resource for all Oklahomans, Reach-Out is available for individuals in crisis and those in need of information. All calls are free and confidential.

Dial 2-1-1

Grief Counseling

The Tristesse Healing Hearts Grief Center, thegriefcenter.org
Calm Waters Center for Children and Families, calmwaters.org

NAMI Oklahoma

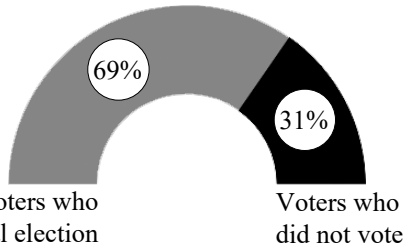
A nonprofit organization founded in 1985 by family members of people with mental illness. The organization has seven affiliates throughout the state that facilitate support groups and conduct education programs.

www.namioklahoma.org

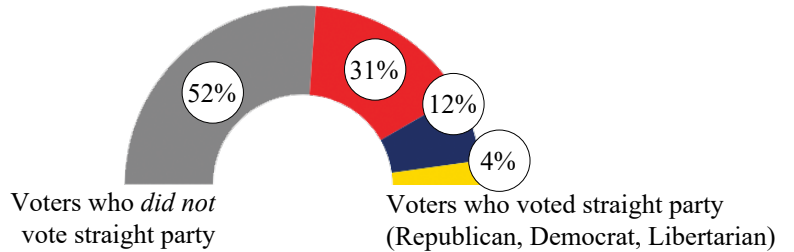
Election night smashes records

Oklahoma voters turned out in record numbers, with 1,558,627 ballots cast in the Nov. 3 general election. President Donald Trump won the state handily with more than 65% of the vote. Here's a look at some interesting facts and figures from Election Day in Oklahoma.

Voter Turnout

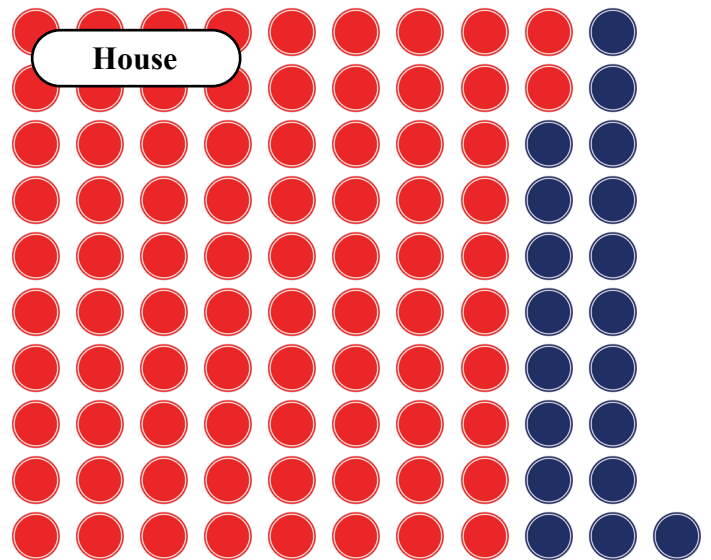
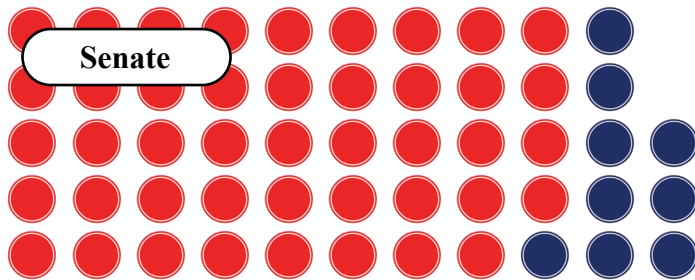


Straight-Party Voting

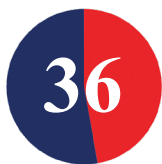


Republicans claim more seats

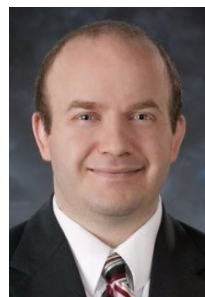
Republicans retained their solid control of both chambers on Election Day, and they even gained ground. In the House of Representatives (right), Republicans picked up five seats, bringing their total to 82. Democrats have 19 seats. In the Senate (below), the parties kept their same split: 39 Republicans and 9 Democrats.



Interesting facts and faces



Voters elected 36 candidates backed by the OEA Fund for Children and Public Education. Of those, 17 are Republicans and 19 are Democrats. The FCPE is OEA's political action committee.



A political party must receive at least 2.5% of the vote in a statewide race in at least one of the two previous general elections to stay on the ballot. Todd Hagopian, the Libertarian candidate for Corporation Commissioner, knocked that requirement out of the park with 23.9% of the vote. Libertarians will stay on the ballot for another four years.



Rep. Jacob Rosecrants (D-Norman) had the narrowest margin of victory of all state legislative races with 79 votes deciding the race.



Sen. Zach Taylor (R-Seminole) was the only lawmaker to switch houses. He now serves Senate District 28 after representing House District 28 for three years.



Rep. Mauree Turner (D-OKC) is the first openly non-binary person elected to any state legislature. They are also the first Muslim in the state legislature.

2021 Education Caucus members

Lawmakers on this list work or have worked in common and higher education, such as classroom teachers, administrators and counselors. An OEA icon indicates membership in the Oklahoma Education Association at the time of election. Lawmakers cannot be active members of OEA because they are not actively working in education. An OREA icon indicates current members of the Oklahoma Retired Educators Association. Lawmakers are allowed to be active members of OREA because there is no employment requirement.



Randleman
District 15



Conley
District 20



Phillips
District 24



Johns
District 25



Sterling
District 27



Ranson
District 34



Burns
District 35



Rosecrants
District 46



D. Lowe
District 56



Baker
District 60



Hasenbeck
District 65



Vancuren
District 74



Waldron
District 77



Provenzano
District 79



Dollens
District 93



Wolfley
District 95



Davis
District 98



Bergstrom
District 1



Stephens
District 3



Bullard
District 6



Pemberton
District 9



Boren
District 16



Pederson
District 19



J.J. Dossett
District 34



Jo Anna Dossett
District 35



Hicks
District 40



Stanley
District 42



The twists and turns of one Epic audit

The saga of Epic Charter Schools continues. Here are key moments in the investigation of Oklahoma's largest school district.



July 2019: A warrant by the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation shows authorities are looking at whether Epic Charter Schools enrolled “**ghost students**,” faking enrollment to bring in more funding. *The Tulsa World* reveals that the FBI and other agencies are looking into Epic. The governor calls for **an investigative audit** of the district.



Fall 2019: Sen. Ron Sharp starts to **publicly question Epic's enrollment practices**, including whether the school district falsely counted students. Epic demands that the Senate investigate Sharp for lying. The Senate ignored the suggestion. State senators, including Sharp, **delve into charter school funding and policies** during an interim study. Epic sends Sharp a cease and desist letter, saying he's defaming the school.



December 2019: Four days before lawmakers file legislation for the upcoming session, Epic sues Sen. Sharp for **libel and slander**, seeking at least \$75,000 in damages. Other legislators decry the lawsuit, saying Epic is trying to intimidate lawmakers.



August 2020: The judge who tossed out the original lawsuit rules that Epic must pay Sen. Sharp's legal fees (about \$36,000) plus a **\$500,000 fine**. The fine was issued under a state law designed to shut down frivolous lawsuits. In the meantime, enrollment spikes at virtual charters because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Epic becomes **the largest school district in Oklahoma**.



October 1, 2020: State Auditor and Inspector Cindy Byrd announces the first half of the “deeply concerning” forensic audit. Byrd says concerns include lack of financial controls, lack of oversight, and millions in taxpayer dollars that have been kept secret.



October 12, 2020: The State Board of Education votes unanimously to demand Epic **repay \$11,235,919** within 60 days. The fine is the total of two pots of misspent money: about \$11 million in miscoded admin payroll costs and about \$200,000 in taxpayer money used to expand Epic schools in California. The same day, Oklahoma Attorney General Mike Hunter appointed a **special counsel** to review the audit findings.



October 13, 2020: The Statewide Virtual Charter Board voted 3-1 to move forward with **termination proceedings** for its contract with Epic. Who voted no? A board member whose great-nephew is one of the co-founders of Epic. One board member — who was censured by his fellow board members in September for his inappropriate handling of Epic issues — was absent.



November 12, 2020: The governor abruptly removes the head of the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board. He is replaced by a private religious school leader who is involved with national private school organizations. *The Tulsa World* called the governor out for swapping out the virtual board leader, describing the move as “empire building.”



What's Next: Throughout the audit, Epic has refused to hand over certain documents that investigators say are public record. Those documents are still secret, and the state and Epic were set to **go to trial** over the issue Dec. 16. The Statewide Virtual Charter School Board has a **public hearing** March 8 about whether to terminate Epic's contract. Also, the **criminal investigations continue**.

Always an activist and volunteer

VOICE honors Hogue-Downing with Lifetime Civic Engagement Award

By Joe DuVall

At times, it's hard to imagine when Debbie Hogue-Downing finds time to sleep. She is the proverbial stone with no moss, always volunteering for a cause or an organization she believes in passionately.

In recognition of that life of service, Hogue-Downing was named the recipient of VOICE's Lifetime Civic Engagement Award earlier this fall. The high honor is given to people who have demonstrated a commitment to championing social justice issues over a long period of time.

The award is normally presented at VOICE's annual gala, a celebration of those who give back to the community. As with almost every other large gathering, the 2020 version of this social event moved from a festive banquet hall to a virtual setting. Attendees joined together in smaller groups across the state, and took part in the event via the internet.

Even so, VOICE's event still drew a large crowd of attendees and presenters online. The most recognizable being Congresswoman Kendra Horn, who had this to say of her friend Debbie:

"When I think about what it means to show up for friends and our neighbors in our community, as a person, as a volunteer, and as a dedicated member of the community, Debbie is top of mind," Horn said.

A masked OEA President Alicia Priest joined Hogue-Downing in the OEA's conference room-turned-decorated ballroom and presented the award.

"As a classroom teacher, Debbie Hogue-Downing was president of her local and an NEA director for the OEA. She has been highly engaged in a variety of activities which included planning and attending legislative breakfasts, reading celebration programs, OEA committees, including the Legislative committee, and the Fund for Children and Public Education, and currently serves on our Human and Civil Rights Committee," said Priest, "To an

amazing and inspirational woman who I have watched with great admiration as she works tirelessly for candidates and causes that she is passionate about."

Priest specifically acknowledged Hogue-Downing's unparalleled advocacy in Native American issues.

As the country and state continue to evolve in their understanding of how harmful school and professional sport nicknames can be, Hogue-Downing has long advocated for such awakenings. "I am a Native American. I am not a mascot. I am a person," said Hogue-Downing

Ron "Duff" Martin, president of the Wisconsin Education Association Council, was Debbie's vice-chair on NEA's American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus.

"Her advice to me, her mentorship, her leadership, was just incredible. Debbie is a steady person when it comes to knowing our history as well as being able to move us forward," Martin continued, "You are so deserving of any award or accolade that's placed on you, because of your phenomenal advocacy for Native Americans. Not only in your home state of Oklahoma, but nationwide."

Ever selfless, Hogue-Downing spent much of her acceptance speech thanking others – including her late husband, Carl Downing. "We were such a team," she said. She also recognized her parents who taught her "a love for public education and a love for diversity."

Hogue-Downing went on to thank you all – the friends and colleagues in her



VOICE recently honored long-time OEA member and activist Debbie Hogue-Downing with its Lifetime Civic Engagement Award. (Photo provided.)

professional associations.

"I stand on the shoulders of my union, the Oklahoma Education Association, the National Education Association, and the Oklahoma Retired Educators Association. I had great training to become a better teacher. I had great training to become the political advocate I am today."

As any good advocate knows, however, the job is never over.

"Change doesn't come quickly, and I continue to fight for the values I believe in," she said.

True to her spirit, Hogue-Downing concluded her remarks with a call to action:

"Let's get out there and get into some good trouble."

Self care

Continued from Page 3

regular breaths and focus on the air as it enters and leaves your body. 2. Take a minute to let yourself focus on each of the five senses (touch, taste, sight, hearing, smell). 3. Take another minute to focus on what you are thinking right now. 4. Take another minute to focus on what emotions are present right now. 5. Take a few deep breaths and resume your day.

Engage Your Interests. Engaging with your interests and hobbies is part

of good self-care. It is easy to lose focus of what makes you unique, which sometimes makes it difficult to indulge in your identity. Rediscover what your interests and hobbies are and begin to find ways to incorporate them into your day. If you used to enjoy reading, find an old favorite and begin again. Like to scrapbook? Make a goal to complete one page this week.

Take Walks, Engage with Nature. Plan a walk by yourself or with your family. When by yourself, take in the

scenery while you travel. Be intentional at focusing on objects as you pass. Focus on the tree – its shape, its height, the surrounding landscape. Focus on the house – become creative and develop a story about its occupants. Focus on the street – think of the many people who have traveled along this road, their destinations, their originations, their story.

Find a Therapist. My wish is that therapy is normalized and the stigma surrounding seeking counseling is greatly diminished. Find a local therapist to talk to. Having a professional can assist you in any of the above suggestions as well as develop plans and goals custom-made for you.

Coming home

Continued from Page 1

Next, Crowder worked four years as the executive director of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association, a “local option” unit of the Colorado Education Association. During her time at DCTA, the association implemented a teacher-led school and she worked with the district on evaluation and peer review systems.

From 2013-20, Crowder served as the executive director of the Tennessee Education Association. She helped them revitalize their membership recruitment efforts and was instrumental in building a large community coalition that focused on supporting Transformational Community Schools.

After retiring from TEA in August,

she and her husband Terry, and their dog Fred, moved back to Oklahoma to be closer to family.

“It’s great to back home,” Crowder said. “I’m looking forward to sharing what I’ve learned during my career with the people here in Oklahoma who taught me how to be an education advocate at the beginning of my career.”



What type of leave covers a COVID-related event?

By Richard Wilkinson
OEA General Counsel

We have had numerous questions about what leave is available for COVID-related issues and how various leave provisions apply when a COVID-related event occurs. Leave benefits for education employees are provided by statute, school district policy or a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) and by federal law.

Oklahoma statutes provide a minimum number of sick leave days for certified and support staff. Certified staff receive 10 days each school year and support staff receive one day per month, which generally works out to the same 10 days available for certified staff. Sick leave days may accumulate up to 60 days. Certified staff can also take an additional 20 days of sick leave at the cost of a substitute after exhausting all paid sick leave.

The law also requires that school districts provide teachers three days of personal business leave and five days of emergency leave. Support staff are provided a minimum of three days of personal business leave. School districts may determine any salary deductions for the use of personal business leave and determine the purposes for which emergency leave may be used.

The leave provisions above are minimum amounts set by statute and local school districts may provide for additional leave benefits through either a local board policy or a collective bargaining agreement. You should check your local school district policies or any collective bargaining agreement to determine if there are any additional leave benefits available in your district. Those additional benefits could include additional leave days, expansion of the reasons for taking leave and additional benefits such as a sick leave sharing program or a sick leave bank.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education published in July its Return to Learn Oklahoma, A Framework for Reopening Schools, which provided comprehensive recommendations for local school districts to consider when reopening schools for the 2020-21 school year. One of the listed recommendations was to provide additional “COVID Leave” for school district staff to be used for COVID-related issues. Some districts opted to provide additional “COVID Leave,” and many did not. The typical “COVID Leave” is 14 days of paid leave to be used specifically for COVID-related issues.

Congress passed the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFRCA) on March 29, 2020, which provides for 80 hours of paid leave for COVID-related quarantine or self-isolation periods, or COVID-related illness and that leave is in addition to any existing state or local leave benefits. The FFRCA also provides for expanded FMLA leave benefits – the expanded FMLA benefits do not include additional days beyond the current 12 weeks but may provide for some reduced pay when taken for the specific COVID-related circumstances referenced in the FFRCA. You should note that the FFRCA leave benefits expire on December 31, 2020.

Currently, if you have been in close contact with an individual who is presumptively positive for COVID it is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Oklahoma

Department of Health (ODH) that you quarantine for a 14-day period. If you test positive for COVID or become ill with COVID symptoms, you are required to self-isolate for a minimum 10-day period from the date of the positive test or the onset of symptoms and you will not be allowed to return to work until after the 10-day period and after you have no symptoms. If you are unable

to work remotely, then you will be required to take some form of leave during either of these events.

You should check your local board policy or CBA to determine if your district adopted any additional “COVID Leave” in its back-to-school plan and whether such leave is available to you. You should also request the additional leave that is available to you under the FFRCA. If those leave benefits are exhausted, you can then use any available sick or other leave (personal or emergency leave) that may be available to you.

You should also review any local sick leave sharing program or sick leave bank to determine if there is leave available to cover COVID-related issues. If all available paid leave is exhausted, certified staff can utilize the additional 20 days of leave at the cost of a substitute.

The “COVID Leave” and the FFRCA leave are not per-occurrence leave benefits – so, you are not entitled to additional leave days each time you are required to quarantine or self-isolate. If you have already taken other leave for a COVID-related issue, you should consider asking to substitute any available and qualifying FFRCA leave for the other leave that you may have already taken.

If you have additional questions or need help with any of leave benefits that may be available in your specific district, please contact your Regional Advocacy UniServ specialist for assistance.

The Families First Coronavirus Relief Act provides for 80 hours of paid leave for COVID-related quarantine or self-isolation periods, or COVID-related illness and that leave is in addition to any existing state or local leave benefits.

Elections filing opens Feb. 1

10 seats available on OEA Board

Filing will open Feb. 1-19 for the open positions on the OEA Board of Directors as well as delegate at-large positions to the OEA Delegate Assembly and the NEA Representative Assembly.

The elections will be held online in late March.

The OEA Board of Directors is designed to represent members at the grassroots level. Each zone is made up of at least 1,000 association members who elect their representative on the board. The newly elected Zone Directors will take office on July 6, 2021.

At-large delegates to the Delegate Assembly and NEA RA will serve at the 2021 meetings. The OEA annual meeting is scheduled for April 30 - May 1 at the Hilton Garden Inn and Edmond Conference Center while the RA is set for July 2-6 in Denver, CO. (Oklahoma Delegates will arrive on July 1 for New Delegate Training, Informational Meeting and Oklahoma Night).

Filing forms will be available on Feb. 1 at okea.org, OEA Headquarters in Oklahoma City and at the OEA regional office in Tulsa. For more information on the elections or filing forms, contact Maureen Peters at 800/522-8091, 405/528-7785 or mpeters@okea.org.

Board of Directors

Eight open OEA Board positions are for three-year terms which expire in 2024. These board members will serve as NEA Delegates in 2022 and 2023.

- **Northeast A**, representing Adair, Craig, Delaware, Mayes, Nowata and Ottawa counties.
- **Northeast C**, representing Cherokee and Muskogee counties.
- **Northwest A**, representing

Alfalfa, Beaver, Cimarron, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Garfield, Grant, Harper, Major, Texas, Woods and Woodward counties.

- **Northwest B**, representing Kay, Logan, Noble and Payne counties.
- **Oklahoma City A**, representing Crooked Oak, Harrah, Mid-America Bible College, The EA of Moore, ESP Moore, Oklahoma Christian College and Oklahoma City Community College.
- **Oklahoma City C**, representing Edmond ACT, Edmond ESP, ESE-OKC, OEA-OKC and University of Central Oklahoma.
- **Tulsa Metro A**, representing Tulsa CTA.
- **Tulsa Metro E**, representing Berryhill EA, Bixby EA, Broken Arrow EA, Jenks CTA and Jenks ESP.

One open OEA Board position is for a two-year, unexpired term, expiring in 2023. (This board member will serve as NEA Delegate in 2022.)

- **Tulsa Metro D**, Oral Roberts University, OSU Tulsa Langston, Sand Springs ACT, Tulsa Community College, Tulsa Tech, Union CTA, Union ESP and University of Tulsa.

One open OEA Board position is for a three-year term which expires in 2024.

This position does not serve as an NEA Delegate.

- **Administrator-at-Large/OEA Board of Directors.**

Statewide Openings

2021 OEA Delegate Assembly

Position(s):

- **OEA Administrator Delegate(s)-at-Large**
- **OEA/NEA Retired Delegate(s)-at-Large**
- **OEA Ethnic Minority Delegate(s)-at-Large**

(Should the Bylaws requirement in this election category be met by local Associations, no OEA Ethnic Minority Delegates-at-Large will be seated.)

2021 NEA Representative Assembly

Position(s):

- **NEA Retired Delegate(s)-at-Large** *(successor delegates only)*

Regional Opening

- **Category I Delegate(s)-at-Large**, NEA Representative Assembly

(The zones and exact number of delegates involved in this election were not determined by press time. This information will be posted in the Election Filing Forms section of the Local Association Forms page on okea.org by February 1.)

Get your calendars out

January 2021

- Jan 16 – Google Saturday with Teaching and Learning
- Jan. 25-26 – OAEA Racial and Social Justice Symposium
- Jan. 29 – OEA Awards Entry Deadline

February 2021

- Feb. 1-19 – OEA elections filing period
- Feb. 6 – OEA Committee Saturday
- Feb. 26-27 – OEA Organizing Conference

March 2021

- March 5 – Outreach To Teach
- March 6 – OAEA Spring Convention

- March 12-14 – NEA National Leadership Summit
- March 15 – OEA Delegate Credentials Due
- March 22 -April 1 – OEA elections voting
- March 30 – OEA Election Day (tentative)

April 2021

- April 10 – NEA RA Credentials Due
- April 29 – OEA Board meeting
- April 30 – Delegate Assembly, Day 1

May 2021

- May 1 – Delegate Assembly, Day 2
- May 3-7 – Teacher Appreciation Week



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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Lee Ins. & Fin. Svs.
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ZOOM INTO A GOOD BOOK!

2021 OEA RAA POSTER CONTEST

THE ASSIGNMENT

- Student artists in grades 3-12: draw or paint a picture that depicts your favorite book or a character from your favorite book.
- Lower elementary students (kindergarten through second grade) may participate through the coloring contest. The official coloring sheet can be downloaded from OEA's website, okea.org/raa.
- All Oklahoma public school students are eligible to enter.
- Entries must be submitted on white, unlined 8½ x 11 paper.
- **DO NOT FOLD ENTRIES.**
- **Each entry must include the following information on a label attached to the back of the drawing:**
 - o Title of book the picture represents
 - o Student's name
 - o Student's grade level
 - o School site
 - o School district
 - o Teacher's name
 - o School phone number

Entries must be hand-drawn or painted. Computer-generated art will not be accepted. Pictures will be judged on creativity, use of color and content. Extra-credit if your picture goes beyond the cover!

DEADLINE

All entries must be received by 5 p.m. Friday, February 12, 2021. Mail, hand-deliver or overnight entries to OEA Focus on Reading, OEA Headquarters, 323 E. Madison, Okla. City, OK, 73105. (Entries received after the deadline will not be judged.)

All entries will become the property of the OEA and must meet all contest rules to be eligible for prizes.

PRIZES

An **Award of Excellence** and an **Award of Distinction** will be given in four categories, as well as an overall **Best in Show**:

- Kindergarten through 2nd grades (\$25 and \$10 gift cards)
- 3rd-5th grades (\$50 and \$25 gift cards)
- 6th-8th grades (\$50 and \$25 gift cards)
- 9th-12th grades (\$50 and \$25 gift cards)
- Best in Show (\$100 gift card)
- Up to three entries in each category will be named honorable mention (certificates only).

Winners will be announced on Monday, March 1, 2021. Prizes for the winning entries will be delivered in March; honorable mention certificates will be mailed to the students' schools.

For more information, contact Doug Folks at 800/522- 8091, 405/528-7785, or dfolks@okea.org.



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The Last Word

with Pres. Alicia Priest



President Alicia Priest

OEA...you deserve a break! The first semester is finished. Across the state, you have been working above and beyond for months. I don't know how we are upright and still moving and coherent at this point.

Recently, a meme popped up in my Facebook feed. It read, "Teachers are in it for the outcome, not the income. Thanking all teachers for their hard work." My immediate reaction was to reflect on my former students and remember their gains, their struggles, the laughs and the light-bulb moments.

Then, I started breaking that statement down. I was appalled by the real message it sent. My translation is, Put whatever you want in front of teachers/education employees. They'll do it AND you don't even have to pay them. Seriously?!? We CANNOT continue to let this mindset go unchecked! Educators – certified and

support – are the backbone of our society. You are trained. You are degreed. You are certified. You deserve better than the underlying message of this meme.

So, I started to rewrite it and discovered someone beat me to it. Here is the combination of their work (anonymous) and mine: Educators are skilled professionals who deserve a competitive and livable wage. Professional pay is one way to say thank you to all educators for their hard work.

OEA, I see you. I acknowledge your struggles and sacrifices for OK students and I will continue the fight to get you proper thanks.

In the meantime, I must also address a growing concern with mental health issues in educators. We are experiencing trauma. We have lost friends and colleagues. We are expected to carry on for the kids and

our communities – all part of that being the backbone I mentioned earlier. We expect so much of ourselves and we rarely take time to care for ourselves and our mental well-being. It is neither a sign of weakness nor defeat to mourn, cry or to ask for professional help. If you find yourself in need of help, please reach out for assistance. We need you to take care of yourselves.

Rest well and take care of yourself and your families over the winter holidays.

T&L is ready to help you destress

Right now, all teachers, students, staff, administrators, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins – *everyone* – needs to take a minute and breathe. So the Teaching and Learning Center is happy to introduce a new Facebook live series.

Wind Down Wednesdays will offer great tips on how to wind down and take a minute just for yourself. By the time you are reading this, we have already held a couple of sessions. You can find past episodes on our OEA Facebook page, and be sure to join us for new events in January.

Squawk Box Thursdays

Members in the Northeast Region have a standing reservation for a weekly conversation with staff members and colleagues. At 4 p.m. every Thursday, the NE Team hosts an open-topic conversation. Members participating in the Zoom call set the agenda by their questions and conversations.

Topics can range from how the district is handling the COVID crisis to bargaining issues and from member benefits to classroom management.

The Zoom link can be found in the Education Edge e-newsletter, which is emailed every Tuesday.

Google Saturday

Teaching & Learning specialists Heather Cody and Laura Miller are planning a full day of come-and-go workshops, focusing on Google tools to use in your classroom, both in person and remotely. The Jan. 16 event will require registration, which will be available soon. Watch the Education Edge e-newsletter and the OEA Facebook page for more information.

Tips & Tricks still available

If you missed an episode of Tips and Tricks Tuesday, there's still time catch up. The "pop-up PD" videos can be found on the OEA Facebook page and okea.org on the Teaching and Learning page for replay. During these 20-minute live videos, we talk about different platforms that our teachers are using everyday.

You'll receive some quick tips about how to get started creating a BitMoji classroom and using it in your Google classroom.

We invited Shawna Hight, a member from Union Public Schools, to talk about Canvas. We walked through using Exact Path. We even had a fun session about using TikTok-style videos.



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*As provisioned by the U.S. Elementary and Secondary Education Act, schools with high percentages of children from low-income families are eligible to receive federal funding and other assistance, known as Title I funding, to support successful education outcomes.



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