

# Education Focus

## Support from the HERD

By Doug Folks

**M**

eagan Ocholik has been certified to teach in four foreign countries. As a first-year, emergency certified teacher in

Oklahoma, she is looking for today's best practices for teaching science to American teenagers.

Josh Frazier earned his teaching degree as a non-traditional student. In his third year as a second grade teacher, he's looking for guidance on issues he didn't learn about in college.

Trena Rogers spent time in the corporate world before getting alternatively certified to teach high school science. What she didn't learn through that process were things like interacting with parents and solid classroom management.

Meagan, Josh and Trina are all finding their answers together as members of Mustang EA's HERD – Helping Educators Realize Dreams. The group, formed with the help of an Early Career Learning Lab grant from the National Education Association, is comprised of nearly a dozen early career educators in the district.

"This is our first year, so we're setting a foundation to develop new leaders for the association," said MEA President Mark Webb, who worked with OEA Vice President Katherine Bishop to write the \$2,500 grant application. "Mustang EA is an older local, and we need to have younger leadership. This group is a perfect way to recruit them."

HERD is one of a new collection of groups forming across the country through the NEA's Early Career Learning Lab (ECLL) grant program to give

teachers with five or fewer years' experience a built-in support group. Like similar groups, HERD will hear customized professional development, tackle projects they create and socialize away from work.

Webb said the first order of business is for each HERD member to complete a self-assessment of issues important to their individual classrooms.

"Hopefully, the group will be able to narrow the assessments down to a couple of problems. We hope to split in two, each group addressing a different problem," he said.

The assessment, provided by the NEA, is very broad. Issues the group could address would be things like classroom management, parent involvement or community advocacy, to name a few.

Members of HERD include core groups from Mustang High School and Centennial Elementary. Webb hopes to add a few more members from other grade levels to give the group a wider range.

The NEA grant includes access to a virtual instructional coach. Filling that



*From left, Trena Rogers, Josh Frazier and Meagan Ocholik come from diverse backgrounds, but each is finding support in Mustang's HERD (Helping Educators Realize Dreams). Photo by Doug Folks*

role is Rachel Croft, a fourth grade teacher from Nevada who is a National Board Certified Teacher.

"ECLL is really important to me because the attrition rate of new educators remains alarmingly high," Croft said. "As part of the ECLL coaching (effort), I am doing my part to keep educators in the field across the nation."

In addition to Croft, who will work virtually with the group, each HERD

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# Winning

## Bargaining pays big dividends

By Joe DuVall

**F**rom beginning salaries above \$41,000 to stipends for teacher classroom supplies, OEA local bargaining teams secured big wins for their members entering this school year.

Nine of the top 10 districts in teacher salary are represented by an OEA bargaining team at the local level. Out of the 255 school districts who pay their teachers the state minimum salary, 98% are not represented by an OEA local affiliate with bargaining rights.

"This past year, we were able to advocate for a pay raise for certified staff above and beyond the \$1,220 provided by the state," said Zach Grimm, The Education Association of Moore (TEAM) president. "Through the bargaining process, our association was able to negotiate a substantial \$3,220 pay increase for all certified staff members."

Oklahoma is a state still weighed down by a teacher shortage, with three emergency certified teachers out of every four new hires. State Supt. Joy Hofmeister recently stated that the Department of Education expects 3,000 more emergency certified teachers this year on top of the 3,000 approved the previous year.

Success at the bargaining table "... was possible because The Education Association of Moore's Negotiations Committee was able to express the need to stay com-

petitive with surrounding districts' salary scales," Grimm said.

Sharon Reese, bargaining team chair for Shawnee ACT, says collective bargaining is beneficial in many ways.

"Perhaps the most important aspect is the relationship that develops between the administration and the association," said Reese, who is OEA's zone director for Southeast A. "Collective bargaining is not a once a year event. It is an ongoing dialogue that runs each direction. A local association can provide administration with honest feedback on what is going on throughout the district. Administration can test ideas on the leadership of the association before they rollout new procedures or professional development."

The same is true in Moore.

"Our members are able to find their voice and exercise their power through several avenues in the bargaining process," Grimm said. "One of the ways TEAM gathers information concerning our negotiated agreement is through surveys throughout the year. These surveys allow our educators to anonymously voice their concerns and prioritize their needs when it comes to bargaining."

TEAM elects a committee of seven educators from every level to advocate for the needs of every student, educator and staff member in the district at the bargaining table.

"This entire process helps our educators to feel heard and valued as we bargain for what is best for everyone in Moore



*Shawnee ACT's Sharon Reese*

Public Schools," Grimm said.

While increasing educators' salary is necessary to curb the teacher shortage in this state and to attract more talent into the profession, the benefits for educators who bargain go far beyond salary.

"Through bargaining, we are able to advocate for the needs of all of our educators," Grimm said. "For example, in 2013 we were able to protect all certified employees with an all-inclusive non-discrimination policy."

In Woodward and Shawnee, their local OEA bargaining teams were able to negotiate an all too rare stipend for classroom materials into their contract.

"One of our most exciting gains through the process of negotiations was securing \$250 for classroom expenses for each teacher in the district," Reese said about Shawnee's recent success. "It was added to the contract as opposed to (giving) a stipend, which makes it a permanent benefit for our teachers. Administration likes it because it is a great recruitment tool for them, and teachers love it because they get to make purchases that are good for their students."

### The Education Focus

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**OEA** Oklahoma Education Association  
putting education first™

In Crooked Oak, the local OEA bargaining team negotiated the highest starting salary in the state at \$43,277, and the administration was happy to do it.

“We are a small district and we all know each other – we have fun,” said Crooked Oak ACT president Nadine Gallagher. “One advantage we have is that our superintendent likes, very much, that we are the highest paid teachers in the state.”

If you dig deep into the bargained contracts, you will find the uniquely necessary incentives to attract and keep

qualified teachers that do not exist in generic contracts found in non-bargained school districts.

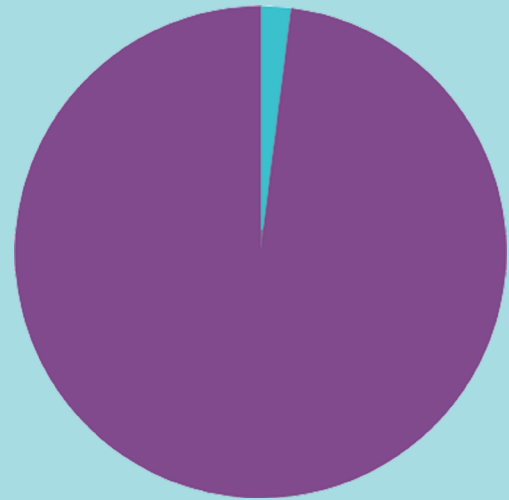
No one spends a fraction of the time with students at a school as its educators. Therefore, no one is more of an expert on the classroom experience and how it should be shaped. Any decisions made without their input are vastly incomplete.

Local associations of teachers and support employees who do not have bargaining rights are only subject to school board policy, which can change at any board meeting. OEA members in bargain-

ing districts will tell you there is no value in a school district closing the door on its most valuable resource – its educators – when determining the framework and direction in which it operates.

“I really believe that without bargaining we never would have gotten the \$2,000 raise,” said Gallagher. “We need to advocate for ourselves. The disrepair of public education is a glaring example of why looking out for ourselves is the only way to protect our profession.”

**98% OF DISTRICTS  
STUCK AT  
STATE MINIMUM  
SALARY HAVE NO  
BARGAINING RIGHTS**



## ***Virtual instruction coaches will help members connect***

### ***Continued from Page 1***

member will be assigned an instructional coach who is an NEA member from another district.

“The individual instruction coaches provide one more way for (HERD members) to connect,” Mark said. “Using someone from outside the district allows a little anonymity so that no one feels like the district is looking over their shoulders.”

While the members of HERD have reached the classroom from several paths, they all have similar needs.

Trena is a fourth-year teacher at Mustang High School. As a chemistry and physics teacher and physical science department chair, she still is looking for help to become the best teacher she can be.

“One thing I’ve said to Mark a thousand times is I really wish (HERD) had existed my first and second year,” she said. “I often felt isolated, or that I was the only one feeling this pressure or anxiety, or misunderstanding, getting over-

whelmed by all the meetings, and events, and other things you’re supposed to be doing – getting lost in the shuffle, basically. I kept up with it, but I didn’t have anyone (to lean on).”

Josh believes HERD will make him a better leader for his local association while also helping him with “real-world applications.”

“Classroom management is something I’ve struggled with,” he said. “I think a lot of it is just my personality, being laid back. It’s helped me in a lot of ways, but it has hindered me in others.”

Meagan received her teacher certification in Canada and she taught two years in England, which made her credentials good in New Zealand and Australia as well. When her visa expired in England, she moved back to Canada and then to Oklahoma City for an internship at a church. She then worked three years for a country clerk’s office before going back to the classroom. Meagan says HERD is

helping her get back in the swing of teaching after being out of the profession for a few years.

“Just because I’ve never been in the education system in the United States before, and because it’s been so long since I’ve taught, (HERD) will really help me remember things,” she said.

Josh, Trena and Meagan all agree that HERD will prove to be invaluable.

“I think what keeps people in a job – not necessarily just teaching – is when you feel like you belong,” Meagan said. “A job like this is very difficult, so if you’re doing it alone, a lot of times you might say, I’m going to leave. If you’re in a group like HERD and you have that support, you know can go to these specific people in the group, and that’s what makes people stay.”

If your local association would like information on the NEA’s ECLL grant program, contact OEA VP Katherine Bishop at [kbishop@okea.org](mailto:kbishop@okea.org).



# Training deadline

## Science of Reading required for early childhood emergency certified teachers

By Doug Folks

**S**ome emergency certified teachers face a Nov. 15 deadline to complete state-required training on the Science of Reading or lose their jobs by the end of December.

New, stringent training requirements for pre-kindergarten through third grade teachers on emergency certificates have given teachers an urgency to be prepared and put pressure on districts to find qualified professionals for the classroom.

“There is a strong correlation between student achievement and teacher preparedness,” State Supt. Joy Hofmeister said. “This training requirement is one safeguard we can put in place with a time line to ensure the best education possible for our students.”

Oklahoma’s teacher shortage has been made glaringly obvious by the high numbers of emergency certifications approved by the State Board of Education in the last several years. Emergency certifications skyrocketed last year to 3,034 granted between July 2018 and April 2019. Just seven years ago, the state issued only 32 emergency certificates.

So far this school, the State Board has approved 2,794 emergency certificates. Of those, 146 teachers must meet the Nov. 15 deadline to complete training on the Science of Reading. Hofmeister said all 146 teachers and their districts have received separate letters notifying them of the training requirement.

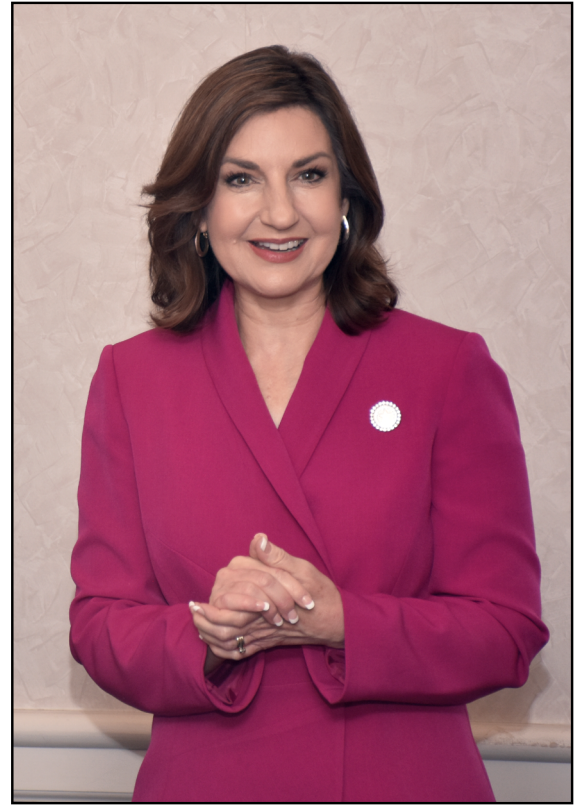
The state has two more trainings scheduled – Oct. 23-25 in Oklahoma City and Nov. 6-8 in Owasso. The SDE said the training is only for pre-K through third grade teachers who are emergency certified. Those who have had a year of teaching experience in that grade band or have 15 hours of course work are exempt from the requirement.

It has been well documented that the pool of qualified teaching candidates has continued to shrink. Principals across the state, in all grade levels and subject areas, are scrambling to find good candidates while colleges of education are graduating fewer students with education degrees.

But after two years of pay raises from the legislature, Hofmeister believes school districts need to find qualified candidates. With an average pay increase of \$7,300 in the last two years, Oklahoma is retaining teachers and creating an incentive for former teachers to return to the profession.

“I never want to lose sight that we have 30,000 certified people in Oklahoma who are not currently teaching in a public school classroom,” she said. “We need to be actively recruiting these certified teachers back to our classrooms.”

Emergency certificates for those early elementary teachers expires Dec. 31, but may be extended to June 30, 2020, if



*State Superintendent Joy Hofmeister*

the candidate completes the appropriate training by Nov. 15. If the training is not completed by the deadline, the emergency certificate will not be extended, Hofmeister said.

## Emergency certification criteria gets tougher in 2020

Effective July 2020, emergency certification applications for pre-K through fifth grade teachers will not be considered unless the candidate meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Successful completion of an academic major in early or elementary education, child development, or a closely related field
- Successful completion of an academic minor in early or elementary education, child development, or a closely related field, plus documentation of six months relevant full-time work or volunteer experience
- Successful completion of a relevant Oklahoma Subject Area Test (OSAT)
- At least one year of closely related full-time work experience, such as:
  - > Serving as a teacher, teachers assistant or paraprofessional in the same grade range in an accredited public or private school
  - > Work closely with young children in a professional setting
  - > For early childhood emergency certification applicants, licensed work experience and an early childcare



# OEA awards honor those who lift up public education

**D**o you have a colleague who has a great lesson plan that really sparks student interest? Do you know of a local civic group that works selflessly for public education? Have you seen a news story that shined a bright light on the good things going on in your district?

If you answered yes to any of those questions, don't miss your opportunity to submit a nomination for one of the Oklahoma Education Association's annual awards

Nominations are due January 24.

All OEA awards are listed on the OEA website ([okea.org/oeaawards](http://okea.org/oeaawards)). Each nomination form can be filled out online before printing and mailing.

Nominations must be received at OEA Headquarters by 5 p.m. January 24. Send nominations to OEA Awards, 323 E. Madison, Okla. City, OK, 73105.

Following is an overview of OEA's many awards.

## Board of Directors Awards

Nominations for the following awards must come from a current member of the OEA Board of Directors.

**Friend of Education** – OEA's highest award, the Friend of Education, honors a person who has made significant contributions to the betterment of public education.

**Claude A. Dyer Memorial Award** – Given to an Oklahoma educator who

has worked to bring about legislative action for equitable salaries and desirable working conditions, and has rendered leadership and direction in efforts to protect and advance the civil and human rights and responsibilities of educators.

**Political Activist Award** – Given to an individual or organization who exhibits a willingness and determination to promote the goals of the OEA through activities in the political arena.

**Outstanding Legislator** – Presented to legislators for outstanding support of public education and education employees.

**NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence** – NEA's most prestigious award is designed to recognize, reward and promote excellence in teaching and advocacy for the profession. Five national awardees are selected for The Horace Mann Awards for Teaching Excellence and receive \$10,000 each. One of the five will be selected to receive The NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence, an additional \$25,000 cash prize, and a commemorative gift.

All current members of an NEA local affiliate or bargaining unit are eligible for nomination, including teachers, education support professionals and higher education faculty and staff.

## Human and Civil Rights Awards

**Kate Frank Award** – Presented to the OEA member and/or local association rendering outstanding and significant service to advancing the cause of member welfare, rights and professionalism.

**Tuskahoma Brown Miller Award** – Presented to a business or group that has contributed significantly to the improvement of education.

**F.D. Moon Educational Award** – Presented to the person who has contrib-

uted significantly to the advancement of education for students.

**Glenn Snider Human Relations Award** – Presented to the school district, individual or organization best exemplifying the practice of effective human relations and concerns for human rights.

## Instructional Excellence in Education

**Teachers Teaching Teachers and Teachers Teaching Students** – To recognize individual OEA members for outstanding contributions in instructional excellence, both with students and colleagues. The awards acknowledge the fact that the quality of education in this country can rise no higher than the quality of teaching.

## Miscellaneous Awards

**Advocate For Academic Freedom** – Honors a person or organization whose contribution to the safeguarding of academic freedom has had a significant impact on the public schools in Oklahoma and the nation.

**OEA Collective Bargaining Award** – Presented to an individual or group making a significant contribution to the advancement of education through the collective bargaining process.

**Education Support Professional Award** – Honoring an individual ESP member whose activities reflect the contributions of an educational support professional to public education.

## Communications Awards

**Marshall Gregory Awards** – Recognizing Oklahoma reporters and broadcasters and their newspapers, radio and television stations for significant efforts to provide continuing and accurate coverage of public schools, current education issues and the OEA. Categories for professionals and for high school journalists are offered.

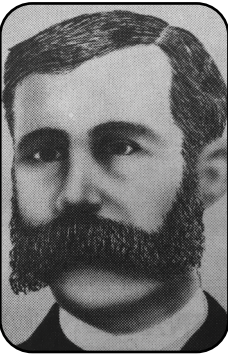
**Golden Apple Awards** – Recognizing OEA local associations for their consistent efforts to provide quality communications to all of their audiences, including members and other education personnel, local school administration, parents and the community in general.



# 130 Years of Professionalism, A

*This month, we mark the 130th anniversary of the OEA. What started as 11 school advocates across Oklahoma. From state aid to retirement to salary t*

Compiled by Carrie Coppernoll Jacobs



## October 19, 1889

A group of 11 teachers met in Guthrie to form the Oklahoma Teachers Association, which would eventually become the **Oklahoma Education Association**. Guthrie Superintendent Frank Terry was elected president. They hosted their first statewide meeting on Christmas Day that year.

## 1919

OEA members successfully lobby for the **first state aid bill** for schools.

## 1949

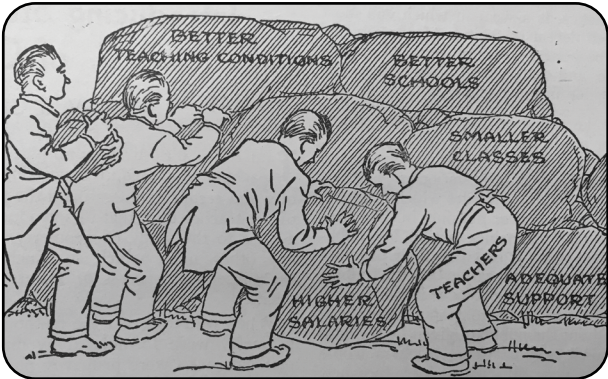
OEA calls for all teachers to have a bachelor or higher. That campaign comes to fruition when the State Department of Education and Oklahoma is the first state in the country to **college graduates as teachers**.

## 1944

OEA members again stage a petition drive for several ballot measures, including increased **school funding and free textbooks**. Voters approve the measures.

## 1901

The Oklahoma Teachers Association recommends the establishment of a teacher retirement system.



## 1935

OEA members successfully lobby for the first **state minimum salary schedule**.

## 1942

OEA members help gather enough signatures to put the issue of **state teacher retirement benefits** on the ballot. Oklahoma voters approve the constitutional measure.

## 1943

Muskogee teacher Kate Frank finds out she has been fired when she reads about it in the newspaper. Why was she fired? She was a “troublemaker.” She organized, and she and her local association were able to unseat several school board members. OEA fought for her to get her job back and to receive back pay. NEA members from across the country donated money to pay her salary during the court battle. In the end, Frank was reinstated, setting a national precedent. The NEA named its legal defense fund in her honor.



## 1959

OEA n  
Oklaho





# Advocacy, and “Troublemaking”

... teachers meeting in Guthrie has turned into tens of thousands of public  
to health insurance, OEA has led the way in public education since 1889.

...r's degree  
in 1957,  
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have only

## 1965

After intense pressure from the OEA, the Oklahoma Legislature completely **overhauls the funding formula** and **increases salaries and retirement benefits**. The union also helped support and pass SQ 430.

## 1965

## 1965

The Midwest City Classroom Teachers Association becomes the **first bargaining local** in the state.

## 1967

OEA secures **due process for education support professionals** after fighting a court battle that lead all the way to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals.

## 1970

The Oklahoma Legislature votes to **allow teachers to bargain** with local schools boards, after a months-long campaign by OEA.

## 1980

OEA members lobby for the **Education Reform Act**, which establishes the first teacher mentor program in the country, boosts teacher certification standards, and mandates teacher-designed professional development statewide.

## 1988

OEA-backed legislation requires all schools to offer **group health insurance** to employees.



## 1990

OEA members stage a four-day statewide walkout that ended with the emergency enactment of **HB 1017**. More than 20,000 attend. The education reform bill raised teacher pay, cut classes sizes, funded professional development, and injected hundreds of millions into education funding.

## 2018

OEA members stage a nine-day statewide walkout that leads to tens of millions in additional classroom funding and pay raises for teachers and support. More than 50,000 attend on the largest day. It's the **most successful walkout of the national #RedForEd movement**.



...member Edna Donley becomes the first  
oman named **National Teacher of the Year**.





# Former student joins teacher as TOY

**W**hen Jena Nelson was a teenager at Broken Bow High School, her drama teacher, Stephen Smallwood, was named Oklahoma's 1996 State Teacher of the Year. Jena was one of the students who appeared in Stephen's nomination video.

Flash forward 23 years to September 2019 when Jena was named 2020 State Teacher of the Year, with a proud Stephen Smallwood cheering her on from the audience.

Jena, a composition teacher at Deer Creek Middle School and a 14-year veteran of the classroom, credited Stephen with getting



*2020 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Jena Nelson and Stephen Smallwood, 1996 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year. Jena was one of Stephen's students at Broken Bow when he won the title. (Photo by Doug Folks)*



*2019 Rising Stars Summer Boismier, Rachel Beck and Emily Potts join State Superintendent Joy Hofmeister (far left), OEA President Alicia Priest (second from right) and Vice President Katherine Bishop (right) on stage at the Teacher of the Year ceremony in September. (Photo by Doug Folks)*

her to this moment when she could very easily could have taken a different path.

"This man physically, literally, in every way, saved my life," Jena said during her acceptance speech. "Without him, I would have been another statistic instead of the state Teacher of the Year."

As the 2020 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year, Nelson will remain in the classroom, so she can continue to inspire her students, colleagues and community every day. Some of her other duties under the title will include speaking engagements and serving as Oklahoma's ambassador for public education.

Yukon's Becky Oglesby is currently traveling the state, serving as an ambassador of public education as the 2019 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year.

OEA had seven members who were finalists for the 2020 award: **Cara Bowerman**, Edmond North High School; **Kirbey Deitzel**, Jenks East Intermediate School; **Terri Guthridge**, Grove High School; **Elizabeth Hoggatt**, Norman High School; **Michelle Rahn**, Will Rogers Junior High School, Claremore; **Kari Rhoden**, Oolagah Lower Elementary School; and **Katie Thompson**, Shawnee Early Childhood Center.

In addition, two OEA members were named Rising Stars: **Rachel Beck**, Woodward Middle School North; and **Emily Potts**, Woodall Elementary.



## PD brings together aspiring educators

Relevant professional development and networking attracted more than 75 students and their local chapter advisors to the annual Oklahoma Aspiring Educators Association Fall Conference in late September.

OAEA President Nancy Melendez opened the conference with an enlightening presentation on the structure and workings of the association. She discussed the governing aspects of the student program, the state affiliate (Oklahoma Education Association), and the "mother ship" (the National Education Association).

Workshops covered classroom issues such as teaching English Language Learners, building a lesson plan and using the Rubik's Cube as a unit at any grade. There were also tips for what to expect in your first year of teaching and special education tools and resources for beginning teachers.

# Get your calendars out

## October 2019

Oct. 26 – OEA Committee Saturday

## December 2019

Dec. 1 – Zone Rebate Application Due

## January 2020

Jan. 24 – OEA Awards Entry Deadline

## February 2020

Feb. 1 – OEA Elections Filing Period Opens  
– OEA Committee Saturday

Feb. 21 – OEA Elections Filing Period Closes

Feb. 28-29 – OEA Organizing Conference, Okla. City

## March 2020

March 6 – Outreach To Teach, TBA

March 7 – OAEA Spring Convention, TBA

March 13-15 – NEA National Leadership Summit

March 15 – OEA Delegate Credentials Due

March 16 – Online voting opens in OEA Elections

March 27 – Online voting closes in OEA Elections

## April 2020

April 10 – NEA RA Credentials Due

## May 2020

May 8-9 – OEA Delegate Assembly, Edmond



## July 2020

July 2-6 – NEA RA, Atlanta, GA

July 15 – OEA State Election Filing Period Opens (President, Vice President, NEA Director)

16 - OEA Summer Leadership, Okla. City

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# The Last Word

*with President Alicia Priest*

**W**elcome to another year of public school work. Is it all you thought it would be?

I remember when I began 25 years ago and all of the supports that were offered new teachers.

You see, back in my day, we had mentors who were trained and paid a stipend to help us grow as new teachers. We had a university mentor. My local association assigned mentors.

Each of these folks spent time with me, checked in with me, were allowed time to come visit my classroom to observe me teaching and to work with me on how I could improve and what I was doing well. They were available to help me figure out any issue I was working through.

Flash forward to today – what are we doing as colleagues and as the OEA to give our early career educators the supports that they need to be successful? Combine the number of early career educators with about 3,000 emergency certified teachers and increased numbers of alternatively certified teachers, and we have a multitude of opportunities and reasons to reach out and help make the profession stronger through mentoring and being open to new ideas and methods.

I can hear some of you saying, “But, I am doing all I can just to stay afloat with all the added work I have to do.”

That is a valid response, and yet we still have an obligation to help. Our kids depend on it. OEA has started NEON, the New Educators of Oklahoma Network. This is a group of, for and

by early career educators. NEON leaders plan social activities and professional development based on their unique needs and interests. Many of our locals have started local groups for their early career educators, too. You can find more information on our website at [okea.org/neon](http://okea.org/neon).

Another way to help the future of our profession is to stay involved in all that goes on with your local and OEA. The OEA leadership team is beginning a listening tour to get your input for next steps in our strategic planning beyond Together We're Stronger. We'll have dates out for those soon.

We requested your input in a recent survey and have more input opportunities planned throughout the year. When they come your way, please participate.

Actually, you can start by completing the My School, My Voice Opportunity Checklist and by encouraging your friends to do so, too. This poll will give you an opportunity to let us know what needs your school has. The data gathered from the survey will help guide work for, among other things, bargaining, funding requests, or showing priorities of the community. Here's the address: <http://pages.email.nea.org/your-school-checklist/>.

Your active participation in our programs has real value, paying dividends for you individually and for all of us collectively. Together, we're stronger!







- 88 papers passed out 
- 17 minutes for assembly 
- 5 parent drop-ins 
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- 1 standardized test given 

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