

Education Focus



Oklahoma Education Association
putting education first™

Dear Members,

Welcome to the 2022-23 school year and it is going to be great! At the beginning of each school year, I loved writing my Back-to-School letter to my students and their families. This year I'm even more excited to have the opportunity to pen a letter to you, my colleagues. The energy that you have for our students' learning and supporting their needs makes you the true professionals you are each day. You are "Worth It" because of the value you bring to the lives of our students. Every student that walks through our doors is "Worth It" to have a welcoming and safe learning environment with trusted professionals. As your professional association it is my commitment to you that we will continue to be strong advocates for our public schools and provide you with the resources and services you need to be successful. Inside this Back-to-School edition you will find resources to start your school year off right. So roll up your sleeves and let's get to work because our profession is "Worth It"!

Thanks for all you do,
Kathleen

Free Legal Services

In addition to professional protection, OEA members have access to a wide range of free personal legal services, such as:



Wills



Creditor
disputes



Uncontested
divorces



Stepchild
adoption



Misdemeanors

OEA members also have access to reduced-fee legal services for a host of other issues, including identity theft, victim protection orders, defamation, felonies, and other legal issues. These services also extend to OEA members' spouses and dependent children. Conditions apply. **Call (405) 523-4340.**

Attention: First-year teachers!

Did you know you're eligible for a rebate in your first year as an OEA member? Get \$30 back for every year you were a student member with OEA and NEA. Fill out the form online at okea.org/studentrebate or call (405) 528-7785.



The Education Focus

Volume 40, Issue 1

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The Education Focus (ISSN 1542-1678) is published four times a year in the fall, winter, spring and summer by the Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105.

Periodicals postage paid at Okla. City, OK, and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Education Focus, PO Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154.

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OEA Oklahoma Education Association
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Before, during and after

A professional association built for your entire education career



Oklahoma Aspiring Educators Association
putting education first.

Through the Oklahoma Aspiring Educators Association (formerly Student OEA), education majors at Oklahoma colleges and universities enjoy great professional development and networking opportunities that prepare them to hit the ground running on their very first day in a classroom.

okea.org/oaea • 800.522.8091



Oklahoma Education Association
putting education first™

The state's oldest and largest education association, OEA is recognized as *the* voice of public education. Its members include active certified educators, support professionals and administrators. Researched-based professional development, protection on and off the job and political advocacy enrich all careers.

okea.org • 800.522.8091



OREA provides education employees a way to continue promoting public education after their active careers are over. County units take on community service projects and the statewide organization lobbies for better pension benefits and to protect the retirement system.

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HB 1775 and Your Rights



By Richard Wilkinson, General Counsel

The Oklahoma Legislature passed HB 1775 during the 2021 Legislative Session and the Oklahoma State Board of Education (SBE) subsequently passed administrative rules that provide guidance on the mandates and prohibitions contained in the new legislation. The law became effective on July 1, 2021, and the administrative rules were adopted on March 10, 2022. Since that time, a wide array of controversial complaints have been raised from all sides and it is important to evaluate the issues under the language of the statute and rules, a summary of which is set out below.

HB 1775 prohibits K-12 schools -- including charter schools -- from teaching that:

- One race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex.
- One's moral character is necessarily determined by their race or sex.
- An individual, by virtue of their race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously.
- An individual should be discriminated against, or receive adverse treatment, solely or partly because of their race or sex.
- Members of one race or sex cannot and should not attempt to treat others without respect to race or sex.
- An individual, by virtue of their race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex.
- Any individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of their race or sex.
- Meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist or were created by members of a particular race to oppress members of another race.

The SBE rules provide that the prohibited concepts listed above shall not be used in:

- Any instruction in K-12 schools including coaching and tutoring.
- Any textbooks, instructional materials, curriculum, classroom assignments, orientation, interventions, or counseling.
- Diversity, equity, or inclusion plans.
- Any mandatory diversity training of employees, contractors, parents or students.

The law is enforced at the local level through a community complaint process that school districts must establish, and which provide for the investigation and resolution of written and specific complaints. Complaints may be filed instead with the State Department of Education (SDE), as can complaints that a school district has not investigated or has incorrectly resolved any complaint. Violations of the new law or SDE rules may result in the loss of accreditation for a school district and possible suspension or revocation of an individual teaching or administrative certificate.

The political rhetoric around HB 1775 and the SBE rules has created uncertainty and angst about the practical implications of the new law and its enforcement by the SDE. Several of the prohibited concepts are vague and ambiguous and have led to confusion about what can and cannot be taught in individual classrooms.

The new law however expressly provides that it does not prohibit teaching concepts that are consistent with state academic standards, nor are teachers limited to teaching only those concepts or topics specifically mentioned in the academic standards. Similarly, the SBE administrative rules expressly provide that individual teaching or administrative certificates can only be suspended or revoked for willful violations of the new law. Teaching concepts embedded in a curriculum adopted by a local school district should operate as a safe harbor and shield against any complaint that a teacher or administrator has violated the new law. *Continued on next page*

What to do if a complaint is filed?

If you are notified that your school district or the SDE is opening an investigation into a complaint that has been made against you, immediately contact your Regional Advocacy Specialist for assistance. Complaints alleging a violation of HB 1775 can be complex and will vary depending on the specific facts lodged in the complaint – OEA stands ready to provide the necessary advocacy and legal assistance required to help members navigate these issues and protect them from potential harm.



Comply First, Grieve Later

By Heath Merchen, Associate General Counsel

According to a recent study by Project Information Literacy, just 9 percent of students surveyed used library books in the library. Instead, most of the students use the library for access to computers and printers. Ironically, those computers along with the phones each student carries in their pocket day to day provide access to uncensored video content, music, and every book ever banned by a library. Somehow, though, the public focus continually returns to what sits on a library shelf, creating community controversy and, sometimes, staff discipline. To help avoid both, our office has a few general pointers:

First, educators who are facing groups that seek to remove books from the shelves should first look to the relevant Board Policies regarding book and curriculum selections and actively participate in that process. Believe it or not, respectfully reminding administrators of the process can lead to successful resolutions. In Enid, recently, a Maya Angelou book and several other titles were removed from the shelves by an errant administrator—but staff worked together with the administration to resolve the issue in accord with the existing District processes for curriculum selection. While the Board was informed of the issue, any significant controversy was avoided and the Maya Angelou book made it back to its place. A teacher's first attempt to address the issue should always be working with the administration to enforce existing policies and procedures, rather than starting a protest.

Second, comply first, grieve later. When instructed to remove a piece of curriculum, throwing yourself on the book as though it is a live grenade and refusing to move is not the recommended approach. Rather, the staff member should comply with the request and then contact your local OEA advocate to assess whether or not the District acted in line with the negotiated agreement and board policy. If not, the appropriate recourse may be to file a grievance. Do not, however, presume you will win and refuse a directive as, if you end up being wrong, you'll end up without a job. Do what is asked, then seek counsel to determine if the District followed appropriate procedures.

Third, avoid going to social media as your first form of protest when disagreeing with a District's action. Once a teacher throws an accusation against an administrator out into the virtual world, it takes on a life of its own and universally damages any real chance at resolution. The goal should be to continue to teach successfully while ensuring that District policies are followed through the formal processes rather than gaining attention on social media. While the First Amendment provides some protection, the law does not shield a teacher from negative work consequences when the speech involves work-related activities and critiquing supervisors. Tread carefully and consult with your advocate before posting.

If you have questions or concerns regarding school book removal or other book related issues, be sure to reach out to your local advocate who can help answer your questions and determine if a grievance is appropriate.

Professional Learning Offerings

OEA Center for Teaching and Learning

Professional development is a great way to involve and train your members. OEA offers these workshops free for local affiliates and customized trainings can be created specifically for you. Learn more at okea.org/pd.

Bullying Prevention

Stop bullying by investigating the psychological, social and educational impact of bullying behaviors, including cyber-bullying.

Classroom Management 101

Techniques to pique student involvement and reduce classroom management problems.

Communicating Effectively with Parents and Students

Develop two-way, professional communication with both parents and students to engage them in school and classroom activities and the learning process.

Communicating Professionally and Effectively with Parents, Students & Colleagues

How we engage with each of our audiences as educators can have significant benefits and repercussions! Learn about the ethical, professional and practical considerations of both your spoken and written words as an educator.

Communication Styles: Making Your Point with Panache

Examine your own preferred communication style and how it can impact your communications with others, then adapt your style to your audience for greater clarity and effectiveness!

Racial and Social Justice

How to achieve equity in classroom and school culture, curriculum and student opportunities.

Recognizing Trauma in Our Students

Recognize the cognitive and emotional impacts of trauma on children and acquire strategies to help overcome them.

Teaching Resiliency

For Oklahoma students impacted by poverty and trauma, resilience is a key characteristic for success in school. Learn classroom practices to help build resiliency.

True Colors

A personality survey that provides insight into learning and leadership styles and helps you make the most of both student and adult group dynamics.

Other professional development trainings can be created per district needs and requests.



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www.okea.org/pd



OEA Member Caucuses

OEA caucuses serve to represent the interests and issues of their specific communities within the OEA. Caucuses are special interest network groups who promote association policy that benefits its members, take part in activities related to their cause, and work to improve the profession for all members. To be an official OEA Caucus, the group must establish itself with officers, bylaws and purpose. OEA members can join any caucus. Learn more and connect at okea.org/caucuses.



Black Caucus



Democratic Caucus



Hispanic Caucus



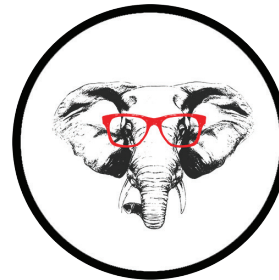
LGBTQ+ Caucus



Native American Caucus



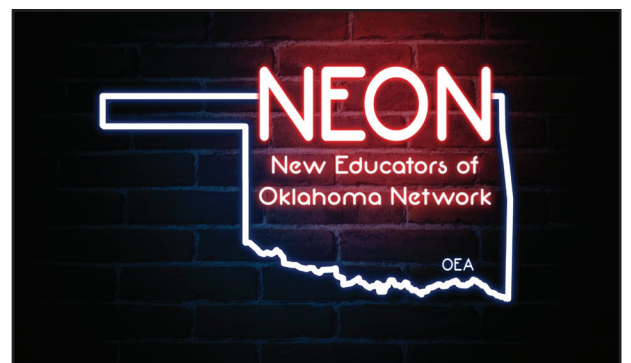
Peace & Justice Caucus



Republican Caucus

New Educators

The New Educators of Oklahoma Network empowers early career educators through lasting professional relationships, relevant and timely professional learning, and association activism, so that you can become an agent of change and own your profession. Go to okea.org/neon or call (405) 528-7785 to learn more and belong to NEON.



Keeping You Informed

The OEA has a team of communications professionals who work to keep you informed about the latest happenings in your profession and at the State Capitol. Members enjoy free access.

Education Edge

A weekly email newsletter with resources, opportunities, and freebies.

Legislative Update

A weekly email with a recap of the latest in education and legislative news.

okea.org

News, information, and special resources only for OEA members.

Legislative Dashboards

An annual publication detailing lawmakers and their voting records on education.

Election Guide

A publication featuring candidate positions on education issues for every legislative race statewide in even-numbered years.

Fried Okra

A weekly podcast featuring guests from across the state, including OEA members, elected officials, and education experts.

Education Focus



































A printed magazine that provides an inside look at OEA news, members, and local affiliates.

OEA Awards

Annual contests recognizing teachers, students, and advocates across Oklahoma.



What does **politics** have to do with **my classroom**?

Who decides ...	School Board	Oklahoma Legislature	State Agencies	Federal Government
Your salary				
School budget				
Class sizes				
Length of the school year				
Health benefits				
Due process				
Retirement benefits				
Testing				
Hiring practices				
Teaching credentials				
Academic standards				
Textbooks				
Campus repairs and upgrades				
Employee rights				

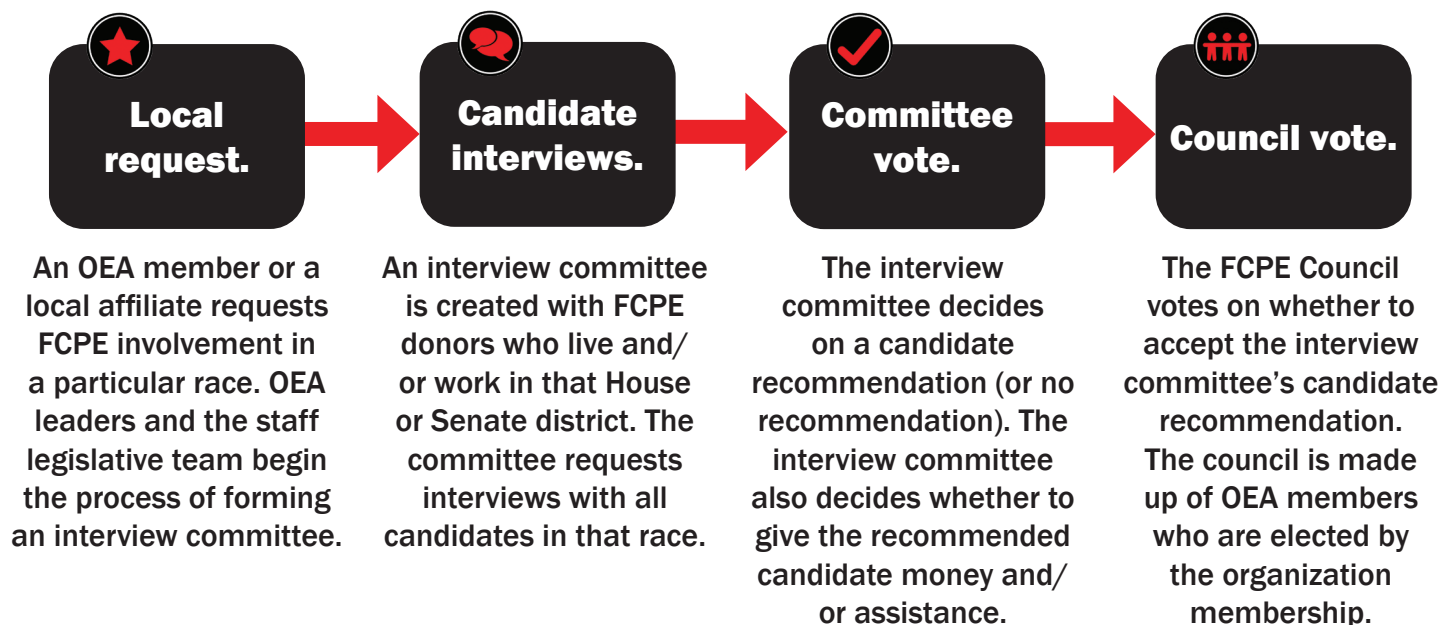
Politics is already in your classroom.



More Than Our Votes

Contributing to the FCPE

Every major policy decision affecting education is made by a politician, whether it's the governor, the Oklahoma Legislature or your local school board. That's why many Oklahoma Education Association members choose to make **voluntary contributions** to OEA's nonpartisan **Fund for Children and Public Education (FCPE)**.



FCPE Facts

- **No dues dollars are involved.** Dues dollars NEVER go to the Fund for Children and Public Education. All donations are voluntary, and all donations come from OEA members.
- **Participation doesn't require big donations.** To sit on these committees doesn't require a large contribution. In fact, the FCPE guidelines recommend a \$10 annual contribution.
- **FCPE policy outlines how to treat incumbents.** OEA will not endorse someone against an incumbent unless that incumbent has "taken action to harm the OEA as an organization, public education or its employees," according to FCPE policy.
- **OEA members who are candidates receive donations.** Any member of OEA or OREA who, before the filing period closes, contributes to the OEA FCPE and whose term of membership exceeds one calendar year: \$250 for a House of Representatives seat, \$500 for a Senate seat, or \$750 for a statewide seat. This does not constitute a recommendation.

On average, OEA members vote at a rate 20% higher than the general public, but **voting isn't enough**. Electing good candidates costs money. To contribute to the FCPE, go to **okea.org/FCPE**.



OEA “WORTH IT!” CAMPAIGN

1. Professional wages and benefits in line with other professions that have similar education and training requirements.
2. Educate the whole child.
3. Educators' influence is felt in every election cycle and every piece of education legislation at the OK legislature.



IF YOU BELIEVE IN THESE GOALS...

Scan Here



Here for you...

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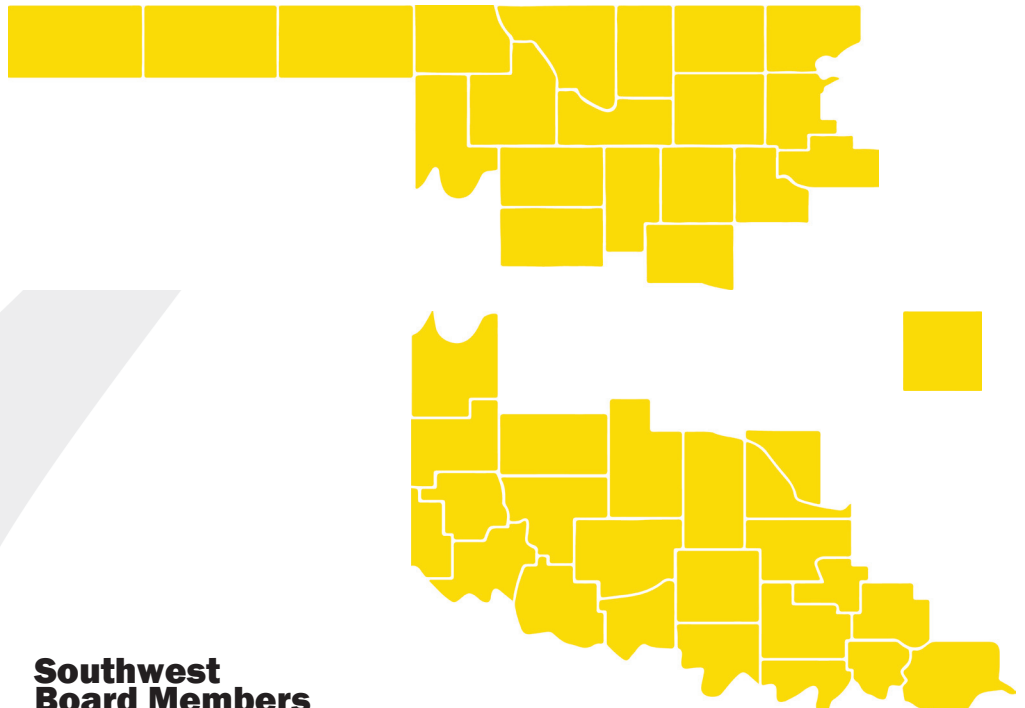
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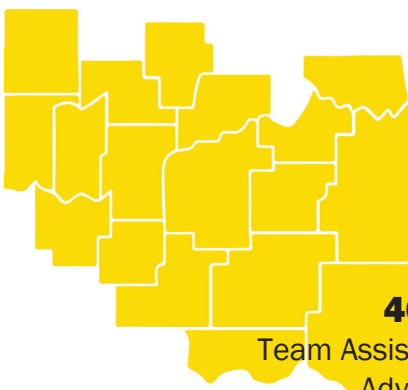
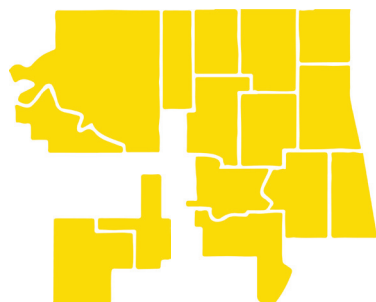
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The OEA is divided into six geographical regions with staff and board members across the state to serve you where you live and work.

Education professionals deserve a specialist.

With ever-changing school budgets, demanding schedules, and surprise challenges every day, you know the realities of the education world inside and out. You expect your partners to keep up—and even lead the way, when needed. With decades of supporting schools and districts, consider American Fidelity for a different opinion in employee benefits, education and enrollment.

Help is here.

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a different opinion



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Because our passion is taking care of educators, we provide exclusive benefits like:

- NO deductible if your vehicle is vandalized on or near school property or at a school-sponsored event;
- NO deductible for a collision claim on or near school property or at a school-sponsored event;
- up to \$1,000 in personal property coverage if items you use during your work as an educator are stolen or damaged while in your car; and
- liability coverage when you transport students.

And because you're human, we also offer:

- reimbursement of up to \$35 for transportation if you find yourself away from home and you feel you can't safely drive;
- increased road service coverage when you purchase Emergency Road Service;
- a replacement car if your new car is declared a "total loss";
- no deductible if you have a collision with another vehicle insured by Horace Mann; and
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Including a change of scenery



SCAN & GO

You deserve to go places where even the photobombs are breathtaking. Find a world of travel savings, advice and more at NEA Member Benefits. Use your membership to plan an unforgettable, budget-friendly getaway.

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