Education Focus

Oklahoma Education Association

SPRING 2025

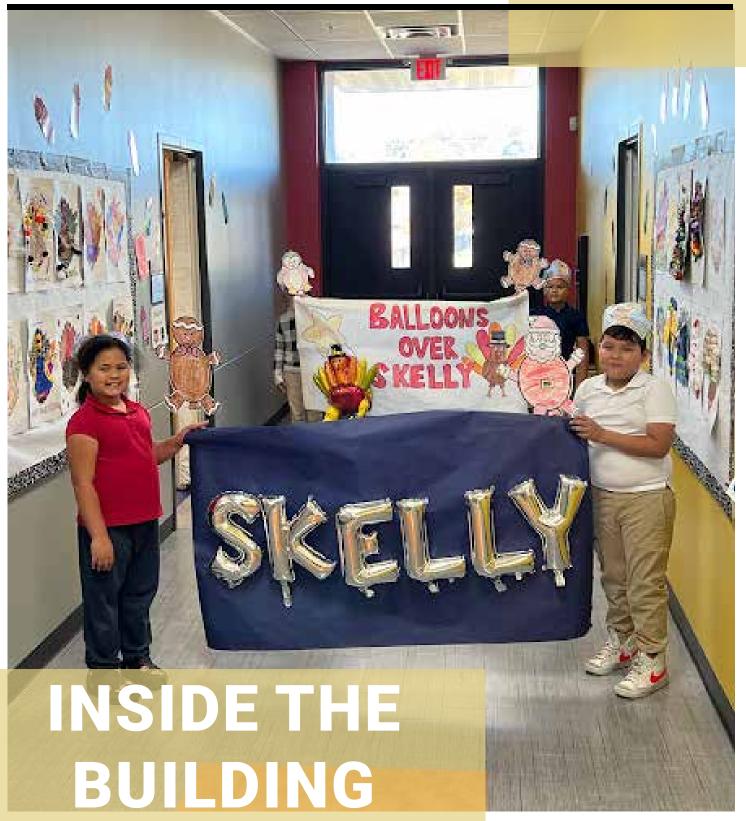


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The Education Focus

Volume 42, Issue 2

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

As you may have noticed, we have had some changes at the OEA headquarters. Katherine Bishop, from whom you are used to receiving this letter, has chosen to resign to spend more time with her family. As time is a gift and the amount we share is unknown, we want to thank President Bishop for her service to our Association at every level.

I would like to take a moment to introduce myself. Having served as the elected Vice-President of the OEA since 2021, I have now stepped into the role of President per our governing documents. I grew up in the rural area known as Banner and attended a K-8 dependent school hosting one class per grade level with the same classmates each year. I graduated from El Reno High School before attending college at the University of Oklahoma for both my bachelor's and master's degrees. At 18 years old, I was unsure what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, so my studies centered around communications, political science, and ultimately elementary education. After teaching both 3rd and 5th grade respectively in Norman, I was elected to serve as the release time President for the Professional Educators of Norman before seeking office at the OEA. Who would have ever thought that my college studies would be EXACTLY what I do for a living now?

As we move forward, I want to ensure that OEA remains strong and well-equipped to serve our members. That's why I am excited to share that the OEA Board of Directors has appointed NEA Director Zach Grimm as Vice President. Zach has been a dedicated advocate for public education, working in Moore Public Schools since 2012 as a Spanish teacher and currently serving as the full-time release president of The Education Association of Moore (TEAM). He has been a member of the OEA Board since 2018 and was elected NEA Director for the state of Oklahoma in 2020. His leadership and experience will be invaluable as we continue to support and uplift educators across the state.

We cannot wait to get to know each of you better and look forward to seeing you at our upcoming member events. Until then, thank you for being a member. Your voice matters on behalf of our students, our profession, and our Association. You are valued.



Cari Elledge

A NEW CHAPTER IN THE BUILDING





Spring is the time of change, which fittingly coincides with a variety of leadership changes at OEA. After many years of serving our public schools and wearing several hats at OEA and NEA, Executive Director Carolyn Crowder is retiring.

Some of you might be dubious of this announcement if you know Crowder's backstory. This is not the first time that she has tried to retire, but much to the delight of her husband and their dog, Fred, this is truly her time to step away and enjoy her much deserved break.

After 42 years in service, Crowder set out to retire in 2020, but when OEA's Executive Director resigned, Crowder answered the call and served as the Interim-Executive Director. Her role was meant to be temporary, but she selflessly gave OEA another four years of service.

What kept Crowder going was the same belief she had for the students in her classroom.

"Always remember, it's about them – not you," she said.

Crowder served as the president of OEA from 1997 to 2003. She went on to serve on the National Education Association Executive Committee before she served as the Executive Director for the Denver Classroom Teachers Association and later the Tennessee Education Association. With a long history at OEA, Crowder has seen a lot of change.

"I fell in love all over again," Crowder reflected. "I got to renew some previous relationships and form some new ones with whom I will work hard to not ever lose touch."

by Monica Royer

There is one thing Crowder looked forward to every year that she will miss: Back to School events. These were moments that reminded her of her passion for teaching and the work she does.

"I truly enjoy meeting with brand new educators who have grand dreams of making a difference in the whole new career they're stepping into – and helping them see how OEA can help them realize those dreams," Crowder said.

Although she is off to new adventures, Crowder will continue to be one of OEA's biggest advocates.

"My hope is that the strides we have made these past 4 years have set OEA up to continue growing and making our mission a reality," she shared. "I will be OEA's biggest cheerleader as I watch you accomplish more than I ever dreamed of."

Crowder looks forward to sleeping in late, going on trips, making a difference in the community, and ultimately, win the lottery to, "fund all the programs we could never get the legislature to adopt!"

Although it is hard to bid farewell to one familiar face, Crowder is leaving OEA in good hands with another. Our current Associate Executive Director, Rhonda Harlow, was chosen by the OEA Board of Directors to step into the role.

Harlow is no stranger to education or the Association's work. She has a B.S. in Journalism/Public Relations, M.Ed. in Education/Reading Specialist and a Ph.D. in Education/Social Foundations. She was a National Board-Certified teacher at Enid Public Schools for 12 years and was an Adjunct Instructor at Northwestern Oklahoma State University for eight years. During her teaching career, Harlow was also active in her local association serving in many roles before joining OEA staff.

During the last four years, Harlow has had the privilege of working side-by-

side with Crowder.

"I have valued the opportunity to work with and learn from Carolyn who has vested her expertise, wisdom, and love for this organization into service for OEA," Harlow reflected. "Incredible people have come before me, and I am honored and humbled to be entrusted to this role."

Similarly to Crowder, Harlow also brings lessons from the classroom to her work at the Association. In her last couple of years in the classroom, Harlow established six classroom expectations: "We respect each other, We try our best, We are a team, We learn from our mistakes, We create, We celebrate each other's success." These expectations help to develop a positive learning environment, and Harlow maintains this at OEA.

"I want to have a collaborative approach to the work that is done by giving space and voice for the members and staff." she said.

Harlow looks forward to the 2026 election cycle with the continuation and expansion of the Let's Activate and Civication campaigns, working to improve local organizing capacity focused on the local's issues and interests, and more member engagement opportunities.

Although Harlow has a key role in the Association, she recognizes that members are the most important part of the association. She begins her new chapter with a message to members:

"OEA is not a building. OEA is not the staff. You are the OEA. Your engagement and involvement are what drives this organization. OEA staff is here to offer supports, trainings, and resources to build your leadership skills and your locals."

We thank Carolyn Crowder for her passion and commitment to public schools, educators, support personnel, administrators, and families and welcome Rhonda Harlow to her new role.

MARCHING INTO MEMORIES: HOW A FIRST-GRADE PARADE BUILDS COMMUNITY

More than just a parade—Balloons Over Skelly teaches creativity, collaboration, and confidence

by Joe DuVall



Left: Skelly Student, Right: Jacob Rodriguez

Public schools are full of magic, and at Skelly Elementary in Tulsa, the magic marches down the hallways.

Inspired by the beloved children's book *Balloons Over Broadway*, first-grade teacher Kaitlin Simmonds and her dedicated team transformed a classroom activity into a schoolwide celebration, bringing learning to life in a way their students will never forget.

The book tells the story of Tony Sarg, the inventor of the massive balloons featured in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. It became the perfect launching point for Skelly's first-graders to dive into creativity, imagination, and hands-on learning.

"The story is about how Tony Sarg started inventing when he was six years old, just like our students," Simmonds explained. "We wanted them to see that their ideas can become reality."

For years, Simmonds had incorporated the book into her classroom at that scale, but this year, everything changed

when fellow first-grade teacher Shannon Stewart reached out with a question: "Have you ever read this book, *Balloons over Broadway?*"

Realizing her classroom project could be much more, Simmonds ignited a collaborative effort among the entire first-grade team, including Stewart, Alexia Wallace, Stephanie Worley, and Krystie Lopez. And with the enthusiastic support of the school's principal, Jennifer Heard, and assistant principals, Amanda Jones and Omeke Alikor, the project blossomed into a full-fledged school event. First-graders designed and created their own "balloons" out of paper, complete with arms, legs, and vibrant decorations.

The preparation for the parade was just as meaningful as the event itself. Students spent days brainstorming and sketching out their balloon ideas, discussing colors, shapes, and themes. Teachers incorporated writing assignments where students described their balloon designs and explained their choices. The activity encouraged creativity and reinforced fine motor skills as students carefully cut, glued, and pieced together their paper balloons.

"It wasn't just about having fun," Simmonds said. "There was real learning behind it, from writing and storytelling to art and engineering."

The school's staff rallied behind the project, ensuring that every student had the materials they needed to

cont.

MARCHING INTO MEMORIES



Nothing makes you want to come to school more than feeling like you belong somewhere

7/7

bring their visions to life.

"It was amazing to see our entire first-grade team come together," Simmonds said. "Everyone played a part in making this happen."

When parade day finally arrived, the excitement was palpable. The hallways buzzed with anticipation as students lined up with their creations. Parade music filled the air, and students proudly marched down the halls, holding their paper

balloons high. The rest of the school lined the walls, clapping and cheering in support of their younger peers.

"It was truly magical," Simmonds recalled. "Fifth-graders asked if they could make signs to cheer on the first-graders, and the entire school was engaged. It felt like we had created something really special."

For the first-graders, this

experience was about more than just fun—it was about belonging. Simmonds and her team wanted their students to feel valued, to know that their work mattered, and to experience firsthand the joy of learning.

"Nothing makes you want to come to school more than feeling like you belong somewhere," she said. "We want our kids to have these core memories—moments that make learning feel exciting and

important."

What started as a book study has now turned into a new tradition, one that will welcome each new class of first-graders with open arms.

"As these kids grow, they'll become the ones cheering for the younger students, just like the older kids did for them," Simmonds said. "It's something special, something they can look forward to every year."

Reflecting on the success of the event, Simmonds noted how it reinforced the sense of community at Skelly Elementary.

"It's not just about the lesson itself, but about the feeling it creates," she said. "We want students to feel like they are part of something bigger, that they are supported, and that their creativity is valued."

She also hopes this story can inspire other educators to think outside the box. "Sometimes it can feel risky to step away from the curriculum, but we found ways to align this project with our learning goals," she explained.

"The students wrote about their designs, used problem-solving skills to construct their balloons, and engaged in discussions about traditions, engineering, and storytelling. It was learning through play, and that's so valuable."

Beyond the academic benefits, Simmonds and her team see this project as a way to foster excitement about school. "We want them to wake up excited to come to school, knowing that there's something fun and meaningful waiting for them," she said.

"When students associate school with joy and creativity, they're more eager to learn."

The impact of the parade will extend far beyond the first-grade



hallway. Younger students who watched this year will one day be the ones holding the balloons, knowing that their moment to shine is just around the corner. Older students who once walked in the parade will return as spectators, cheering on the next wave of first-graders, continuing the cycle of encouragement and excitement.

Educators understand that learning isn't just about textbooks and tests—it's about the magic behind the doors, the moments that make school feel like home. And for one morning each year at Skelly Elementary, that magic will march proudly down the hallways, paper balloons held high, in a parade of joy, community, and endless possibilities.

These kinds of stories unfold in public schools every day—stories of creativity, innovation, and

belonging that often go unnoticed by those who never step inside. While some attempt to paint a false narrative about what happens in our classrooms, the truth is right here: students learning, growing, and thriving in ways that cannot be measured by test scores alone.



44

Truly, this
was won by
the entire
community
coming
together to
really support
our school



In most minds, small towns and Friday night lights go hand-in-hand. Football games at the local high school are an essential part of connecting small communities. Unfortunately, for places like Inola, Oklahoma, they do not always have access to the most up-to-date equipment and technology, but they make the most of it. Last fall, T-Mobile gave an opportunity for small towns to earn cash prizes in their Friday Night Lights Competition and through the power of community, Inola High School emerged as the victor.

T-Mobile used this competition to promote their work in rural areas as well as uplift those communities in a meaningful

SMALL TOWN SCORES BIG WIN

Inola High School wins national competition for grand prize worth \$2 million

by Monica Royer

way. During the 6-week span, the company awarded \$5,000 to 300 high schools, \$25,000 to 16 finalists, and a stadium technology upgrade package worth 2 million dollars to the champion.

The company chose its winner based on a number of factors including: compelling stories about why their high school needs the grand prize tech upgrade, potential impact on the school's football field and how the school has shown school spirit during the application window through social engagement.

This story all began when one community member happened to see a flyer for the competition at a local T-Mobile store. They gave it to Deleea Meeker the College and Career Coordinator, Speech and Debate Coach, and Student Council advisor at Inola High School.

"I thought this would be a good way to get some school spirit going during the football season," Meeker said. "So, our student council group started making Instagram posts and doing fun social media for it."

At first, it was just a fun way to get involved, but Meeker and her school quickly learned that they had an intense challenge in front of them. During the whole competition, there were over 1,700 applicants, 20,000 social media posts made,

22,000 fans in attendance, and much more. Despite the odds, the Inola community rallied together.

"Truly, this was won by the entire community coming together to really support our school," Meeker said.

The cellular company handed out smaller prizes throughout the competition as well as prompts to inspire them, but ultimately, it was up to the schools to show their authenticity and school pride. For Inola, this meant reaching out beyond their small community and making a state effort.

"From the students making endless posts, calling every superintendent in the state, to canvasing the mall, the OKC Thunder game, other schools, etc.—our students and community rallied together to make this happen!"

Through all the hard work and community outreach, Inola High School was named the national champion. The grand prize included a \$100,000 cash grant, a new techedout scoreboard, 5G network upgrades, the ultimate tailgate party for the whole community, a 5G-powered halftime drone show and an upgraded weight room from GronkFitness.com. Obviously, this prize will be impactful on the school and their athletic programs, but the cherry on top was truly the

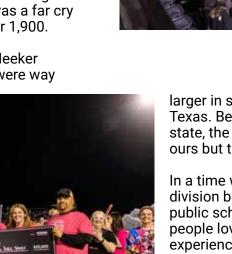


support shown by the community.

"Really, the competition itself brought our community together in a way we have not experienced in a long time," Meeker reflected. "There was a sense of pride and unity that was very special."

The weight of this win was huge, especially given that a large part of the competition was a numbers game, and frankly, Inola did not have that on its own. The only requirement for the competition was that the schools who entered needed to be from communities of 150,000 people or less. Although it was focused on smaller schools, Inola was a far cry from the cap with a population just under 1,900.

"Being a small town, this is incredible," Meeker gushed. "We went against schools that were way

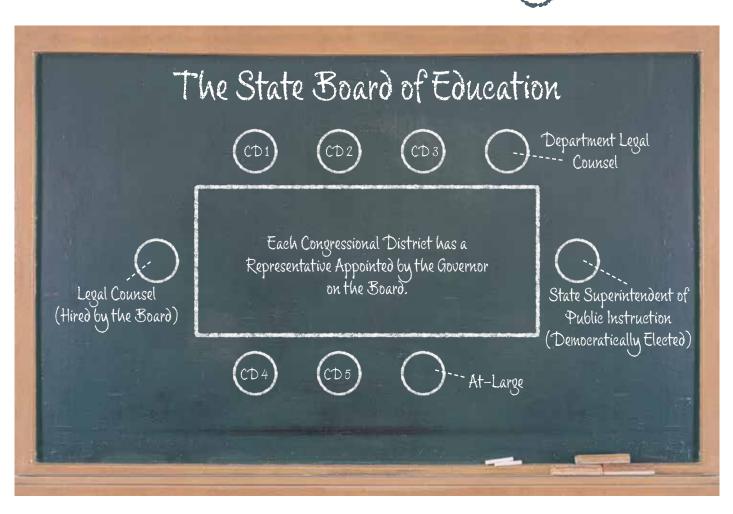




larger in states like California and Texas. Being a small town in a smaller state, the impact of this win is not just ours but the state's!"

In a time where it feels like there is division between the community and public schools, Inola's win proves that people love and support them. Inola's experience goes to show that schools are still the heart of our communities, and when they ask for help, people will rally for them.

Who is Deciding the Poli



Administrative Rules Process













RULES ARE DRAFTED

RULES OPEN FOR
PUBLIC
COMMENT

STATE BOARD VOTES ON RULES LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REVIEWS RULES

LEGISLATURE REVIEWS RULES GOVERNOR REVIEWS AND ACTS ON RULES

First, the
Oklahoma State
Department of
Education
(OSDE) drafts
proposed rules
to implement or
clarify state
education
policies.

Second, the proposed rules are published in the Oklahoma Register, and a public comment period follows which often includes a public hearing.

Third, after the comment period, the State Board of Education votes on the proposed rules.
All boardapproved rules are submitted to the legislature.

Fourth, during session the legislature reviews the rules through the Administrative Rules Committee. If passed, rules are then sent to the full chamber.

Fifth, the legislature can approve, reject, or modify them if both chambers agree. If they cannot come to a consensus, the rules are automatically sent to the Governor.

Lastly, the
Governor reviews
all rules and has an
opportunity to
reject or sign off
on each rule.
Approved rules are
then published in
the Oklahoma
Administrative
Code.

ities in Your Classroom?

60th Legislature Overview

Senate

One half of all 48 seats are up for election every even-numbered year. Terms are 4 years and each member may serve up to 3 terms equaling 12 years.

Floor Leader Rep. Julie Daniels

Legislative Cycle

2 year cycles. A bill that doesn't make it through the process is eligible to come back in 2nd year of the same session.

All 101 seats are up for election every even-numbered year. Terms are 2 years and each member may serve up to 6 terms equaling 12 years.



Pro Tempore

Rep. Lonnie Paxton

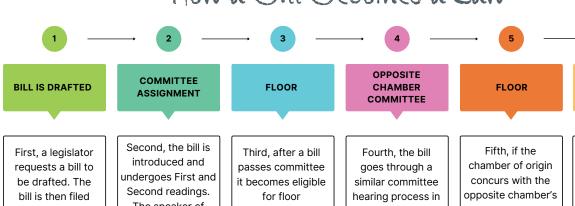
Rep. Kyle Hilbert



Rep. Anthony Moore

In 2026, Oklahoma will hold elections for the next Governor, and for State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

How a Bill Becomes a Law



and assigned a number. Thousands of bills are introduced each session.

The speaker of each chamber then assigns bills to specific committees. If a bill does not pass committee, it becomes dormant.

consideration. If a bill is not heard on the floor, it becomes dormant.

the opposing chamber. Once it returns to its chamber of origin, new amendments are considered.

amendments, the bill then moves on to the governor. If they do not concur, the bill goes to a conference committee.

Lastly, the Governor may either sign the bill into law or veto in one of three ways: Lineitem veto for appropriation bills, pocket veto, or veto. The legislature may then override the veto with 2/3 vote in each chamber.

GOVERNOR MAY

SIGN BILL INTO

LAW





What?

The OEA Legislative Directory was created to serve as a guide for members to browse a list of Oklahoma legislators, their districts, their contact information and to stay updated on key education issues during legislative session.

Where?

You can find the dashboard in the members area of OKEA. ORG -- When session begins this will be where to find all the latest up-to-date news coming from the capitol. www.okea.org/stay-informed/legislative-dashboard

Why?

This guide contains the stances of the OEA Fund for Children and Public Education (FCPE) on all current Oklahoma education issues and each legislator's recommendation status. All legislators previously recommended by the OEA FCPE are indicated on this guide. The OEA FCPE is a member driven political action committee that runs on voluntary donations from OEA members.

The legislative session is nearing its end, with the final day set for the last Friday in May. You can stay informed on legislative activities by visiting the OEA Legislative Dashboard.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Paige Goad, Legislative Assistant, at pgoad@okea.org.



With AFQuickClaims, many benefits can now be processed faster than ever when filing online or through AFmobile®.

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Insurance Benefits Eligible for Quick Processing



Accident
Wellness and
Screening
Annual physical
exam, preventive
testing and more.



Cancer Diagnostic Testing Mammogram, PAP, colonoscopy and more.



Health Screening Stress testing, blood glucose testing, echocardiogram and more.

Critical Illness



Disability Pregnancy ClaimsProvides a quick and easy filing process for routine pregnancy claims.

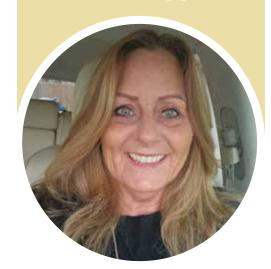


Disability Physician ExpensePays a lump sum if you see a doctor due to a covered injury or sickness.





You are not the labels you are given, and everyone is smart in my classroom



SPECIAL EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT

by Scout Anvar

Helena Ferchau's Special Education (SPED) students know that each class begins with a few moments of grounding and mindfulness. She understands the importance of starting the day off right and often says, "Each day is a new opportunity." Once class commences, Ferchau and her students enjoy hearing quiet music of calming frequencies to encourage concentration and positivity. She wants everyone to feel self-regulated, so they are prepared to learn and grow. She hopes to "show every student the love they need," no matter what.

Ferchau was in SPED classes herself as a child, and it has shaped her teaching style greatly. "I aimed to become the teacher I always needed in school but never had," she reflected. Now, she is a well-

qualified SPED educator and on track to receive a Master's Degree in Special Education from Northeastern University. Through her academic journey, Ferchau faced a lot of obstacles and doubt, which she began to internalize. But it was through the encouragement of a close friend that a switch flipped in her mind. This support planted a seed in her to encourage others, especially SPED students, that they are capable; "You are not the labels you are given, and everyone is smart in my classroom," Ferchau stated.

Ferchau rarely has issues with student behavior due to the effective classroom management techniques she has refined over her seven years at Council Grove Elementary. She is often commended by colleagues for the comfort, calmness, and peace of her beach themed classroom.

Ferchau began her career in student mental health and transitioned to SPED teaching due to the success she saw in the high-needs students she worked with. Her charisma, her kindness, and her resilience are evident in her teaching style. Let us all take a moment to appreciate the wonderful work SPED teachers are doing for students each day across the state, starting with Helena Ferchau.



The
responsibilities
of a bus driver
transcend the
steering wheel



ESP SPOTLIGHT

by Scout Anvar

There are so many moving parts to a successful school community and it can be easy to take for granted some of the most foundational parts, like our school transportation services.

Behind the wheel of one Edmond Public School bus sits beloved driver, Janice Brown. Brown is well known across Edmond schools as a compassionate and thoughtful member of the team. Brown was hesitant to begin her career in school transportation at first but was hired on the spot and received transportation training through the district at a career fair for support employees two years ago. She has been "all wheels on the ground" ever since.

Brown is raising her grandson and wants to be involved in schools to support him while staying active in the community. She also fondly remembers a bus driver her daughter had who went above and beyond to be a positive and influential adult in students' lives. Brown takes every opportunity to show up for her students and to connect with them.

"Sometimes all it takes is someone to acknowledge you, to show you they care," she remarked.

Brown shows her love for the profession in many ways. Whether it involves talking students through emotional life events, providing treats like Starbucks drinks to encourage them during important testing, or communicating with families when she believes a student may need extra support, Brown exudes kindness for all.

"The responsibilities of a bus driver transcend the steering wheel," she said.

Brown is the first friendly face a child sees in the morning, and the last one they see before going home. As a transportation professional, she must ensure all 60+ students get to and from school safely while managing their behavior and maintaining road safety between other drivers. She does all of this with a warm, welcoming smile.

"I know every kid on my bus. I know their demeanor, their circumstances, and in many cases, their home lives," Brown explained.

With every word of encouragement, and every snack provided, Brown leaves a lasting impression on every student she supports.



Pescheduled to June 4-5







Transforming our world for the common good

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Registration \$40 Opens April 21 - May 21





What is Summer Leadership?

The OEA Summer Leadership Conference is designed to equip local education leaders with the skills and knowledge needed to strengthen their schools, communities, and local associations. This year, the conference will take place at multiple regional locations across Oklahoma, making it more accessible to educators statewide.

Summer Leadership Academy 2025

Who is Summer Leadership For?

The event offers specialized training for local leaders at all levels—from chapter presidents and treasurers to early-career educators preparing for future leadership roles. Sessions will focus on effective advocacy, financial management, organizing strategies, and leadership development, and more ensuring attendees leave with practical tools to support their colleagues and students.

Where will Summer Leadership Take Place?

By expanding to multiple locations, OEA aims to provide a more inclusive and engaging experience, allowing participants to connect with peers, share insights, and gain region-specific guidance. Whether you're a seasoned leader or just beginning your journey, the Summer Leadership Conference is an essential opportunity to grow, collaborate, and make a lasting impact as an education leader in Oklahoma.

Stay Tuned for Locations and Dates

BRINGING THE REAL WORLD INTO THE CLASSROOM

Edmond teacher asks local journalists to help students

by Monica Royer

In recent years, there has been a push for more integration and partnership of community resources and career professionals in the classroom, especially at the secondary level. Educators, parents, and community members recognize the importance of students being able to see themselves in the workforce and help them to pursue their dream careers. Callie Reichert, an English III teacher and Newspaper Advisor, knew that regardless of her passion for English and experience as a student journalist, her newspaper students needed more. They needed to learn from someone in the trade, but more importantly, to be inspired by them, so she invited local reporters to come to her classroom.

"I am new to helping with our student newspaper this year, and it occurred to me it would be beneficial for both me and my students to hear from real professionals," Reichert explained.

With the help of OEA, Reichert was able to get connected with journalists Nuria Martinez-Keel from Oklahoma Voice and Blake Douglas from NonDoc. Martinez-Keel, a long-time education journalist, jumped at the opportunity immediately.

"As an education reporter, I enjoy visiting schools and interacting with the teachers and students who are at the heart of the beat I cover," Keel said.

Although Keel is an established writer, she recognized the importance of going back to her roots and lifting up the next generation of journalists.

"Every professional journalist started somewhere," Keel explained. "Those of us farther down the road should share what we know with those at the beginning of their journey, and the students I visited are much farther along than I was at their age." Douglas, who leads NonDoc's Edmond Civic Reporting Project, felt especially connected to students in this area.

"Everywhere across the country, but especially in Edmond as a town that is now without its traditional newspaper or record, it's important for journalism students to have access to working journalists," Douglas explained. "It's even more important they can hear from those that actually cover the communities they live and study in, given that is where they'll be laying the foundation for their understanding of journalism."

During both visits, Reichert was thrilled to see her students entranced by the reporters and eager to learn. Upon hearing that the visits were scheduled, they prepared questions and sought help with interviews and overall writing structure. Keel and Douglas presented tips and tricks for the students.

"I shared with them the method I learned in college to structure a news article," Keel explained. "The method is called the High Five, and it helps the writer prioritize what pertinent information should go at the top of a story."

Although the writing tips helped, it was the personal narratives that really drew the students in.

"Real-world experience trumps traditional lecture every time—it's just much more engaging," Reichert said. "Journalists come in with







Real-world experience trumps traditional lecture every time

7,

real stories and details about things they have dealt with in the field and those are things I would never be able to include in a traditional curriculum since I do not have those experiences."

Keel and Douglas did not take this responsibility lightly. Keel knew that she could do more than just try to get kids to be journalists—she could help them with life skills.

"Even if none of these students ultimately pursue a journalism career, I think it's important to learn what goes into a quality news story and how a proper interview is conducted," Keel said. "Media literacy is a skill that will help them throughout life."

Douglas wanted to be sure that if any students were serious about pursuing this career, they would know what to expect.

"With general trust of legacy media outlets at one of the lowest points it's ever been, working journalists have a responsibility to explain to prospective writers the circumstances that have caused that slip, some within the control of media and some without," Douglas explained. "The only way to recover that lost trust is through ethical, contextual and skillful reporting, something that the next generation of news media has to be ready to prioritize."

After both visits, all parties involved were grateful for the experience. Reichert immediately saw a spark lit in her students and was eager to ask the reporters for more visits.

"These visits meant a lot to me because these professionals gave up their own time to be there and answer questions," Reichert said.

Douglas was also moved by the experience because he did not have the opportunities that these kids do.

"As someone whose high school did not have a paper, I'm glad to see not just that the program exists here but has attracted a lot of curious students to take part!" Douglas exclaimed.

This experience shows that education should not be limited

to the walls of a school. When members of the community come into the classroom and work with teachers, magic can happen. Students need opportunities to know what possibilities are out in the world and sometimes even when a teacher tells them, it is hard to believe. But when community members come in and make a connection, it can make a world of difference in perspective.







NEW EDUCATORS OF OKLAHOMA NETWORK

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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



Women's Caucus



Native American Caucus



Peace & Justice Caucus



Republican Caucus



Rural Caucus







