

Education Focus

Removing all barriers

Community schools pay huge dividends in suburban Union

By Doug Folks

As school buildings go, Ellen Ochoa Elementary looks like many modern schools being built these days in suburban

Oklahoma towns. Lots of natural light filtering into the classrooms. Interesting design lines inside and out. Happy students going about their daily routines.

The first hint that Ochoa is something else altogether is the other building sitting on the campus. It's a health clinic and it's not a separate entity that just happened to plop down next to a school. The clinic is part of the school and sits on the campus intentionally, serving the students of Ochoa, their families and even community members with no direct connection to the school other than living within its attendance boundaries.

What's not so obvious to the casual passer-by is how much the community as a whole is involved at the school.

Ochoa is found on the northern edge of the Union Public School (UPS) district, just across the street from the Tulsa Public Schools district. Ochoa has nearly 1,000 students, mostly Hispanic but very diverse. About 90% of its students qualify for free and reduced meals, and most are bilingual.

All of the students at Ochoa and their families live within a mile-and-a-half of the school.

UPS considers all of its sites to be community schools, but eight elementaries are



Fourth grade teacher Hannah Jarman stands outside of her classroom at Ellen Ochoa Elementary in the Union School District. She says the biggest difference teaching at a community school is just that – a real sense of physical community between the teachers, students, parents and patrons within the school's attendance boundaries. (Photo by Doug Folks.)

“full-service community schools.” Ochoa stands out as the model, providing wrap-around services fully immersed in helping its surrounding community.

Defining community schools

The concept of community schools may not be well-known outside of education circles, or even outside of the Union district. But they can be found all over the country with a proven track record of transforming low-performing schools.

In Austin, Webb Middle School had a graduation rate of just 48% in 2009 and was on the verge of closure. By 2016, it was the highest performing Title 1 school among the district's 14 middle schools with a 90% graduation rate.

In 2000, Cincinnati had no community

schools and 85% of its students dropped out by the end of the 10th grade. After turning 44 of its 65 sites into community schools, the district jumped to an 80% graduation rate with 40% of its students going to college.

After adopting the community schools model, Hillsborough, Florida, schools saw student suspensions drop 69% in one elementary and 34% at a middle school.

Kulsum Siddiqui, Union's district school liaison for community schools, sums up the model rather simply: “You can't help students without helping their families.”

Community schools are built on six pillars:

1. Strengthened curriculum and aca-

See “Parents” on Page 4

Leaning in and listening

“This is the hardest year of my career.”

Vice president Cari Elledge and I heard that statement repeatedly as we traveled the state listening to our members this fall. We saw it in their eyes and heard it in their voices. The stress, exhaustion and fatigue was palpable.

If you would have asked me in June or July how the 2021 school year would start, I would have been full of optimism. Then, August came with a vengeance. The COVID variant was surging, we had over 650,000 students sitting in classrooms without the prevention layer of the vaccine and SB 658 created a lot of confusion for districts, school boards and parents.

For so many of our districts our approach has been “business as usual,” but the reality is we are still in the middle of a pandemic. We still have students and educators that are getting sick, and many of them are facing the heartache of those who have passed away. I find myself wanting to yell at the top of my lungs, “This is not business as usual!”



Through my travels, I've had one goal in mind – to get to you in person so I can lean in and listen. It was not uncommon to hear members talk about their fellow educators that have just had enough and

quit. When I think about that there is a pit in my stomach for the loss of an educator who is not with students, the loss to their colleagues and the loss to our profession.

What was it that made our education professionals say enough is enough? Was it pay? Was it workload? Was it the lack of support and respect? There was no single cause because it was all of the layers upon layers that had built up to say, “I'm done – I'm leaving a profession that I love.”

The layers keep piling up and to what end and what cost? In addition to those common themes, we have our students that are depending on us to be the constant stability in their lives. They, too, are living through the layers upon layers of disruption, stress and grief of this pandemic.

Daily, we see the impact these last two years have had on their social and emotional growth and well-being. In a perfect world, we would wish for a magic wand to wave in the air and put everything back to normal, however, there is no normal. But to my dismay, that is exactly how so many districts have approached this school year – everything is back to status quo.

What's the solution? We are the solution. We are the experts that every day are making sure that students arrive safely on our buses. We are making sure that no student suf-

fers the effects of food insecurities, providing two and sometimes three meals a day. We are making sure that we are providing learning environments that are focused on their academic and social and emotional growth. It is the uniqueness of every local that makes our associations and their members the solution.

I encourage you to sit down and be willing to lean in and listen to your members, administration and community members. Discuss where you want to be. What are your goals? Take a deep look and reflect on what you did last year that you are not doing this year. Was there something that gave you the needed time that you are so desperately lacking this year? What resources and support do you need to achieve your goals? How do we get to be out-of-the-box thinkers that we were the last year and a half?

Please know that you are not alone and as your state association we stand ready to assist your local association brainstorm and problem-solve to become solution driven.

Thank you for what you do each day and what you do for our students and our profession.

Be well,

Katherine

Katherine Bishop
OEA President



During the listening tour of the eastern half of Oklahoma, Katherine met with Tulsa Metro leaders (photo above left) and with Owasso's Teresa Blair (center) and Shirley Statum (right). (Photos provided.)

Spring: The perfect time to save money

By David Glenn
NEA Member Benefits

The holidays are upon us, along with all their joy, good cheer and – no doubt – an extra measure of stress! As you approach the Season of Caring and focus on the needs of others, it's also important to look after your own well-being, too. The association benefits highlighted below offer ways to make the holidays more affordable and enjoyable for everyone!

Save
with
Dave



David Glenn

Save this holiday season and beyond

NEA Discount Marketplace, powered by Rakuten. If you're shopping anyway, why not get cash back while you do it? With the NEA Discount Marketplace, earn Cash Back on your holiday purchases from more than 2,500 top retailers. Visit www.neamb.com/marketplace to set up your Rakuten account and start shopping!

Take advantage of December's exclusive deals from Access: 1800Flowers, Restaurant.com, Shiseido, Bose and Lowe's!

Buy Now and Pay Later with NEA Easy Pay, powered by Square Deal Market. NEA members enjoy making purchases with no credit check, interest charges or membership fees. Convenient payment plans are set up with auto debit.

Keep stress at bay this holiday season

Work and family pressures, the pandemic and holiday preparations can add up to one big ball of stress, but there are resources available to help you keep it all together.

Be sure to check out the **NEA Mental Health Program App from Sanvello.** This on-demand mobile app provides clinically validated tools for managing stress, anxiety, depression and more. Many app resources are free of charge, and others are discounted for NEA members. Learn more at www.neamb.com/mentalhealth.

Be sure to check out my 10 minute Save With Dave Face-book Live at 5:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month for more information on ways to recoup your dues dollars.

I and everyone at NEA Member Benefits wish you a peaceful and joyous holiday season!

It's like eating out of the palm of your hand.



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OEA

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to show your phone and save anytime,
anywhere. Use promo code 101952 plus
your OEA membership ID number.

The Education Focus

Volume 39, Number 2

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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.

Need help? Contact your regional team.
Oklahoma City Metro, Northwest, Southeast
and Southwest Teams
323 E. Madison, Okla. City, OK 73105
800/522-8091 or 405/528-7785

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OEA Oklahoma Education Association
putting education first.

Everyone plays a role at a community school

- Continued from Page 1*
- demic programs that are culturally relevant and engaging.
2. An emphasis on high-quality teaching.
 3. Coordinated and integrated wrap-around supports, such as health care, eye care and social and emotional services.
 4. Positive behavior practices such as restorative practices.
 5. Transformational family, student and community engagement.
 6. A shared leadership philosophy.

What is really exciting about this model – especially for policymakers – is that it doesn’t need another penny of tax money to be implemented or to be successful. Partnerships with local businesses and nonprofits help fund the variety of services and programming.

Union’s path to the community schools model

Poverty levels were at 15% in the Union district in 2000, with a student body comprised mostly of white students. About that time, teachers started seeing a deep shift in their student demographics. Today, the poverty level is 70% and UPS schools have a much more diverse student population than it did just 15 years ago.

As the district demographics began to change, UPS administration realized that it must embrace the new diversity.

“When we see a student who is on the cusp of learning English, we don’t see that as (an obstacle),” said Siddiqui, a 2000 graduate of Union High School. “We see that as, ‘This kid is bilingual. This kid is going to have a bright future because he can speak English and Spanish.’”

Moving to a community school model required a new mindset and a willingness to find innovative ways to help students be successful not just in school but in life later on. The idea that school was 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. September through May was not good enough. After-school programming was a must and the school building needed to be open in the summer.

Siddiqui said a survey of parents found that 75% of students did not

participate in any enrichment program outside of school. The No. 1 reason was cost, followed by transportation and parent schedules.

Today, enriched after-school programming is a hallmark at Union’s eight full-service community schools. Roy Clark Elementary was first, in 2005. Next came Boevers, Grove, Jarman, Jefferson, McAuliffe, and Rosa Parks elementaries. The newest elementary, Ochoa, was built in 2017 with the community school model in mind. Each school conducts an annual needs assessment with its families to determine afterschool programming.

“Community schools is not a cookie-cutter approach. It looks different in every school,” Siddiqui said.

The programs are open to all students, serving about 3,000 students pre-pandemic. Each site’s after-school program runs Monday through Thursday for an hour-and-a-half to two hours, September through May. Every child receives a snack and transportation home. The programming looks different at each site. It could feature STEM, fine arts, youth development, health and wellness or coding – whatever appeals to that individual school community.

Run Club has been a very popular after-school program. During the pandemic, UPS offered a virtual run club, giving students a log in which to track their progress. If they completed 26.2 miles over an eight-week period, students received a medal for completing a marathon.

Partners like Camp Fire, Girls Scouts and

Tulsa Changemakers provide programming at no cost. Other programs like visiting the Tulsa Children’s Museum or hobby-based clubs need funding. Siddiqui, who finds herself spending more time fund-raising, assures corporate sponsors that their money will be used for programming only. Nonprofits provide food and clothing.

Ochoa takes community schools to the next level

Fifth-year teacher Hannah Jarman is in her third year teaching fourth grade at Ochoa. She came to Tulsa as a Teach for America educator after receiving an undergraduate degree from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

She spent her first two years teaching in a charter school that accepted students from around the city. Teaching at Ochoa is an entirely different experience.



When Ellen Ochoa Elementary was in the design phase, officials asked students and parents what they wanted to see in the new building. The kids wanted a slide, which now sits in the center of school. (Photo by Doug Folks.)



“You can’t help students without helping their families.”

Kulsum Siddiqui, UPS district school liaison for community schools

“You just really get that sense of physical community,” she said of Ochoa. “You get to walk into the neighborhood and see all your families outside and there’s also the welcoming experience of having parents come into the building. Even from my first year here to now, I’ve seen the sense of community grow so much.”

The on-site health clinic is run by Community Health Connections. Funding to build the clinic came from the City of Tulsa. It provides a wide variety of health care, including nutrition and dental screenings, for all residents in the Ochoa boundaries. Students also have access to mental health services separate from the health clinic.

Ochoa Elementary includes a community kitchen and a space dedicated to a neighborhood garden. There is a room used for after-school community events, like tax preparation seminars, that is accessed without entering the school.

Even building the school included input from the entire community. The students wanted an indoor slide, so a shiny, metal, two-story spiral slide sits in the middle of the building.

“Everyone plays a role in a community school,” Siddiqui said. “So, you’re looking at all of the different stakeholders in a small community and what does every single person need and how can we have

Taking community schools statewide

The success of the community schools model in Tulsa Union Public Schools and across the country are eye-opening. By removing all barriers that prevent student success, districts are seeing vastly improved graduation rates, fewer dropouts and better student behavior.

Oklahoma schools can currently adopt the community school model at any time. But the Oklahoma Education Association wants to see the legislature amend the law so that districts can receive federal funding to help implement the model.

Community schools also offer another benefit for all public schools by eliminating the argument for vouchers.

“We know vouchers will be run again during the next legislative session. But, we’re trying to change the conversation and look at school choice in a different way,” said Ivy Riggs, OEA director of government relations. “If we’re really trying to talk about reaching kids who don’t have a lot of options, who need some extra help, community schools are the solution, not vouchers.

“We all know that a voucher is not enough money to send a kid to private school. It doesn’t come with all the other supports, like transportation. And private schools are not recruiting kids from lower income neighborhoods.”

those wrap-around services to ensure that not only are students getting what they need but how can we support the families to help students as well.”

Following through on the concept

Union’s philosophy of helping students be successful by removing all obstacles is foremost, all the way through high school.

“Union’s mission is pretty simple: 100% graduation, college and career ready,” Siddiqui said. “It’s simple, but very ambitious.” That goal is embraced by everyone from the superintendent’s office to the faculty, from the support staff to the students.

The high school football program is a perennial contender for a state championship in Oklahoma’s largest class. The team has 200 players in uniform because there are no cuts – everyone who wants to play is on the team. The co-curricular model is followed for all high school activities, from sports to band to drama.

“About 90% of our high school students are engaged in some kind of co-curricular activity,” Siddiqui said. “If a kid is engaged in one extra-curricular activity, the chances for graduation are much greater.”

The district established the Career Connect Department after realizing its students were graduating but not going on to college or getting jobs making a living wage. The program connects students to a variety of industries, including automotive, health care and childcare. Juniors and seniors are assigned different internships in the community, and the participating companies wind up hiring those students after they graduate.

“Union Schools provides transportation (to the internships). We provide steel-toed boots if that’s what’s needed,” she says. “Removing barriers for students is a priority for the district.”

For students looking to attend college, Union established a partnership with Tulsa Community College. Each year, a cohort of students who reflect the district’s population take college courses at Union High School. When they graduate, they not only have a high school diploma, but also an associate’s degree.

From after-school programs at the elementary level to college and career programs at the secondary level, Union Public Schools is removing obstacles through the community schools model. The results speak for themselves.

Q & A with Ivy Riggs

What to expect from the 2022 legislative session

In early October, Ivy Riggs was named as OEA’s associate executive director for the Center of Legislative and Political Organizing. A former middle school science teacher in Mustang, she worked nearly nine years as a lobbyist and a member of the OEA’s Southeast Regional Team prior to the promotion as the association’s director of government relations. We sat down with Ivy to get her take on the upcoming legislative session, which begins February 7.

Education Focus – Last year, we experienced one of the worst legislative sessions for public education. Do you agree?

Ivy Riggs – “At the end of last session, there were a lot of changes in education policy that we felt were reactive to the pandemic. There was a high level of frustration and I think we saw a lot of legislation that reflected those feelings. Hopefully, a pandemic is a once-in-a-lifetime thing, so it’s hard to accept that we need statewide legislation to fix a problem we have no control over. They weren’t happy with how some schools handled decisions to meet virtually or in-person. At the very end of the session, we saw a bill that prohibited vaccine and mask mandates. All through the session, that bill had other language, but it was substituted at the last minute.

“The people driving the train are not educators or live in the education world, so it’s frustrating when they don’t ask an educator. There are lots of educators in the legislature, but that’s not who’s pushing this agenda.”

EF – Since the end of May, you’ve had a lot of conversations with legislators. Is the attitude going to be different this year?

IR – “I hope so. When I talk to our education allies – moderates on both sides of the aisle – they are fed up with how things were done last session. There were promises made that some in leadership reneged on. There was some pressure from the governor and outside groups. On the other hand, I’m worried because what we’re seeing is a lot of screaming and yelling at school board meetings and parents that have never been involved before now want to take over school boards. Legislators are hearing from those parents. I don’t think for a second that they are the majority; I think they are a really loud minority.”

EF – 2022 is an election year. What can we expect with that in mind?

IR – “In an election year, typically, we’ll see more gun bills and pro-life bills – issues they can put on flyers to say, ‘See, I’m protecting you.’ I think we’ll see more mandates and prohibitions on LGBTQ students. I think we’re going to see more attempts at mandating what we can teach with curriculum limitations. I think we have a few folks out there who are pushing the envelope of what they are discussing in the classroom, but overall, none of



Ivy Riggs was recently name director of government relations for OEA. She has been with the association for nearly nine years as an OEA lobbyist and a member of the Southeast Regional Team. (Photo by Doug Folks.)

these concerns are legitimate. But where it is happening, legislators are hearing about it. It’s problematic because those legislators believe it’s happening on a wider scale.”

EF – In a lot of election years, there is legislation to give teachers and support professionals a raise. Can we expect that this year?

IR – “I can’t say for sure at this point, but I can tell you we’ve heard a little talk about a bill to raise pay for ESPs. I haven’t heard any talk about a teacher pay raise. I do anticipate a growing budget because tax collections are up and oil prices are on the rise. The things that feed our economy are healthy and doing better. Coming out of a pandemic, that’s amazing to me. I think they are going to try to target specific areas, like teacher recruitment and retention, maybe some scholarships.

Civics + education = Civication

By Joe DuVall

Lawmakers are connected to so much that impacts public education, yet many are disconnected from the schools in Oklahoma.

As educators, you are the experts. As advocates for your students and your profession, you have the ability to inform our state’s leaders on what actually happens inside the classroom. The Oklahoma Education Association is thrilled to help facilitate those discussions through ‘Civication,’ where civics and education can finally meet.

There will be opportunities for OEA members to interact with their elected leaders both at home and at the Capitol.

OEA is divided into zones that each elect a member to represent them on the board of directors. For “Civication at Home,” those board members will set a zone meeting for members to have dinner and a conversation with their local legislators from December through February. Your legislative and political organizer (LPO) will schedule the meeting with legislators or, if legislators are unable to attend, then LPO staff will host a training for members. Meals for members will be covered by the OEA.

“Civication at the Capitol” will occur every Tuesday in March and April. Members will register and have the option to stay overnight in a double occupancy hotel room. OEA will host a dinner on Monday night and host a legislative briefing



and breakfast Tuesday morning. Money for gas, substitute pay, double occupancy hotel room, dinner Monday and breakfast Tuesday will be covered by the OEA. You will have an option to choose a preferred roommate, an assigned roommate or pay half the cost of the room to stay by yourself.

Due to the pandemic, it is likely that lawmakers have not physically interacted with schools or their employees in a very long time. It is imperative that educators remind those in power of the importance of public schools to the overall quality of life in Oklahoma and the resources professional educators require to maximize their impact.

“Civication provides an opportunity to build stronger relationships between our members and legislators. We want this to develop on-going conversations centered around improving public education for all students in Oklahoma,” said Ellen Pogemiller, legislative and political organizing specialist.

Let OEA and Civication be the reason you become active. This is your sign. You are the voice your students need and we are here to amplify it in the most effective direction possible.

Sign up and find out more at okea.org/civication.

On the next two pages you will find a poster outlining Civication that you can pull out and post in the staff lounge or work room.

There is talk of bringing the NBCT stipends back, maybe some money for mentorships – ways to keep folks in the profession and recruit people to the profession.”

EF – What legislation are we pushing this year?

IR – “We are trying to work on an employee assistance program. Currently, state employees have access to the Department of Mental Health for services. I know that every school employee has health insurance, but they don’t always know where to go. So, this service would connect school employees with those services.

“We were lucky enough to join Rep. Ronny Johns (R, Ada) and Rep. John Talley (R, Stillwater) on an interim study this past fall on some support employee issues. For instance, now that schools have a handle on how to conduct virtual school, we may not see snow days anymore. We’ll see virtual days instead. But when a district has a virtual day, ESPs don’t have an option to work. So, we’re looking at ways we can protect our ESP salaries.”

EF – Because of the pandemic, our members had a hard time connecting with legislators last session. How are we addressing that for 2022?

IR – “We think that one reason last session was so anti-public education was the breakdown of the relationships we had built over the last few years. Pre-pandemic, we had several locals who brought people to lobby throughout the session, almost every week. But over the last year, the normal legislative breakfasts or coffee-shop chats became virtual and I think you just lose a little

bit of that personal touch. So, the only contact legislators were receiving was coming from angry parents who were frustrated with what was happening in schools. They weren’t hearing the good stories they normally do.

“That’s why we’ve applied for and won an NEA grant to help turn that around. Every week in March and April, we’re going to invite members to join us Monday evening for a dinner and legislative discussion. Then, we’ll put them up in a hotel for the evening. The next morning, we’ll have a breakfast and a formal briefing before going to the Capitol to lobby. We’ll provide some gas money and even pay for a sub.

“The more we can get face-to-face with our legislators, hopefully, the more we gain back some of that ground we lost to the pandemic.”

Important legislative dates

- Feb. 7 – Second session of the 58th Legislature begins
- March 3 – 1st committee deadline
- March 17 – Floor vote deadline for bills in chamber of origin
- April 14 – Committee deadline for bills from opposite chamber
- April 28 – Floor vote deadline for bills from opposite chamber
- May 2-27 – Conference committee and final approval process
- May 27 – Session ends (sine die)



c i v i c s + e d u c a t i o n

@ home

December through February: Join us for dinner! OEA board members are hosting zone meetings across Oklahoma. Lawmakers who represent the surrounding communities will be invited, and a member of the OEA legislative team will provide a quick training about advocating for public education.



dinner + hometown + advocacy

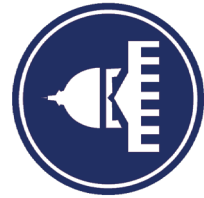
Members of the OEA Board of Directors will schedule dinners for their respective zones. Lawmakers who represent the surrounding area will be invited to meet with members. Some zones will receive a quick legislative training about advocacy. No RSVP required!

- **Northeast A** – 6 p.m. Jan. 24, Pizza Hut, Vinita
- **Northeast C** – 5:30 p.m. Feb. 10, Napoli's, Tahlequah
- **Northwest A** – 6 p.m. Jan. 13, Pheasant Run Golf Club, Enid.
- **Northwest B** – 5 p.m. Jan. 13, McAlister's Deli, Stillwater.
- **OKC Metro A** – 6:30 p.m. Jan. 14, The Education Association of Moore office, Moore.
- **OKC Metro B** – 6 p.m. Feb. 3, Swadley's BBQ, Bethany.
- **OKC Metro C** – 6 p.m. Jan. 11, at Louie's, Edmond
- **OKC Metro D** – 6 p.m. Jan. 27, at S&B Burgers, Midwest City
- **Southeast C** – 6 p.m. Jan. 11, at Red B Restaurant, Idabel.
- **Southwest C North** – 5:15 p.m. Jan. 20, Giuseppe's, Marlow.
- **Tulsa Metro A/B** – 6 p.m. Jan. 11, at Carrabba's, Tulsa

Don't see your zone? Check the latest event listings at okea.org/civication

@ the capitol

Tuesdays in March and April: Join us for a trip to the Capitol! OEA members from across the state are invited to meet their lawmakers – a trip complete with free hotel, meals and mileage. OEA will even pay for your sub! If you prefer a shorter trip, you can join us for breakfast Tuesday morning.



overnight + dinner + breakfast

Stay the night in a downtown Oklahoma City hotel. Enjoy complimentary dinner and have the chance to network with fellow OEA members. Join us for breakfast, a quick advocacy training, and a trip to meet lawmakers at the Capitol.

Members have three options for Civication @ the Capitol:

- + **Overnight, networking, and training.** On Monday night, enjoy dinner with your fellow OEA members and then stay the night in a downtown Oklahoma City hotel. On Tuesday morning, join us for a breakfast training before heading to the Capitol.
- + **Networking and training only.** On Monday night, enjoy dinner with your fellow OEA members and then home for the evening. On Tuesday morning, join us for a breakfast training before heading to the Capitol.
- + **Training only.** On Tuesday morning, join us for a breakfast training before heading to the Capitol to meet with lawmakers and advocate for public education.



Ready to sign up? Register by scanning the code or going here:

okea.org/civication

FCPE funds pro-public education candidates

Every decision made for education is made by a politician. Whether it is the governor, the state legislature or the local school board, elected officials determine how our schools are run. That's why many OEA members choose to make voluntary contributions to OEA's nonpartisan Fund for Children and Public Education (OEA FCPE). They know that the political environment is a significant factor affecting their jobs every day.

Voluntary OEA FCPE contributions are designed to help elect friends of education to political office. Dues dollars are never used to support political candidates.

The association uses an in-depth process to find candidates who will vote favorably on public education legislation, using members at every step. First-time candidates complete a questionnaire and incumbents' voting records are examined. Every candidate who participates in the process also sits for an interview with a panel of members.

Recommended candidates typically receive financial support for their campaign expenses, but the contribution amount differs depending on the political race and the needs of the candidate.

By recommending the candidate, OEA is asking members to consider voting for the candidate. But the OEA FCPE knows that its recommendations are but one source for members to consider before entering the voting booth.

Donating to the FCPE is easy. You can donate through PayPal, Venmo (search @OEA-FCPE on your Venmo app), through payroll deduction or by completing a form and mailing it to the OEA.

Find links to the various donation methods and more information on how candidates are recommended at okea.org/fcpe.

Seminar will prepare you for 2022 election season

Get a jump on the 2022 election cycle by joining the OEA Center for Legislative and Political Organizing for a full day of workshops about how to hit the campaign trail as a candidate or volunteer.



Run the Race 2022 will be held 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, January 22, in the Oklahoma City area at a site to be determined. Lunch will be provided. Registration is free but required. The event will feature two tracks: offices for the Oklahoma legislature and other state-level races and school board campaigns. Topics will include fund-raising, field work, volunteer coordination, and other campaign-related issues.

The workshop is open to individuals and groups representing local OEA associations. Registration is found at okea.org/runtherace.

For more information, contact Scout Anvar, LPO center assistant, at sanvar@okea.org or 405/523-4310.

Serve on an interview committee

OEA members who donate to the Fund for Children and Public Education are eligible to serve on interview committees for races in their home districts. If you would be interested in serving, complete this form and return it to Scout Anvar, LPO Center Assistant, PO Box 18485, OKC, OK 73154, or complete the form online at okea.org/fcpe.

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Mid American Christian University's Master of Education in Educational Leadership is designed for those who seek to positively transform the lives of educators, children, families, and communities through educational leadership as a principal, assistant principal, or other administrator within educational institutions.

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Organizing conference to be "Better Together"

Better Together: Organizing Through Advocacy," the theme for OEA's 2022 Organizing Conference, carries a double meaning. Not only does it signify the strength of collective action, it also highlights the conference returning to an in-person meeting after last year's virtual conference.

The members-only conference is set for Feb. 25-26 at the Embassy Suites Northwest in Oklahoma City. Those who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 may attend in-person. A virtual option will be offered for unvaccinated or those who would feel safer attending the conference online.

Registration will open Jan. 1. Early bird registration of \$35 per person will run through Feb. 4. After that day, registration is \$50 per person.

An evening of fun and fellowship on Friday the 25th will feature Singo and the 2nd Annual Lip Sync Battle, which this year will include performances by members. Proceeds from both activities will benefit the Fund for Children and Public Education.

Saturday's agenda will feature special keynote speakers to open and close the conference and two sessions of breakouts. Tentative topics for the breakouts will include personal wellness with Dr. Elizabeth Risch, a panel on strengthening community relations, community schools, and building relationships between

local association bargaining teams and school boards and administration. The four sessions will be offered twice.

Network opportunity added for early career educators

This year's organizing conference has an added bonus for early career educators. Thanks to a grant from the National Education Association, the Early Career Link educators new to the profession a unique networking opportunity.

Participants will have their conference registration paid for along with hotel rooms for the nights of Feb. 25 and 26. After the organizing conference agenda is completed, the EC Link attendees will convene to enjoy an evening of food and fun and a chance to make new connections in the association.

The extra event is being planned by OEA's new educator group, NEON (New Educators of Oklahoma Network).

EC Link is open to all members with seven years or fewer in the profession. The conference registration form will include a place to sign up for the event. For more information, early career educators may contact Heather Cody at hcody@okea.org or 918/706-6807.

For more information on Better Together, Organizing Through Advocacy, contact Brian Johnson at bjohnson@okea.org or 405/584-1655.



Let's honor the best of the best

Recognizing a great teacher, a dedicated education support professional or a local organization that supports public schools shines a spotlight on the good in education.

The goal of the OEA Awards Program is to honor excellence in education. The association is now accepting nominations for all awards.

The deadline is 5 p.m. Jan. 28.

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

Nominations must be received at OEA Headquarters by the deadline. 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 contributed 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.



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Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

(Required by 39 USC 3685)

The publication’s title is The Education Focus (Publication No. 1542-1678). The filing date of the statement is Oct. 6, 2021. It is published quarterly. The annual subscription price is \$5.00. The complete mailing address of the known office of the publication and of the General Business Office of the Publisher is: Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105-3117. Doug Folks (405/523-4355) is the contact person. The publisher is the Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105-3117. Doug Folks is the Editor and Carolyn Crowder is the Managing Editor. Owner of the publication is the Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105-3117. There are no bondholders, mortgagees, or other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax have not changed during the preceding 12 months. The name of the publication is The Education Focus. The issue date for the circulation data which follows is Aug. 5, 2021. The data is classified as follows: a. the average number of copies of each issue during preceding 12 months, and b. the actual number copies of the single issue published nearest the filing date. Total number of copies: a. 15,789; b. 15,700. Paid or requested circulation through (1) outside-county mail subscriptions stated on Form 3541: a. 15,542; b. 15,433; (2) in-county subscriptions: a. none; and b. none; (3) through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other non-USPS paid distribution: a. 144; b. 164; (4) other classes mailed through the USPS: a. none; b. none. Total paid distribution: a. 15,686; b. 15,597. Free or nominal rate copies for (1) outside-county: a. 78; b. 78; (2) in-county: a. none; b. none; (3) other classes mailed through the USPS: a. none; b. none. Free distribution outside the mail: a. none; b. none. Total free distribution: a. 78; b. 78. Total distribution: a. 15,764, b. 15,765. Copies not distributed (office use, leftovers, spoiled): a. 25; b. 25. Total printed: a. 15,789 b. 15,700. Percentage of paid and or requested circulation is: a. 99.0% and b 99.1%. Electronic copy circulation is (1) Paid electronic copies: a. 0; b. 0; (2) Total paid print copies plus paid electronic copies is: a. 15,686; b. 15,597; (3) total print distribution plus paid electronic copies is: a. 17,764; b. 15,675; (4) Percent paid (both print and electronic copies): a. 99.00%; b. 99.00%. The statement of ownership will be published in the Dec. 13, 2021, issue of the publication. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions. Doug Folks, Editor.



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