

OEA-ASPIRING EDUCATORS DIVISION ANNUAL REPORT SPRING 2024

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As of March 5, 2024, the OEA Aspiring Educators (OEA-AE) division has 836 members. The OEA-AE board of director members were elected in April of 2023. The installation of officers took place on July 16, 2023. The OEA-AE Board of Directors attended an onboarding retreat in July of 2023. The onboarding retreat was supported by both OEA professional and associate staff and NEA staff. Participants took part in an agenda/program that focused on building AE BOD relationships on the team and the foundational skills needed to achieve the goals they set for the team. The AE BOD built relationships, developed leadership skills, established goals and community agreements, created a calendar of meetings, drafted AE strategies/tactics/metrics to meet goals, and developed events to support the priorities of the AE BOD for the 2023-24 year. The OEA-AE Board of Directors meets monthly (8 meetings via Zoom and four three-day mini-retreat work sessions).

OEA AE had nine participants at the 2023 NEA Aspiring Educators Conference held June 28 – July 1. They attended a wide variety of conference sessions and engaged in “union communities.” Ohio was well represented at the AE National Award in 7 AE categories at the NEA AE National Conference. AE members, AE Ohio Chapters, and two Ohio AE Chapter Advisors were nominated. We received top honors for three out of the seven nominations. Sarah Beck of Ashland University won the outstanding local leader award. The Kent and Ashland Chapters both won an award for local chapter excellence. (Two awards have never been given in this category) Additionally, Anesha Ward won one of the five Jack Kinnaman scholarships in the amount of \$3,500. We had an AE NEA delegate, a chapter advisor, and AE guests attend the NEA Representative Assembly. They participated in numerous Ohio RA events and the RA. They not only gained knowledge and participated in the democratic process of the RA but also began to build important relationships with union members in Ohio and across the country.

Recruitment and retention of AE members along with establishing new OEA AE chapters and strengthening existing chapters and identifying AE leaders was a top priority for the AE Board of Directors this year. There are 30 AE chapters across the state. The AE BOD developed a list of targeted chapters and set criteria for three tiers of assistance. Tier One goals are Membership Growth, Engagement Growth Connection Growth, and Leadership

Identification. Tier Two goals are Capacity Growth, Network/Connection Building, and Leadership Identification. Tier Three goals are New Chapter Activation and Dormant Chapter Wake Up. Chapters to note who experienced growth in membership and/or engagement are Ashland University, Kent State University, Central State University, Ohio State University – Main Campus, Ohio University Lancaster, Mount Union University, and the University of Findlay. We are exploring new chapters in Marietta and Ursaline.

Kent State EA hosted a conference in early November for all Aspiring Educators in Ohio. They had representation from Kent State University, Ashland University, and Akron University. Speakers spoke on topics such as Classroom Management, First Year Experience, Understanding Student Backgrounds, Special Education Mock IEP Meeting, Positive Behavior Reinforcement Simulation, and Growing Your Professional Voice. Approximately 60 attendees joined KSEA for this event. The biggest highlight was Mark Horner, a Teach Better Ambassador and Tallmadge High School Assistant Principal joined them to talk about connecting students to their “why” and he shared stories about amazing teachers at his school and how Aspiring Educators can be more like those teachers.

Ashland UEA held a Therapy Workshop. They invited student service providers such as a physical therapist, and occupational therapist, and provided a session on general IEP and 504 information. They had 50 participants and members got to leave with either an OT fine motor bag, chair band, and a scavenger hunt, or an IEP flipbook and reference guide. The members provided feedback and loved the presenters. The presenters were very excited to join them and were happy that they could educate future educators on their professions. AE member Elizabeth Minut said, “It was amazing to be able to understand and see what different therapies look like in the classroom. I loved getting to spend time in the OT break-out session with Linda. Getting to take home our own OT fine motor bags and having something that I can use in the field right now to help students with fine motor deficits is so beneficial. I also loved getting to know more about IEPs and how to better accommodate and modify my classroom/coursework for my students. Overall, the event was very informative, and it was so great to hear about all the different therapies happening in the school and how we can include them in the classroom.”

Additionally, the AE BOD prioritized mapping networks/relationships and providing members and Chapters the resources they need to be successful. The AE BOD in collaboration with the AE Liaison and assigned AE Organizer continues to build visibility, networks, and opportunities for AEs via podcasts, Ohio School Magazine articles, connections with other departments/divisions (ONE, OEA-R, and OASNP), other NEA state chapter affiliates, Ohio Ed Rising, and other community partners. We continue to search for AE visibility opportunities: Tablings (EdRising, AOI, and other OEA or district events), collaboration with the OEA Communication Department for Columbus Classic events, collaboration with ONE on statewide events and Beyond the Classroom, OEA-R Read Across America, and OEA/NEA event scholarships opportunities. The following information is a highlight of this work. The Ashland AE advisor through an OEA retiree made a connection with the leadership of NCOEA. The advisor and co-presidents of the chapter were invited to attend a district council meeting. Through their

presentation/conversations, Ashland received a \$1500 grant from NCOEA to assist in the chapter growth and member engagement growth. Ashland University EA has been awarded a National Education Association (NEA) Create grant in the amount of \$2,000 to support their chapter in member recruitment and engagement. Plans for the grant included member-driven workshops, providing monthly professional development, fostering, and strengthening OEA partner relationships with the Ohio New Educators and OEA retired, and community outreach initiatives such as teacher appreciation baskets for school districts that support Ashland aspiring educators.

OEA AE provides two conference opportunities for members each year. Partnering with ONE and its member ambassadors, the 2024 AE ONE Conference Together Towards Tomorrow – One Piece at a Time provided experience in professional development, keynote speakers, leadership training, a social event, panel discussions, and more educational resources! The conference empowered and enriched early career educators, education support professionals, and aspiring educators to lead within their profession and reach new levels of growth. The conference had 10 universities in attendance. Approximately 160 participants attended the conference. Presenters were represented by educational partners, ONE members, and OEA and NEA staff. On April 5 – 7th, the 2024 AE Spring Leadership Conference “Discover Your Purpose in Leadership” will focus on “how to define what you stand for as an individual and identify what truly matters to you: your own values and ambitions and tell your leadership story” and feature special guest Sabreena Shaller NEA-AE Chair. This conference supports attendees as individuals and as a chapter in their leadership journey. The election of AE Board of Directors and the AE NEA delegate takes place during the conference.

AE Board of Directors, through one-on-one conversations, AE member interest surveys, and an AE World Café event identified AE issues, barriers, and influencers to those issues, issue solutions, and collected data. The top issues were Licensure Exams and Prep, Expenses/Finances when student teaching, Respect, and Communication as a pre-service educator. The AE BOD prioritized the issues and started discussions with Ellen Adornetto (EPRMA) regarding OAEs and Educational Prep Programs.

This year Ohio was awarded the AEGIS grant. AEGIS is a non-competitive grant from NEA-AE for state affiliates to support organizing efforts with state AE programs. The group is placed in cohorts. OEA-AE organizing is in cohort three with TN, GA, HI, CT, and IN. These participants organize and work using a Network Improvement Community (NIC) and meet monthly on Zoom, annually in person, and monthly for one-on-one coaching calls.

For Ohio's participation in AEGIS, the problem statement to guide the organizing process is "With the decrease in OEA-AE membership, there is a need to increase the membership recruitment and engagement through leadership structures in the local chapters and the state." The next step was identifying what we know and what we wonder, to lead to the goal setting: "By March 15, 2024, we will increase membership enrollment from 997 to 1047. To reach this goal, the initial plan was to host monthly power hour calls and build chapter kits. The OEA-AE BOD recognized the challenge they were having with

leadership commitment and engagement therefore, the original strategies and tactics of the grant had to be modified.

The AE BOD and AE assigned Organizer decided to implement a "Chapter Challenge" where they identified five key standards that would lead to goals of growth in enrollment and engagement. The "Chapter Challenge" strategies will gather data on chapters, members, and potential members, and leadership identification through improving communication structures, hosting virtual power hours, providing incentives to chapters who meet growth and engagement goals (increasing membership and engagement by 5% in each area), and to create platforms to recognize AE members and AE Chapters. Although we do not believe we will reach our enrollment goal, the AE BOD and AE support staff efforts have increased enrollment in January and February of 2024 by 149 AE members. Additional organizing strategies and tactics project continued growth trends.