

Open Enrollment — It's Required

During Open Enrollment (Oct. 6–24), all benefits-eligible bargaining unit members must do one of the following:

1. Reconfirm any current benefit elections.
2. Elect or make changes to benefits (add or delete dependents, update beneficiary information, etc.)
3. Waive coverage Employee Self Service (ESS) will be used for the 2026 enrollment process. Make sure you are able to log on to ESS PRIOR to the start of Open Enrollment. Benefit choices made during Open Enrollment will be effective Jan. 1, 2026. This year's Open Enrollment is completely virtual.

To participate in Open Enrollment, benefits-eligible bargaining unit members can:

1. Log into ESS to make your elections for core benefits (Medical, Dental, Vision, FSA and Life), you do not need a counselor.
2. If you do need support with making your elections through ESS, meet online with a Benefits Counselor in a co-browsing session for both core and voluntary benefits. Visit <https://columbuscityschools.annualenrollment.net> to schedule your call center enrollment meeting ahead of time, or call 614-401-5172 between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. EST. At your scheduled appointment time, you will receive a call from the iBTR Enrollment Representative. The phone number they will be calling from is 614-401-5172. You are encouraged to save the number in your phone so you will know who is calling.
3. Use ESS to confirm, change or waive your benefit elections. CCS must report health care coverage information for its employees and their dependents to the federal government. Verify that the Social Security numbers entered into ESS for you and your dependents are correct. Note that if you are enrolling a new dependent, you will need to verify their eligibility. Please be on the lookout for communication from BMI, the District's dependent verification administrator.
4. Remember that if you enroll in Core benefits through ESS but also want to make changes to your voluntary benefits, you can make those changes yourself on the bswift platform by visiting columbuscityschools.bswift.com. You can watch a video to learn to use bswift by copying and pasting this link in your browser: <https://youtu.be/IM1ZY-wVsygA>. If you need assistance with your voluntary benefits, you can reach out to iBTR by calling (614) 401-5172. Voluntary benefits include: Short-Term Disability, Long-Term Disability, Critical Illness Insurance, Accident Insurance, Hospital Insurance, Pet Insurance, Identity Theft Protection, Whole Life, and Term Life Insurance.

If you have questions regarding the Open Enrollment Process, contact CCS Benefits Department at (614) 365-6475 or benefitquestions@columbus.k12.oh.us.

Class Size Matters

The CCS administration has to make a concerted effort to complete initial class size adjustments within the first 19 student attendance days of the school year. Oct. 1 is the deadline to reorganize classrooms that exceed the class size guidelines prescribed in Article 301 of our Master Agreement. Here are the size limits:

- K–4: No more than 27 students each; grade 5 - 28 students
- EL classrooms: K–5 No more than 15 students per EL class time; 6–12 maximum of 100 EL students
- Middle school: No more than 33 students per class and 150 students per day.
- High school: No more than 34 students per class and 150 students per day.
- High school or middle school non-academic classes (computer, physical education and music) must not exceed the number of pupil stations. For instance, assigning 35 students to a computer class with 30 computers would be a violation of the contract.

If your school still has not decided how to reorganize classes to meet class size requirements, district administrators will intervene to assist you. If at any time class sizes exceed contractual limits, a reorganization must take place.

If you have any questions about class size, call the CEA Office at 614-253-4731.

CEA Foundation Mini Grants Are Back! Apply, Dream Big, and let your Creativity Shine!

Now is the time to prepare for the CEA Foundation Mini Grants. This is your chance to receive funding to support, grow, or enhance the amazing work already happening in your classroom or school. Below is all the information you need to know!

Application Timeline

- Opens: 7 a.m., Thursday, Oct. 2, 2025
- Closes: 4:30 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 22, 2025 (our first Records Day)

What's New This Year

- **HOW-TO VIDEO** (<https://youtu.be/2vWa6ILamUM>) Step-by-step guidance, hints, and updates for applicants.
- **Three Grant Categories:** General Mini Grant, Early Career Educator Mini Grant & STEAM/STEM Mini Grant
- **Funding Update:** All grants are up to \$500.
- **New Rule:** Only one application per project per school will be accepted to maximize impact.

Continued on Page 2

Grievance Update

CEA works to protect your rights and maintain the integrity of the negotiated contract. While we advise bargaining unit members to work out problems at the building level first, we know this isn't always possible. We regularly inform you of grievances we are working to resolve. Go to: <https://www.ceaohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Grievance-250929-07.pdf>.

Continued from Page 1

2025–2026 Mini Grants at-a-Glance	Examples of use	Criteria	Amount
General Mini Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Electives/ Unified ArtsOT/PT; APE, etc.Supplemental supports	All CEA members in good standing	\$500 per grant
Early Educator Mini Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Interactive bulletin boardsClass library/ manipulativesFlexible seating	All CEA members in good standing in years 1–5 of their career	\$500 per grant
STEAM/STEM Mini Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Robotics/KinexSTEAM/STEM Club suppliesFees for competitions	All CEA members in good standing	\$500 per grant

Questions? Email ceaminigrants@gmail.com from your personal email address.

Now Forming: 2025-2026 Bargaining Team

Our current Master Agreement has a reopener clause that will take CEA back to the table with the district in March of 2026. Our first step for the next round of negotiations is to form a Bargaining Team. We are looking to create a diverse team of CEA members representing the various experience levels within our bargaining unit.

As a representative of the bargaining team, you will have the opportunity to work as part of a large team of dedicated members. As part of the team, your responsibilities will include:

- Identifying the current needs of teachers
- Communicating and disseminating information to our members
- Serving as a liaison to keep members updated throughout the year
- Attending bargaining related meetings and trainings

Interested applicants should send a cover letter highlighting your interests and qualifications along with a résumé to:

Teri Mullins, CEA Bargaining Chairperson,
CEA Office, Route 2

All cover letters/resumes need to be submitted by Tuesday Sept. 30, 2025. The selective interviewing process will run from Oct. 1–16, via zoom, to select Bargaining Team Members.

See You at the CEA Fall Fling!

The Fling is right around the corner! Join us for the CEA Fall Fling this year. Mark your calendar for **Friday, Oct. 3**, from **4–8 p.m.** at the **Hilton Columbus at Easton**, 3900 Chagrin Dr. Your Association just welcomed more than 200 new members this school year. Help them celebrate their new endeavor and welcome them to the CEA family! Our annual party features music, great food, and prizes. Get to know your colleagues. Meet candidates for public office and local elected officials. Admission is free. Beer and wine are just \$5.

Wellness will be Partnering with Lifecare

Alliance to host a staff flu shot clinic at the CEA Fall Fling on Friday, Oct. 3 from 4–8 p.m. located at Columbus Hilton Easton, 3900 Chagrin Drive. Flu shots are available at no cost to you. If you have insurance, it will be submitted as a claim.

No appointment is needed, just bring your ID and insurance card with you. Family members are welcome to attend, and no one will be turned away without insurance.

Available Vaccines: **Trivalent** (all ages, egg-free, no preservative) and **High-Dose Trivalent** (ages 65+, egg-free, no preservative)

Staff who receive their flu shot will be able to earn a \$25 gift card. To learn how to receive your gift card, visit the Wellness website ccsoh.us/wellness and click on the **FLU SHOT INFORMATION** tab.

Only CEA Members’ Children Get Free College Scholarships

The CEA Member Scholarship Fund is now open for applications. **This benefit is for our members with children who are college seniors between Sept. 2025–June 2026.** The fund provides \$2,500 in tuition assistance for each senior attending a four-year college or university. Eligible students are college seniors between Sept. 2025–June 2026 with at least a 2.0 GPA. Payment will be made directly to the college or university. Parents or guardians must have taught in the Columbus City Schools for four years prior to the application date and must be continuous CEA or CEA-R members.

Download the application at <https://bit.ly/41MTvX4>. The **deadline is Friday, Oct. 10, 4 p.m.** If you have questions, call Kathy Wilkes at (614) 253-4731.

Fight Flu and Earn a Gift Card from Wellness

Staff who receive a flu shot before Dec. 31 will earn a \$25 gift card from the CCS Staff Wellness Initiative. After you receive your flu shot, visit the Flu Shot Information tab on the Wellness website, ccsoh.us/wellness, and fill out the flu shot form. You do not need to receive your flu shot at a CCS location in order to be eligible for the gift card. As a reminder, gift cards are a form of compensation and are subject to employee payroll tax.

Questions? Email wellness@columbus.k12.oh.us.

Attention: Mid-Career Educators

We are excited to invite you to participate in the Mid-Career World Café, a collaborative gathering designed to share experiences, insights, and ideas that can help shape the future of Ohio’s Educator and Support Staff community.

To help us prepare and ensure the conversations reflect the priorities and interests of participants, we kindly ask you to complete this short form: bit.ly/3K9WFOQ.

Your input will guide the topics of discussion and ensure the event is meaningful and relevant to your journey as a member of OEA, such as:

- Mentorship Matters: Mid-career educators emphasized the need for mentors to be compensated for their time and expertise.
- This recognition is essential to building strong, sustainable support systems within our schools.
- Relevant Professional Development: PD must be meaningful and applicable to the realities of mid-career educators. Generic or disconnected training does not serve our growth or our students.
- Mental Health & Wellness: Burnout is real. There is a clear call for mental health initiatives that support educators in maintaining balance, resilience, and well-being.

Details:

Event: Mid-Career World Café

Date & Time: Nov. 1 or Nov. 8, 2025 (*Pick ONE date*) 10 a.m.–2:30 p.m. (Lunch provided)

Location: **Ohio Education Association HQ** – 225 E Broad St. Columbus OH 43215

Complete the form by Oct. 27, 2025. We look forward to learning from your perspective and building a space where Mid-Career Educators and Support Staff can connect, share, and inspire one another. More information regarding meeting times and dates to come!

Learning Walks

Your Union has received many phone calls, emails and text messages regarding the district’s “Learning Walks” with concerns about whether they are evaluative as well as how they are being conducted. In August, CEA members approved a Conceptual Agreement that contains the following new language regarding non-evaluative classroom visits:

Section **211.09 A. Nonevaluative Classroom Visits** refer to classroom visits by board employees for the purpose of improving instructional practices, curriculum implementation, and student learning. Any written nonevaluative feedback generated from the visit shall not become part of any teacher’s personnel file or evaluation.

Joe Hernan, Director of Math, Innovation and Technology provided this email to summarize how he has described the purpose of “Learning Walks” to administrators:

“Learning Walks are short, non-evaluative classroom visits that give us a clear picture around curriculum implementation and instructional practices. The tool helps us collect consistent data, provide teachers with supportive feedback, and spot trends across classrooms and schools. That information guides the kind of professional learning and instructional support we offer.”

“They’re not about evaluating teachers—they’re about making sure our curriculum is implemented with fidelity and using what we see to strengthen teaching and learning across the district.”

If your administrator is doing something different, call CEA.

Retiring? Avoid OTES

Bargaining unit members who are planning on retiring during the 2025–2026 school year can be exempted from the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System. To take advantage of this, submit your notice of retirement to Human Resources by Friday, Oct. 31. You must continue to complete the evaluation process until your retirement has been approved by the Board of Education. Go to <https://www.csoh.us/Page/2340> to download retirement information or access the Google form to submit notification of retirement. If you have questions, contact Teri Mullins, CEA Staff Consultant at (614) 253-4731.

Special Fall CEA Election

Due to three vacancies on the CEA Board of Governors, there will be a Fall Special Election. CEA is seeking candidates for the unexpired terms of Governor for District 2 (2028), District 4 (2026) and District 7 (2028). The declaration period begins Monday, Sept. 29, and ends Monday, Oct. 13. A Declaration of Candidacy for CEA Office will be available on the CEA website at bit.ly/3IDDYCy or by calling CEA at (614) 253-4731. Forms are accepted in hard copy or electronic format at elections@ceaohio.org. Declaration forms must be received by the CEA office no later than 4:30 p.m., Monday, Oct. 13, 2025. Campaigning begins Monday, Sept. 29, and ends Nov. 11, 2025. Ballots will be in the buildings on Oct. 24, 2025. Voting will begin on Monday, Oct. 27, 2025, and ends Tuesday, Nov. 11, 2025. Ballots will be collected and tallied by the Election Committee on Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2025. Call Brittany Pierce, CEA Election Chair, at (440) 225-2631 with any questions.

Join the Sick Leave Bank

The *CEA Master Agreement* provides a very important benefit: our Sick Leave Bank. Every year, some of us experience devastating illnesses and injuries requiring long recovery periods; or, we simply haven’t accumulated enough sick leave to cover extreme situations. You can help by donating **two sick days** to the **Sick Leave Bank**. It’s easy. The donation form is available on the **CCS Intranet** under “**Human Resources**” or the **CEA website** under “**Forms**.” The **deadline** for **donations** is **Tuesday, Sept. 30**. Any bargaining unit member who exhausts their sick leave may apply to borrow up to 10 days from the bank. They will be required to pay back the borrowed days as additional days are earned. **If you joined the Sick Leave Bank in the past, you do not need to rejoin, nor do you need to make an additional donation.** In order to withdraw days from the Sick Leave Bank, bargaining unit members must complete a Sick Leave Bank Withdrawal Form, located on the CEA website.

Join the New Special Education Caucus! All CEA members are invited to join.

CEA is excited to announce the launch of the Special Education Caucus — a new group created by and for members who are passionate about supporting our students with disabilities and the educators who serve them.

The Caucus will be a place to:

- Connect with other special education professionals across the district.
- Share resources, strategies, and solutions.
- Advocate for the needs of both students and staff.
- Make sure special education voices are heard within CEA.

Whether you're an intervention specialist, related service provider, or simply a member who cares deeply about special education, you are welcome!

Here is the membership form to join: <https://forms.gle/ThsefQWJy7X69Zch8>.

LA Attendance

One of the many duties of Faculty Representatives is to attend the CEA Legislative Assembly (LA). Held on the first Thursday of nearly every month of the school year, the LA is the policy-making body of your Association. Your elected Faculty Representatives receive vital updates from CEA Officers and Staff and vote on important issues affecting your Association. Any CEA member is welcome to attend the LA. The next CEA Legislative Assembly will be at Columbus Downtown HS on Thursday, Oct. 2.

The following is a list of buildings/units that were represented at the Sept. 11 Legislative Assembly:

17th Avenue Service Center, Adapted PE, Alpine ES, Arts Impact MS, Attendance Specialists, Avalon ES, Avondale ES, Beatty Park ES, Beechcroft HS, Berwick Alternative ES, Binns ES, Briggs HS, Broadleigh ES, Buckeye MS, Building Substitutes, Burroughs ES, CAHS, Cassady ES, CEA Office, Cedarwood ES, Centennial HS, Champion MS, Climate & Culture Systems Consultants and PBIS Coordinators, Clinton ES, Colerain ES, Columbus Africentric EC ES, Columbus City Prep. School for Boys, Columbus City Prep. School for Girls, Columbus Gifted Academy, Columbus Global Academy, Columbus International HS, Columbus Online Academy, Columbus Spanish Immersion Academy, Como ES, Cranbrook ES, Devonshire ES, Dominion MS, Duxberry Park ES, Eakin ES, East Columbus ES, East HS, East Linden ES, Easthaven ES, Eastmoor Academy HS, ECE @ Central Enrollment, École Kenwood, ,Elementary Art, Elementary Music, Elementary Phys. Ed., Fairmoor ES, Fairwood ES, Forest Park ES, Ft. Hayes Arts & Academic HS, Ft. Hayes CC, Gables ES, Georgian Heights ES, Gifted & Talented, Hamilton STEM Academy, Highland ES, Hilltonia MS, Hubbard ES, Huy ES/A.G. Bell Program, Independence HS, Indian Springs ES, Indianola Informal K-8, Innis ES, Johnson Park MS, Juvenile Intervention Center, Leawood ES, Liberty ES, Lincoln Park ES, Lindbergh ES, Linden STEM Academy, Linden-McKinley STEM Academy, Livingston ES, Maize ES, Marion-Franklin HS, Medina MS, Mifflin HS, Mifflin MS, North Linden ES, Northgate Intermediate ES, Northland HS, Northtowne ES, Nurses, Oakmont ES, Olde Orchard ES, OT/PT, Parsons ES, Psychologists, Ridgeview MS, School Counselors, Scottwood ES, Shady Lane ES, Sherwood MS, Social Workers, South HS, Southland, Southwood ES, Special Ed/VI Coordinators and Transition Coordinators ,Speech & Language, St. Vincent, Starling PreK-8, Stewart Alternative ES, Student Support Center, Sullivant ES, Trevitt ES, Valley Forge ES, Valleyview ES, Watkins ES, Wedgewood MS, Weinland Park ES, West Broad ES, West Mound ES, Westgate ES, Westmoor MS, Whetstone HS, Windsor STEM Academy, Winterset ES, Woodward Park MS, World Language MS and Yorktown MS.

Special Notes

Transplant Needed for CEA Member: Robyn Chernack, Intervention Specialist (**Cedarwood ES**), is in need of a kidney donation from a living donor. Such donations are typically very successful and ideal when made by living donors. Eligible donors have matching blood types and are free of diseases including high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, kidney and heart disease. Donors are able to lead normal lives. To become a donor, go to: bit.ly/40y23zN.

Make a donation to the Catastrophic Sick Leave Bank: When someone experiences a life-threatening illness or injury, and they are out of accrued time, they can apply for catastrophic leave. When approved, sick leave days can be donated, allowing them to remain in paid status and receive healthcare benefits. The following members have been approved for Catastrophic Leave and are in need of donated days: **Kellie Wilburn**, Eastmoor Acad.; **Linda Hulteen**, Displaced; and **Mary Barber**, Columbus North International HS. To donate, complete the Catastrophic Sick Leave Donation Form, available on the CEA and CCS websites. Submit the completed form to leavesofabsence@columbus.k12.oh.us.

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Columbus Education Association

FALL

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FRIDAY

FLU SHOT AVAILABLE

Photo Booth

\$5 Beer & Wine

October 3, 2025

4-8 pm

Free Admission & Food

Door Prizes

Columbus Hilton Easton

3900 Chagrin Drive

Meet CEA Member Book Authors

Sensible

Sugar

Program

Join Now at:

bit.ly/3K20o0O

STARTS OCTOBER 1

WHY JOIN ???

In 21 days, you will learn how to control your added sugar intake, so that you can enjoy the sweet stuff without the guilt. Throughout the duration of this program, you will learn:

☒ What is considered an appropriate amount of added sugar intake

☒ How our bodies handle sugar

☒ How to identify added sugars in foods

☒ How to accurately track added sugar intake

☒ The Pros and Cons of added sugars vs. artificial sweeteners

☒ And more!

IF YOU HAVE EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND YOU'RE UNSURE IF THIS PROGRAM IS FOR YOU, PLEASE CONSULT YOUR MEDICAL PROVIDER BEFORE STARTING.

WHAT TO EXPECT

 Educational Material

Evidence-based educational material will be delivered once a week per email to those that choose to participate.

 Tracking

Support and guidance on tracking your added sugar intake throughout the 21 days.

 Support

Ask questions directly to a Registered Dietitian via an anonymous link and receive ongoing support.

ccsoh.us/wellness



 HEALTHY BODIES

ACTIVE MINDS

COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS

 LIFE CARE ALLIANCE

Update your home mailing address with CCS Human Resources after you move. CEA uses this information to communicate with you about important issues when an email or text will not suffice.