

Honoring Black Americans

This month, we remember the contributions of many Americans who were left out of the history books for many decades. It is our opportunity to share the accomplishments of American heroes and to emphasize that American history isn't the purview of any one group of people.

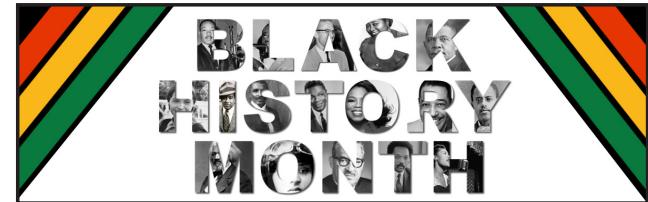
Black History Month began in 1925 when historian Carter G. Woodson urged fraternity brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. to help promote a "Negro History Week." Woodson, a Harvard-trained historian, believed that promoting the achievements of Black people would help to combat prejudice and build a sense of pride among his people.

Since 1976, every U.S. President has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating Black history. The theme for 2026 is "A Century of Black History Commemorations."

2026 marks a century of national commemorations of Black history. Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, George Cleveland Hall, William B. Hartgrove, Jesse E. Moorland, Alexander L. Jackson, and James E. Stamps institutionalized the teaching, study, dissemination, and commemoration of Black history when they founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) on Sept. 9, 1915.

"To understand the modern world, especially nations where Black peoples form a significant population, one must grapple with the impact that the public observances have had on the past and the present. This year, when we are also commemorating the 250th anniversary of United States independence, it is important to tell not only an inclusive history, but an accurate one. We have never had more need to examine the role of Black History Month than we do when forces weary of democracy seek to use legislative means and book bans to excise Black history from America's schools and public culture. Black history's value is not its contribution to mainstream historical narratives, but its resonance in the lives of Black people."

For classroom resources about this subject, go to <https://asalh.org/black-history-themes/>.



UNCF Helps Columbus Students

On Thursday, Feb. 5, your CEA will meet at East HS for the February CEA Legislative Assembly and the kickoff of the UNCF Campaign. UNCF is the nation's largest and most effective minority education organization. UNCF plays a critical role in enabling more than 60,000 students each year to attend college. We are ready to begin our Columbus City Schools' UNCF Workplace Campaign. Fifty percent of every dollar we raise is designated for scholarships for Columbus City School students. Please be generous in your giving. Many of our students do not have the resources to consider higher education. Your donation is an investment in our children, our community, and our nation. This drive is very important, as we prepare our students for jobs in the global community. More than 60 percent of UNCF scholars are the first in their families to attend college and their successful education changes lives. Your investment can help break the cycle of poverty and despair in a family. The impact of your gift will be felt for generations to come.



Thank a School Counselor

This year's National School Counselor Week's theme is "School Counselors Amplify Student Success," and will be celebrated from Feb. 2–6, 2026. Sponsored by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), this annual event highlights the crucial role school counselors play in promoting student academic, social, and emotional development and career planning.

The purpose of National School Counselor Week is to focus public attention on the unique contribution of school counselors within U.S. school systems. Counselors work in professional partnerships with school staff, business and industry, parents/families, and the community to focus on positive ways to enhance students' social/personal, academic, and career development. It is frequently a counselor who can make a positive difference in a child's life. For instance, professional school counselors help students set goals, explore career plans for college, select appropriate courses for post-secondary options, develop skills in decision making, manage conflicts, and problem solving.

CEA would like to recognize our counselors who engage students in examining and improving their abilities, strengths, interests, and talents. They also work in partnership with parents and support teachers and other educators in providing an educational system where students can realize their potential. National School Counseling Week is sponsored by the American School Counselor Association. Visit <https://bit.ly/4k5MRD3> for more information and a list of suggested activities. When you see your school counselor, say, "Thanks." From all of us at CEA to all CCS counselors: A great big cheer of appreciation for all you do.



Every School a Community School...The Future of Columbus

The term "community schools" has become quite familiar in our membership over the past few years, but what do you really know and understand about community schools? Over the next few weeks, we'll share some information on what a community school is, what it is not, and why we should all be fighting for them.

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The reopening of negotiations will begin Mar. 15, 2026. The CEA Master Agreement is set to expire in fewer than 936 days.

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.ceaoio.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Grievance-260202-22.pdf>.

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What in the world is a community school?

To be completely honest, community schools embody how education should function in a healthy democracy - they're public schools (in CCS we call them Community Campus Schools, in Ohio they may often be called Community Learning Centers or CLCs) that provide services and support which fit each neighborhood's needs. They are schools collaboratively organized by the people who know our children best - families, educators, community organizations, local governments, and the students themselves - all working together.

Community schools provide not only tremendous opportunities for learning and success for students, but they also offer hope, opportunity, and transformation to entire communities.

It would be easy to look at this and say, "don't we already have schools like this?" or "we're already doing that with [insert your favorite community organization here]." The truth is that strong schools have strong community partnerships. However, wrap-around services alone do not make our schools community schools. All of our schools have different levels of community engagement, family engagement, and resource—and not all of these differences are equitable and fair. When we say community schools, we're talking about the full-service community school model. Your union specifically advocates for the NEA Community Schools Model that includes six pillars of practice. Like most public education models, they are adaptable to the needs of an individual school's students, staff, families and community. This ensures that our families, students, and members receive the individual needs and attention that each building deserves.

In 2022, you won language for a pilot community school as a result of our strike. Northland HS was selected through an application process to become our pilot community school in 2024. Now, we're fighting to fully support and expand the model so that every school becomes a community school. Your union and our partners at the Columbus Education Justice Coalition believe that this is our answer for growth in our school district.

Take a look at the following videos to learn more about sustainable, full-service community schools, then watch The Voice for more information on why and how community schools will benefit every member and every student in Columbus City Schools.

NEA Community Schools Model

<https://youtu.be/5dTXujuJRc0?si=zFgh5ILtZ48tm2dV>

Why Every School Should be a Sustainable Community School (Chicago Teachers Union)

<https://youtu.be/iC33ELIZ2oM?si=4G413riYANVgRCDh>

Want to learn more about community schools?

Join us and our partners at the Columbus Education Justice Coalition for The People's State of Our Schools: A Community-Led Town Hall on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026 from 10 a.m.–12 p.m. at the Maroon Culture Lab (formerly the Pythian Theatre).

This powerful community gathering will examine the impact of school closures in Columbus City Schools and launch the coalition's "Nothing About Us, Without Us!" Community Schools Campaign—a movement to reinvest in neighborhood schools and advance the NEA Community Schools Model as a sustainable path forward.

- Documentary screening
- Community & national voices
- Clear ways to take action

This is more than an event—it's a call to organize, imagine, and fight for the schools our communities deserve. Save the date and bring a colleague.

Meet The Candidates Nights

CEA will be hosting two in-person Meet the Candidate events for members to meet the candidates running for positions in the Spring Election. The meetings will take place on Thursday, Feb. 19, at **The Berwick Party House**, 3250 Refugee Rd. Columbus, OH 43232 beginning at 4:30 p.m. The second meeting will be held Wednesday, Feb. 25 at the **Plumbers & Pipefitters Union Hall**, 1250 Kinnear Rd, Columbus, OH 43232 beginning at 4:30 p.m. Members can select which meeting they would like to attend. All candidates running for a position should plan to attend both meetings.

Bargaining Priorities Survey Closes Sunday, Feb. 8

Members should have received a link in their personal email for the online-only Bargaining Priorities Survey. This survey will close at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 8, 2026. If CEA does not have your home email address, you will not be able to complete the survey online. Contact CEA at tellcea@ceaoio.org if you do not receive the survey or if you have problems accessing the survey.

Apply for a CEA Scholarship

Do you have a child graduating high school? Would you like some financial assistance with their college education? Consider applying for a CEA and CEA-R Scholarship. These competitive scholarships are a wonderful opportunity for our members' children to earn scholarship dollars toward college. Applications are due by 4 p.m., Friday, Mar. 20, 2026. You can download the application at <https://bit.ly/4sYfaOU>. The scholarship application must include a statement of the student's personal philosophy and goals and include two references: One from a current academic instructor with whom the student has studied during the past year and one from someone other than a relative. Applicants must be the children of a CEA or CEA-R members for their dependent(s) to be eligible. A teacher must:

- Be a current CEA or CEA-R member
- Have taught in Columbus City Schools for the four (4) years prior to applying for the scholarship unless the applicant

taught for four (4) years prior to:

- Going on an approved leave of absence
- Going on an approved disability retirement
- Retiring and maintaining membership in CEA-R
- Applicants must:
 - Be the child of a CEA or CEA-R member.
 - Be graduating high school seniors or students already enrolled in an undergraduate program at a college or university.
 - Have a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or above, which must be verified by an official high school or university transcript. Copies will not be accepted.
 - Be a full-time student while enrolled in college.
 - Include a copy of the Student Aid Report from FAFSA.
 - Indicate all financial aid (other than student loans) which they expect to receive.

The Christa McAuliffe Memorial Scholarship is granted each year to a student majoring in education (unless no education applicants apply). This scholarship will be 1½ times the amount of any other scholarships awarded. Send completed applications to: **Columbus Education Association, Attn: Spring Scholarship, 929 E. Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43205.**

Joint Committee Recommends Eliminating Quality Points from 2026–2027 School Year

Quality points have been a point of contention since their adoption more than a decade ago. In the fall, your Union approached the District with the idea of revising Board Policy 5421 and eliminating quality points from the determination of a middle or high school students' grade. The District agreed with the idea, and a Joint Committee has been meeting since October of 2025. The members of the Joint Committee are Heidi Baxter, (World Language MS); Clarence Daniels, (Mifflin HS); Keith Emerick, (Berwick K–8); John Harrison, (Whetstone HS); and Phil Hayes, (CEA Office).

From there, the proposed policy goes to the Board's Policy and Governance Committee for approval later in the spring. Following approval at that meeting, the policy will go to the full Board for a vote. If approved by the Board, the new grading system would be in place for the 2026–2027 school year.

ICE Belongs in Your Coffee, not School—Join Your Community in Keeping Us Safe!

The Columbus Education Justice Coalition, our partners at Pint Size Protesters, and Defend & Recruit have been diligently working with grassroots organizations and neighbors across Columbus and Central Ohio, Chicago, and North Carolina to develop local neighborhood and school patrols in response to ICE presence in our communities.

We have developed neighborhood ICE Watch teams. Now we are building our school patrols. School patrols involve volunteers who have been trained in ICE Watch to surround schools and monitor the area for ICE activity. They notify the community in the event that ICE does show up. The main goal for school patrols are to keep targeted parents who are dropping off/picking up their kids safe AND to show kids and staff that they are not alone — we keep us safe!

School Coordinators will be connected with the lead organizers in their neighborhood patrol, as well as a chat for all school coordinators to check-in, discuss protocols and tactics, etc.

If your school building is interested in being connected to your neighborhood team, please reach out to Izetta Thomas at thomas@ceaohiphio.org to be connected. We will make sure that you are trained, connected to your neighborhood team, and supported in every way.

Article 211: Alternative Panels

The training for Article 211 is now complete. Each building should have established an Interview Panel. The *Master Agreement* defines the interview panel as the administrator, Senior Faculty Representative, one elected member of the Association Building Council and two parents/community members. However, buildings may convene an alternately constructed panel. To request an alternate interview panel, a request must be sent to 211cea@ceaohiphio.org. The request must be in writing, on school letterhead, signed by both the Senior FR and the administrator listing the names of all panel members, by Friday, Feb. 5.

Reorganization: It's Elementary

This is the time of the year when principals begin to organize their staffs. It's mostly the elementary principals who seem to be confused by this process—every year. Principals must follow the rules when staff reducing and reorganizing staffs:

- At elementary schools, you must reduce based on certification and seniority from among the current teachers in K–5 or K–6, the volunteer or the least senior teacher.
- Staff-reduced teachers cannot be reorganized into vacancies.
- Principals should provide bargaining unit members written notice of their reorganization. Such written notice should indicate whether or not the grade level teachers are being reorganized is a "self-contained" or "departmentalized" classroom, along with the subject(s) that teacher will be teaching.
- At K–8 schools, reductions are made by category: K–5 and 6–8. Teachers may only be reorganized within the K–5 or 6–8 grade bands and may not cross over.

If you have questions regarding the reorganization and staff-reduction process, read Section 211.03 of the *CEA Master Agreement*; or call CEA at (614) 253-4731.

Fee Waiver Application Window Opening

Summer 2026 Fee Waivers: The application period will open Jan. 26, 2026, and close Feb. 12, 11:59 p.m. Access the online application from home or work using your CCS email username and password. Have your college ID number available when applying. You will automatically be sent a confirmation email once your application is submitted. To complete the online application, Go to <http://bit.ly/2jhWSjd>. If you have Priority I or Priority II status, upload the proper documentation with your online application. Documentation is required with each fee waiver process. Your priority status will change without the proper documentation. For assistance with frequently asked questions, links to each of the universities, priority status, and docu-

mentation guidelines, go to <https://www.ccsoh.us/Page/4815>. Call (614) 365-5039 or email feewaivers@columbus.k12.oh.us if you need assistance. Check your CCS email regularly for updates.

Do You Have Your Continuing Contract?

It is that time of year where you can apply for a Continuing Contract. Bargaining unit members submit their Continuing Contract application using Google Forms only. Bargaining unit members will have to be logged into their CCS email account to utilize the online form. To utilize the online application process, go to <https://bit.ly/4jKUq22>.

All the eligibility requirements must be met to be considered. In accordance with *CEA Master Agreement*, Article 401.08, to be eligible to receive a continuing contract, you must have the following:

- A five-year professional license or a permanent certificate shall be on file in Human Resources. The certificate/license should be received in Human Resources on or before Mar. 6, 2026.
- At the conclusion of this school year, you must have completed three years of successful Columbus teaching experience within the last five years or if you previously had a continuing contract in Columbus or another Ohio district, you must have completed two successful years of Columbus experience. Under the new licensing standards, you must also meet the following coursework requirement:
 - If you hold a master's degree at the time of initially receiving a teacher's certificate/license, six (6) semester hours of graduate coursework in the area of licensure or in an area related to the teaching field since the initial issuance of such certificate or license is required.
 - If you do not hold a master's degree at the time of initially receiving a teacher's certificate/license, thirty (30) semester hours of 300 level coursework or above in the area of licensure or in an area related to the teaching field since the initial issuance of such certificate or license is required.
 - If you believe that you will be completing the requirements making you eligible for a continuing teacher contract for the 2026–2027 school year, you must complete the online application and provide original transcripts. Only digital transcripts will be accepted and should be sent to transcripts@columbus.k12.oh.us. The electronic form and original transcripts must be received no later than Mar. 6, 2026.

Questions regarding this information should be directed to Teacher Certification & Licensure at (614) 365-6680 or license@columbus.k12.oh.us. All applicants will receive an electronic confirmation. Applicants must check their email (spam or clutter folders) to ensure they receive the confirmation as additional information may be requested. Approvals, denials, or delay notices for the Continuing Contract applications will be sent via email by Mar. 31, 2026. *Note: Official transcripts must be emailed to license@columbus.k12.oh.us to verify if the transcripts on file are up to date.

Capital District RA and Elections

The Capital District Spring Representative Assembly (RA) will be held on Wednesday, Apr. 22, 2026, at **The Boat House**, 679 W. Long Street, Columbus, OH 43215. Registration begins at 4:30 p.m. and the RA starts at 5:30 p.m. Alternates are welcome to attend the RA. A key focal point of the Capital RA will be the Spring Elections for Capital District President and Vice President. CEA Members may declare their candidacy starting Jan. 20, 2026, through Friday Mar. 27, 2026. Voting will take place during the Capital RA on Apr. 22, 2026. Go to <https://bit.ly/4jNr4QM> to download a declaration form.



The Capital District seat on the Ohio Education Association Board of Directors is also up the deadline Jan. 30, 2026. Please get more information from William Baird at OEA. His email is baird@ohea.org. The seat will be voted on at the Capital RA.

Is Your License Expiring?

If your license from ODE is expiring June 30, 2026, and you have a limited employment contract, you must complete the required coursework or CEUs necessary for renewal and apply before May 11 to be licensed by ODE for the 2026–2027 school year. If you have a continuing contract, you have through June to complete your coursework and submit your application. Failure to renew your license may result in suspension of pay and initiation of termination/non-renewal proceedings.

In addition to the online application, you will need to complete a background check if it has been 5 years. If you have questions about the date of your last background check, or you don't plan to renew your license, contact Leslie Butler, Human Resources, Teacher Licensure, at license@columbus.k12.oh.us. Contact Leslie about questions concerning CEUs or the license renewal process at LPDC@columbus.k12.oh.us.

Special Notes

MAT Team Meeting: The MAT Team will meet at the CEA Office on **Tuesday, Feb. 3, at 4:30 p.m.** RSVP by contacting either of the Co-Chairs, Joe Decker (seppdecker@gmail.com) or Izetta Thomas (thomasi@ceaohio.org).

Transplant Needed for CEA Member: **Robyn Chernack**, Intervention Specialist at **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: **Jeanne Collins**, Woodcrest ES; **Maria Flora**, Yorktown MS; and **Katrina Callaghan**, Northland 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.

CEA Spring Elections: There will be an election for the following CEA offices and positions: **President; Vice President; Governors for Districts 1, 4, 5, 10, and Minority-at-Large; 2026 NEA Delegates; Local Delegates; 2026 NEA State-At-Large Delegates***; and **2026–2027 OEA Delegates**. Declaration Forms are available on the CEA website and at the CEA office. Declaration Forms are due at the CEA office no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 6. Voting will begin on **Tuesday, Feb. 24**, and will end on **Tuesday, Mar. 10**. Ballots will be collected and tallied by the Elections Committee on **Wednesday, Mar. 11**. Contact Brittany Pierce, CEA Elections Chair, at (440) 225-2631 with questions. *NEA State-at-Large Declaration Forms must be submitted to William Baird at OEA by January 31, 2026.