



Summer Leadership Conference

Wednesday-Thursday, July 22-23, 2026
Corporate College East, Warrensville Heights

Join Us for NEOEA Summer Leadership Conference Wednesday, July 22, and Thursday, July 23

By Amy Butcher, NEOEA Summer Leadership Conference Chairperson

It is time once again to begin thinking about the end of the school year. (Can you believe it?) We are now in the fourth quarter and entering the home stretch. As we think about wrapping up 2025-2026's school year, I hope you are thinking about NEOEA Summer Leadership. Your committee has been working hard all year to bring you the best conference NEOEA has to offer.

We have some great sessions for you this year with some new presenters. You have the opportunity to learn how to bargain better, get the legal updates, hear about the AI code of conduct, or how to inspire others to say "yes" to union leadership. We truly hope there is something that will interest every leader, no matter where you are in your leadership journey. Attending NEOEA Summer Leadership will help you grow!

This year we will be returning to Corporate College East. If you were there last year, or attended Megaconference, you will know this is a great place for our conference. We will also be welcoming overnight guests at The Aloft hotel. This newly-renovated hotel features a pool and lounge. Anyone who came last year knows how much fun we had in the lounge, so I hope you will join us after your Wednesday of learning. There are plenty of things to do in the area. If you like shopping you can check out Pinecrest, Beachwood Mall, or Legacy Village. If history is your passion, I recommend the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage.



This year our conference will be featuring Mary Kusler, NEA's Senior Director of Advocacy. Mary will bring her national perspective on how elections at every level shape the future of public education. Mary will highlight key issues that affect educators and our communities every day. Decisions made by elected leaders shape what happens in our communities, our schools, and our classrooms. When educators have a voice in elections, we help ensure that those making the decisions understand the importance of strong public schools and how they support and foster student success. As part of this important conversation, we will also invite legislators to join us for Wednesday evening so they can hear

firsthand our public education agenda. This is an opportunity to ensure policymakers understand the priorities of educators and the needs of the students and communities we serve every day.

With all these exciting opportunities, be sure to put NEOEA Summer Leadership on your calendar right now! Block off July 22-23 to educate yourself, grow as a leader, and have fun doing it. We look forward to seeing you in July.

Registration begins May 20!

Wednesday Training Sessions

Session One, 2:30-4:30 p.m.	
1A Leadership Practices Inventory	In order to lead with purpose and vision, understanding your leadership assets and the liabilities of your leadership style is essential. This session provides each participant with a unique opportunity to assess their leadership strengths and to identify those areas of improvement by utilizing the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) which introduces “The Five Practices of Exemplary Leaders.”
1B Making Your Constitution & Bylaws Work for Your Union	Your Constitution & Bylaws are one of the most crucial tools for creating an effective and resilient union. This session will provide clear and applicable strategies to help the experienced officer and brand new activist to understand and reshape their C&B to build power for years to come.
1C The President’s Playbook: Roles, Skills, and Connections	This session will guide participants through the key roles and responsibilities of a local president while building the knowledge and skills needed for success. Attendees will also have the opportunity to connect and collaborate with fellow local presidents. This session is developed with NEWER presidents in mind.
1D New Treasurers’ School (treasurers and presidents with five years of experience or less)	The responsibilities of the local association treasurer can seem ominous, especially for the first-time treasurer. OEA Secretary-Treasurer Rob McFee will give you the knowledge you need to do the job for your local and its members. This session will be tailored to the needs of treasurers who have five years or less experience on the job. Participants will focus on fiduciary duties, membership, and accounting issues, along with cybersecurity.
1E Rockin’ the Role: <i>Help!</i> I Need Some Leaders	Strong unions are built when we <i>Come Together</i> , but getting members to step into leadership roles can be a <i>Long and Winding Road</i> . Say <i>Hello</i> to new leaders, and <i>Goodbye</i> to just getting by with a <i>Little Help from your Friends</i> . You’ll leave with realistic strategies to make leadership feel doable, supported, and even appealing. <i>We Can Work it Out</i> as we learn how to identify, encourage, and develop members into Hall of Fame leaders who are ready to step up and make an impact.
1F Educator Rights and Responsibilities to Violence	Violence in classrooms is an area of concern for members. Did you know there are tools available for you to utilize to help maintain a safe environment? Participants will discuss available options and steps that can be taken to advocate for all students.
1G Listen. Connect. Lead.	Through instruction, practice, and reflection, this session will grow our skills of mindful listening, nonviolent communication, and community building. By rooting the experience within the five social-emotional learning competencies, participants will be invited to consider how heart-forward leadership can positively impact the values and vision of their organizations.

Wednesday evening—join us at 5:00 for our Keynote Speaker Mary Kusler, followed by dinner and social event with our legislators!

Thursday – Breakfast, 8:00 a.m.; Announcements, 8:45 a.m.; Training Sessions, 9:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Session Two, 9:00-10:30 a.m.	
2A When the System Hurts: Navigating the Hard Seasons Together	This work demands everything, and sometimes the hardest moments don’t come from the bus, classroom, or school. When colleagues face discipline, administrative leave, or a reduction in force, the impact doesn’t stay contained. It moves through hallways, into staff rooms, and lands quietly in the people who care. This session opens space for conversations that rarely get scheduled: How do you navigate the painful stretches of this work? How do you show up for someone going through something you may not fully understand, or maybe living yourself? Participants will leave with honest language, practical tools, and a renewed sense of what it means to truly hold each other up through the hard seasons.
2-3B Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about the Grievance Process	Participants will learn the difference between a complaint, a grievance, and a ULP, the importance of filing grievances, and the role they play in defending their collective bargaining agreement and be thoroughly discussed. From the informal meeting to advocacy during the grievance hearing, all stages of the grievance process will be discussed and practiced. Participants will also learn how to decide whether or not a grievance should be taken to arbitration. <i>(This session ends at 12:15 p.m.)</i>
2C Beyond the Caseload:	Participants will receive a brief update on current trends and key challenges in special education, including workload, service delivery, staffing, safety, and recent federal and state guidance. Building

Turning Challenges into Change	on that foundation, participants will learn practical tools and processes to evaluate local issues, plan strategically, and assess and draft contract language tailored to a range of special education topics. Attendees will leave with a replicable framework to guide action steps in their district, along with draft language designed to strengthen staff protections, support services for students, and improve overall working conditions.
2D The Savvy Presider	All presidents have to preside: the word is right there in the title "president." This session will help presidents—and future presidents—acquire the tools to become confident presiders at membership meetings, executive committee meetings, and anywhere else they may be called on. An experienced presider and parliamentarian will review parliamentary basics, address parliamentary questions, and lead a practice of a successful meeting.
2E Conflict Styles and How to Use Them in Your Local	Conflict is a normal part of working together—but it can also be a powerful tool for growth. In this interactive session, participants will explore different conflict styles, discover their own approach, and practice strategies to turn challenging moments into opportunities to strengthen relationships and build stronger locals. Participants will leave with practical tools they can use right away to foster collaboration, solve problems, and keep their local moving forward.
2F ChChChChanges ... are Coming to Federal Student Loans and Loan Forgiveness	If you have student loans, including Parent Plus loans, or if you are contemplating applying for student loans, this session is a MUST! Changes started this month which, without action, may result in higher payments and the ineligibility for loan forgiveness. Discussion will include changing income-driven repayment options, actions borrowers may want to take to preserve options for lower payments, buying back months in forbearance and deferment, major changes around Parent Plus loans, and limits on Parent and Grad Plus loans (annual and lifetime) as well as options available through NEA Member Benefits to make existing loans more affordable, to stay aware of future changes, and to further your education (or that of a family member) at little or no cost.
2G Organize Like You Mean It: Finding and Fueling Union Leaders	This course will explore how a local can identify, train, maintain, and mobilize organizers. Participants will discuss how to identify potential organizers, how to train “one-on-ones” to new activists, and how to delegate initial responsibilities to an organizing team. We will also discuss list building, member assessments, building mapping, and other strategies to encourage organizing habits throughout a local’s annual activities. Local capacities built through these strategies create the grounds for successful education issue campaigns, crisis negotiations support, and political campaigns.
2-3H Calling All Building Representatives!	This training session will help new building representatives learn the ropes and will be a refresher for experienced representatives. Learn how to represent your members in meetings with administrators, handle gripes and grievances, be a first friend-best friend for new members in your building, the art of ten-minute meetings, and much more! <i>(Must attend both parts; this session ends at 12:15 p.m.)</i>
2 I Your Voice in Campaign 2026	Public education will be on the ballot in 2026, and the decisions made will impact our schools, students, and communities across Ohio. The results will impact YOUR profession. This session will help members of NEOEA/OEA understand Campaign 2026, the role of member engagement, and how we can work together to advocate for strong public schools. Join us to learn how your voice and involvement can help protect and strengthen public education for the future.
2J Your Union GPS: Mapping Opportunities	Getting involved in your Union can seem overwhelming—but we can help! Come explore all your Union has to offer, from becoming a delegate to Representative Assemblies to participating in trainings, seminars, and networking opportunities with members from across the state. This interactive session provides a clear look at how to become a delegate for NEOEA, OEA, and NEA Representative Assemblies while also helping you understand the structure of our Association and how to navigate the many opportunities available at every level. Whether you are looking to deepen your involvement or simply refresh your knowledge, this session will help you confidently take the next step in your Union journey.

Thursday Training Sessions (continued)

Session Three, 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	
3A When the Relationship Ends:	RIFs hurt. Let’s discuss how to approach the situation to ensure all members feel supported and well-informed as it relates to what they should expect, licensure, continued communication, and

The Professional Implications and Next Steps of a Reduction in Force (RIF)	next steps for employment.
2-3B Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about the Grievance Process <i>(Must attend both parts; this session ends at 12:15 p.m.)</i>	
3C Discipline Demystified: Know the Process. Protect the Member.	When a member faces discipline, nonrenewal, or termination, union representation is critical at every stage. This session provides a practical overview of the full process, covering legal requirements and day-to-day representation. Participants will receive an update on Weingarten Rights, <i>Loudermill</i> (pre-disciplinary) hearings, just cause, progressive discipline, and Ohio’s standards for nonrenewal and termination, and learn how to prepare members, navigate meetings confidently, and ensure fair treatment and proper follow-up.
3D The Secretary—More AND Less	The secretary of a local is one of the two “minimum essential officers” that every organization needs. What are the essential functions? Are you doing too much? Too little? This session will examine the secretary’s responsibilities, offer some practical tips, and suggest some pitfalls to avoid.
3E Tools for Financial Bargaining	This session will provide attendees with a primer on school finance, including how to evaluate a district’s financial position in advance of bargaining. We will also highlight key compensation considerations and messaging around financial bargaining. Members will leave the session with an understanding of financial bargaining best practices as well as OEA resources that can be used to support locals.
3F Understanding Health Insurance: Costs, Choices, and Consequences	A practical overview of how health insurance plans function with a focus on cost drivers, plan design, and member impact. This session examines key choices, plan design trends, and how they influence both access to care and long-term costs.
3G Legal Update	This session provides a practical, real-time overview of the most significant legal developments impacting educators and unions. Topics may include recent case law, statutory changes, SERB decisions, discipline trends, and emerging issues in public education. The focus is on what these developments mean in practice, how they affect day-to-day representation, member rights, and risk exposure. Attendees will leave with actionable guidance and strategies to better advise and protect their members.
2-3H Calling All Building Representatives! <i>(Must attend both parts; this session ends at 12:15 p.m.)</i>	
3 I Educators as Legislative Advocates—Strengthening Relationships	Participants will build on their skills to effectively influence the education policy-making process. This session will focus on practical tools for successful legislative advocacy, strategies for engaging legislators and cultivating strong relationships, and approaches for creating local advocacy plans that mobilize partners and hold elected officials accountable for their decisions.
3J LGBTQIA+	The legal landscape for the protection of members who identify as LGBTQIA+ continues to change. This session will provide local associations with valuable resources that works to ensure the protection of their LGBTQIA+ members through the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Lunch/Afternoon Announcements/Gift Winners, 12:15-1:00 p.m.

Session Four, 1:00-2:30 p.m.	
4A Artificial Intelligence: The Licensure, Data Security, and Employment Implications of Being Human	Like so many things in life, we use the tool first and maybe later, the manual and safety precautions! Attendees will be presented existing law, code, and policy aligned with potential AI common practices.
4B Local Association Development and Member Engagement that Makes	Strong local unions are built when members are engaged in their unions. Participants will explore what effective member engagement looks like in action. Attendees will learn practical strategies to strengthen your local so it can be effective in advocating for members and engaging support within the community. Participants will learn the value of Leadership Councils and how to use them in

a Difference	sharing and partnering with the local unions who share the same Labor Relations Consultant. Participants will leave energized with tools to build support within your union membership, amplify member voices, and create meaningful change in their local union and communities.
4C What's Heating Up at the Table?	A focused look at the issues currently shaping bargaining across OEA locals. This session breaks down where pressure is building, what it means for your contract, and how to respond strategically at the table. Participants will leave with clear insights and practical approaches to navigate today's most contested topics.
4D Solidarity 101: Living Our Union Values	True solidarity means recognizing that we are part of something much bigger than our own local. This training explores our roles as ambassadors for the labor movement in our daily lives. We will frame why buying union, choosing union services, and standing with sibling locals are essential strategies for building long-term power for all working people.
4E Talking Property Taxes	This session will break down how property taxes fund public schools and why public education funding has become so reliant on property tax revenue. We will also review the new restrictions on property taxes made by our legislature and their impact on public education, as well as recent statewide levy trends.
4F Beyond Your Pension: Covering the Gaps in Your Retirement Security	Education employees in Ohio enjoy the benefit of some of the best run public retirement systems in the country, and the repeal of WEP and GPO opened up doors to greater retirement security for many. But there are still gaps to consider in planning for a secure retirement. This session will identify gaps, explore ways to cover the gaps, and identify options most commonly available to members. Employers choose the options employees can use, most often without input from the local association. Every employer offers supplemental retirement savings plans endorsed by administrator groups and the State of Ohio, while the NEA Retirement Program is available to members in fewer than 100 OEA locals. Shouldn't ALL members have access to the NEA Retirement Program? You can make that happen, and attendees will be provided with the tools and rationale for doing so.
4G When a Post Becomes a Problem: Social Media, the First Amendment, and Member Protection	This session examines how social media and off-duty conduct can lead to employee discipline, even when activity occurs outside the workplace. Participants will gain a practical understanding of when speech is protected, when it creates risk, and how legal standards such as <i>Pickering v. Board of Education</i> and <i>Garvetti v. Ceballos</i> are applied in real-world scenarios. Attendees will leave with concrete strategies to advise and protect members before issues arise and to respond effectively when they do.
4H The Changing State of Dispute Resolution Services in NE Ohio	If your local is in a dispute today and you call FMCS—what are you likely to hear? Mike Franczak knows firsthand. A former FMCS mediator who was impacted by the DOGE cuts, now working as a private mediator and arbitrator, Mike will share what's changed, what it means for your locals, what to expect, and how to navigate your mediation and training options in this new reality.
4I Vouchers Hurt Ohio and Vouchers Hurt Your School District!	Over 90% of the students who use vouchers have never set foot in our public schools. Hear from one of the original members, Dan Heintz, of the steering committee who filed the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit. See how much money our own school district loses and what we can do as public school employees. Dan is a member in Chardon and a school board member in Cleveland Heights-University Heights, so you will learn first-hand his about own advocacy experiences in all three arenas.
4J Women and Bargaining	This session will be a frank, open discussion FOR WOMEN ONLY about the reality of women taking the spokesperson role in collective bargaining. Panelists will include Labor Relations Consultants and local leaders who will share their experiences and offer insights about navigating collective bargaining and advocacy in a world predominantly staffed by women that can also be biased against us taking a leadership role. A Q&A session will be included.

Please note that our Experienced Treasurers workshop will be held virtually on Friday, July 24. Details at neoea.org/files/ExpTreas.pdf.



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Wednesday-Thursday, July 22-23, 2026

Corporate College East, Warrensville Heights

REGISTRATION: SUMMER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Process:

- 1) Registration is online this year and **opens on Wednesday, May 20**. Please go to the link at <https://vireopay.net/transact/NEOEA/SLC2026>. Besides the usual demographic data, we will need to know which session(s) you'd like to attend, if you will be joining us for the meals and Wednesday night keynote speaker, dinner, and social event, and if you'll need a hotel room. Once you've made your selections, be sure to press the "submit" button so that your registration will be recorded; you'll be able to print a receipt.
- 2) You will receive an email within two business days confirming your enrollment for the NEOEA Summer Leadership Conference along with the amount due for your registration. Please make your check payable to NEOEA, and mail it to NEOEA Summer Leadership; 6001 Landerhaven Drive, Suite D; Mayfield Hts., OH 44124-4190.
- 3) **Registrations must be received by Wednesday, July 15. No reservations will be accepted after this date.**
- 4) On Thursday, July 16, you'll receive an email with a link to the conference site and any other details that you'll need.

Registration Fee:

Register early and save! Payments postmarked by Friday, June 12, get the reduced price.

	By June 12	After June 12
New Treasurers' School only (Wednesday)	Free	Free
Commuting (1 person/no sleeping room)	\$ 50	\$ 80
Double occupancy (2 people/1 sleeping room) **	\$ 200	\$ 230
Single occupancy (1 person/1 sleeping room) **	\$ 150	\$ 180

**** If you need a hotel room, your registration must be received by Wednesday, June 24.**

Notes:

- 1) Summer Leadership Conference is for **NEOEA members only**.
- 2) Course selections are subject to room limitations.
- 3) Course descriptions and presenters are subject to change.

NEOEA Policy 8.08b states "Event registration constitutes a commitment to attend. Members are responsible for managing their own registrations and cancellations. Cancellations must be submitted in writing (via email or the designated registration system) no later than the published cancellation deadline. ... Members who are no-shows or cancel after the deadline will be invoiced for the full NEOEA cost of registration to cover incurred costs. The local president will be notified if the member does not pay within 30 days. ... Emergencies and extenuating circumstances will be considered upon written request to the Executive Director. Determinations will be made on a case-by-case basis."

Graduate Credit:

Participants of Summer Leadership can receive two semester hours of graduate credit (\$390) through Ashland College for attending the Conference and completing an outside assignment. Registration and payment is online through Ashland College. Details are available at neoea.org/files/GradCredit.pdf.

Any questions? Please email us at desk@neoea.org.