



## **NEOEA Day: Educator-owned Professional Development**

*(Wondering why so many kids had the day off on October 12 this school year?)*

It could be said that professional development is in NEOEA's organizational DNA. When the principals and superintendents who founded what was then called the "North Eastern Ohio Teachers Association" first met in 1869, their main purposes were to improve education funding, school supervision, and teacher training. One of their earliest decisions was to have an annual meeting on the second Friday of October, where their teachers could attend a wide variety of workshops on critical educational topics.

Membership in the early twentieth century soared so rapidly that the annual meeting occupied three halls. For decades, educators from thirteen counties gathered in downtown Cleveland, until automobiles eclipsed trains as the preferred mode of transportation and parking became a serious obstacle. For decades more, NEOTA experimented with different arrangements of centralization and decentralization, finally settling on "NEOTA Day" as a widely-dispersed system of workshops.

Meanwhile, in the 1960s, control of NEOTA's internal affairs gradually shifted from administrators to classroom teachers, and NEOTA became affiliated with the National Education Association (America's largest teacher union) and its state affiliate, the Ohio Education Association. NEOTA Day survived this change: most local affiliates negotiated contractual requirements that schools give students the day off, which allows teachers and other education employees to use the day to attend professional development activities.

In 1989, as NEOTA's membership became more diverse, the organization changed its name to NEOEA: the North Eastern Ohio Education Association. The familiar NEOTA Day was renamed as NEOEA Day, welcoming other education employees besides preK-12 teachers.

For many educators--members and nonmembers alike--NEOEA Day represents an important option in professional growth. Participants in most programs receive certificates of participation which LPDCs (local professional development committees) count toward license renewals. For most educators, however, the most important aspects of NEOEA Day are variety and choice. Variety comes from the large number of choices: on NEOEA Day 2011, we offered 48 programs of professional, personal, and leadership development. Choice is enhanced by the organization's ownership of the programs: many programs are designed and presented by members themselves, while other programs bring in outside experts.

As NEOEA begins its second 140 years, NEOEA Day remains a unique and important part of educational life in northeastern Ohio.



## Fact Sheet

NEOEA is a professional association of educators working to improve public education in northeastern Ohio by serving the needs of its members. Founded in 1869, NEOEA is the largest education organization in northeastern Ohio and one of the oldest education organizations in the United States.

Our 32,000+ members are education employees working at 151 educational institutions in the eleven counties of northeastern Ohio. They are organized into 193 local affiliates which act as exclusive bargaining agents representing staff members at a wide variety of workplaces:

- public school districts;
- county boards of developmental disabilities;
- educational service centers;
- career centers;
- colleges and universities.

Although incorporated as a professional association, NEOEA is affiliated with the National Education Association (America's largest and oldest education union) and its state affiliate, the Ohio Education Association. We share with those organizations a commitment to democratic governance, and NEA, OEA, and NEOEA are all governed by Representative Assemblies consisting of locally-elected delegates. NEOEA's Representative Assembly meets twice each year to conduct the business of the Association, including electing officers and enacting items of new business, a budget, and a comprehensive body of resolutions.

Elected officers include a president, a president-elect, a past president, and a recording secretary. A thirty-nine member Board of Directors meets nine times a year to put into effect the policies and directions of the Representative Assembly and to consider recommendations of fourteen standing committees.

Meetings of the Board, its own committees, and fourteen membership committees bring about some 2,400 trips each year to our Garfield Heights conference center from all over northeastern Ohio. The conference center is staffed full-time by Executive Director Bill Lavezzi and Executive Assistant Linda Grunden.

### **NEOEA headquarters is located at:**

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## NEOEA at-a-Glance

NEOEA is one of ten district education associations affiliated with the 132,000-member Ohio Education Association (OEA) and 3.2 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

NEOEA is an organization of education employees comprising:

- preK-12 Public School Educators
- Education Support Professionals such as secretaries, custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, etc.
- Higher Education Faculty
- Educators of the Developmentally Disabled
- Teachers and Support Professionals at Career Centers and Education Service Centers

Founded: 1869 as North Eastern Ohio Teachers Association

Members: 32,678

Local associations: 193

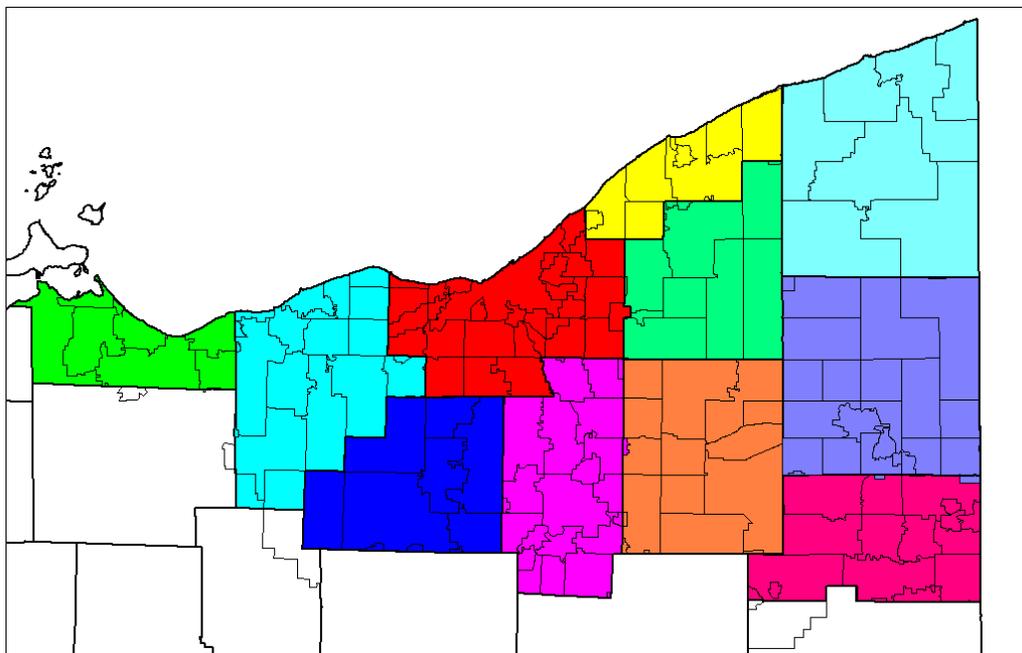
Employers: 151

Northeastern Ohio coverage: 11 counties

Ashtabula  
Cuyahoga  
Erie  
Geauga

Lake  
Lorain  
Mahoning  
Medina

Portage  
Summit  
Trumbull



## Officers and Executive Director 2012-13



### **Mary Alice Conkey, President**

Completing 27 years of teaching, Mary Alice is currently an Intervention Specialist at Mayfair Elementary School in the East Cleveland City School District. She received her Bachelor's Degree from Notre Dame College, and her Master's from John Carroll University. She is President of the East Cleveland Education Association and serves on the Notre Dame College Alumni Board. Upon her election in 2011, she said, "I am thrilled to accept this leadership role during a time when we need to come together as a strong union and work closely for the betterment of all of our members in the Association. We will continue to fight the good fight as we move NEOEA and each of our locals forward."

Ms. Conkey was the first person to be elected to NEOEA's new two-year term as President and will serve as President through August 2014.



### **Kim Richards, President-elect**

President-elect Kim Richards teaches art at Cardinal High School.

She has been president of the Cardinal Education Association since 2000(?), and she was elected in 2008 as the OEA and NEOEA Director representing Unit 5, which includes educators from 29 local affiliates in Geauga, Mahoning, Portage, and Trumbull Counties. She continues to serve in that capacity as she begins her term as President-elect.

Ms. Richards was elected in April 2012 as the first person to serve two-year terms as President-elect, President, and Past President. She will be NEOEA's President in 2014-16.



### **David Saywell, Past President**

David Saywell has completed 35 years of public school teaching, and has been employed by the Euclid City Schools since 1978. He presently teaches fifth grade there, but also is able to teach special education.

Mr. Saywell has been the President of the Euclid Teachers Association since 1999. He is the chairperson of the North Coast Joint UniServ Council, a group of 24 local affiliates located in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Lake, and Geauga Counties.

Mr. Saywell was elected President-elect in April 2010, was President in 2011-12, and will serve NEOEA's first two-year term as Past President through August 2014.



### **Brian McConnell, Recording Secretary**

Brian McConnell has been teaching vocal music for the past twenty years and is currently teaching in the Warrensville Heights City School District. He's had the opportunity to teach in Ohio and Nebraska. His passion to teach comes from a being a member of a family of educators. Mr. McConnell was the President of the Warrensville Education Association from 2008-2011. He has been an active union member and advocate for public education for the past eleven years. "I am looking forward to serving the 33,000 elementary and secondary teachers, university professors, and support staffs as their new Recording Secretary. NEOEA has a long tradition and history, and I'm proud to be a part of it."

Mr. McConnell began his term as Recording Secretary on September 1, 2011.



### **William S. Lavezzi, Executive Director**

In a career spanning three decades, Bill Lavezzi taught English, drama, and psychology at Warrensville Heights High School, Aurora High School, and Aurora's Harmon Middle School. He expanded his professional responsibilities by serving as president, negotiator, and building representative in the local teachers' associations in both school districts. After serving as NEOEA's President in 1995-96, he represented Portage and Summit County teachers on the NEOEA and OEA Boards of Directors from 1996 to 2000. He has been NEOEA's Executive Director since 2000.