

The OADDP *Newsline*

The Ohio Association of Developmental Disabilities Professionals

A Department of The Ohio Education Association

Important Dates

Annual Conference

March 2-3, 2018

**Mohican State
Park Lodge
and Resort**

**Watch your mail or
check the website for
more information.**

Board Meetings

**May 11, 2018
Lunch at OEA RA**

**July 14, 2018
TBD**

ALL are welcome!

**Check the website,
oaddp.org,
for location addresses.**

UNION STRONG!

By: Christina West, Chairperson

Until recently, I treated the union like car insurance - paid my dues via payroll deduction and moved on. I didn't truly understand the importance of the union and what they can provide until something happened. In keeping with the car insurance analogy, let's say that someone stole my car. I didn't really need that insurance, until, well, I needed it.

I was one of twenty Portage County Board of DD Service and Support Administrators (SSAs) that decided to stand up for what we believed in and go out on strike. **Now** I needed that insurance! I learned that thousands of people throughout the state were supporting us. I learned the importance of working together, of educating myself on what is going on in my community, and what the OEA really meant to me. I learned that our union isn't *just* insurance after all.

I am sharing this because I want others to learn from my mistake and stop thinking of your union as insurance and access what is available. Most of us pay our dues and move on with our days. I challenge you to stop doing this. Attend your local union meetings. Volunteer to be on a committee. Attend a district or OEA conference to learn more. USE your union and the support provided. Learn to advocate for yourself so that you can advocate for the people we work with.

You can get more involved by volunteering for one of the many standing committees that set the agenda for OEA. Those of us that provide support to students and adults with disabilities need to be on these committees so that we can have a voice, so that we can advocate. Those of us who are on a committee will tell you that the networking and education you get is worth the time. Learning about how our union operates and meeting others from all over our state is eye opening.

Let us know if you are interested in representing OADDP at OEA. We have a voice, and we need to use it, as county board programs change drastically, as schools deal with budget cuts, and as more students with special needs are included in their local public schools.

Our union is more important now that it ever has been. We need to stick together, not be afraid to speak up, and not continue to just pay for the insurance.

Special Education Work Group: Next Steps

By: Hank Haynes

As previously reported, a Special Education Work Group was formed in NEOEA to find ways to address the concerns of all members who work with special needs students within the context of OADDP. After a few meetings discussing commonalities and challenges, a New Business Item (NBI) was presented at OEA asking for a similar work group statewide, as there is no OEA organization for special education other than OADDP. The NBI passed, and OEA President Becky Higgins is in the process of putting together a group of members from both sectors of staff who work with special needs children and adults. Working to expand the scope of OADDP to include Pre-K-12 and increase membership was a focal point, as 16% of OADDP membership work in those settings.

The work that has already been done at NEOEA will be shared with the task force that OEA develops, including the survey of concerns and the conversations detailing gaps in staff support. The overwhelming need is for more professional development for all staff, especially in the areas of appropriate IEPs, and classroom and behavior management. Other critically important concerns are staffing, caseload, and planning time. OEA Legislative Policies and Resolutions addressing special education will also need to be reviewed.

When the OEA Special Education Work Group completes its work, there will be a need for an OEA organization to continue advocacy for Pre-K-12 Special Educators within OEA. OADDP is ready to fill that void. One hurdle to expanding membership among these special educators is the organization's name. The Pre-K-12 staff stressed that they do not identify with the term "developmental disabilities," while the DD staff definitely do. At the upcoming OADDP Membership Conference, members will consider changing the name of the organization to the "Ohio Association of Special Needs Professionals" (OASNP) and re-brand the previously County Board of Developmental Disabilities focused organization to one with an expanded focus on Pre-K-12 educators in our local schools. Adjustments to the OADDP Mission and Strategic Goals will also need to be dealt with.

A page on the OADDP website has been set up for the NEOEA Special Education Work Group at <http://oaddp.ohea.us/neoea-special-education-work-group/>. OEA Members can download working documents, reports, meeting notices, agendas, and minutes.

If you are interested in serving on the new OEA Special Education Work Group, please contact OEA President Becky Higgins directly with your qualifications. She will appoint members and set up the first meeting..

If interested in helping or for more information, contact Hank Haynes, haynes@neoea.org.



OEA Fights to Preserve Full Year OPERS Service Credit for County Board of DD Employees

By: Bob Matkowski, OEA Organizer and OADDP Staff Liaison



This past year, OPERS has changed the definition of “earnable salary” to no longer allow classified County Board of DD staff to gain a full year’s service credit when their positions are only nine or ten months long.

OPERS has stated a person will only receive service credit for months in which they work, even though they are paid over 12 months.

OEA has collected signatures from hundreds of DD classified staff which will be shared with both OPERS and state legislators to secure a full year’s service credit for classified staff employed at a County Board of DD. House Bill 413 has been introduced,

which includes a full year’s retirement service credit when working the full school year.

OEA is also securing members to both testify on behalf of the bill as well as initiating challenges at OPERS showing both short term and long term harm to members.

OADDP Annual Membership Conference

March 2-3, 2018

Mohican State Park Lodge and Resort

The Annual Conference receives high praise every year from those who attend, and we’re sure that this year’s will not disappoint. The theme is “Turning Challenging Behaviors into Opportunities,” presented by Daria DeNoia, OEA Education Policy and Practice Consultant. As usual, the agenda is a mix of association and legislative updates, legal updates by Kathy McKinley, professional issues, networking, and fun! All this plus a beautiful, wooded setting and good food. You should have received your registration form in the mail by now, or check the website for details.

The conference will also include a discussion about expanding the mission of OADDP to include more special needs educators in public school settings. To this end, there will be a vote to change the Constitution and Bylaws, as needed, as well as the Mission Statement and Strategic Goals. Elections for the four OADDP officers will also be held.

For more information, visit the [OADDP 2018 Annual Conference Page](#) on the website.

You need to be part of this!

Local Focus...Portage SSA

by Nikki Nadasky

On October 4th 2017, the Service and Support Administrators (SSA) at the Portage County Board of Developmental Disabilities went on strike. They had been working without a contract for 14 months and through numerous attempts to negotiate a fair contract. The last negotiation occurred on September 11th, where the board presented their last and final offer. The SSA's team attempted to reach out and wanted to negotiate further, but the board was unwilling to move. The SSA's had little choice but to strike.

On November 27th, after fifty days of being united in their efforts, the SSA's ratified their contract and returned to work the next day. The group learned so much about camaraderie, solidarity, and compassion. Each and every one on the line learned they had strengths and gifts they did not know they had and are better for the experience. The families who the SSA's serve rallied support for them and started a parent group to encourage the board to return to the table and settle. Families wrote letters to the local newspaper explaining how important services are to their loved ones. They also spoke passionately at county commissioner's meetings and board meetings. The Ohio Education Association wrapped their arms around the SSA group and stood side by side with them daily. The SSA's as a group are so much stronger for the experience and have gained even more strength and dedication to those they serve. By advocating for themselves, they have become better advocates for those they serve. They wish to strive to continue the message of equality, advocacy and respect, in order to change the culture at the board. They wish to make it a better board and better county for all those served.