OMTA sent 10 Delegates to the NEA RA this summer in Chicago. Meetings lasted from 7am – nearly 6pm most days. New Policies and Resolutions, New Business Items (NBIs), and Legislative actions were debated and voted up or down. Many items were sent to the committee that focuses on the kind of action/information or referred to the NEA Board for further debate before action is taken or a new debate/vote at next year’s RA is planned.

Not all debated topics have the same level of personal connection to each delegate or teacher back home. Some delegates simply need to ask clarifying questions, while some debates are very passionate. No matter the level of disagreement, the goal is to always remain civil, and truly hear one another.

In the end, the process is truly democratic. If the idea is supported by the majority, it is voted into action. If the majority do not support the idea, the author needs to make a choice: either give up or go back and find a way to express the idea to make it something that the majority can support.

~Tracy Lee Taylor

If you would like to read more about the details of what was debated, here is a link to one of the RA pages on our CTA.org website: [https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/conferences-events/annual-meeting-and-representative-assembly/about-ra/ra-news/2022-nea-representative-assembly-back-and-better-ever](https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/conferences-events/annual-meeting-and-representative-assembly/about-ra/ra-news/2022-nea-representative-assembly-back-and-better-ever)

Here is your OMTA delegation! Monica Lite, Stephanie Hibbard, Mary Kay Scheid, Rosa Whitton, Tisha Curry, Jose China, Regina Purcell, Sendai Parker, Malinda Hurley, and Tracy Lee Taylor
Sendai Parker

As I reflect back on this summer’s activities, being your delegate to the Representative Assembly was definitely a highlight. Besides meeting teachers from all over the United States, I was privileged to hear many different opinions on a variety of issues. One of the issues which affected me deeply was the NBI concerning bereavement leave when a miscarriage occurs. I’d never thought about the emotional side of a miscarriage. But to hear the pain in the delegate’s voice who authored this NBI left me speechless and tearful. This affected me so deeply that I had to bring it to the table during our last bargaining session. If there are like-minded educators out there who feel the same way about this issue, please let your bargaining team know so they may continue to work to include this language in our CBA.

Jose China

My first time at the RA was a very educational and exciting experience. Seeing the sheer amount of people at the RA was surprising and inspiring. I was told that there would be a lot of people, but seeing everyone was very exciting and knowing that we are all teachers. I personally have gone to many types of conferences and conventions in the past, but I’ve never gone to one at this size. Everyone I spoke to was welcome, helpful, and most importantly, we were all there for the same reason.

I felt very welcomed and heard at the RA. I was not alone in my experiences when they asked about me and OMTA. I was empowered we were empowered. We were there to support, listen, and help each other out. It enriching to speak about and special education needs and experiences not only with teachers from around the state, but from teachers from around the country. Even during the state meetings before the RA, it was a wonderful experience. I learned so much from everyone at the local, state, and the national level.

Regina Purcell

Over the summer I had the opportunity to go to the NEA RA in Chicago as a representative for our union. I was amazed at the number of delegates from all across the US who came to be a part of this important event. One of the greatest moments of this conference was a visit by the Vice President of the United States, Kamala Harris. She spoke of strength, support, and courage for our system of Education. She spoke of erasing the hurtful decisions made by former political people, who said they supported education, but acted in the opposite manner. Vice President Harris spoke of the power and influence that educators have to impact lives and make positive changes. Finally, she spoke about how important we were, the teachers, giving so much of ourselves to our students. She acknowledged our struggles and praised our triumphs. She said we would stand together, not walk alone, so that our voices would be heard.

This was so much more than what we expected. It was a warm hug for our souls. To know that our government administration believes in the job we are doing and that we are respected and appreciated for our work.

As I look back on that moment, I think about the future of education. Our future looks bright, and we have hope again.

Stephanie Hibbard

“I have learned so much from you and I know you have learned so much from each other. You have been incredible. Joy, justice, excellence. Those are action words! I need you to be joyful! I need you to do justice! I need you to be always, every day, I need you to be excellent! NEA, lift up your heads! Lift up your heads! The sun is still shining and we will rise again tomorrow!” It has been several weeks since I heard this closing remark from NEA President, Becky Pringle at the Representative Assembly in Chicago this past summer. Yet, I still reflect on her statement and am in awe of the experience being with several thousand educators, from all over the country, with the same desire of wanting what is best for our students and profession. Although we didn’t always share the same point of view, there was always civil discourse.

It was inspiring to be at a convention where educators were able to speak freely about issues which impact our students and
profession. Regardless of the voting outcomes to accept or deny new business items, delegates were respectful. At the end of each day, we could co-mingle and come together as a group to board busses and do it all over again the next day. In my opinion, this was truly American Democracy at its finest.

Malinda Hurley

Amid the process to get through and into the convention center’s huge hall where the National Education Association Representative Assembly 2022 in Chicago was being held, I felt like this was my first Representative Assembly. The pandemic changed the way we did business as usual. Negative COVID tests results and mask-wearing were required to enter the NEA RA. Electronic devices were used to record delegate’s votes. These changes kept everyone safe and the vote tabulations accurate.

Although there were changes, many aspects stayed the same: New Business Items (NBI’s) Legislative Amendments, Policy Statement Amendments, and Resolution Amendments. At my first NEA RA 2019 in Houston, Texas, I learned what a Resolution was and how to submit them. Resolutions are simply a set of belief statements phrased as “NEA believes,” “NEA supports” or “NEA opposes” and does not ask the NEA to take action. As I read through the numerous existing 2019 Resolutions, I found that only a few resolutions directly related to foster youth. I then acted by submitting child welfare resolutions to lend voices to foster youth students and their stakeholders to support this marginalized community. After two years of pandemic shutdown, the resolution process began again. My proposed resolution amendments and a new proposed resolution became part of the updated NEA Resolutions at the 2022 NEA RA.

The New Resolution B under the category: Adult-to Youth Mentoring Programs states, The National Education Association believes that all children and youth should be provided the opportunity to participate in personalized adult-to-youth mentor programs, as needed, that ensure a beneficial relationship with at least one adult mentor. The Association also believes that such mentor programs should support the youth’s academic success and overall well-being and should seek to recruit mentors who reflect the diverse identities of the youth they serve. This is a huge nation-wide win for our foster youth students.

Know that the process works, and that one can make a difference for our students and teachers.

Rosa Whitton

This year the National Education Association (NEA) selected Dolly Parton as the winner of the 2022 Friend of Education Award. Dolly Parton’s foundation, The Dollywood Foundation, has gifted more than 200 million books through the Imagination Library that gives free books to children from birth to age 5. Dolly Parton launched the library in 1995 to benefit the children of her home town. Her idea was to inspire a love of reading and love of books among preschool children and their families. The program gifts a book through the mail in the child’s name each month from birth until they turn 5. The Imagination Library was created in honor of her dad who never had the opportunity to read and write.

In a video, Dolly Parton accepted the award on behalf of her and her team. She thanked the NEA for its award and she recognized the hardships that educators endure to help students succeed. She said her mission in life is to make people feel good about themselves. Dolly said her foundation now offers college scholarships for high school students and her theme park, Dollywood, helps cover college tuition and expenses for employees. She ended the video with one of her most famous song lyrics, “And remember, I will always love you!”

MaryKay Scheid

The in-person NEA RA is a truly spectacular event. Imagine more than 7,000 passionate educators in a single convention hall discussing and debating issues surrounding education. The energy in the hall is palpable and the camaraderie is inspirational. Even in masks, we could see the excitement on the faces of educators who had not had the chance to debate in person since 2019.

My NEA RA experience in Chicago involved some notable firsts and lasts. In my leadership role for Service Center One (I serve as regional treasurer), I was tasked with providing support for the state delegates elected in our area. This was a first. I was responsible for taking attendance, ensuring delegate safety, and providing guidance regarding the business to be completed—especially to newer delegates. As a Chicago native, I was also able to help folks navigate public transit and find the best pizza to enjoy at the end
of the day. I believe my contributions were appreciated by the local OMTA delegates as well.

This was my last meeting to serve as Chair of one of the caucuses for the National Education Association. Within the national and state organizations, caucus groups provide recommendations to leadership on issues of importance to their specific group. Recognized caucuses include (but are not limited to): Women’s, LGBTQ+, Asian and Pacific Islanders, and Science. I represented a smaller caucus, the National Board Certified Teachers Caucus. Our group reviewed proposals with an eye toward supporting accomplished teaching and encouraging participation in the NBCT process. Having been Chair for six years, it was time for me to pass the baton to another Board Certified Teacher—a colleague from New Jersey. I enjoyed my participation in the national caucus because it gave me an opportunity to connect with leaders from across the country. Those connections helped me support educators back home, working with candidates to help them through the process so they could enjoy additional financial compensation from the state (NBCTs in California, teaching at a high-needs school, will receive an additional $5,000 in compensation from the state for the next few years). While this was my last summer to serve as chair of the caucus, I know it isn’t completely an end. I’ve been appointed as membership chair for the coming year! But I’m glad, because I wasn’t ready to say goodbye forever.

Monica Lite

While many of you were relaxing and enjoying your well-deserved time off this summer, OMTA leadership was hard at work. OMTA sent a group to the NEA Representative Assembly this summer in Chicago. We spent 6 days working within our California caucus and then with other state delegates, who together, discussed future NEA policies and bylaws. The most impactful moment during my time were the “theme” days. Imagine 6,000 delegates proudly wearing orange in response to gun violence. Starting September 15th, we would like to bring a little bit of the RA to OMTA. We are asking ALL members to wear Red for Ed that day. Show your union pride.

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