

# THE LAE VOICE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS

Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

Volume 21, No. 5 December 2025



## From the PRESIDENT'S DESK

D'Shay Oaks, President

**It is a special time of year! The school year is officially halfway done... Wow! Every person on a school campus contributes to this success every day:**

- Creative minds inspire learning.
- Hard work and dedication shape future leaders.
- Resilience in challenges fosters student growth.
- Innovation in teaching methods engages diverse learners.
- Supportive environments nurture curiosity and exploration.
- Teamwork among educators enhances collaboration and success.
- Motivation drives students to achieve their best.
- Adaptability to change ensures relevance in education.
- Service to the community builds strong connections and values.

This holiday season will be different for me and others this year. However, we will remember the reason for the season. During your well-deserved holiday break, remember to prioritize these three things:

### 1. REST

### 2. REJUVENATE (especially mentally)

### 3. ENJOY family and friends

Looking into the New Year, we anticipate a busy legislative session. I will need your help by reaching out to your State Senator and House of Representative members! Thank you for allowing me to represent you! Thank you for being a member of LAE!

Happy Holidays! Looking forward to a great 2026!  
D'Shay Oaks





## **A Message from LAE Vice-President, Cynthia Henderson of Caddo:**

Greetings, let's get ready to rumble! We cannot afford to sit silently on the sidelines and watch. The shutdown directly impacts educators throughout our state. We are now faced with losing access to affordable health care, and more of our members could go hungry. In addition, Federal funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is being challenged. This is a crucial moment in our democracy! We cannot withhold our voice. LAE needs your leadership at this moment. It is time to advocate for our members. We must act now, organize a press call/event, and build an event that highlights your local members serving their community. We must make sure our voices are amplified and our stories are written.

Never, Never, stop fighting!

Cynthia  
Vice-President LAE



## **IF THE SHOE FITS, THEN YOU SHOULD WEAR IT! BECOME AN NEA RA STATE DELEGATE!**

### **Educators Who Are Leaders!**

A leader is someone who motivates, inspires, and guides others towards their goal or vision. A leader is passionate about their work and can assist others.

True leaders lead by example, build trust relationships, make thoughtful decisions, and empower others to reach their full potential. They demonstrate integrity and accountability while fostering collaboration and promoting positive change for all. If this is the case, then LAE has a job for you. BECOME A NEA RA STATE DELEGATE!

### **The Role of an NEA RA State Delegate**

The role of NEA RA State Delegate serves as a representative for their state's educators at the National Educational Association Representative Assembly. (NEA RA) Their role is to serve as the voice of educators from their state, representing their concerns and priorities at the national level. During the assembly, delegates debate and vote on key issues, including New Business Items, policy amendments, and resolutions that guide NEA's work for the coming year. They also have the opportunity to engage with delegates from every state to build unity around issues affecting students, educators, and schools nationwide.

It is both an honor and a responsibility to be the voice of educators and help shape the profession and future of public education across America.

If you are interested in becoming a delegate to the NEA RA, go to [lae.org](http://lae.org) and download the NEA RA State Delegate/Successor form.





# LAE 2026 ELECTION INFORMATION

**THE TIME IS NOW! SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATION FORM AND LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!  
IT'S TIME TO TAKE YOUR SEAT AT THE TABLE!**

Don't just sit on the sidelines, be a voice for change and renewed commitment. Serve on committees that can impact public education, schools' working conditions, and many other essential opportunities. Now's your chance to have a seat at the table.

The following LAE Board of Directors seats are up for re-election. It is required that a candidate have a minimum of 3 years of association membership and be in good standing to be eligible to run for one of the following positions.

Interested candidates must submit a nomination form for their respective position of interest. In addition to the nomination form,

candidates have the option of submitting a short professional biography (not to exceed 50 words) and a high-resolution photo (no larger than 5x7 inches) that will appear in the February issue of The Voice. All nomination forms can be found on the LAE website at [www.lae.org](http://www.lae.org), as well as from your local president and your LAE board member. Completed nomination forms should be sent to [mcarpenter@lae.org](mailto:mcarpenter@lae.org) on or before January 7 by 5:00 p.m.

**First Associate District - Seat A**

**Second Associate District - Seat C**

**Third Associate District - Seats A and C**

**Fourth Associate District - Seat C**

**Fifth Associate District - Seats B and C**

**Sixth Associate District - Seats A**

**Educational Support Professional – Seats C and D**

**LAE Administrator**

**NEA Director**





# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS



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nea.org

As we all know too well, we live in a time of hyperpolarization where many of our elected leaders see their job as fanning the flames of divisiveness rather than leading. The latest tragic assassination of a public figure has unleashed a widespread campaign to oust educators and others from their jobs based on social media postings and other public comments that express anything other than grief. To date, scores of educators have been placed under investigation for private, off-duty comments they have made. NEA and its affiliates will continue to represent individuals and defend their First Amendment rights.

Members should understand that, as educators, they are held to higher standards than others and may be subject to discipline for off duty speech that school officials reasonably expect may cause disruption in school. Such speech includes racist, antisemitic, sexist social media posts as well as posts that appear to applaud or condone violence. Members should consider reviewing their social media posts and deleting older posts or others that could be read to express such views. And before posting on social media members should consider whether the post may be taken out of context to express views other than what the member intends and be aware of who their post may be shared with. If your social media settings allow your friends to share your posts, your posts are effectively public postings and you should take the same care before posting as you would if writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper or speaking into a microphone on a public street.



# KEY POINTS

For a more detailed reminder of your rights to engage in off duty speech, see the NEA Educator Advocacy Guide. Below too are the key points to keep in mind in deciding what, and how, to share on social media and whether what you share would ultimately be found to be protected by the First Amendment.



The First Amendment protects your off-duty speech on matters of public concern. Posts that you make at work or using your work computer are unlikely to be protected.

Even vile and reprehensible speech has been held to be protected speech – at least in some contexts – by the Supreme Court. There is no category of “hate speech” that is unprotected by the First Amendment.

But public employees do not have absolute First Amendment rights to say anything they wish off duty. To decide whether off duty speech is protected by the First Amendment, courts weigh the value of the employee’s speech against the employer’s interest in preventing actual or reasonably anticipated disruption of school.

Social media posts that condone or applaud violence will be given little weight in that balancing and will likely be found to be unprotected by the First Amendment.

Social media posts that engage in political debate on matters of public concern will likely be given great weight in that balancing, but may nevertheless lose protection if the speech targets individuals or groups with obscenities or slurs whether explicit or implied, or if the speech addresses the educator’s individual grievances.

Given the current environment, members should review their social media postings, including reposting of others’ potentially unprotected comments, and update them as necessary to avoid being targeted over a statement that could be taken out of context.

Remember to reach out to your state and local union for support on these issues if needed.



LAE's Outstanding Educator

# ANGELA MATTHEWS

LAE's outstanding educator is Angela Matthews. Ms. Matthews is a proud LAE member, Local President of Ascension Parish, and a strong advocate.

## Who is Angela Matthews?

Angela is the local president for Ascension Parish and stands in support of workplace fairness. She also listens to her members, addresses their concerns with integrity, and ensures that their voices are heard. Her effectiveness makes her approachable, along with her understanding of contracts, policies, and

union procedures. By staying informed and engaged, Angela can confidently support members and uphold professional standards. While communication is key, a good local president shares updates and encourages participation. Angela's dedication and commitment to solidarity strengthen both the workplace and the union. **But this is not all of who she is.**

Every morning before the sun rises, Angela completes a safety check before beginning her bus route. Each morning, she greets her students with a smile, ensuring every student starts their day

with kindness and care. Her dedication to safety, punctuality, and professionalism sets the tone for the day. As a skilled driver, Angela pays attention to traffic, weather, and the needs of each student. Beyond driving, Angela is a role model who teaches responsibility and respect through her daily actions. Her work and dedication are often unnoticed, but **ANGELA MATTHEWS** makes a lasting difference in the lives of her students, their families, and the success of another school day.

LAE congratulates and thanks you for a job well done.



## Member Savings Include:

- Up to 75% off ODP Business Solutions regular prices on Best Value List of preferred products.
- Shop online and get free next-business-day delivery\*\* on qualifying orders of \$30 or more.
- Convenient payment options including single account billing or consolidated billing for multiple locations.

To access your savings, visit:

[odpbusiness.com/lae](http://odpbusiness.com/lae)

\*\*Free Delivery: Minimum purchase required after discounts and before taxes. Orders outside our local delivery area and most furniture, oversized, bulk items, cases of bottled water and other beverages and special order items do not qualify. Non-qualifying orders incur a delivery charge (minimum charge of \$9.99). Many orders can be delivered next business day (between 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM) if placed online or via phone by 5:00 PM or via fax by 3:00 PM, local time (in most locations). Other restrictions apply.







# Make the most of your new **MEMBERSHIP!**

Find out how NEA Member Benefits can help you:

- Reduce student debt
- Save on travel and everyday items
- Get insurance that fits your schedule
- Sign up for free life insurance
- Plan ahead for retirement

And so much more!

**nea** *Member  
Benefits*

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to learn more



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec 22-Jan 2  
Winter Break  
Office Closed

January 9th  
Board Meeting

January 10th  
Board Retreat

January 10th  
LAE Committee  
Meetings

January 13th  
Martin Luther King Jr.  
Day  
Office Closed

Feb 2 - Feb 3  
LAE Retired Meeting  
Location TBD

Feb 16 - Feb 17  
Mardi Gras  
LAE Office Closed