

ORANGE COUNTY CLASSROOM TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

OUR UNION VOICE



UNITING

EMPOWERING

ADVOCATING

DIGITAL VERSION: ORANGECTA.COM

BACK TO SCHOOL EDITION

AUGUST 4, 2025



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Welcome back, educators!

There's nothing like the start of a new school year—the excitement of meeting new students, reconnecting with colleagues, and setting the stage for growth and learning. I hope you had time this summer to rest and recharge and spend time with loved ones. I also know that many of you had to take on extra work just to keep up. That reality drives our fight at the bargaining table—where we continue pushing for every available dollar to go toward raises.

*At recent school board meetings, I've shared your stories and reminded leaders that Florida ranks **50th in the nation for average teacher pay**. While Tallahassee has cut back the increases meant for teacher salaries in the last few years, that means the district must work harder to prioritize its teachers. And let's be clear—in addition to pay increases, there are meaningful changes that cost nothing at all. Respect doesn't have a price tag. Reducing unnecessary walkthroughs and addressing toxic school climates—those are choices the district can make today to help educators feel valued and want to stay.*

We are stronger together. Let's make this a year of progress and solidarity, and a year when all members of our bargaining unit stand together to make a difference in our profession. And remember—if you need support or have questions, our team is here for you, Monday through Friday, 8–5, at 407-298-0756 or orangecta@gmail.com. We are always in your corner.

In Solidarity,

Clinton McCracken, Orange CTA President

[CTA Members welcome back to school \(video\)](#)

BARGAINING



Bargaining involves ALL of us. Every win we've ever achieved came from collective action and engagement, not just behind closed doors but through shared strength across every school in the district. When members stay informed, share updates, and speak up, we build the momentum that moves the community, the school board, and the district. We met throughout the summer and our next meeting is August 27th. While you'll be in school for the next session, ask a friend or family member who is free to attend on your behalf! [**CLICK TO RSVP.**](#)

Next Bargaining Dates: Aug. 27, Sept. 12, Sept. 24, Oct. 3. Check the [bargaining section of our website](#) and join our [Facebook group](#) to keep updated. Also, as a reminder, we have invited every school to have a representative on the expanded Bargaining Committee to ensure all voices are heard in this process. Contact your Association Representative or CTA Specialist if you don't yet have someone on this committee. Let's show the district that we're paying attention, we're united, and we're action ready.



LABOR MANAGEMENT UPDATES: We have been advocating on behalf of members, and below are several topics we are currently discussing.

- 12-month payment option
- Parent Square
- School Counselors
- Worksites Renovations / Construction
- Work Order Tracking Form
- Early Release, possible switch to Fridays
- Meet the Teacher / Open House
- Maternity Leave
- CFE
- Referendum - CTA is advocating for the one mill to be increased and to be used for salary increases.

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS BECAUSE MEMBERS STOOD STRONG TOGETHER

- Tentative Agreement: Language for members' top priority: Unfounded Claims
- Tentative Agreement: Reduces sick leave donation requirement (from 10 to 4 days)
- Tentative Agreement: No meetings on the last Wednesday of the student school year
- 3 weeks of paid maternity leave
- MOU about Open House and Meet the Teacher
- 504 reviews have been reduced to every 3 years instead of annually
- Added 3 days paid Bereavement Leave
- Moved a teacher non workday to April to ease the long period of no time off
- Doubled CTA PD course offerings, including a virtual AI course launching in September
- Union Recertification with 98% of members voting in favor
- Recovered membership density after SB256 and built even more momentum
- Percentage Raises

CONTRACT REMINDERS

Have a contract concern? If you are a member, contact your CTA Specialist at 407-298-0756 or orangecta@gmail.com

Contract Reminders

Welcome BACK TO SCHOOL



- PLCs/Collaborative Teams are teacher driven.
- PLCs/Collaborative Teams can NOT be required during your daily uninterrupted planning time. This is YOUR planning time.
- Teachers can't be given homework for PLCs/CTs.
- Common Boards can't be required.
- Teachers shouldn't be asked to complete data that is already available to the admin.
- Teachers can wear jeans any day of the week.
- Lesson plan templates and team lesson plans can't be required.
- CRMS, SBUAS, and Common Assessments can't be required.
- Principals do NOT decide who will be on the FAC.
- You do not have to accept late work past your deadline.
- You should not be scheduled to supervise students for more than 3 hours without a break.
- Everyone in our bargaining unit gets daily uninterrupted planning time.
- Teachers can drink soda and coffee at school and don't have to hide it.



#MICROMANAGEMENT #KNOWYOURCONTRACT #STRONGERTOGETHER

WEDNESDAY PREPLANNING PD: Professional Development on August 6, is not mandatory. Please email us at orangecta@gmail.com if your principal is requiring teachers to attend PD.

PREPLANNING SCHEDULE: During preplanning, administrators can schedule meetings and activities, but these are capped at 2.5 duty days (18.75 hours). The rest of the preplanning time is protected for teachers to set up classrooms, plan lessons, and prepare for the year. This provision does not apply to new hires, STO schools, or CP schools. *"Scheduled activities during preplanning will be limited to the equivalent of no more than two and one-half (2 ½) duty days so as not to significantly impede the teachers' time for preparation for the coming school year. This does not apply to new hires to the District and/or work location, schools assigned to the School Transformation Office, or schools identified as Corrective Program Schools."* Article XIV.Duty Day. T. P60

WEDNESDAY MEETINGS SCHEDULE: During preplanning, teachers must receive the meetings (including PD) schedule for early release Wednesdays for the first semester. The principal has two early release days per month to use at their discretion, while the rest are protected for uninterrupted teacher planning. *"Beginning with the 2020-21 school year, the administrator may use a maximum of two (2) early*



release days per month. The remaining early release days shall be used for uninterrupted planning time after student contact time. Teachers will be provided a copy of the schedule during preplanning for the first semester and before winter break for the second semester. Before the beginning of the school year, the District will send communication discouraging the scheduling of unnecessary meetings and/or Professional Development scheduled the Wednesday before report cards or progress reports are due." Article XV. Work Year. D. P61

UPCOMING EVENTS

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING (VIRTUAL): We invite you to virtually attend our upcoming Annual Membership Meeting! This meeting is an opportunity for us to reflect on the past year, from the challenges we faced to the wins we achieved **together**. We'll share our goals for the upcoming year, and how you can help us achieve them! Register [HERE](#)

Date/Time: Wednesday, August 6, 5:00 pm

SOCIAL WITH CONGRESSMAN MAXWELL FROST: Get to know Congressman Maxwell Frost at a social for CTA members on Friday, August 22! Come out to share your ideas, concerns, and hopes for public education with the Congressman, along with other local leaders. We hope to see you there! Stay tuned in the next newsletter for location details.

Date/Time: Friday, August 22, 5:30 pm

Location: TBD

LABOR DAY FAMILY/UNION PICNIC AT CTA: Join us and our brothers/sisters from the Central Florida Central Labor Council for an afternoon of great food and entertainment at our annual Labor Day Picnic! All union members and their families are invited! As you know, CTA members are also members of the AFL-CIO along with many other local unions in Central Florida. These are important connections and allies in the labor movement. We show up for each other in contract fights, pickets, and our brothers/sisters often come to our bargaining meetings to support us.

Date: Monday, September 1

Location: CTA Office (1020 Webster Ave, Orlando, FL 32804)

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: Are you looking for ways to: design lessons that meet students where they are in the learning process? Anticipate and reduce barriers for students to achieve rigorous goals? Use students' strengths and interests to drive instruction? Then join us for our next Professional Development course, **UDL: Universal Design for Learning Framework and Guidelines!** This interactive module is based on the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) Universal Design for Learning Framework and Guidelines. Participants will build an understanding of neuroscience as a foundation for educating the whole child and designing instruction to best meet the needs of diverse learners. [Register today!](#)

Date: September 19-20

Location: CTA Office (1020 Webster Ave, Orlando, FL 32804)

ORLANDO CITY & ORLANDO PRIDE: Join Orlando Pride & Orlando City to celebrate Back to School! Take advantage of one (1) complimentary ticket with the purchase of a ticket to select home matches! Click [HERE](#) to claim your complimentary offer today!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

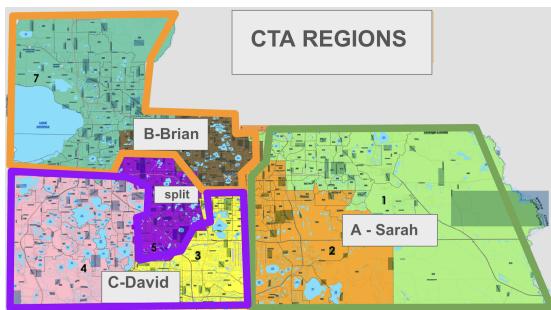
SCHOOL COMMITTEES: Each Association Representative at schools will coordinate a vote to establish or choose a representative to the following committees: Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC), Placement Review Committee, and Budget Advisory Committee, and a representative for the Bargaining Committee. The members of the FAC are in charge of establishing a process to elect the teacher representative to the School Advisory Committee.

BARGAINING COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE: Every OCPS school/worksit should have a representative on the expanded Bargaining Committee. This member attends bargaining dates when possible, communicates bargaining updates to instructional personnel at their school/worksit, and shares insights from the school/worksit to the committee and Bargaining Team. Make sure your voices are heard! Email us at orangecta@gmail.com if you would like to be part of the bargaining committee or contact your AR (ARs are welcome to serve on the Bargaining Committee as well).

CTA COMMITTEES: Interested in becoming more involved with your union? We invite members to sign up for the committees listed below! This is a great way to connect, organize, and build solidarity with other members. Committees meet monthly on Zoom. Sign up [HERE](#) and we'll reach out with more information.

- **FYRE** (Florida Young Remarkable Educators): FYRE continuously engages and empowers diverse teams of early career educators through training, collaboration, networking and opportunities to experience their union in action — giving a voice to new members with which to advocate for their students, their union and their profession.
- **Government Relations**
- **Howard Fenner Scholarship**
- **Marion Cannon Scholarship**
- **Ulysses Floyd Scholarship**
- **Human and Civil Rights**
- **Minority Affairs**

MEMBERS ONLY FACEBOOK GROUP: Remember that our members only Facebook Group is the ONLY group affiliated with your Union. Be sure you are getting accurate information when asking questions online. We have seen inaccurate information in other places. Also, while anonymous posting is currently an option, remember that CTA staff are unable to fix any concerns when they're posted in the group. For assistance from staff you must email or call the office. **We often see contract violations in comments but can't file a grievance to resolve it if you don't contact us directly.** You can also file a class action grievance and remain anonymous but again that must be done by contacting the office.



NEW REGIONS: We have created three subregions for the district to better support members. We will host in person and/or zoom Regional meetings each quarter and will be working with ARs in each Region to build the strength of our union. All ARs have a list of each school/worksit and which Region they are in.

Region A (Mostly East and Southeast and some Central schools)-CTA Specialist Sarah Yelensky

Region B (Mostly North and Northwest and some Central schools) CTA Specialist Brian Antoine

Region C (South and Southwest and some Central schools) CTA Specialist David Cintron



Standing
with thousands
vs.
All Alone



TOP REASONS TO JOIN

We will have a drawing at the September AR meeting. For every new member you sign up we will enter your name into the drawing! Join today at joincta.com.

1. We can accomplish more together than all alone
2. Stronger collective bargaining power to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions
3. Contract support for grievance process to protect your rights
4. Free Professional Development
5. Amplify your voice for pro-public education policies
6. CTA members-only benefits (like our new Dental/Vision plans)
7. FEA, NEA, AFT benefits
8. Assistance with Evaluation system
9. Support network and community
10. Being part of the solution for change instead of passively accepting problems

IPAD GIVEAWAY: We will be giving away an iPad at our September AR meeting. One entry for every new member you sign up in August.

2025-2026 GOAL: Each school will increase membership by 5%.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES:

The Commissioner of Education sent a letter attacking teachers and their unions, accusing the unions of delaying salary increases. Let's be clear: an attack on the union is an attack on educators—because Orange County educators are the union. Every decision made at the bargaining table reflects what Orange County educators have said they need to best serve their students and communities.

The state boasts of “historic investments,” but the truth is educators are being forced to do more with less, leave the profession, or take on second jobs just to make ends meet. Teachers care for our students, families, and communities, yet the state continues to fail in taking care of us. The state also conveniently ignores the fact that Florida ranks 50th in the nation in teacher pay.

Our educators take care of students, families, and the entire community, yet the state continues to fail in taking care of them. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

SCHOOLS WITHOUT AN AR:

The following schools do not currently have an Association Representative. Please contact orangecta@gmail.com if you are interested in serving in this role. ARs are a critical resource for members at each worksite, providing information and strengthening our Union. ARs may also be eligible to have their local dues reimbursed.

ATWATER BAY ES
BITHLO/KALEY
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
CENTER/MINORITY
ACHIEVEMENT OFFICE
BRIDGEWATER MS
CASTLEVIEW ES
CHENEY ES
COLLEGE PARK MS
DEVEREUX TREATMENT
DOMMERICH ES
DR. PHILLIPS ES
DREAM LAKE ES
FRANGUS ES

HAMLIN ES
HUNGERFORD ES
HUNTERS CREEK MS
JUVENILE OFFENDERS
PROGRAM/ORANGE YOUTH
ACADEMY
LAKE GEORGE ES
LAKE SYBELIA ES
LAKE WHITNEY ES
LAKEVIEW MS
LAWTON CHILES ES
LOCKHART ES
LUMINARY ES
MEADOWBROOK MS
MILLENNIA GARDENS ES

MULTILINGUAL STUDENT
EDUCATION SERVICES
NORTHLAKE PARK
COMMUNITY SCHOOL
OCPS ACADEMIC CENTER
FOR EXCELLENCE
ORANGE CENTER ES
PALMETTO ES
PANTHER LAKE ES
POLICY &
PROCEDURES/RBELC
PRINCETON ES
SADLER ES
SHENANDOAH ES
SILVER PINES ACADEMY K-12

SOUTHWEST MS
STONEWYCK ES
STUDENT SERVICES
SUMMERLAKE ES
SUNRISE ES
THORNEBROOKE ES
UNION PARK ES
UNION PARK MS
VISTA LAKES ES
WEST OAKS ES
WESTBROOKE ES
WHEATLEY ES
WINDERMERE ES

Welcome to Teaching Conversation Series

Starting a teaching career is exciting—but it can also feel overwhelming. Whether you’re a new teacher or working alongside one, having the right support makes all the difference.

That’s why we created the [Welcome to Teaching Conversation Series](#), an on-demand podcast from Share My Lesson and the AFT. In each short, practical episode, early career educators talk with AFT professional development leaders about what it really takes to succeed in the classroom—and how to build lasting support systems.

Explore the free, for-credit episodes:

- [Classroom Management](#): Set clear expectations and handle behavior challenges with confidence.
- [Children's Well-Being](#): Create safe spaces where students can thrive emotionally and academically.
- [Family Engagement with a Focus on Literacy](#): Build strong, consistent connections with families to support student success.
- [Teacher Well-Being](#): Learn practical tips for managing stress and staying grounded.
- [Civics Instruction](#): Teach civil dialogue and real-world engagement with confidence.
- [Union Partnership and the Path to Thriving in Teaching](#): Teaching can feel like an island. Find out how to feel more connected, supported and empowered.

Each episode includes companion blogs and teaching resources you can use right away.

[Read the full article](#) to access the full podcast series, bonus content, and ideas to support educators at every stage.

P.S. If you know a new teacher or mentor at your school, forward this email and share the series with them—because no one should have to go it alone.

NEW CTA DENTAL/VISION: NEW Optional CTA Member Benefits Are Here! — available to members at special rates. Visit ctabenefits.com or call 407-890-6874 to enroll. Optional benefits include:

- **Dental & Vision**

- Aflac (Accident, Critical Illness, Hospital Indemnity, BenExtend)
- Disability Insurance
- Life and Long-Term Care
- Cosmetic/elective coverage (fertility, weight loss, medspa, and more)
- Legal Protection & ID Theft
- Pet Insurance
- Auto & Home Insurance

Other benefits through CTA include:

- Gym membership discount coming soon!
- 20% off tuition at [National University](#)
- 10% off [Student Loan Program Services](#)
- [Voyage Retirement Solutions Financial Plan](#)
- [NEA Benefits](#)
- [AFT Benefits](#)
- [FEA Benefits](#)



The YMCA logo is in the top left corner. The main title "OCCTA & YMCA PARTNERSHIP" is in large white letters. Below it, a "SPECIAL EMPLOYEE OFFER" box contains the following text:

OCCTA SPECIAL PRICING
Exclusive OCCTA Member Offer

The YMCA is proud to partner with OCCTA to support your health and wellness goals!

Here's what you get with this special deal:

- ✓ 10% off Plus & Max Memberships
- ✓ \$0 Join Fee – we'll cover your setup cost!

Take advantage of this exclusive offer today!

Contact Marcus James at 407-204-3004 or mjames@cfymca.org to get started.

MARCUS JAMES | SALES DIRECTOR | 407.204.3004 | [MJAMES@CFYMCAC.ORG](mailto:mjames@cfymca.org)

THE NEA TRAVEL PROGRAM: This is a free benefit for NEA members. Receive exclusive deals and discounts, saving you up to 60% on hotels, car rentals, cruises, and more. Plus earn NEA Travel Dollars to use like cash along the way and help you save even more (1 credit = 1 USD). New to the program? [Enroll for free](#) today and earn \$500 Travel Dollars on NEA! Valid for one year and replenished annually.

CTA SOCIAL MEDIA: [Click](#) to join the CTA Members FB group (the only official CTA FB Group). "Like" CTA's public FB Page [HERE](#) to see posts in your feed. Follow Instagram, Threads, Bluesky @orangetcta.

FREE CTA MEMBER T-SHIRT: Members click [HERE](#) to order your T-Shirt if you haven't yet received one.

The Contract, Lesson Plan Agreement, MOUs, Evaluation Info, Supplement Handbook and more are available [HERE](#).

Our ongoing Bargaining Suggestion Form can be accessed [HERE](#).



CTA'S MISSION IS TO EMPOWER AND ADVOCATE FOR OUR MEMBERS IN ORDER TO ENSURE A QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR EVERY STUDENT.

OCCTA - 1020 WEBSTER AVE., ORLANDO, FL 32804 407-298-0756 WWW.ORANGECTA.COM

WWW.TINYURL.COM/JOINMYUNION



bmgy money

Orange County Classroom Teachers Association has partnered with BMG Money's LoansAtWork program. Get access to reliable, affordable on-line installment loans to help intimes of need, regardless of your credit history.



Loans range from \$500 - \$5,000*

Payments made through 7 - 35 months of payroll deductions

Bi-weekly payments of \$12 - \$118 if repaid over 2 years*

Apply regardless of your credit score



Sign up now at

app.bmgmoney.com/signup and type "Orange County Public Schools" as the name of your employer.

*Fixed simple interest rate: 19.99% per year with a one time fee of \$0. For example, a \$3,000 loan repaid in 52 installments over 24 months, the APR will be 19.90% and the approximate bi-weekly payroll deduction will be \$70 (assumes a loan execution date of 12/09/2024). Other terms and conditions apply, and your loan may vary depending upon your loan execution date, actual payroll deduction schedule, etc. Not all applicants will qualify for a loan. Must be employed for at least one year to be eligible to apply. All loans marketed by BMG Money are made by WebBank, except, as of 12/08/2024 the loans made to residents of Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island are made by BMG LoansAtWork, LLC.



BACK TO SCHOOL OFFER

City Matches:

AUGUST 16
AUGUST 30
SEPTEMBER 20

Join Orlando Pride and Orlando City to celebrate Back To School! Take advantage of one (1) complimentary ticket with the purchase of a ticket to select home matches! Scan the QR below to claim your complimentary offer today!



Pride Matches:

AUGUST 29
SEPTEMBER 13
SEPTEMBER 19



ORLANDO
HEALTH[®]



Kency Lopez
321.321.5771
klopez@orlandocitysoccer.com



Live Virtual Event

Restock Your Medicine Cabinet for a Healthy School Year

What You'll Learn

- Top OTC medicines every family should have
- How to manage prescriptions and medications safely
- The vitamins and supplements worth keeping
- Tips to support your immune system
- Free medicine cabinet checklist!



Wednesday,
August 27th at
4:00 PM ET

Your Speakers



Brittany Campagna, PharmD
Clinical Pharmacist



Dr. Christian Lima
Family Medicine Physician



Save your spot and register today!