

# Advocate

AN INDIANA STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION

A photograph of a classroom scene. In the foreground, a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a bright teal polo shirt, is sitting at a desk and raising her right hand. To her left, a young man with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue polo shirt, is looking towards the front of the room. In the background, there are wooden lockers with pink sticky notes on them. The lighting is bright and even.

## Be Consistent, Dependable and Prepared

Gain tips on how you can be successful as a new and early career educator.

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## An Educator's Guide to Retirement Income Planning

What you need to know about state pension plans, Social Security and retirement savings accounts

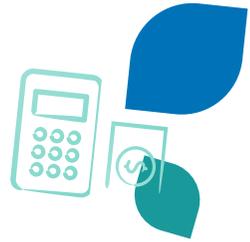


# Get An Educator's Guide to Retirement Income Planning to simplify planning for your financial future.

VISIT [neamb.com/retireincome](https://neamb.com/retireincome) AND DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE to start putting your future first!

## The Retirement Guide breaks down:

- State pension plans
- Social Security benefits and qualifications
- Retirement savings account options
- Key financial planning considerations
- Next steps – with a personalized checklist for you



**Review Deadlines for Submitting Candidate Statements for State Association Offices**

At the April 2023 ISTA Representative Assembly (RA), delegates will elect positions of the ISTA vice president and treasurer. If you are interested in running for any of these positions, you must notify the Office of the Executive Director by March 1, 2023, via the candidate form at [ista-in.org/governing-documents](http://ista-in.org/governing-documents). If you want your candidate statement to appear in the Advocate, submit your candidate statement form by Nov. 1. All candidate statements submitted after Nov. 1 will be published on the ISTA website.

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**We want to hear from you!** Send ISTA your comments about the magazine. If you have story ideas or want to be a contributor, email [communications@ista-in.org](mailto:communications@ista-in.org).

Advocate is the official quarterly publication of the Indiana State Teachers Association, the state level of the United Education Profession. The content of the Association's publications will be consistent with its mission, strategic objectives and policies.

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**PURPOSE, MISSION AND GOALS**

**PURPOSE**  
To advocate for and advance the interests of Indiana's students, educators and public schools.

**MISSION**  
The Indiana State Teachers Association is a professional association organized to sustain quality public education, improve students' educational opportunities and advance the professional status of educators.

- GOALS**
- Unify our voices — we are stronger together.
  - Provide economic security and professional working conditions for educators.
  - Create a premier public education system that serves all kids regardless of ZIP code, culture or ability.
  - Fight for racial and social justice.

**W**elcome back to a new school year! I hope the start of your school year

has been a great one. After two years of masks, social distancing and e-learning, it seems as if we are finally regaining a sense of normalcy. Although, COVID-19 isn't completely a thing of the past, we now have a better idea of how to manage our symptoms and mitigate the virus from spreading.

Although many of our colleagues have decided to leave the profession, you have chosen to stay, and I am incredibly proud of your resilience and determination to make an impact on students' lives. As ISTA president, I am doing all that I can to lift our members and give voice to the importance of respecting educators. This summer, I had the opportunity to travel to different locals and talk with members and potential members about the great work they're doing across the state of Indiana for education.

At ISTA election season is in full effect, and we are continually working to prioritize the issues that matter most to our educators. I also encourage you to use your voice this election season. Educators are trusted members of the community. When educators get involved in their local association, they have a say in which candidates are endorsed. Our goal as a unit is to ensure pro-public education candidates are elected to the school board, city council, Statehouse, etc. Local political action committees have been busy this summer interviewing candidates for for school board and the General Assembly. They compiled a list of recommended candidates on the Indiana Political Action Committee for Education (I-PACE) website.



Keith Gambill, ISTA President

 Follow Keith on Twitter @istapresident

You can find pro-public education candidates on your ballot at [ipace-in.org/vote](http://ipace-in.org/vote).

Please keep in mind that you are the Association, and you all make the difference. If no one tells you, I am proud of you! I want to wish everyone the very best this school year. Let's all work together to make it a great one!

Thanks for all you have done and continue to do. 🇺🇸

Sincerely,

Keith Gambill  
ISTA President



### Yolanda Smith Gonzalez

Yolanda Smith Gonzalez is a second grade teacher at Liberty Park Elementary School and a member of Warren Education Association. She is also a member of the ISTA Racial Affairs Committee.

# Overcoming Teacher Burnout

Beyonce's new single "You won't break my soul!" could be the battle cry of teachers everywhere. While we may not be able to release our jobs, we can release the stress that could easily become consuming. As educators, we get immersed so deeply into our work. However, it is our responsibility to create a work/life balance that allows us to be our best selves. To manage burnout, I am:



Taking better care of my health



Being present in my relationships



Engaging in "soul" care through meditation



Setting boundaries on my time at work



Taking time to REST and not feeling guilty about it

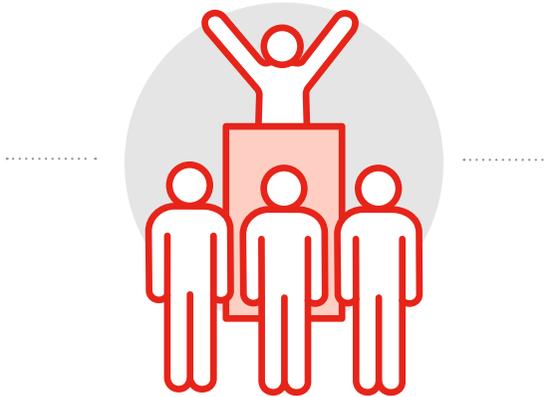


Rediscovering the things I enjoy



**How will you overcome teacher burnout** so that this career path does not break your soul?

# Union Words to Know



Being a part of a union comes with its own vocabulary. If you're new to the union and unfamiliar with the terminology, here are some words you should know.

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## Affiliate

A local union that is chartered with a state and national union or a state union that is chartered with a national union (example: Seattle Education is an affiliate of the Washington Education Association and the National Education Association). Other terms commonly used are local, chapter, and council.

## Association/Building Representative (AR)

A union member who serves as a leader at the building or campus level. An AR engages new members, organizes colleagues for collective actions and may represent members in discussions or grievances with management. The AR is the bridge between a work site and the larger local. This role is sometimes referred to as a steward.

## Bargaining Rights

The legal authority of a union to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement. The level of bargaining rights that unionized workers have is determined by a collective bargaining law in states that have one. Those rights vary from state to state.

## Collective Bargaining

An exchange of ideas between unions and management who must negotiate in good faith over the terms and conditions of employment such as salary, benefits and working conditions. Collective bargaining can also be used to secure student-centered demands like a full-time nurse in every school, recess or fewer standardized tests. (See Bargaining for the Common Good.)

## Exclusive Representation

When a group of employees organize for the purposes of collective bargaining, they elect or authorize a union to represent them in contract negotiations, grievances and other employee and labor relations matters. For an association to become the exclusive representative, it must be certified by the labor board and/or formally recognized by the employer.

## Grievance

Generally, a violation of the collective bargaining agreement where a formal written complaint is filed with the employer by the grievant (employee or association). Grievance procedures are negotiated and included in the collective bargaining agreement. If unable to resolve at an early step in the process, the dispute is typically resolved in binding arbitration.

## Labor-Management Collaboration

Structures and processes for joint problem solving and decision making. Associations and employers may use interest-based bargaining for contract negotiations and collaborative approaches for meet-and-confer processes where bargaining does not take place. They may use interest-based processes to guide labor-management committees.

## Meet and Confer

In a state where an employer is not legally required to collectively bargain with a union and chooses not to, they may discuss issues and solicit input.

## Representative Assembly (RA)

The annual meeting where elected delegates vote to decide the policy, priorities and budget of the union. This may also be called a convention in some unions.

## Tentative Agreement (TA)

An agreement reached by the union and employer bargaining teams. Both sides must ratify the TA before it can become effective. The terms of the existing collective bargaining agreement that are not affected by the TA remain in full force and effect.

## UniServ Director

Term NEA and its affiliates use for a staff person who supports the state and local union and individual union members through varying roles and responsibilities such as collective bargaining, contract enforcement, member representation and upholding employee rights, member organizing and political action. Your UniServ Director is your first line of defense should an incident occur that might threaten your reputation, certification or even your livelihood. This type of staff position is also commonly referred to as a labor relations consultant or field/business representative. 🗨️

# ISTA Will Call on General Assembly to Address The Educator Shortage

Addressing educator pay and respect, as well as honoring our retired educators, will be among ISTA's top priorities for the 2023 legislative session that begins in January. While the full legislative agenda will be developed over the fall and will be released later this year, these fundamental issues must be addressed by legislators next session.

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## INCREASE EDUCATION FUNDING

The 2023 legislative session is a budget-writing session for the Indiana General Assembly. The biennial budget will provide education funding for public schools for the following two years. Much attention has been paid to the number of educator job postings available on the Indiana Department of Education's job portal, highlighting the state's teacher shortage issues. We are experiencing an unprecedented teacher shortage at a time when just half of Indiana high school graduates are pursuing education after high school – the lowest point in recent history. To have a vibrant citizenship and build a strong economy with the workforce needed to fill the jobs of the future, Indiana's leaders must prioritize public education in the upcoming state budget.

While Indiana made record increases to education in the most recent budget, the state has dug itself deep into a school funding deficit over the past decade or more. As pointed out recently by Ball State economist Michael Hicks, the 2022 – 23 budget "increased school funding by 2.1%, but overall inflation last year was 9.1%. School teachers in Indiana are today experiencing a 7% pay cut right now."

Indiana's leaders must prioritize public education in the upcoming state budget. ISTA will call for education funding increases that must be sufficient to overcome inflation and sustained through the next several state budgets. The state has more than enough budget surplus to make this happen.

## IMPROVE TEACHER MORALE AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Indiana doesn't have a dearth of educators – educators simply are no longer willing to work without professional pay and appropriate working conditions. In addition to paying educators as professionals, we must also improve their working conditions. The pandemic exacerbated this problem—and it's only getting worse. Educator burnout is at an all-time high. A whopping 55 percent of educators are considering leaving the field, according to a recent NEA survey.

Teachers should also have a greater voice for the working conditions. Educators should be permitted to work together through their union to bargain contracts that let them do their jobs safely and well. ISTA will be calling on the General Assembly to restore the collective bargaining rights of teachers.



## HONOR RETIRED EDUCATORS

For the first time in 10 years, lawmakers provided a 1% true cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to Indiana Public Retirement System (INPRS) retirees in 2021. ISTA supported the COLA because it had been a decade since the legislature had enacted one. It was past time for a base adjustment.

However, it must be noted that a 1% COLA increase for many retirees on an annual basis was less than the stipend (13th check) they had

been receiving, which could have been up to \$450. Additionally, simply due to the timing differences between a 13th check in September and a COLA beginning in January, retirees received no post-retirement funding in calendar year 2021.

A COLA was necessary to break the cycle of stipends, but the state and INPRS is in a fiscal position to do more. ISTA will be asking the legislature to honor our retired educators by providing a meaningful COLA in the next biennial budget. 🇺🇸



Get involved by finding your legislators and contacting them this fall:

<http://www.ista-in.org/legislators>.



### Conner McNeely

Conner McNeely is a foreign language and lit teacher at Perry Township Schools and a member of Perry Education Association. In addition, he serves as an ISTA Early Career Educator Ambassador.

# CELEBRATE AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK



Like every year, the week before Thanksgiving is American Education Week. In case you aren't counting down, that's Nov. 14 – 18. American Education Week has a long history, and it's a perfect way to engage members (and potential members) in your local and a way to show appreciation to the teachers and education support professionals in the public schools in our communities.

American Education Week was first celebrated in 1921. The National Education Association partnered with

other organizations to advocate for more funding for public schools to combat the illiteracy rate at the time. One-hundred-and-one years later, as members of our locals, ISTA and the NEA, we continue to advocate for our students, our profession and the success of our communities. American Education Week is celebrated to honor the work we do daily as educators!

So, how can we celebrate?

Make it daily, a local affair and engage both members and potential members.

# Ideas for Celebration



Kick off the week by providing an all-staff breakfast and/or donuts before school in the workroom.

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Leave a box of treats in common spaces throughout the building for school staff to enjoy.

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Write a letter to the editor to be published at the beginning of the week, outlining the importance of our schools and their accomplishments.

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Do a schoolwide (or district wide) spirit week. Get the whole community involved!

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Is there a home game this week? Choose a theme for the game to celebrate the accomplishments of our student athletes, coaches, students and staff.

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Have students “hug” the school! Arrange for students to surround the exterior of the building and have local media cover it.

There is a myriad of ways to celebrate our public schools and American Education Week. As you plan to celebrate in your local, do it in a way that lifts up the accomplishments of our students, the work of the school staff and shines a light on your greater school community. 

# Member Spotlight



**JoAn Ames** is known for her exceptional work as an education support professional in La Porte, Ind. We did a Q&A to get to know her.

**Q:** How long have you been a bus driver?

**A:** I've been driving a bus since 2012, which now makes 10 years.

**Q:** What made you want to become a bus driver?

**A:** At the time, it fit within our schedule.

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## When we take the diversity out of the education system, you take the growth out of education.

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My son was in high school, and I was a stay-at-home mom working my business. I custom design show clothes for people who show horses. I wanted a part-time job that was flexible, and I knew the director at the time. So, I decided to give it a try.

**Q:** What's your favorite memory as a bus driver?

**A:** My first bus route really showed me how tough some of these kids have it, but they were still great kids. I had a family that didn't have anything. The little boy could be a handful and the oldest sister would get in trouble at times. I would always make sure that the kids got on the bus safely. At the end of the school year, their dad gave me a \$15 Wendy's gift card and said, "you kept my kids safe". That's a touching memory for me because I was simply doing my job.

**Q:** What motivates you to keep going and stay positive despite the various issues in the education system (school shootings, legislation and policy changes, etc.)?

**A:** There are lots of great kids. I have driven for the haves and the have nots and I've never had a problem out of any of the kids. I also stand behind the teachers. Tying the hands of educators doesn't teach the kids anything. When we take the diversity out of the education system, you take the growth out of education. It helps them learn. The teachers are in a tough spot and they are not rewarded for what they do. In addition, I use a lot of humor day-to-day.

**Q:** What advice would you give to a new bus driver?

**A:** It's a great job with lots of perks. You'll find that you will enjoy seeing the children. I'd also tell them that how you run the bus is how you will be treated. You treat the kids with respect and hopefully you get that back.

**Q:** When you're not driving a bus, what are some things that you enjoy to do?

**A:** My husband and I have a small farm with some cattle. I'm also currently campaigning for number 1 amateur for the paint and pinto association. The horses are my passion. The paint and pinto are my breed of choice. I've been training horses for 46 years. I'm a cowgirl and I have been my entire life.

**Q:** What motto do you live by?

**A:** It's only a problem if I can't fix it!

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### Joyce Click

Joyce Click is a lifelong educator having recently retired after 44 years of teaching in MSD Washington Township. She is currently a member of ISTA/NEA Retired.

# Advice for Early Career Educators



- Cheerfully greet every child each day.
- Make sure your students have daily necessities including lunch and school supplies. Advocate for students who are underserved.
- Encourage creativity by planning special projects beyond the standard curriculum. Before departing school in the afternoon, complete the next day's lesson plans and lay out needed materials.
- Treasure each pupil and be kind to everyone, especially the custodians.
- Some days are better than others, so keep a box of positive notes and review them on "cloudy days." Save some money from every paycheck. Wear high-quality walking shoes. Join ISTA and become an advocate for public schools.

Congratulations to all who recently started their teaching careers. Forty-five years ago, I signed my first contract. Excited to tell my mother the news, I drove to her house and accidentally ran over her mailbox. Once my mother recovered from the notion of repairing the mailbox, she shared tips learned from her own career.



When my own daughter started teaching, I added this advice:

- Steer clear of negative influences at school.
- Work around obstacles by changing what YOU can control.
- Do your least favorite school task, first.
- Be consistent, dependable and prepared.
- Write grants for supplemental materials through the NEA Foundation and Donors Choose.
- Take three slow breaths when stressed and use self-talk phrases such as "I am the adult in the room," and "I can do this."
- Block out the "noise" surrounding public education and do what is best for YOUR students.
- Remember, every day YOU have an opportunity to change a life.



**Angie Kirkham**

Angie Kirkham is multicultural coordinator for her district at Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation.

# SCHOOL SHOOTINGS: HOW TO COPE

We all know the many stressors of being an educator. Large class sizes, hours of planning and grading, preparing classrooms for a new school year, trying to meet the many and varying needs of each of our students, connecting with families and the list goes on. These are part of being an educator. We may not completely get all of this as we are going through our teacher training programs, but we are not surprised about them when we land our first job. We may be surprised at how hard the work really is, but we can remind ourselves that this is what we worked so hard to do. What I found I was not completely prepared for was the effects and fears I would experience after the news of yet another school shooting.

While I was in college the shootings at an Amish school in Pennsylvania and at Virginia Tech occurred. Both were shocking and heart wrenching, but I had been so busy with classes, working and my own children that I did not have the

time to watch or read a lot about them.

The tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary took place during my fourth year of teaching. There had been school shootings during my first three years, but nothing to the extent or as widely reported on as the shooting at Sandy Hook. What was most startling was that it was an elementary school, and the victims were so very young. At the time I was teaching fifth grade and my students were about 10 years old. The children killed at Sandy Hook were six and seven. I just couldn't imagine it. Following the tragedy were the stories of the teachers and staff. I watched and read everything I could, until I couldn't anymore. I just had to stop, because mentally I couldn't hold the grief I felt and continue my day-to-day responsibilities.

This past summer, just after the last day of school, the first reports of a school shooting in Texas were coming out. My

daughter works for Texas Public Radio (TPR) in San Antonio, Texas and was covering elections that day. I saw tweets from her and TPR in regard to the large numbers of children killed in Governor Abbott's statement. Then I found out she would be going to Uvalde, Texas to cover the shooting. My heart dropped. Being the daughter of a teacher and having to report on a shooting where children and teachers were killed made my heart shatter. I knew she could do it and would do it well, but I didn't want her to have to do it. I didn't want anyone to have to do it.

Earlier that year I had pocket dialed my daughter and then my phone died. I don't normally call my daughter, so she tried calling back and it was going straight to voicemail. She tried reassuring herself that it was nothing but ended up calling her dad to make sure. These are the things the families of teachers worry about. Just as parents and guardians worry about their children at school, families of educators worry about them too.

Because the tragedy at Uvalde happened during the summer, I had a lot of time on my hands, and I watched and read everything I could. Also, since my daughter and her colleagues were covering the story, I paid special attention to what they were reporting. This is when I remembered that being informed was important, but over consuming was not good for my mental health.

During the summer, I was named the multicultural coordinator for my district,

which means I will not be going back to the classroom, but I will be in all schools throughout the district. As I prepare for the new school year and talk with teachers, both veteran and first year teachers, I am reminded that we have done hard things before, we will continue to do so and our students need us. If we do not take care of our own emotional health, we are of little use to anyone else. 🚩

### So, what do we do to carry on? Here are a few things I have found to be helpful:

- When a shooting occurs, limit the amount of coverage you watch or read.
- Talk to someone. I have a therapist and it has been so helpful to talk to her when the fears or stress become too much.
- Find ways to relieve your stress. Exercise, meditate and connect with friends. All are helpful to ensure you are not hyper focused on the tragedies that could occur.
- Know the plan your school has in place and if possible be a part of the group that oversees it. Knowledge is helpful for many.
- If you notice safety issues in your building, report them using the procedures your school has in place and follow up to make sure they are addressed.



### Wafa' Safi

Wafa' Safi is on a teaching release from Hamilton Southeastern for the 22-23 school year, while she assists ISTA through a NEA Professional Practice & Policy Teaching Fellow role. Additionally, she is co-chair of the ISTA Racial Affairs Committee.

# WHAT'S IN A Name?

In the last Indiana Representative Assembly (RA), there was a proposed name change that delegates voted on and passed. The proposed name change was from Minority Affairs Committee (MAC) to the Racial Affairs Committee (RAC). Let's dive into some Association history.

Since the passing of Brown v Board in 1954, the number of educators of color, more specifically Black educators, decreased significantly in public schools. In 1965, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Teachers Association (ATA) merged. Shortly afterward, the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC) was born in the NEA because educators of color voices and concerns were not given a platform. The EMAC was created to ensure that educators of color not only had a platform but to maintain equal (at minimum) representation of educators of color in various committees and leadership.

For example, if **there are 20% educators of color** throughout the state, there should be at least 20% at minimum found serving in various committees and in leadership.

In 1975, ISTA established MAC. MAC has been an active governance committee and has members who are representatives in each District Council. They are responsible for voting on recipients for various ISTA scholarships and awards for educators and students of color. They also vote on national award recipients such as NEA's Human and Civil Rights Awards. MAC holds regular meetings and has been responsible for various book club endeavors, speaker engagements and providing various sessions on racial and social justice.

Now that you know what this committee does, why the name change?

In 2019, at ISTA's annual All Committee meeting, members were examining the charges and began a very different conversation. What is in a name? Why the word, "minority?" Members proceeded to explain that the word "minority" carried a negative connotation (being "less than") and that people of color in around 20 years will no longer be the minority in the United States of America. So why keep that name? This question was posed and then the order of business proposing a name change was put forward, and passed, at the 2022 ISTA Representative Assembly.

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The RAC has held many listening sessions/ townhall meetings with educators of color throughout the state. We have brought some wonderful programming to the ISTA throughout the recent years and are ready for another amazing year of even more programming for all ISTA members. With redistricting, we have trained all our district representatives, and will continue to listen to the needs of educators and help bring solutions to the problems they face. We are excited for the upcoming year and hope you join us in the many programs that the RAC will be bringing. 🏠



To review ISTA's RAC improvement plan, previous advocacy events and more, visit:

<https://www.ista-in.org/our-advocacy/advocating-for-racial-and-social-justice>.

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### Lyndsy Eslinger

Lyndsy is a special education teacher at Brown Elementary in Brownsburg. In addition, she serves as president of the Brownsburg CTA, a member of Professional, Practices and Standards (PPS) Committee and as an ISTA Early Career Educator Ambassador.

# Professional Development Done Differently: **The Good Teaching Conference**

One of the greatest benefits of an ISTA membership is the ability to meet and learn with other teachers, and the Good Teaching conference, which took place Sept. 9-10, gave me the chance to do just that. We've all been to professional development opportunities recommended (or should I say required) by administration, but ISTA members do things differently at the Good Teaching conference.

Have you ever joined a drum circle at professional development? Painted with colleagues to help yourself unwind? Indulged in chair massages? Professional development opportunities that I have attended outside of ISTA has never looked like this, and let me tell you, after our hiatus from being with one another, it was nice to spend Friday evening engaged in self-care with fellow members.

Between the self-care events of Friday evening and a good night's sleep, I was ready to learn Saturday

morning. We call the Good Teaching Conference, "The conference by teachers for teachers." ISTA ensures that sessions are relevant by asking members to propose sessions. This year's topics included universal design for learning, creating inclusive environments for all students, trauma's effect on regulation, classroom management, National Board Certification and more! The sessions I attended made me reconsider my practice and better equipped me to take on my professional work.

I left wishing the conference could last a little longer, but after embracing colleagues, taking pictures and collecting door prizes, it was time to go. The time with my ISTA family readied me to provide strong instruction this year, and I left already looking forward to future conferences.



Review conference materials and presentations:

[www.ista-in.org/good-teaching-conference](http://www.ista-in.org/good-teaching-conference)



To view more photos from this year's Good Teaching Conference, visit: [bit.ly/3QXEfoY](https://bit.ly/3QXEfoY).





### Amber Seibert

Amber Seibert is an English teacher at Decatur Central High at Decatur Township.

# Extra Credit

Literature serves as mirrors and windows, allowing us to both see ourselves represented within stories and helping us learn about others. Preview each book to make sure it's a good fit for your classroom.

Here are some suggestions by grade level. It's also helpful to check the Stonewall Book Awards for even more options. Happy reading! 🌈



## ELEMENTARY:

10,000 Dresses  
BY MARCUS EWERT

And Tango Makes Three  
BY JUSTIN RICHARDSON  
AND PETER PARNELL



## MIDDLE SCHOOL:

Drama  
BY RAINA TELGEMEIER  
(GRAPHIC NOVEL)

The Best at It  
BY MAULIK PANCHOLY



## HIGH SCHOOL:

You Should See Me  
in a Crown  
BY LEAH JOHNSON

The Poet X  
BY ELIZABETH ACEVEDO  
(WRITTEN IN PROSE)





NAVIGATING YOUR INVESTMENT JOURNEY

# Which Path Are You On?

## Saving and Planning Workshops for ISTA Members

As part of your membership, NEA Member Benefits and Security Benefit are offering free, local workshops to help members build a successful path to retirement. Regardless of where you're at on your retirement journey, our workshops can help you find answers to your fundamental questions.

*Don't miss this opportunity to get on the right path and take control of your retirement journey.*

For more information contact:

### Frank Vargo

Indiana State Director, Security Benefit

[Frank.Vargo@SecurityBenefit.com](mailto:Frank.Vargo@SecurityBenefit.com)

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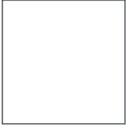
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