



# Advocate

AN INDIANA STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION



## Advocacy in Action

ISTA members get COVID-19 vaccine after successful advocacy.

**PAGE 08**





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## IN THIS ISSUE

Attend the Summer Conference Series.

Page 20



# 05

### Perspectives

Explore resources for both student and educator summer enrichment.

# 06

### Our Rights

Level up your discussion skills with tips from a local leader.

# 08

### Our Advocacy

Check out our Red For Ed successes as of publication.

# 10

### Organizing in Action

Learn about how the legislative session was altered during the pandemic.

# 11

### Organizing in Action

Stay in touch with your legislators after the General Assembly ends.

# 12

### Our Members

Welcome and encourage student teachers at your work site.

# 14

### Our Profession

Reflect on lessons learned from the pandemic.

# 16

### Professional Development

Order your book for the next Racial Justice Book Club.

# 22

### Extra Credit

Find your hobby.



**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.

### SPRING 2021: VOL. 4, ISSUE 3

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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.

**H**ow does anyone begin to describe this past year? I'm certain there are many colorful ways folks would describe this year, but as I reflect on the amazing work you have done this year, the word that stands out to me is **resiliency**.

Even the most normal school year is never normal when dissected, but this year will forever change our perspective of normal. Masks, hand sanitizer, virtual lessons, quarantine, social distancing are just a fraction of the changes and adjustments that you have made this year.

At the center of our collective work this year has been the health and safety of our members and students we serve. We have advocated for best practices in delivery of instruction, cleaning, reporting and social emotional well-being - to name a few. We have forged new partnerships. Provided for our communities. And ensured the best for our students under conditions that no one could have predicted.

**AND YOU HAVE DONE IT!**

I know you are tired - it's not surprising. There was no history for us to draw upon, no how-to manual to reference. You have made it through this school year with hard work, dedication, love of your profession,



**Keith Gambill**, ISTA President

 Follow Keith on Twitter [@istapresident](https://twitter.com/istapresident)

and for some of you, lots of caffeine. You have been resilient throughout changing working conditions. You have managed to create a year unlike any other and you have done so brilliantly.

As the end of this school year nears, make plans now to relax, reconnect with family and loved ones. Get away from computer screens, tablets and cell phones. Allow yourself the freedom to let go of the frustrations and heartbreak of this year and focus on the amazing accomplishments you have made. You deserve it.

Bravo, Bravo, Bravissimo! 

# Summer Enrichment for Kids and Educators

## KIDS

After a year of virtual, hybrid and socially distanced learning, kids need to get physical and expand their imaginations this summer. Suggest these activities to get kids to come out from behind their screens.



**Read.** Whether it's revisiting a favorite book or exploring new stories and characters, tell kids to turn off their screens and crack open a book.

**Write.** Every kid has imagination. Encourage your students to practice their creative writing skills.



**Get outside.** Whether it's playing tag or riding a bicycle, urge your kids to enjoy the outdoors.



**Want to share resources with kids and families?**

Send summer reading suggestions from the National Education Association.

[bit.ly/3f9qNl0](https://bit.ly/3f9qNl0)

Find more ideas for summer activities from WETA's Reading Rockets.

[bit.ly/2NMktLB](https://bit.ly/2NMktLB)

## EDUCATORS

Summer is a great time to prepare for the new year — whether that's clearing your mind for creative activities, exploring professional development or getting some R&R — take the time to discover what you need to do this summer to be a stronger educator come fall.



**Explore online trainings.**

With more than a year of virtual content, educators can find professional development on nearly any topic online.

**Read a good teaching book.** Reading a teaching book can spark fresh ideas over the summer. When you're excited about trying a new strategy, the demands of the coming school year feel less daunting.



**Don't overthink things.**

Kids are interested in what interests you. Prepare your first day of school speech and share what you're enthusiastic about.

**Radical optimism.** Advocate for the positive in your classroom. Get into an optimistic and confident frame of mind.



**Plan a trip.** Keeping in mind that international trips may be limited for some time to come, explore areas in your neck of

the woods. Camp, hike, visit a museum, explore a park. There's lots of ways to expand your horizons without going far from home. ▲



### Casey Honkomp

Casey Honkomp has been an elementary teacher for 15 years. Honkomp serves as the co-president, bargaining chair and discussion chair for the Monroe-Gregg Teacher's Association.

# 5 TIPS FOR MEANINGFUL DISCUSSION

*Discussion chair Casey Honkomp shares her tips for preparing for and winning in discussion.*

1. **Know Your Team and Theirs.** Select members willing to see multiple perspectives, who can handle pressure well and are able to communicate effectively. Know the personalities on the opposite side of the table. Know how they process information and how to navigate their potential trigger points.
2. **Be Prepared.** Prepare an agenda beforehand. Make sure administration is able to add their items as well. Allowing people to find answers before the meeting makes everything go more smoothly. It will save you a lot of “I don’t know” answers.
3. **Establish a Foundation.** Have a shared foundation and understanding about what discussions should look like and how both sides want to utilize this time. Will you meet monthly? Who will run the meeting? Does the administration want to see the notes before they are shared with members? When you have two different views on discussion, the table can be very tense. Work out the details so everyone has a clear vision and can work together toward a common goal.
4. **Be Flexible.** Situations will call for understanding and grace. There are also going to be times you stand your ground. Be willing to bend when needed but know when to stand your ground — your membership is behind you.
5. **Be Respectful.** Above all be respectful. When you are sitting in discussions you represent your building and your teachers’ association. If you are unable to communicate with administration in a respectful way, they won’t be willing to return the favor. Be a professional, regardless of what is happening on the other side of the table. ▲

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# Securing Red For Ed Wins for Members

In this legislative session, ISTA has promoted the Red For Ed priorities — full and equitable funding for public schools, improved working and learning conditions and increased teacher salary — as well as the timely issues around working and learning in a pandemic.

ISTA's voice has been in the Statehouse, media, communities across the state and online. While the legislative session is still ongoing as of the writing of this issue, here are the highlights thus far from ISTA's Red For Ed work.

**Watch for an online special legislative issue of the *Advocate* in May.**

## Full Funding for 2020–21 School Year

Many school districts were forced to switch to virtual learning in 2020 to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. In August 2020, Senate President Pro Tempore Rodric Bray caused controversy by sending a letter to Indiana school superintendents stating districts that used virtual learning risked receiving only 85% of their funding.

Sen. Bray referenced a state law that applied to virtual charter schools — a very different circumstance. ISTA pushed back.

Gov. Eric Holcomb declared support for fully funding schools. The result was an action from the Indiana State Board of Education that held schools harmless, based on whether a student was being taught virtually or in person prior to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Both the General Assembly and governor have taken action to ensure all public schools will receive 100% of their promised funding for the 2020–21 school year.

## Keeping Educators Safe

The pandemic has taken a toll on the mental health and working conditions of educators. Early in the pandemic, ISTA called for a safe reopening of schools and outlined requirements to ensure student and staff safety. We also called for a statewide mask mandate for schools before mask mandates were widespread.

These actions resulted in schools stepping up safety measures and the governor issuing not only a mask mandate for schools, but for the entire state. While some schools did a better job than others of meeting educator safety demands, ISTA kept raising the issue with state leaders and in dozens of media interviews.

This same perseverance was also used to secure vaccines for educators. As soon as ISTA discovered educators may have to wait longer to receive a vaccine under a revised state vaccine plan, the Association made a call for educators to be prioritized. While the state had to defend its vaccine policy on a nearly daily basis, ISTA kept our members' voice in every news story.

In March, state and national educator appeals reached President Joe Biden who directed national pharmacies to prioritize educators. ISTA quickly partnered with Meijer to establish an expedited vaccine registration system for school employees, as well as setting up school-based clinics for areas of the state without a nearby Meijer. All Indiana teachers and school staff were able to receive at least their first dose of the vaccine in under four weeks. 📍



*ISTA member Danielle Hewitt received her COVID-19 vaccinations in early March when educators were prioritized by President Biden.*

Red For Ed advocacy stats through March 31. Watch for a final update in ISTA's special legislative issue of the *Advocate*.



**50,000+ emails, Tweets and calls** to legislators

.....



**17,000+ pageviews** of InvestInEducationIN.org

.....



**870 media hits**

.....



**25,000+ clicks** of Red For Ed digital ads

# Legislating and Advocating in a Pandemic

Leading up to the 2021 legislative session, it wasn't certain how, or if, the General Assembly would meet and conduct its business in early January. Throughout the fall of 2020, a committee of legislators met to devise how the legislature would operate under social distancing and other safety protocols. With the assistance of Statehouse staff and experts, the legislature was able to begin as planned on Jan. 4.

During the first week of the session, Indiana reached its highest peak of positive COVID-19 cases and one of the highest points of statewide deaths. The pandemic's impact was felt throughout the session.

To accommodate social distancing, the House met in a large conference room set up at the Indiana Government Center South Building. The Senate was able to continue to meet at the Statehouse using their typical chamber, although the body had to utilize a balcony to accommodate senators to ensure social distancing.

Safety was a concern for everyone at the Statehouse, although measures around mask-wearing were politicized. While there was a statewide mask mandate and a requirement for those inside the Statehouse, the policy was not enforced. Some legislators, staff and anti-mask activists freely walked the hallways of the Statehouse and Indiana Government Center without masks.



*ISTA Policy & Research Coordinator John O'Neal testifies at the Statehouse.*

ISTA Public Affairs staff maintained a physical and virtual presence throughout the session. ISTA lobbyists and others testifying in committees were required to speak behind plexiglass barriers or from separate rooms by video in some cases. ISTA was also able to provide written testimony to committee members in advance, which helped ensure our members' voices were heard throughout the committee process.

During the second half of the session, the Senate took some steps toward normalcy by allowing testimony inside committee rooms, but the House maintained its protocols. Luckily, as of publication, there haven't been any COVID-19 outbreaks to disrupt the session as some had expected. The only delay was when Gov. Holcomb closed the Statehouse for several days out of concern over possible violent protests related to the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. [▲](#)

# Relationship Building with Legislators Outside of the General Assembly

*Stay in touch with your legislators after the legislative session has ended — it could help build a stronger relationship and lead to better communication when it counts. Take advantage of the next nine months while your legislators are back home to keep the lines of communication open.*

## **How do you build a relationship with your legislator?**

Before you get started, do some research about your legislators. Look for things you may have in common with them.

Keep emailing over the summer and fall. Be their resource for how educators in your community are impacted by state government. Tell your stories and be the example they think of when making decisions impacting your profession and students. You don't have to be a political wonk or policy expert. You're a professional educator with a story to tell and that has the most impact.

While we tend to communicate with our legislators when opposing legislation, consider thanking them for voting correctly when they do. There have been bills passed this legislative session that were supported by ISTA. Reach out to your ISTA UniServ Director for possible bills and the voting record of your legislators. An

unexpected note of thanks may just open the door for further constructive conversations.

As social distancing relaxes, consider meeting with your legislators over the summer to discuss issues impacting your work. Or, invite your legislators to visit your classroom for the day this fall. A classroom visit gives your legislators a first-hand experience of life in the classroom.

Cultivating or maintaining a relationship with your legislators may seem intimidating, but we have found that breaking through the talking points and political walls and making a connection can sometimes make the difference once your legislators return to Indianapolis. Being a voice of local educators may make the difference next session.

If you would like help on connecting with your legislator, reach out to your ISTA UniServ Director or Public Affairs staff to get started. [▲](#)



### Brittnie Beach

Brittnie Beach is a senior at Purdue Northwest. She will graduate in May and hopes to enter the teaching profession.

# Finding Strength in the Pandemic

ISTA Aspiring Educator President Brittnie Beach reflects on her experiences as a student teacher during COVID-19. Beach's experience has prepared her for her chosen career and made her focus on what's important - the kids.

I have learned teachers have to be flexible, but this year brings a whole new meaning to the word flexible.

As a student teacher during a pandemic, I have found myself being more flexible than ever before. Navigating these uncharted waters has been difficult at times, but I know I am right where I am supposed to be. My advice to future educators would be to find the good in every moment, even the bad ones, keep working toward your goal and have faith in yourself.

You are capable of more than you know. Going to college and student teaching through a pandemic has allowed me to see that I am capable of so much, and so are you. It is important to understand that if you have a bad moment, know that is all it is. A moment. Do not focus on the bad moments in the day because the good moments, throughout the day, will always outweigh the bad.

Teachers are special and will continue to put in hours after work to ensure their students have the best school experience possible. To some students, school is a place to learn because they have to be there, while others think of school as their second home with the building staff as their second family. Make sure to create the loving, caring and positive family environment every day for your students. You never know how you're going to make an impact each day. Make sure your impact is a positive and meaningful one. You are molding future generations.

I see you. I believe in you, and I am always in your corner cheering. 📣



### Dr. Dustin Bailey

Dr. Dustin Bailey is head of Educator Preparation at Hanover College and is the higher education representative to the ISTA Board of Directors.

# Give Student Teachers the Boost They Need



A simple, “hang in there – you’re doing great,” will help a stressed student teacher.



Many of you will recall the stress associated with a student teaching experience. Remember those long hours developing detailed plans that show the very best instruction, often under the watchful eye of a college professor, all while learning how to find one’s voice in the profession?

In today’s climate, that stress is compounded by COVID-19, restrictions, schedule interruptions and more. Established educators are also feeling these pressures, but from a different

perspective. It is important to note that student teachers are excited about joining this fantastic profession. We all need to do what we can to help student teachers know that “this too shall pass,” and they are in for a wonderful career.

We all know that relationships matter. When an experienced educator takes time to listen to and encourage student teachers, it can go a long way. Everyone can do this — it does not have to be a student teacher under your supervision.

Take time to stop by and say hi, ask how they are and take time to just listen. Perhaps be willing to offer suggestions or ways that you have addressed stressful situations. A simple, “hang in there — you’re doing great,” will help a stressed student teacher. We all have to join together in this unique time. Now more than ever, we all need to support each other and do what we do best — value people, support each other and maintain a strong climate of collegiality. We are good at that — let that extend to student teachers as well. ▲



### Jack Hesser

Jack Hesser is an ISTA Early Leadership Institute coach and teaches middle school science at Harshman Middle School in Indianapolis. He serves as a grade-level team leader and hosts the podcast, Spillin' the T on Leadership.

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## REFLECTING ON A CHAOTIC YEAR: LESSONS LEARNED

Pandemic learning has made many of us feel like first-year teachers again. The process of creating virtual learning experiences, facilitating hybrid instruction and troubleshooting the myriad of tech problems has presented a lot of frustrations. Amongst the many challenges of this past year, these are some of my **key reflections**.

#### **Prioritize celebration over frustration.**

Early on in the pandemic learning process, I spent a lot of my time and energy focusing on what wasn't working. Finding solutions to problems is important, but I was spending so much time being frustrated I was losing focus on what really mattered — my students. Intentionally spending time each day to celebrate my students helped me shift my focus away from things that I had no control over.

#### **Family partnerships are more critical than ever.**

My school adopted a caseload model this year to help keep families more in the loop. Unlike in past years where information was a one-way stream from me to families, this has allowed me to develop more meaningful relationships with the families. Given how much change

happens weekly, this partnership has been instrumental.

**Change is on the horizon.** As our gaze shifts toward fall — and what a less chaotic school year might look like — it's up to all of us to decide what the new normal is. We can't go back to the way things were knowing how much wasn't working in that system. As teachers, we must advocate for a more equitable vision of public education. This is an opportunity to redefine the role of standardized testing, provide schools with the resources they need and ensure quality working conditions. Together, with our students, their families and our communities, we can create an education system that works for everyone. If we don't, someone else will create it for us. 🗓️

# Substitute Teaching During a Pandemic

*Educators have been absent at higher rates for illness and quarantines this school year, and Indiana faced substitute shortages before the pandemic. Now, school districts are feeling the impacts. To compound the shortage, many retired educators who have served as substitutes in the past are choosing to stay home. However, ISTA-Retired member Deb Marcum chose to continue substituting. Marcum shares her perspective of subbing during a pandemic.*

The 2020–21 school year is my fourth year as a substitute, and the second school year impacted by the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, students have attended in-person classes two days a week, Zoomed from home two days a week and had one e-learning day a week. Class sizes have also been smaller for social distancing. Some days I may have only four students in a classroom, while other days I may have 15.

In a survey of ISTA members and the impact of COVID-19, **85% of educators** confirm they, their colleagues or students have had to quarantine due to COVID-19.

Lessons for the students are always digitally provided. The substitute teacher makes sure the students are on task. Students, faculty and staff all wear masks. There is no exception to that rule. I have never felt at risk for contracting COVID-19, because of the reliability of the mask wearing.

The students tend to be very quiet, even when trying to engage them in the classroom. They miss the camaraderie of their classmates and the normalcy of their daily activities. I miss the daily social interactions with the students as they appear to be more reserved.

Subbing during the pandemic has actually been easier because of the reduced class sizes and lessons on a learning platform for students, but I would love to return to larger classes and more interaction. We are always short of the number of subs needed, so sign up! 🚩



## Deb Marcum

Deb Marcum is an ISTA-Retired member. She was previously a high school social studies teacher and the president of the Noblesville Teachers Forum.

# Racial Justice Book Club

## Will Cover **Racial Identity**

The ISTA Minority Affairs Committee (MAC) hosted its first Racial Justice Book Club in March. Participants read and discussed ISTA member Dawn Knight's book *Race and Football in America: The Life and Legacy of George Taliaferro*. Taliaferro, who played football for Indiana University and became the first African American drafted into the NFL, was a professor and mentor to Knight.

Knight shared with the book club Taliaferro's story — on and off the football field. Taliaferro faced racism in his football career and later in his pursuit of a career in education. Knight believes his success lay in his perseverance and strong will to help others that propelled him to overcome.

Thank you to Knight for sharing Taliaferro's story!

MAC will host its second Racial Justice Book Club June 10. The book club will read *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* by Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D.

Tatum is a past president of Spelman College, psychologist and race relations expert. Her book *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* has been listed on the Independent Bookstore Bestseller list and was awarded the Multicultural Book of the Year in 1998 by the National Association of Multicultural Education.

## Save the Date

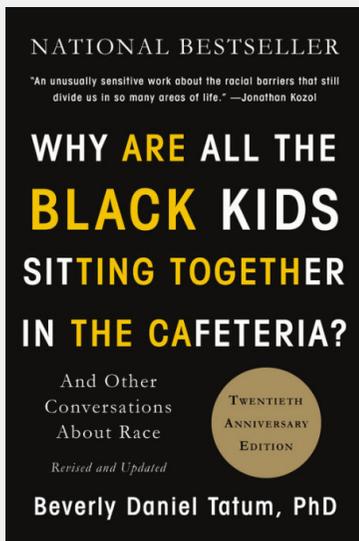
**June 10 at 4 p.m. ET | Virtual**

**Registration Link:** [bit.ly/3cqKHNb](https://bit.ly/3cqKHNb)



Tatum was interviewed during the Black Lives Matter protests in summer 2020. She discussed how both Black and white parents can talk to kids about current events and race.

Listen at [wbur.fm/2Q2RpjW](https://wbur.fm/2Q2RpjW).



## From the Publisher: About the Book

Walk into any racially mixed high school and you will see Black, white and Latinx youth clustered in their own groups. Is this self-segregation a problem to address or a coping strategy? Tatum argues that straight talk about our racial identities is essential if we are serious about enabling communication across racial and ethnic divides. These topics have only become more urgent as the national conversation about race is increasingly acrimonious. This is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the dynamics of race in America.

## Where to Purchase Books

Featured below is an independent, Black-owned bookstore ISTA has partnered with to supply the books on our reading list.



### Brain Lair Books | South Bend

Provides books that uplift marginalized voices, specializing in children's books. Brain Lair Books is dedicated to developing empathy and building a community centered around the discussion of inclusive books.

[shop.brainlairbooks.com](http://shop.brainlairbooks.com)

**Use coupon code ISTAFS for free shipping. Want to order more? As long as your order includes *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, everything else will ship for free. 🇺🇸**

# What's National Board Certification?

National Board Certification is the most respected professional certification available in education. Completion of National Board Certification signifies that a teacher has demonstrated the advanced knowledge, skills and practices required of an outstanding professional.

Created for teachers, by teachers, National Board Certification is performance-based and peer reviewed. Certification is available in 25 certificate areas from Pre-K through 12th grade in 16 disciplines.

To pursue National Board certification, you must have a bachelor's degree with the exception of career and technical education teachers who must meet the licensure requirements for the state, have completed three full years of teaching or school counseling and possess a valid state teaching or counseling license or have taught in a school recognized and approved to operate by the state.

ISTA is dedicated to increasing the number of National Board Certified Teachers in Indiana and offers a variety of financial support and online and in-person resources to help members.

Explore more about National Board Certification at [nbpts.org](https://nbpts.org).

Learn more about ISTA National Board Certification support at [ista-in.org/nbct](https://ista-in.org/nbct). 



*ISTA member Lorie Shiveley shares her National Board Certification journey with other ISTA members.*

## National Board Certification Five Core Propositions

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

# MAC Builds on Racial and Social Justice

In our continuing series on ISTA standing committees, Minority Affairs Committee (MAC) co-chairs Ronald Swann and Greylor Walston offer details on the work of the committee. Under their leadership, the MAC has sought to engage educators of color and allies through educational forums, book clubs and listening events. The committee is building on the racial and social justice strategic work of the Association. Here's more about MAC's role in ISTA.

## **Q: What are the charges of the Minority Affairs Committee?**

**A:** Some of the committee charges mirror other committees, in that we select scholarship and award recipients and share governance information within our District Councils.

MAC is also charged with reviewing and updating the Minority Involvement Plan. Implementation of a robust plan helps ISTA meet NEA bylaw requirements of 3-1(g), which states that NEA Representative Assembly delegates of a state affiliate should achieve ethnic-minority delegate representation at least equal to the ethnic-minority populations within the state.

## **Q: How does committee work meet strategic ISTA goals?**

**A:** ISTA has made fighting for racial and social justice a strategic priority. MAC's governance work seeks to engage more members of color in leadership positions in the Association and enables members of color to raise their voices.

## **Q: What do recent updates to the Minority Involvement Plan address?**

**A:** Updates to the Minority Involvement Plan set a course for how MAC and ISTA can recruit and retain educators of color in the profession and support and engage members of color in the union. Review the ISTA Minority Involvement Plan at [ista-in.org/governing-documents](https://ista-in.org/governing-documents).

## **Q: How has this work become more urgent with the movement for social and racial equity in our country?**

**A:** MAC continues to respond to the surge in engagement from ISTA members for resources which promote social and racial equity in our classrooms and communities. MAC is committed to find ways to improve the experiences of minority students inside and outside of school settings. Recognizing the historic nature of current events, MAC will continue to provide tools for ISTA members to dismantle systems of inequality. Find more information at [ista-in.org/racialjustice](https://ista-in.org/racialjustice). 



**Ronald Swann**



**Greylor Walston**

# Join Summer Conference Series Virtually

Local leaders, membership teams, bargaining teams, Red For Ed coordinators and site leaders and association representatives are invited to join the Summer Conference Series. The ISTA team is approaching the Summer Conference differently this year — offering a series of timely and topical trainings to prepare your local for the coming school year, including growing membership and building bargaining power. These will be delivered in a virtual series during June and July, while aspects of the traditional Summer Conference will be presented at what we hope will be an in-person conference open to all members in September.

## Series Details

All sessions will be offered from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. ET.

### **June 8:** Learn best practices for connecting with new hires.

Audience: Local presidents, vice presidents, membership teams, Red For Ed coordinators and site leaders and association representatives

### **June 15:** Build your local's year-round membership plan.

Audience: Local presidents, vice presidents, membership teams, Red For Ed coordinators and site leaders and association representatives

### **June 22:** Strategize for bargaining in your local and advocating for expanded bargaining rights. Targeted for local associations with fewer than 100 in the bargaining unit.

Audience: Local presidents, vice presidents, bargaining teams, Red For Ed coordinators and site leaders and association representatives

### **June 29:** Strategize for bargaining in your local and advocating for expanded bargaining rights. Targeted for local associations with 100–500 in the bargaining unit.

Audience: Local presidents, vice presidents, bargaining teams, Red For Ed coordinators and site leaders and association representatives

### **July 13:** Strategize for bargaining in your local and advocating for expanded bargaining rights. Targeted for local associations with more than 500 in the bargaining unit.

Audience: Local presidents, vice presidents, bargaining teams, Red For Ed coordinators and site leaders and association representatives

For more information, visit [ista-in.org/events](https://ista-in.org/events). 



“So far my experience as an ELI fellow has given me the opportunity to be a voice for change from the inside and the opportunity to use my voice where it matters.”

**Danielle Holsey**

2020–21 ELI Fellow

Middle School Teacher,  
Indianapolis Education Association



“The knowledge gained through the ELI project development and proposal was worth more than any classroom professional development session. The ELI program allows young teachers the opportunity to be the voice of ISTA and to set the foundation for what we want for the future of public education.”

**Bruce Thomas**

2019–20 ELI Fellow

Elementary Teacher, Monroe  
County Education Association

# Expanding Opportunities for ELI Participation

Multiple cohorts of fellows have completed the Early Leadership Institute (ELI) in Indiana. The NEA and ISTA program builds and strengthens connections with early career educators by engaging them in action-oriented advocacy. ELI fellows gain leadership skills and often step into leadership roles within their local association or are more engaged in their local association after completing the ELI program. ISTA aims to increase opportunities for more locals to join the ELI program and for more early career educators to participate in the program.

ELI fellows are guided by coaches and hub coordinators through the program in which they survey and conduct one-on-one conversations with other early career educators and research and identify issues impacting K-12 early career educators in their district or region. After the research phase, fellows identify issues important to early career educators and their careers including early career educator retention, challenges accessing professional development and helping early career educators find their voice.

Fellows then develop an action plan to address the issue impacting early career educators in their district or region. They work collaboratively with stakeholders and decision-makers to fine tune, and in some cases, implement the action plan to address the issue.

ISTA plans to expand opportunities for local associations to participate. The program scope continues to grow allowing for more locals to join ELI. In the 2021–22 year, small locals will have the option to partner with other small locals in their district enabling more early career educators to benefit from the program.

If your local is interested in participating in ELI, visit [ista-in.org/ELI](https://ista-in.org/ELI). Applications are due June 1. Questions? Contact Rick Scalf at [rscalf@ista-in.org](mailto:rscalf@ista-in.org). 📍

# Finding **Your** Hobby

*Being an educator can be very fulfilling, but all of us need a space and activity outside of school to keep us sane! We talked to two members with very different hobbies, but who derive enjoyment and relaxation from both.*



*Dee Wilusz with one of her dogs after a competition.*

## **Dee Wilusz** Michigan City Classified

My husband and I began rescuing White Shepherds in 2005 and have fostered 89 dogs. We have had 11 of our own White Shepherds. My involvement with the dogs led to becoming a dog trainer and finding a whole new world of dog activities. Agility, sheep herding, obedience, conformation, therapy work, swimming and scent detection are just a few of the activities that we enjoy.

Every moment that I spend with my dogs is an absolute joy and educational. Dogs are excellent trainers, and I am privileged to have learned many valuable lessons from them that make me a better human being.



*Blanket students in Becky Travis' class knit to donate to a local charity.*

## **Becky Travis** Prairie Heights Education Association

I mainly knit and crochet, but I'm also happy to embroider and sew. I think the thing that's most appealing about my hobbies is that there's a definite end point. Teaching doesn't often give you a chance to see a final product, which can be frustrating. I craft things for others more often than for myself, but I don't have any interest in making my crafts into a side hustle.

One of the most rewarding parts of my teaching career was having the opportunity to teach a knitting class to seventh graders. The students made blocks that I crocheted together into blankets that we donated to charity.



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