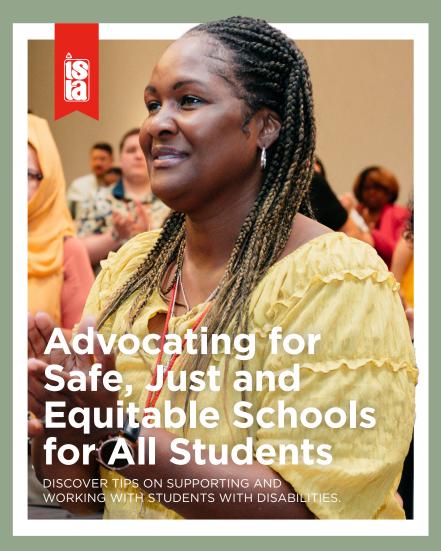
ADVOCATE

AN INDIANA STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION



Page 16



educators

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WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Are you passionate about defending public education, advocating for equitable schools, building strong locals, protecting our future, culturally responsive teaching or new education trends? Email us at communications@ista-in.org to contribute to *The Advocate*.

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.

A D V O C A T E

SPRING 2024: VOL. 07, ISSUE 03

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Diana Reed Treasurer

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Indiana State Teachers Association **Publisher**

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Brytnie Jones Managing Editor

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Contributor

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Gianna Mesarina Early Career Educator, Miscellaneous

Evansville Teachers Association

Michigan City ESP

Matthew Winegar NEA North Posey



150 W. Market St., Ste. 900 Indianapolis, IN 46204

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

Spring for me always feels like a renaissance. The budding trees, the early blooms of daffodils and crocus and the world beginning to turn green once again is truly a rebirth.

The dichotomy of the beginning of spring and the return of summer with the end of a school year is always an interesting contrast.

There is something about the turning of the calendar from March to April that suddenly makes time start to move a little faster. Perhaps it's the warmer weather or the longer days, but once we get to spring, we all know the school year is quicky coming to a close.

Our members have worked very hard to foster the next generation of educators through their work with Educators Rising. Our members have given back, alongside our Aspiring Educators, and helped out Parke Heritage Middle School at Outreach to Teach and Retired members collected shoes at this year's Representative Assembly for Changing Footprints.

Soon, we will witness many of our students in caps and gowns as we send them on to their next chapter. I know that each of you have given your all to ensure that our students have roots and wings. As this year draws to close



Keith Gambill, ISTA President

Follow Keith on Twitter @istapresident

please rest in the knowledge of a job well done. •

Best Loulel

All my best,

Keith Gambill ISTA President



TELEIA MAGEE

Washington Township Education Association

Teleia Magee is a member of Washington Township Education Association. She teaches English at Westland Middle School. In the past, she has served on the Racial Affairs Committee and as a building representative.



MAKE YOUR CLASSROOM INCLUSIVE.

Scan the QR code above for more ideas on how to make your classroom inclusive.

THE PROMOTION OF EQUITY IN THE CLASSROOM

As a classroom teacher, I have realized that it is essential to have tools in place that are equitable and will allow all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, social economic status, etc. to feel included.



Create an Inclusive Environment

I have banned the phrase "shut up" from my classroom. If a student verbalizes this phrase to another student, they must immediately apologize. This expectation is stated at the beginning of the school year with a discussion as to why it is harmful to the learning environment.

Encourage All Students to Participate and Utilize Their Voice

Students are used to opting out of participating in class. However, in my classroom, regardless of their ability level, everyone is encouraged to try. Students are not allowed to say, "I don't know".

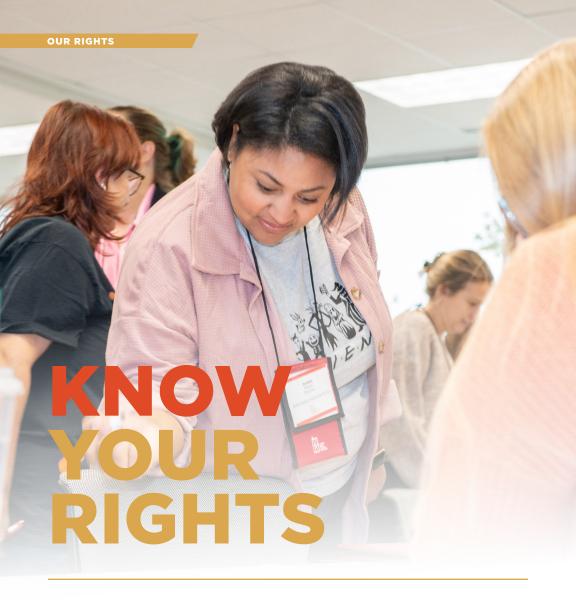
If they do, gentle encouragement is provided by myself and other students

Provide Materials in Student's Native Language

Level one and two English Language Learners are provided materials in their native languages to ensure they can be successful. This instantly brings a bright smile to their faces when they can understand the material.

Adapt to Student's Learning Style

A student can always identify the best way they love to learn, and I incorporate this as much as possible in my lessons. Δ



As an educator or education support professional, you have rights inside and outside of your schools to advocate for public education and meet the needs of your students and fellow educators.

Federal and state laws provide protections to citizens, employees, educators, and

unionized workers.

These laws allow educators to do their jobs efficiently without fear of being unfairly disciplined for advocating for students, reporting misconduct, teaching or organizing to improve working conditions.



Here are four basic rights that you have:

The First Amendment:

The First Amendment generally protects the right to free speech, meaning your right to speak or not speak, your right to write, advertise or otherwise make your views known through words. However, public schools have the authority to limit educators' speech on the job, as well as, speech off the job that directly impacts the workplace.

Report Wrongdoing:

Public school teachers and ESPs are protected when speaking up to prevent discrimination and harassment or acting as whistleblowers to report other violations of federal and state law.

Schools may not fire, transfer, demote or retaliate against an educator because that educator complained about illegal discrimination.

Teacher Tenure:

Tenure status often provides the broadest protections for teachers at the K-12 level. At the K-12 level, tenure laws prevent a school district from dismissing a tenured teacher without good reason.

Union Activity & Speech:

States with public sector bargaining laws offer additional protection for union activity and educators' speech about workplace conditions. The protections vary by state, but generally prevent employers from firing, disciplining, or threatening employees for engaging in union activity or working together to address workplace concerns.

For specific advice, contact your UD or ISTA's attorney Eric Hylton.



LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS

Scan the QR Code to the left to learn more about your rights as an Indiana educator.



Think our advocacy efforts stop when the legislative session ends? Actually, the next several months are a prime opportunity to strengthen relationships and build power for the upcoming budget-writing legislative session. The summer and fall periods offer unique opportunities to fortify relationships with lawmakers, engage in community advocacy, and, importantly, strengthen the foundation of your local union. Here's a guide to making the most of the off-session months:

Engage Locally, Impact Statewide

Your involvement in local events, forums and legislative town halls keeps the

conversation around public education vibrant and front-of-mind for decision-makers. Use this time to showcase the successes and challenges within our schools, demonstrating the real-world impacts of educational policies. Be sure to sign up for your lawmakers email list to hear about their town halls or other events they may be attending.

Forge Personal Connections with Lawmakers

The quieter months are ideal for developing more personal connections with your representatives. Such relationships can provide a platform for meaningful exchanges and ensure that the voices of educators are considered in policy discussions.

Invite lawmakers to visit your classroom or attend a school event to see the impact of education policies firsthand.

Leverage Social Media for Advocacy

Use social media platforms to amplify your advocacy efforts. Sharing stories and insights about education can engage a wider audience, including policymakers, and keep educational issues in the public eye. Consider tagging your lawmakers or elected officials in your posts.

Strengthen Our Union for More Effective Advocacy

A pivotal aspect of our advocacy strategy is bolstering the strength and membership of your local union. The collective power of ISTA members is a significant force, capable of commanding attention and driving change. Here's how you can contribute:

- Ask Your Local President: Reach out to your local president to discuss ways to enhance union membership and strength. Whether it's through recruitment, engagement in union activities or professional development, every member's participation adds to our collective voice.
- Empower Through Engagement:
 Remember, the union's strength
 is derived from its members. By
 engaging more deeply with union
 activities and advocacy efforts, you
 not only contribute to our collective
 power but also empower yourself
 and your colleagues to be more
 effective advocates.



ISTA member amplifying her voice at a Pack the House event during the 2023 legislative session.

• Unity as Our Foundation: Our strength lies in our unity. A strong, active membership ensures that our voices are not just heard but heeded by lawmakers and community leaders. This unity makes clear that we stand together in our commitment to improving public education for all.

As we navigate the coming months, let's remember that advocacy doesn't pause. It evolves. Our actions during this period are crucial in building a stronger foundation for our advocacy efforts, ensuring that we remain a formidable force in the fight for the future of public education. Through personal engagement and a commitment to strengthening our union, we can ensure our voices are more powerful than ever. Δ



SCAN TO READ ABOUT ISTA'S PRIORITIES

Read about ISTA's priorities and summaries of education legislation passed this session.

Do your employees know the value of their total compensation?



We can help! Contact us today.

Kevin Gray, State Manager Michael Marshall, State Manager Megan Garton, Account Development Manager 317-871-2480



MEET MEGAN

Megan Worcester is a member of NEA Union CO. She serves as local Association President and Legislative Action Team (LAT) Leader. ISTA talked with Worcester about her advocacy work and her role on the board of Joint National Committee for Languages – National Council for Languages and Internation Studies, where she is the first board member from Indiana in several years.

Q. Tell me a little bit about yourself.

I am a Spanish teacher at Union County High School in Liberty. I graduated from Miami University in Ohio, where I double majored. After graduating, I moved to Spain and taught English for seven years. After completing the seven years, I decided to move back home, and found an open position at Union County and began teaching Spanish. I've been teaching here ever since, and I've become very active in the professional development wing of foreign languages.

Q. How did you get into organizing and advocacy work?

I was born with advocacy in my blood. I was born during the strike in 1985, so a lot of people joke that I was born on the picket lines. My dad was an elementary teacher for 40 years and an ISTA member. I come from a strong Association family.

A mentor of mine requested I join the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, Indiana Chapter (AATSP-IN). This was my first introduction into the Advocacy world, but I've always believed that



advocacy is vital, so I jumped in with both feet. I feel stronger knowing that I am making people feel supported and protected.

From then, I began taking an active role in several other organizations. Currently, I serve as Vice President/Conference Chair and Advocacy Chair of Indiana Foreign Language Teachers Associations (IFLTA), Membership and Outreach Committee Chair on the board of Joint National Committee for Languages - National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS) and Advocacy Chair of AATSP-IN.

Through these roles, I am actively developing strategies and bringing people together to advocate for and protect foreign languages in Indiana.





Megan Worcester sharing advocacy tools with conference attendees to help evaluate and strengthen their advocacy skills.

Q. When did your passion for foreign languages begin?

Like every kid, I took Spanish for four years in high school and I thought it was cool, but I didn't see the need for it. However, I took a 10-day Spring Break trip, and I thought I was really good at Spanish because I could ask questions and understand basic conversations. Then, in college, I did a mission trip in Mexico with my church and realized I didn't know as much as I thought. I realized that if I wanted to continue the trip through my church, then I had to learn Spanish. I changed my major from Music to Spanish. I didn't want to have to work through a translator, I wanted to just talk to the people, so I did a study abroad in Spain for a year where I got good and then I moved to Spain for seven years. There is a quote by Nelson Madela that says, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart." That quote sticks with me. I tell my students that learning foreign languages is going to help them in business and in life.

Q. What does it mean to be on the board of JNCL-NCLIS?

A lot of people that are on national boards are from bigger cities, so being from Indiana,

I believe that I can bridge the gap and be an example that you don't have to be from a massive school to reach these levels. Being from a State that's primarily red in these realms and being able to have an impact is shocking. We met with Senator Braun and a week later he joined the world language caucus, and he was the first Senator to join. World Language is a bi-partisan issue that is relevant and important.

Q. What do you hope to accomplish through your advocacy work?

I meet with legislators about world language initiatives once or twice a year. I've actively tried to get more people from various regions to attend. This past year seven people, covering four of the nine districts, attended. We are hopeful that this year, we will have representation for six of the nine districts. I hope to continue to advocate for world language, discuss advocacy initiatives, what has worked and what hasn't. World Languages is a topic that people tend to put to the side. I hope to push it to the forefront.

That's' my goal.





SIERRA SEARCY

MEMBER & TEACHER
Centerville-Abington EA

Sierra Searcy is a member of Centerville-Abington EA. She teaches second grade at Rose Hamilton Elementary School.

When I decided to tell people that I wanted to be an educator, I heard several comments like "it's not all butterflies and rainbows" and "you won't make any money."

But the thing is, we go into college knowing that teaching is hard, and we won't be compensated much in pay. However, that doesn't stop us, because we know the reward is far greater.

In my first year of teaching, I braced myself for moments of self-doubt. Managing a classroom of 24 seven-year-olds requires resilience and hard work. Especially when working with a spectrum of behaviors, individualized education programs, chatter, challenging home environments and diverse personalities that are difficult to bring together to create a positive learning

environment. But, nevertheless, you keep showing up for the kids.

Preceding my teaching journey, I often heard cautionary tales about the first years of teaching. However, what these narratives fail to convey is the profound joy that ensues when a student's face lights up upon grasping a concept they've diligently worked on. People don't tell you how amazing it is when you have had a rough day and they still come up to give you a hug and tell you that you are the best teacher. The cumulative impact of influencing thousands of children over a teaching career far outweighs the trials encountered along the way.

At the end of each day, I walk myself through every detail of the day and think about what I can do better. However, I am working on giving myself grace and not questioning every decision I make.

Through the challenges and successes of my first year, I am so happy that I chose to go into education. I have a Post-it on my desk that says, "be the teacher you needed when you were younger", and I am working daily to become the teacher my second graders need. •



REVIEW ISTA'S NEW EDUCATOR GUIDE

Learn classroom management tips, how to develop a work-life balance and work with families and more in your first few years as an educator.

ADVICE FOR FIRST-TIME EDUCATORS

KAREN WARBLE



MEMBER Retired Communication Committee

Karen Warble is a member of ISTA-Retired. Currently, she is the secretary for the Retired Communication Committee. Additionally, she serves as a zone coordinator and board member.

The first years of your teaching career are an exciting time. Over my career, I found teaching to be a wonderful, but demanding profession.

Below are several things I found helpful during my educational career:

Love What You Do

By choosing education as a career, you have already demonstrated a love for teaching. As you grow into your profession, continue to let your love for teaching lead and guide your work. As a result, others will immediately recognize your love for the job.

Be Happy. Be Positive. Be Excited.

Students need a teacher that is going to make them want to come to school and develop a love for learning. You are their cheerleader. Make each student believe they can do it.

Adapt

Students don't need a perfect teacher, so don't expect to be perfect. Some things will not go as planned and issues may arise such as a tech issue, behavioral concerns or a student question that may

lead to your lesson being modified. Always be ready to adapt.

Plan and Collaborate

Effective planning can be a key to overall good teaching. Be creative and don't be afraid to try different techniques. Also, develop relationships with your colleagues as collaboration can help with organizational, academic and behavioral planning.

Classroom Management and Discipline

Classroom management and discipline seemed to be the hardest parts of teaching for me. Planning a multi-step lesson that kept the students actively involved and used all modalities of learning seemed to be the best way to keep everyone on task. Sure, there were little tricks like proximity, teacher movement, student movement, leveled questioning and positive teacher statements that also helped. When a situation did arise that required discipline - being firm, fair and consistent - seemed to be successful. Be ready to enforce any statement made about the consequences.

Mental Health - Preventing Teacher Burn Out

Time management is important for your mental health. Lesson planning, filing reports, grading, as well as preparing for parent teacher conferences can take a great deal of your out of school time. Allow time for you and your family!

In conclusion, teaching is not easy. Many outside the field feel they know how to teach when in reality they are forgetting the individual needs of each and every child! You need to find your own style, one that works best for you and your group of students. Enjoy, love and exhibit your excitement for teaching! ^(a)



SIGN UP FOR ISTA PRE-RETIRED

Sign-up for ISTA Pre-Retired, Retired or read what's happening for retired members inside the *Chalkboard*.



NEA Member Exclusive

A trusted and valuable benefit

As an NEA member, did you know you receive \$1,000 of term life insurance at **no cost** to you? You're already enrolled in the NEA® Complimentary Life Insurance Plan, but it's a good time to make sure you've selected a beneficiary.

When you do, you can have some peace of mind that your loved ones will receive their benefit in a time of need. This unique benefit helps ensure educators like you have additional coverage beyond what may be provided through your district. It's just one of the many ways your union membership works hard for you.

Scan the code or go to neamb.com/mycomp for a quick and easy path to update your beneficiary information.





RUBY SOPKE

Brownsburg Elementary School

Ruby Sopke is a member of Brownsburg CTA. She is a blind and low vision special education teacher at Brownsburg Elementary School. She is a member of the Racial Affairs Committee and District Council member.



LEARN MORE ABOUT SUP-PORTING STU-DENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Identify ways that you can continue to meet the needs of your students with disabilities.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR WORKING WITH STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In the rich tapestry of education, inclusivity is not simply an ambition, it is a necessity. Special education in public schools exists to play an important role in bridging the gap to ensure that every student, regardless of their abilities, feels valued, supported and empowered to succeed. As an educator, it's important to recognize the practical tips and methods for creating an inclusive environment for students with disabilities.

CONSIDER THESE:



Embrace Diversity

Acknowledge and appreciate the distinctive abilities and skills of every student to create a sense of belonging for all.



Focus on Communication

Open and truthful communication is key. Engage students, parents, support staff and other specialists to recognize students' individual needs and preferences. Create a team-player



Provide Accommodations

Implementing accommodation and modifications as needed for equal accessibility to learning opportunities is imperative. Accommodations might include assistive technologies, alternative formats or adjustments to assigned tasks.



Foster Peer Support

Motivate a culture

of empathy and understanding where students support and learn from one another.



Flexibility

Recognize that each student has a unique learning style and be open to adjusting your teaching approach accordingly. Having adaptability is important in addressing their varying needs.



Educate Yourself

Life-long learners have a great advantage in implementing best practice methods for supporting your students. Continue to seek out professional development opportunities and collaborate.

Inclusive education means embracing differences and creating an environment where every student can flourish. By applying these functional tips and promoting a culture of inclusivity, we can create truly transformative educational experiences for all students. Δ



WHAT TO EXPECT THIS SUMMER AT ISTA





"The stories
we tell can build
an empathetic,
inclusive and
equitable world."









Educators of Color Network Conference

June 6-7

ISTA is hosting its second annual Indiana Educators of Color Network Conference for Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) members and allies at Intech in Indianapolis. This year's theme is Powerful Voices. Powerful Change.

This conference will present phenomenal keynote speakers, powerful community building activities and enlightening breakout sessions. Additionally, there will be a special evening dinner, where participants will have an opportunity to indulge in cuisines from various cultures.

ISTA members are encouraged to attend, learn and engage with fellow BIPOC educators and allies.

Learn more about one of this years' keynote speakers, Luis Ortega below.

Luis Ortega

Luis Ortega is a multidisciplinary storyteller, TEDx Speaker, educator, artist and the founder of Storytellers for Change.

Over the last fourteen years, Luis has traveled across the nation to share his personal narrative and message about the power of storytelling and story-listening to inspire action and build empathetic, inclusive, and equitable communities.

To find out more about Storytellers for change, visit storytellersforchange.com.

Summer Academy July 15-17

ISTA is hosting its first Summer Academy July 15 - 17 at Intech in Indianapolis.

This two-day training is invitation only and intended for members currently participating in UniServ programs, recent program graduates and those who are eligible and have shown an interest in leadership growth. ISTA's UniServ program ares: Year-Round Organizing, Emerging Leaders, New Presidents and Early Career Program.

Summer Academy will contain a fulfilling curriculum around the theme of organizing and engaging members. Additionally, there will be fun activities for participants to enjoy during the evening to strengthen and build connections with fellow educators and local leaders.

For more information about either event. visit ista-in.org.





THE ASSOCIATION DURING

EARLY ENROLLMENT

The Early Enrollment program invites active and Aspiring Educator members, who have not previously enrolled during the early enrollment period, to join the association from April 1 to Aug. 31.

Early enrollees have the opportunity of experiencing the great benefits of being a member of the association at no immediate cost. Starting April 1, potential members can join the Association without paying dues until the new school year begins.

ENCOURAGE YOUR COLLEAGUES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EARLY ENROLLMENT TODAY!

For questions, contact the ISTA Member Resource Center at 844-ASK-IST or askista@ista-in.org.

AVAILABLE BENEFITS



Professional development opportunities



Collective power



Travel and vacation discounts



Shopping discounts



Access to discounted graduate courses



Retirement planning



Discounted sports, entertainment and theme park tickets

MEMBER TESTIMONIALS



DAWN ROWE

Columbus East High School Columbus EA

"I signed up during Early Enrollment and have taken part in several benefits, such as collective bargaining and Professional Development. I feel that through ISTA, I stay better informed and have a voice in my profession in ways I did not have before."



MARY ZOGBI

Whiteland Community High School Clark-Pleasant EA

"ISTA has supported me and made sure my voice has been heard in and out of my school district. The benefits from ISTA have saved me many times!"



MARIA SANCHEZ CISNEROS

Columbus North High School Columbus EA

"As a first-year teacher, signing up for ISTA was always on my to-do list along with endless other tasks. Before I realized it, it was too late for me to enroll until the early enrollment, which came in handy! I was finally able to complete my task of joining ISTA, dip my toes in the water and feel confident to enroll for the following year!"

MEET ISTA'S ADVOCATE

[EDITORIAL 2024-25 BOARD]

Editorial board members are consulted and asked to contribute to current and future story ideas, recruit member contributors, offer input on editorial content and more.



SHALONDA MORROW

Shalonda is from Michigan City, Ind. She has been in education for 22 years as an ESP. For the last two years, she has been the District 2, ESP representative for the Racial Affairs Committee. She also serves on the ISTA Foundation Board. Morrow enjoys the work that she does with ISTA because it gives her a sense of belonging and she believes that the knowledge she has gained from her ISTA colleagues has been a blessing.



GIANNA MIROWSKI

Gianna is a dedicated educator with a passion for shaping the future of education.
She holds a bachelor's and master's degree from Purdue

University, where she cultivated her love for teaching and learning. With six years of teaching experience under her belt, Mirowki believes that she brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to her role in the classroom. She has been on the editorial board for the Advocate for several years and also serve on the ISTA Board of Directors for the Minority-at-Large position.



KRISTIEN HAMILTON

Kristien Hamilton is a UniServ Director that works with locals across the state. She was a previous local leader and middle school mathematics teacher who enjoys crunching numbers.



AMY PRICE

Amy Price is from Evansville, Ind. She has taught various grade levels and subject for 34 years in the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation. She has remained a member of the Evansville Teachers Association for her entire career, which has led to her attending several

ISTA and NEA representative assemblies. Currently, she serves on the ETA Board of Directors. She has been on the ISTA Advocate editorial board for four years now. She is married to her husband Christopher and has two sons. Jackson and Charlie. Her family wouldn't be complete without her three puppy dogs. Lastly. Price recalls ISTA President Keith Gambill being the very first teacher she met at her first teaching job and she is extremely grateful to reconnect and work alongside him within ISTA.



MATTHEW WINEGAR

Matthew Winegar is the Business teacher at North Posev Junior High in Poseyville, Ind., where he also coaches' football and track and field. He holds a master's degree in business administration. He spent ten years serving in the United States Navy and was awarded 12 medals and commendations. After serving in the Navy, he spent 10 years in the healthcare industry working in the management of quality improvement, risk management and compliance before making the transition into teaching. He was selected as the 2023 Posev County Teacher of the Year.

THE FREEDOM TO READ & LEARN

Across the country, politicians and parent groups have challenged books that represent marginalized and oppressed peoples. As a result, educators have been pushing back against those who want to censor literature. Educators, especially librarians, have been frustrated by the agenda of banning books that are representative of so many individuals' stories.

Students should have the freedom to read and learn about the diverse cultures, identities, perspectives and experiences that shape the world. Here are three books that have been challenged and banned in the last two years, and are still being banned.



ALL BOYS AREN'T BLUE

George M. Johnson

In a series of personal essays, prominent journalist and LGBTQIA+ activist George M. Johnson's explores his childhood, adolescence and college years in New Jersey and Virginia. He provides honest descriptions and address topics such as gender identity, racism, queer love, toxic masculinity, family, Black joy, consent, brotherhood and structural marginalization.



THE BLUEST EYE

Toni Morrison

The Bluest Eye is a perfect introduction to Morrison's iconic catalog. This book explores the live of Percola Breedlove, a Black girl who longs for blue eyes. When her dream comes true, it turns out to be more nightmare than fantasy.



SOLD

Patricia McCormick

This bestselling National Book Award Finalist gives voice to a young girl robbed of her childhood yet determined to find the strength to triumph. Sold tells the story of one young girl who finds herself in just that situation: sold. Lakshmi is from a mountainous village in Nepal, where she grew up in simple happiness despite economic poverty. But after a devastating crisis, she is sent off to India for a job so she can contribute to the family's income—and discovers she has been sold into prostitution and may never be able to work her way out or escape.



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