

Executive Director report to the 2017 KEA Delegate Assembly

I became Executive Director on May 1, 2016, so this is my first report to the DA in my new role. It's hard to believe that it's been almost a year since I started; the last few months have been filled with learning and challenges, but that's what makes the work interesting.

For those of you who may not know me, I was born in upstate New York but moved to Kentucky in 1993 to attend UK College of Law. I started working with KEA in 1994, first as a law clerk and then as an Associate attorney with the Lexington firm of Brooks & McComb, representing members in issues with their employers and before the Education Professional Standards Board. I eventually became a partner in that firm, and was proud to join the KEA team as a staff attorney when Joy Arnold retired in 2006. In that role, I helped manage KEA's legal services department until January 2010, when I was glad to take on additional responsibilities as Assistant Executive Director for Programs. As Assistant Executive Director I supported KEA's Communications, Government Relations, Legal, Technology, Website, and Professional Excellence staff. I also learned a lot about the organization through my work with the Compliance/Constitution Committee and as administrative support to KEPAC. I enjoyed the opportunity to serve on the bargaining team and better understand the interests of staff, and provided in-house corporate legal support.

What's happened since I became Executive Director? Here are a few of the highlights:

- **May, 2016:** I worked to get acclimated in my new role and build relationships with other public education advocacy groups.
- **June, 2016:** We hosted the TALK conference in Northern KY in mid-June and provided a high quality teacher led conference for teachers. I was also honored to work with the KEA Emerging Leaders cadre to assure we are developing new leaders to sustain the organization going forward. President Winkler convened the Executive Director Evaluation Committee to create my evaluation instrument and set annual goals. The new management team also held our first meeting with KEASO leadership.
- **July, 2016:** The first week of July was entirely consumed by the NEA RA. Later that month we held the KEA Board of Directors annual retreat and the Local Presidents' training. We continued our organizational capacity work with the NEA Foundation. Opening day events begin in local school districts during the last week of July, which is always a busy and productive time for our field staff. This year, with the encouragement and support of NEA, we focused our energy on holding one-on-one conversations with as many new educators as possible.
- **August, 2016:** With the help and support of the field office associates and our excellent membership staff, we changed the way that we process membership forms, moving that function from being centralized at HQ out to each field office. We held our annual KEA Staff Development Day, spending much of the time reviewing the results of our

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Organizational Culture Inventory, which is part of the organizational capacity work with the NEA Foundation. Our NEO (New Educator Organizing) work continued in earnest throughout the fall.

- **September, 2016:** President Winkler and I attended President/ED team training offered by NCSEA. This helped us understand our respective communication styles and clarify our professional roles. We held our annual “All Committee Weekend” event, which brings together all the members of the KEA Standing Committees to plan their annual calendars and begin their work for the year. KEA staff, leaders, and members worked throughout the month in support of KEPAC endorsed legislative candidates. The UD's and local leaders continued the NEO contacts. The management team and local leaders conducted interviews to fill a UD vacancy in the Russell Springs office.
- **October, 2016:** Staff, leaders and members actively continued their work in support of KEPAC endorsed legislative candidates. Mid-month, the management/governance team attended the final NEA Foundation Convening in D.C., which was the official culmination of the organizational capacity work we've been doing for the last three years. I started working with NEA staff and other EDs from the Mid-Atlantic region to plan the 2017 Regional Organizing Institute. The management team and local leaders interviewed UD candidates to fill a vacancy in the St. Matthews office.
- **November, 2016:** Election Day brought significant changes to the Kentucky General Assembly and to the national administration. Anticipating adverse changes in policy on the state and national front, the KEA Board of Directors held an emergency meeting to discuss the potential effects on our members, Kentucky's students, and the Association. We began planning for significant changes in the way we must conduct association business.
- **December, 2016:** We held an All Staff meeting in Covington on December 7 and 8. We engaged staff in continuing conversations about the changes in the political environment and the impact on the Association, but we also enjoyed a staff holiday party. Throughout the month we planned for the upcoming legislative session.
- **January, 2017:** The legislative session begins. As anticipated, during the first week the assembly passed two pieces of anti-labor, anti-union legislation, “right to work” and “paycheck protection.” Although they recess for 3 weeks right after this, the tone of the session isn't expected to get any better. Internally, we work with the Program & Budget Committee to draft the 2017-18 KEA budget.
- **February, 2017:** The legislature returns. Senate Bill 1 (ESSA implementation), charter schools, neighborhood schools, mandated curriculum are all in play. We finalized the draft 2017-18 budget and continue other preparations for the 2017 Delegate Assembly. KEA districts stepped up in a big way and organized members to come to Frankfort and

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lobby their legislators during “Days of Learning” every Tuesday and Thursday throughout the month.

- **March, 2017:** The “short” session seems to never end. On the last official day before the veto period, despite overwhelming opposition from our members, from non-members, from parents, and from other education stakeholders, HB 520 passes both chambers and is delivered to the governor. The TELL survey, KEA pre-delegate caucuses and online elections for the 2017 NEA RA statewide delegates continue throughout the month.

I’m happy to tell you that throughout the last few months, KEA staff across the state have consistently, efficiently, and gracefully risen to every challenge with which they’ve been faced. I’m pleased and proud to work with them and for you.

In solidarity,

Mary