

# OEA

An affiliate of the  
National Education Association

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**The Education Focus**  
OEA's all-member publication

# The Education Focus

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association

December/January 2002-03

## Money Woes Cripple Schools

### OEA, Education Coalition Working to Find Solutions

By Stacy Martin

The Budget Shortfall That Won't Go Away may well be a horror classic on some future Halloween, but right now the financial crisis is all too real for Oklahoma schools.

The funding crisis continues to devastate school districts, and Oklahoma Education Association President Carolyn Crowder is encouraging school employees to prepare for tough days ahead.

"Educators would be wise to steel themselves during these extraordinarily difficult times," Crowder said. "We are advising them to deal with this as best they can until things improve."

"Led by OEA, education leadership is working hard to bring about immediate action. Obviously, it can't happen soon enough, but we are working as quickly as circumstances allow."

Education leaders are recommending a one-cent sales tax hike, either permanently or temporarily. It would yield the speediest relief, pumping about \$25 million monthly into education within 60 to 90 days of passage.

Education leaders remain open to other solutions, but believe an immediate answer is needed to staunch the bleeding until other funding mechanisms kick in. Most would take a

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### NBPTS Certifies Largest Oklahoma Class

Putnam City's Bob Curtis helps first graders (from left) Christopher Escoboar, Devin Banks, Jason DeLeon and Taylor Smith cut out angels during a class project. Curtis is one of Oklahoma's first nationally certified elementary art teachers, and part of Oklahoma's record class of 241 board-certified educators. See Page 6-7 for more.

## A Teacher Moves Into the Governor's Mansion

By Stacy Martin

Incoming First Lady Kim Henry understands well the enormity of the task that lies ahead for Oklahoma – grappling with the worst state budget crisis in a generation.

Difficulties have enveloped every part of state government, but by far, the hardest hit is public education.

"It's devastating, frightening – not only for teachers, but for children and, ultimately, for the state of Oklahoma," Henry said.

As a 10-year veteran teacher, she knows whereof she speaks. During her tenure, Henry lived with issues

such as low pay and oversized classes. She knows these issues still plague teachers today.

Meanwhile, Oklahoma's economic problems seem to just grow worse daily. Education funding cuts this academic year

stand at \$158 million and counting. It is predicted that school administrators may lay off thousands of education employees for the 2003-04 year.

The Henry administration has already begun working on the problem. Kim's husband, Governor-elect Brad

Henry, has assembled a team of experts to analyze matters and recommend both long- and short-term strategies, she said.

**"You lead by example. We both believe that."**

**First Lady and Shawnee teacher Kim Henry**

"As heartbreaking as it is, I don't think there's an immediate solution," she said. "But I'd like to reassure people it remains a top priority of my husband's administration."

Education and children have long

See First Lady on Page 2

# The Twelve Days Of Budget Crisis

By Carolyn Crowder, OEA President

On the first day of budget crisis – Oklahoma sent to schools – the largest cut in our state’s history.

On the second day of budget crisis – school boards sent to ESP – notices of many pending layoffs.

On the third day of budget crisis – administrators sent to teachers – notice of when and how to clean their own classrooms.

On the fourth day of budget crisis – school boards asked the state de-

partment – to waive all class size penalties!

On the fifth day of November – OEA voters made a difference – and elected Governor Brad Henry!

On the sixth day of budget crisis – many school boards took a stand – and passed a Special Session Resolution!

On the seventh day of budget crisis – local OEA leaders met the press – and let them know the problems

caused by cuts!

On the eighth day of budget crisis – state OEA leaders met the press – and let them know schools should be more important than prisons!

On the ninth day of budget crisis – OEA leaders told the public – a penny sales tax for schools is better than an automatic property tax increase for schools who run out of money!

On the tenth day of budget crisis – local coalitions met with their legisla-



Carolyn Crowder

tors – to find out prior to session who was *really* going to make education a priority!

On the eleventh day of budget crisis – Coalition leaders from all over the state – came together with Governor Henry at the SOS summit.

On the twelfth day of February – the Coalition made state history – with a rally that turned a crisis into our state’s greatest opportunity.

You don’t have to sing this song – but together – we’ve got to make it come true!!!

## First Lady

been the focus of the Henrys’ lives. Kim Henry volunteers for Close-Up, a civic foundation that sends 25,000 of the nation’s children to Washington, D.C. to learn about the federal government. Since the groups are often substantial, Brad Henry usually joins Kim’s group at his own expense to act as an additional chaperon.

Her teaching career includes two years in the Moore School System, followed by eight years in the Shawnee Public Schools. Most recently, she was an Advanced Placement U.S. History & Government teacher at Shawnee High School.

As a teacher, she came to realize the need for changes to help both educators and children.

“For teachers, it’s definitely salary,” said Henry. “It would be nice to have a modest standard of living. When I was teaching, if something had happened to Brad, we would have qualified for free and reduced lunches.”

Additionally, Henry despaired when her classes grew too big, as they sometimes did.

“I had some classes that were quite large,” Henry said. “It made it very difficult to have the one-on-one that you need to make sure that a child is learning properly.”



***Governor-Elect Brad Henry has his own education expert in wife Kim Henry. The First Lady has taught for 10 years, most recently as a history teacher at Shawnee High School.***

The Henrys’ children will remain in the Shawnee Public Schools until the end of this academic year. The trio includes Leah, 13, Laynie, 11, and Baylee, 5. After moving into the Governor’s mansion on Jan. 13, the Henrys are committed to continuing their children’s education in Oklahoma public schools.

Many difficult decisions face the Henry Administration, she said. The Governor elect’s team of experts are reviewing economic conditions and state agency budgets. Budgets that

can be pared, will be – beginning with the Governor’s office.

“You lead by example,” Henry said. “We both believe in that.”

Henry said she realizes teachers are working under very difficult circumstances, but asked that they keep the faith while answers are found.

“There are no easy answers ... there are no quick answers,” said Henry. “But rest assured there are good minds working on it. After all, these are our children.”

# OEA

***The Education Focus***

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# Budget Crisis

year or more.

Crowder said OEA's considerable lobbying strength and legal expertise will likely come into play this year as never before. This is critical, since the answers to the budget crisis lie with Oklahoma's elected officials.

In the meantime, many members whose jobs, pay or benefits are threatened will be able to turn to OEA for support, guidance and comprehensive legal representation.

"OEA is well-versed in member rights – which are critical during times like this," said Crowder. "Advocacy is the heart and soul of this organization. We expect many members to turn to us for support. I can assure you, we will be there for them."

On the bright side, OEA-recommended Democratic candidate Brad Henry won the race for Governor of Oklahoma, replacing Republican Frank Keating. OEA and Henry are in agreement on several issues, which is a good starting point, she said.

In late November, OEA sent out a "Save Our Schools Local Crisis Plan" to local leaders statewide. The packet contained budget crisis information and an action plan geared to build grassroots support for restoring public education funding.

"We believe these packets contain the road map to building a groundswell of community action and support," said Crowder. "In turn, we will build on that momentum at the OEA."

In that vein, OEA and the Oklahoma Education Coalition have organized an Education Summit on January 14 in Oklahoma City. Its purpose is to teach local education leaders to generate school and community support or a budget crisis solution. Information is available by calling 800/522-8091, ext. 316.

Many challenges lie ahead, but they are better met with the strength of unity that OEA membership provides, Crowder said.

*The Oklahoma Education Coalition invites you to the*

## Save Our Schools Education Summit Tuesday, January 14



9 a.m. - 3:45 p.m. at the  
Clarion Meridian Hotel  
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today to register your district.*

# FAQ

## **Exactly how did we arrive at this state revenue shortfall?**

Things went bad rather quickly and without warning. The booming national economy of the 1990s ran its course, the terrible events of 9-11 occurred, and the stock market took a deep plunge.

The national economic downturn led to problems for the Oklahoma economy, which had enjoyed modest growth for a period of years accompanied by several legislative tax reductions. Soon, all major categories of state tax collections took a significant dip, leading to our present shortfall.

## **Why didn't anyone know it would be this bad and plan for it?**

Just like experts didn't warn the country of the 1929 stock market crash or the 1980s oil bust, neither did they give advance warning of the decline in the Oklahoma economy. State government follows a detailed process in determining how much money can be spent. It involves the governor, other state-wide elected officers and the legislature. No one could have predicted a crisis this severe.

## **Is this budget shortfall real or are they hiding the money somewhere?**

All credible sources say the shortfall is real, and the state will suffer a decline of \$600-\$800 million in tax revenues before the current fiscal year ends June 30. Counting cuts in last year's state general fund budget, next year could see a reduction in state spending of almost a billion dollars. That's approaching 20 percent of the budget.

The constitutional reserve fund has about \$35 million that can be appropriated, but that's it. There aren't any special funds that haven't already been tapped.

## **Is there really too much fat in school administration?**

We strongly support schools managing and utilizing their financial resources well. How well a district is managed can only be determined on a case-by-case basis. Undoubtedly, some districts are more efficiently managed than others, and administrative waste should be eliminated where possible.

Thoughtful consideration should be given to appropriate steps that could save money while improving the quality of the Oklahoma educa-

## *Frequently Asked Questions About the Budget Crisis*

tion system. Those who know school finance best believe that reducing the cost of school administration won't come close to making up the current budget shortfall.

## **What solution does the Oklahoma Education Coalition offer to resolve this crisis?**

Leading OEC organizations are proposing legislative adoption of a temporary or permanent 1-cent sales tax earmarked for common schools. It's the fastest new source of revenue that could be put in place, and it is projected to raise over \$300 million per year.

Other, longer term revenue-raising measures could include a hike in motor fuel taxes, renegotiation of existing compacts with the Native American tribes, a lottery earmarked for schools, or a higher priority for public education in the way state money is currently spent. Some leaders have proposed a general overhaul of the state's entire tax system.

## **What can I do to help?**

As a part of the Oklahoma Education Coalition, OEA will be a leader in the battle to restore education funding cuts. It will also continue to fight for improvements in salaries and fringe benefits for all education employees, including working with the legislature to guarantee implementation of the second phase of the teacher health insurance legislation passed during the 2002 session.

You can help by being an OEA member and becoming involved in local and state activities aimed at solving this crisis. You can be part of a local coalition to take the education message to your community and your state legislators. You can also plan to attend the Oklahoma Education Coalition "Save Our Schools" Summit in Oklahoma City on January 14. Finally, you can take the lead in getting your local school board to dismiss classes on February 12 so your entire community can rally on behalf of public education at the State Capitol.

Recently, the OEA sent out information and action packets to local presidents statewide. It describes how local coalitions can elicit community and media support and generate grass roots action. Historically, this kind of response has led policymakers to act on behalf of public education.

# Shawnee ACT Members Play Active Role in Electing Native Son Brad Henry

By Bruce Treadaway

When Brad Henry won the governor's seat this year, the sounds of celebration from the Shawnee area should have been audible all over Oklahoma. The loudest sigh would have come from the Shawnee ACT and its members who helped with the Henry campaign.

There was never any doubt in their minds who would win. It becomes even more important when it is understood that Kim Henry, the governor-elect's wife, was a U.S. Government and AP American history teacher at Shawnee High School. The incoming First Lady's fellow high school teachers, Justine Thompson and Gail Foresee, gave money to the Henry campaign, but family health problems kept Justine from being as active as she would have liked to have been.

Justine was one of the first people Kim Henry called when her husband decided to run for governor. Thompson taught Governor-elect Henry in 10<sup>th</sup> grade English, and then Kim a year after Brad.

"Brad was the kind of student you always wanted in class. He always asked questions," said Thompson.

As for Kim, she added, "She was bright and articulate. She was also a fabulous history teacher. We are very sorry to lose her. Their children will stay in school in Shawnee though, so we'll see them often."

Foresee said, "Brad was 7<sup>th</sup> in his class of 301. He was the cowboy kid and FFA president. Brad is a problem solver and works towards consensus. He doesn't think in a partisan way. He never cared whether someone else was poor or rich. He always liked to win. I'm very happy he was elected. Everybody has said since he was elected that he is a good person. *He is a good person!*"

4/Oklahoma Education Association



Debbie Hogue-Downing (left) and Nancy Rogers were just two of the many Shawnee ACT members to work in Brad Henry's successful run for governor.

Debbie Hogue-Downing and Nancy Rogers are two of the many Shawnee teachers involved in the Henry campaign. Hogue-Downing gave out bumper stickers and signs, but because she is a state official for the Democratic Party, she couldn't get involved until Brad became the nominee. That was very difficult.

"The Shawnee and Seminole locals always work well together and that is certainly the case in the Henry campaign," Downing said. She was personally more involved with coordinating Henry's campaign through the Democratic Party. She walked neighborhoods and helped with phone banks. Nancy Rogers built yard signs and helped staff a "Get Out The Vote" phone bank.

Shawnee ACT also passed out Henry materials to local members. They stuffed material for neighborhood walkers, members were encouraged to vote for Brad and the local ran an ad in the "Shawnee News-Star" in support of Henry. Different school sites collected money to pay for the ad.

Rogers put it best when she said,

to increase salaries of teachers. We think she will be a great spokesperson for public schools, and remember, Brad's picture in the Shawnee annual said clearly that he was 'Most Likely To Succeed.'"

"It was great to wake up the morning after and have a sign in my yard for a winner, a home town boy, a fellow church member and a teacher," Rogers said.

"We are proud of Brad and Kim. When they were on (KFOR TV's) 'Flash Point,' Kim said her issue was



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# Mendenhall, Crabtree Surprised By Winning \$25K Milken Awards

By Marty Bull

October 15 turned out to be an eventful day for Norman's Jefferson Elementary teacher Kristina Crabtree and Tulsa's Marshall Elementary teacher Ginger Mendenhall. Both were named Milken Family Foundation National Educators at their respective school sites. The recognition includes a cash award of \$25,000 and an expense-paid trip to the foundation's national conference in Los Angeles in April.

Both teachers were surprised at all-school assemblies.

"I had no idea what was going on," said Mendenhall. "I was thinking about all I had to do to get ready for some clean up work to be done in our room and then my name was called.

What an awesome experience. It was thrilling."

Crabtree was equally surprised.

"We were told that this was a stop on Supt. Garrett's yellow bus tour," she said. "I just thought the TV stations were there to cover her presen-



Tulsa's Ginger Mendenhall (above) and Norman's Kristina Crabtree (left) were recently named Oklahoma's Milken Award winners. They are two of 100 teachers from around the country to receive the \$25,000 prize this year.

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tation. I never dreamed that I would be recognized in this manner."

The Milken National Educator Awards were created in 1985 to reward, retain and attract the highest caliber professionals to the nation's schools. In October, 100 unsuspecting educators across the country were surprised with the news of their \$25,000 Awards, which can be used any way they choose. State and local officials, students, peers and community leaders attended the emotional, school-wide assemblies.

Education pioneer Lowell Milken – chairman and cofounder of the Milken Family Foundation – created the award program to celebrate the efforts of some of our nation's most outstanding teachers, principals and specialists in K-12 education. Under his leadership, the Milken National Educator Awards have become the largest teacher recognition program in the U.S. By the end of October, 1,877 exceptional educators from 46 states

will have been recognized, totaling over \$46.9 million in awards from the Milken Foundation since the program's inception.

Just being recognized as an outstanding kindergarten teacher is an honor in itself, but the \$25,000 cash award is a life changing experience for Crabtree.

"Like everyone, there are things I want to improve in my life on a long-term basis, like investments, but right now a privacy fence sounds pretty good," said the 11-year teaching veteran. "Now I have the money to make those things a reality."

Mendenhall hopes to use part of the cash award to make a "memory" for her fifth grade students.

"I want my students to share in this award," said the Tulsa Public Schools Teacher of the Year and finalist for Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year. "They don't have all the opportunities to see the world like some kids do and I want to try and give them that."



Vanoss's nationally certified Linda Marks helps Krystal Trivitt work a problem on the board.

## Record Numbers Earn National Certification

Ask just about any nationally certified teacher to describe the process and you just might get the same answer each time: The process creates a better teacher.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) recently awarded its prestigious national board certification to 241 Oklahoma teachers, increasing the number of board-certified teachers in our state by 48 percent, said officials with the Oklahoma Education Association and the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation in a joint announcement.

"This percentage increase serves as an affirmation that teaching excellence is the rule in Oklahoma," said Carolyn Crowder, OEA President. National Board certification is an important part of the "professionalization" of teaching – the building and strengthening of standards and processes that assure the public that there are highly-skilled teachers in every classroom, she said.

Oklahoma ranks eighth nationally with 632 nationally certified teachers in the state's fifth year in the program. Among the Oklahoma Class of 2002 are 176 OEA members.

Research backs up the comments of those completing the process. Studies show board-certified teachers tend to be much more effective in their classrooms, happier with their jobs and more likely to remain in the profession.

"You can't go through the process and ever be quite the same," said Alva's Maris Ward. "I've begun to be more inquiry based, away from the books so much. I was looking at starting my doctorate, but talked to several people who had actually pulled out of their doctoral programs to do this instead, not only because it was more lucrative, but because it was more beneficial to their teaching."

Ward is the first teacher from Alva to earn national certification. She could have retired two years ago, but the NBPTS process motivated her to

stay in the profession.

"If you're not growing professionally, you're just moving backwards," she said.

Bob Curtis, an art teacher at Overholser Elementary in Putnam City, became one of the first three Oklahomans to earn certification for middle childhood art.

"(The process) helped me with better classroom management," Curtis said. "I learned how to plan better and better assess students."

For Linda Marks in Vanoss, this was her last chance to earn national

certification. She banked scores for three years, finally completing the process this year.

"I think I grew more by going through it so many times," she said.

Marks said going through the process taught her to change little things, like to organize grades in her grade book so that she could better analyze how and why her students were progressing.

Under the Education Leadership Oklahoma Act, up to 200 teachers are selected to receive a \$2,300 stipend to subsidize the national board certification fee. Successful candidates receive a yearly \$5,000 stipend for the 10-year life of the certificate.

## OEA's Class of 2002

### Ada

Kimberly Ann Harris  
Ada Junior High  
Dana Daphine Jordan  
Glenwood Kindergarten

### Altus

Mary Lynn Runyan  
Altus High School

### Alva

Maris Ward  
Alva Middle School

### Ardmore

Charlsie Allen  
Ardmore Middle School  
Mona Cunningham  
Ardmore High School

### Bartlesville

Debra Craig  
Oak Park  
Dedra Morgan  
Ranch Heights Elementary  
Shelly White  
Woodrow Wilson Elementary

### Bethel

Lenora Winsett  
Bethel Middle School

### Blanchard

Kristi Davis  
Blanchard Elementary

### Broken Arrow

Karen Barnes  
Broken Arrow Senior High  
Rhonda Bennett  
Park Lane Elementary  
Marilyn Cavallo  
Park Lane Elementary  
Mary Guinn  
Broken Arrow High School  
Cynthia Ann Ralston  
Oak Crest Elementary  
Cherry Redus  
McAuliffe Elementary  
Tanya Wilder  
Wolf Creek Elementary

### Beggs

Sarah Ann Gomez  
Beggs High School

### Bixby

Virginia Ishmael  
Bixby Middle School  
Robin Cescon  
Brown-Gray Elementary

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**Byng**  
Linda Lancaster  
Byng Junior High  
Leahna West  
Byng Junior High

**Chandler**  
Beverly Taylor  
Park Road Elementary  
Debra Terronez  
Chandler High School  
Debbie Weeks  
Chandler High School

**Chouteau-Mazie**  
Vicki Underwood  
Chouteau-Mazie Elementary

**Claremore**  
Mary Anderson  
Claremore High School  
Andrea Brankel  
Claremore High School  
Jonell Pearson  
Claremore High School  
Marlene Smith  
Claremont Elementary  
Marilyn Storie  
Claremont Elementary

**Cleveland**  
Julie Horine  
Cleveland Primary

**Clinton**  
Toni Lynn Gemaehlich  
Clinton High School  
Teresa Segress  
Clinton High School  
Jeanette Stone  
Clinton High School

**Commerce**  
Shanna Miller  
Commerce Middle School

**Coweta**  
Richelle Krumsiek  
Coweta High School

**Deer Creek (Edmond)**  
Ann Bullard  
Deer Creek Middle School  
Kari Steele  
Prairie Vale Elementary

**Edmond**  
Brandi Lea Barnett  
Edmond Memorial High School  
Teresa Byers  
Washington Irving Elementary  
Margie Cloy  
Edmond Memorial High School  
Ann Marie Goetz  
Clegern Elementary School  
Kerry Lynn Cumming  
Haskell Elementary  
Brenda McRae Price  
Edmond Memorial High School  
Deborah Kim Reichert  
Edmond Memorial High School  
Tracy Jill Rich  
Northern Hills Elementary  
Mary Ann Robinson  
Cheyenne Middle School  
Amelia Jane Schulke  
Chisholm Elementary

Sunny Scott  
Chisholm Elementary  
Deborah Utley  
John Ross Elementary

**Elgin**  
Tomi Lorah  
Elgin High School

**Elmore City-Pernell**  
Carleena Day  
Elmore City-Pernell Elementary  
Vicki Lynn Schmidt  
Elmore City-Pernell Elementary

**Enid**  
Gretchen Cole-Lade  
Enid High School

**Fairview**  
Myrna Beck  
Fairview Public Schools

**Fort Gibson**  
Karen Collins  
Fort Gibson Middle School

**Geary**  
Marianne Price  
Geary Elementary

**Guthrie**  
Deborah Chapman  
Guthrie High School  
Joy Cleaver  
Guthrie High School  
Kevin McDonald  
Guthrie High School

**Jenks**  
Susan Cronk  
Southeast Elementary  
Sharon Felty  
Jenks East Elementary  
Linda Rock  
Jenks Middle School

**Lawton**  
Mary Ann Couger  
Geronimo Road Elementary  
Catherine Fowler  
Tomlinson Junior High  
Nina Hunt  
MacArthur High School  
Jamie Polk  
Lawton Public School

**Laverne**  
Kenda Miller  
Laverne Elementary

**Madill**  
David Stracener  
Madill Elementary

**Meeker**  
Allyson Kay Cleveland  
Meeker Elementary School  
Stephanie Thornburg  
Meeker High School

**Midwest City-Del City**  
Barbara Ann Allen  
Carl Albert High School  
Cindy Butler  
Parkview Elementary  
Jacqueline Gilley  
Monroey Junior High

Brayden Kahre  
Steed Elementary  
Toni Fredeman Pantier  
Academic Center for Enrichment  
Wendi Ramsey  
Townsend Elementary  
Craig Wise  
Midwest City High School

**Moore**  
Judith Davis  
Houchin Elementary  
Mary Eger  
Southgate-Rippetoe Learning Center  
Mickie Key

Kelley Elementary  
Barbara Prichard  
West Junior High  
Janann Yeager  
Bryant Elementary

**Muskogee**  
Ronia Davison  
Sadler Arts Academy  
Jeanne Owens  
7th & 8th Grade Center

**Mustang**  
Teri Lea Brown  
Mustang Valley Elementary  
Angela Choate  
Mustang Trails  
Suzanne Edgmon  
Mustang Valley  
Teresa Hutter  
Lakehoma Elementary  
Cynde Morris  
Mustang Creek Elementary  
June Page  
Mustang High School

**Newcastle**  
Charlene Moore  
Newcastle Elementary

**Noble**  
Ann Gilje  
Noble High School  
Sara Staats  
Pioneer Intermediate

**Norman**  
Debra Ann Bailey  
Lincoln Elementary  
Elizabeth Ballard  
Norman High School  
Glenda Cook  
Monroe Elementary  
Stacy Darling  
Eisenhower Elementary  
Stacey Lyn Fike  
Irving Middle School  
Gayle Fischer  
Jackson Elementary  
Brook Meiller  
Norman High School  
William Muir  
Curriculum Center  
John Nolan  
Norman High School North  
Robye Pursifull  
Eisenhower Elementary  
Beverly Smith-Edwards  
Instructional Srv. Ctr./Leland Wolf  
LuAnne Lasley Tune  
Truman Elementary  
Nicole Watkins  
McKinley School  
Victoria Wood  
Cleveland Elementary

**Nowata**  
Roberta Scott  
Nowata Middle School

**Okemah**  
Rebecca Brinlee  
Okemah High School

**Oklahoma City**  
Diane Crepeau  
Cleveland Elementary

**Oologah-Talala**  
Betty Deen  
Oologah-Talala Middle School

**Owasso**  
Joan Hillson  
Eighth Grade Center  
Linda Jane Roberts

Ator Elementary  
Carolyn Sunday  
Ator Elementary  
Tobi Thompson  
Owasso Mid-High School

**Perry**  
James Steen Parham  
Perry Middle School

**Ponca City**  
Lee Cavener  
Ponca City High School

**Porter**  
Christina McCollough  
Porter High School

**Poteau**  
Lisa Leming  
Poteau Primary Elementary

**Putnam City**  
Linda Buxton  
Windsor Hills Elementary  
Bob Curtis  
Overholser Elementary  
Kelly Faught  
Harvest Hills Elementary  
Simon Gallagher  
Hefner Middle School  
Joyce Lackey  
Central Intermediate  
Colleen Mallory  
Putnam City West High School  
Beta Noel  
Putnam City North High School  
Vivian Rice  
Coronado Heights Elementary  
Francine Ruokangas  
Tulakes Elementary  
Rose Mary Story  
Putnam City North High School

**Ryan**  
Rita Durrett  
Ryan High School

**Sand Springs**  
Kathleen Griffin  
Sand Springs Kindergarten  
Rebecca Stewart  
Garfield Elementary  
Angelyn Lee Ullrich  
Angus Valley Elementary

**Sapulpa**  
Mary Moss  
Liberty Elementary

**Seminole**  
Glania Trimble  
Northwood Elementary

**Shattuck**  
Judith Wilkerson  
Shattuck Elementary

**Shawnee**  
Leslie Kent Cappel  
Jefferson Elementary  
Shirley Sumner  
Jefferson Elementary  
Sherri Lynn Thompson  
Jefferson Elementary

**Sperry**  
Sandra Patterson  
Sperry Elementary

**Stillwater**  
Janice Faye Cox  
Skyline Elementary  
Eivi Castro Deveny  
Stillwater High School  
Nancy Greer

Skyline Elementary  
Pamela Haines  
Stillwater High School  
Ginger Sublett  
Skyline Elementary  
Pamela Ann Richeson  
Skyline Elementary

**Stroud**  
Julie Sherwood  
Stroud High School

**Tahlequah**  
Stephanie Crawford  
Tahlequah Junior High  
Deborah Underwood  
Tahlequah High School  
Ann West  
Tahlequah High School

**Tecumseh**  
Deborah Humphrey  
Tecumseh High School

**Tulsa**  
Pam Brooks  
Mayo Demonstration Elementary  
Deborah Davis  
Franklin Youth Academy  
Jennifer Gripado  
Kerr Elementary  
Rebecca Lynn Harris  
Kendall-Whittier Elementary  
Lisa Merrill  
Lindbergh Elementary  
Bonnie Sue Stone  
Kerr Elementary  
Stacy Strow  
MacArthur Elementary  
Beverly Dawn Wissen  
Edison High School  
Margaret Wollmershauser  
Hoover Elementary

**Union Public Schools (Tulsa)**  
Angela Hefley  
6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Grade Center  
Amanda Howell  
Eighth Grade Center  
Betty Mitchell  
Moore Elementary  
Lori Randall  
Moore Elementary  
Barbara Smith  
Jarman Elementary

**Vanoss**  
Linda Presson Marks  
Vanoss Elementary

**Western Heights**  
Linda Fischer  
Winds West Elementary

**Wewoka**  
Patricia Hensley  
Wewoka Elementary

**Wilburton**  
Lisa Baker  
Wilburton High School

**Woodward**  
Brenda Diane Gartrell  
Woodward Middle School  
Nancy Shore  
Highland Park Elementary  
Connie Wise  
Horace Mann Elementary

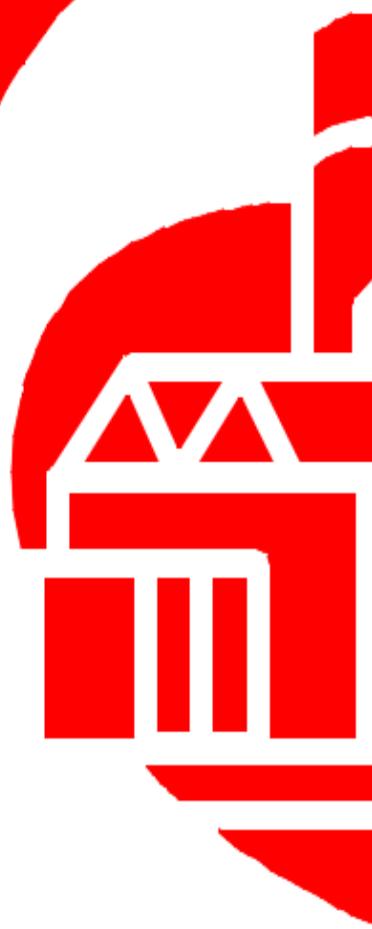
**Yukon**  
Susan Mitchell  
Shedek Elementary



Maris Ward, seen here with some of her students, is the first teacher in Alva to earn national certification.

Pages 8 and 9 of this issue are a poster for you to use to let people in your community know we are fighting for the survival of public education. Laminate the inside spread and place in your car's window after parking at school, the grocery store, church and other stops you make around town. And, share your story of how the budget cuts are hurting your classroom when someone asks about the poster!

# SC



OF

## Education Cuts



EA

Hurt Everyone!

# Members Need To Be Familiar With RIF Laws

Reduction In Force – three words that strike fear into the hearts of school employees across the state. With an estimated 5,000 teachers facing a “RIF” at the end of this year, and at least that number of support employees, it is more important than ever to be well-versed in the relevant Oklahoma laws. The following article, while far from exhaustive, is designed to assist members in recognizing at least a few of the issues that arise when a district implements a Reduction in Force.

A RIF is generally defined as the elimination of an employee’s position based on financial factors or program changes. Since it is the elimination of a position, and not the termination of a person, the employee’s performance should never be part of the district’s rationale. Attempting to use a RIF procedure as a pretext to terminate an employee because of performance or disciplinary concerns violates both state law and the employee’s basic Due Process rights.

Even when a district isn’t using a RIF as a pretext, its right to reduce staff is still limited by Oklahoma statutes and case law. For instance, although career teachers may be nonrenewed pursuant to a RIF for the



Heath Merchen  
OEA Associate General Counsel

following year (if the district notifies them of the RIF on or before April 10 of the current year), a career teacher has the right to “bump” a probationary teacher out of any position the career teacher is qualified to fill.

In addition, districts must reasonably accommodate career teachers by making course schedule adjustments, when possible, so that career teachers are retained instead of probationary teachers.

While career teachers can be nonrenewed for the following year pursuant to a RIF, they cannot be dismissed during the current year pursuant to a RIF unless there has been a reduction in student enrollment that

results in a commensurate loss of state revenue. Though the issue has not been litigated with respect to probationary employees, we believe that the same standard applies.

Unlike career and probationary teachers, however, support employees may be dismissed pursuant to a RIF during the year so long as the district is acting pursuant to a “reasonable plan or policy.”

The requirement of a “reasonable plan or policy” applies, regardless of whether the RIF is done at the end of the year for certified staff or midyear for support employees. Determining if a given plan or policy is “reasonable” can depend, in part, on the district’s financial condition — a topic far too complex to address here.

At a minimum, however, the plan must set forth the criteria to be used to determine which positions are eliminated and must follow existing RIF policies and the RIF procedures in any negotiated agreements.

It is also important to remember that if a position is being reduced due to financial reasons or program changes, RIF policies and negotiated agreement provisions apply, regardless of the semantics the district uses in its dismissal/nonrenewal notice.

The dismissal/nonrenewal notices sent by school districts can be extremely vague and the laws governing the reduction in force of education employees can be equally confusing — a combination that gets very unnerving when jobs are on the line. Hence, if you or someone you know receives a dismissal or nonrenewal notice, be sure to contact your OEA advocacy specialist or the OEA Center for Legal and Corporate Services immediately.



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# FMCS Deputy Director To Highlight Conference

Richard Barnes, deputy director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), will deliver the keynote address and visit with members at OEA's annual Advocacy Conference, Jan. 24-25.

In addition to Barnes, attendees to "Survivor: The Oklahoma Experience" will offer a variety of workshops on Saturday, Jan. 25. OEA President Carolyn Crowder, Vice President Roy Bishop and Executive Director David DuVall will conduct the conference's opening session Friday evening, Jan. 24.

Barnes will make a presentation on leadership styles in a general session to open the Saturday portion of the conference. He made a similar presentation last summer at the Oklahoma Labor-Management Conference.

"Mr. Barnes is very informative and entertaining, and we're excited that we're able to bring him back to Oklahoma," said Bishop. "I think our members will really benefit from his

presentation."

President Bill Clinton appointed Barnes as the 14<sup>th</sup> director of the FMCS in January 1999. He held that position until his recent appointment as Deputy Director by the incoming appointee, Peter J. Hurtgen. In the role of Deputy Director, Barnes is responsible for the management of the nation's federal mediators in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam.

Barnes was the first career mediator to be confirmed by the United States Senate as Director. His broad and far-reaching experience in collective bargaining and labor-management relations make him exceptionally qualified for this position.



Moore ACT's Elise Robillard (left) and David Shaw take part in a table discussion during the 2001 Advocacy Conference. The event has proven to be one of the OEA's most popular training opportunities.

As Director and Deputy Director at FMCS, Barnes has led mediation teams that resolved some of our nation's most significant labor-management disputes. Most recently, he

mediated settlements between The Boeing Company, the International Association of Machinists and their engineering employees, SPEEA.

Bobby Thompson, a mediator out of FMCS's Springfield, Kan., office, and known to members throughout Oklahoma, returns to the Advocacy Conference this year. He'll conduct two sessions on Interest-Based Bargaining and Negotiations Mediation.

Registration for the Advocacy Conference is due by Jan. 17. Cost is \$25 for certified members and \$10 for support professionals. Every third person from the same local Association is admitted free.

Attendees can register by filling out the form below and returning it to the OEA, or by registering online at [www.okea.org](http://www.okea.org).

Lodging reservations are due by Jan. 10, and should be made directly with the conference Hotel, The Waterford Hotel, by calling 800/992-2009 or 405/848-4782.

**Survivor: The Oklahoma Experience**  
**2003 OEA Advocacy Conference**  
**January 24-25**  
 Waterford Hotel  
 6300 Waterford Boulevard (63rd & Penn)  
 Oklahoma City, OK

## Conference Agenda

Friday, Jan. 24

**Registration -- 6:30 p.m.**  
**Opening Session -- 7:30 p.m.**  
 Featuring  
 President Carolyn Crowder,  
 Vice President Roy Bishop and  
 Executive Director David DuVall

Saturday, Jan. 25

**Registration and Continental  
 Breakfast -- 8 a.m.**  
**Keynote Session -- 9 a.m.**  
 Featuring Richard Barnes  
 Deputy Director of the Federal  
 Mediation and Conciliation Service

**Saturday Workshops**  
**10:30 a.m., 1 p.m. & 2:30 p.m.**

- Bargaining & The Law
- Building a Winning Team
- Conflict in Schools, featuring Dave Renfro, FMCS mediator
- ESP Issues
- Grievance Processing
- How to Prepare for Interest Based Bargaining & Negotiations Mediation, featuring Bobby Thompson, FMCS mediator
- Indoor Air Quality
- Legal Issues Update
- Legislative Issues
- Reductions in Force
- Understanding your Compensation Schedule
- The Worm in the Apple (Adult Bullying)

## Registration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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 City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Local Association \_\_\_\_\_  
 OEA Region \_\_\_\_\_  
*(photocopy this form for other members in your local)*

### Registrations are due by Friday, Jan. 17.

Register online at [www.okea.org](http://www.okea.org), or complete this form and mail it to Advocacy Conference, c/o Melanie Engh, Oklahoma Education Association, PO Box 18485, Okla. City, OK, 73154. Cost is \$25 per person for certified employees, \$10 per person for support professionals, with the third person from the same local attending free. Registration includes continental breakfast and lunch on Saturday, Jan. 25.

### Lodging

Conference participants are expected to make their own lodging reservations directly with the **Waterford Hotel** at a special rate of \$69, single or double occupancy, by calling **800/992-2009** or **405/848-4782**. *The special rate is good only for reservations made prior to Jan. 10.*

**For more information** about the OEA Advocacy Conference, "Survivor: The Oklahoma Experience," contact Melanie Engh at OEA Headquarters, 800/522-8091, 405/528-7785, or [mengh@okea.org](mailto:mengh@okea.org).



First Team All-USA Teacher Pat Smith has created a mobile space shuttle out of an old RV.

## Broken Arrow Teacher Named 1st Team All-USA

By Jeff Savage

One of Oklahoma's own, Pat Smith, of Park Lane Elementary School in Broken Arrow, was selected as a First Team member of USA Today's Fifth Annual All-USA Teacher Team.

Eighteen individuals and two instructional teams were selected from

hundreds of nominees nationwide as representatives of all outstanding teachers. Nominated by her principal, Smith won a trophy and \$2,500 for her school.

"There are so many wonderful teachers and to be recognized as an exceptional one is quite thrilling and makes all the little things I do special,"

Smith said.

Smith has been teaching grades 1-5 for 25 years and uses an explorative hands-on approach in her science and social studies classes. Inspired by an instructor at an Oklahoma Aerospace Camp over seven years ago, Pat had the confidence to come home and apply for the Christa McAuliffe Fellowship Grants. She was

awarded two grants totaling \$60,000 to create the first public school mobile space shuttle.

Even before receiving a grant, Smith had spent thousands of her own dollars toward the shuttle. With the McAuliffe money, they renovated an old RV into a mobile, simulated space shuttle lab modeled after the NASA, "Launching a Dream" program. The

vehicle is equipped with computers, satellite building materials, experiments, and audiovisual equipment. Over 20,000 individuals have "flown" missions in the Broken Arrow Space Experience (B.A.S.E.), including parents and grandparents.

Regardless of the age, Smith says the response is the same: "Wow, can I do this again." The shuttle is currently housed and scheduled at the Tulsa Air and Space Museum.

"When I grow up, I want to be an astronaut," Smith said. For now, though, she will continue to create scripts for space missions.

"If I continue teaching until I'm 80 I would want to do this job," says Smith. She demands a lot and expects a lot from her students, but is very quick to point out, "What I am teaching is not as important as the child I am teaching."

### Foundation Offers Teachers Free Laptops

If you're one of our teachers who is always on the lookout for free or "cheap" stuff for the classroom, check out these two sources.

If you could use a new laptop computer, look up *The Teacher Laptop Foundation*. Over 50 teachers from seven states have already received their computers from the organization, which is sponsored by Toshiba, Pepsi and CDW-G.

Liz Picone, Oklahoma's representative from NEA Member Benefits, reports that selected teachers will also receive free lifetime Internet access and tech support. For more information and to register, visit [www.teacherlaptop.org](http://www.teacherlaptop.org) or write to The Teacher Laptop Foundation at 12460 Crabapple, Suite 202-202, Alpharetta, GA 30004.

Another offer comes from the Educators Progress Service Inc., which offers thousands of free teaching kits just for the asking. Publisher Kathy Nehmer says, "We're happy to help budget-strapped teachers find teaching aids which make classes exciting and informative. Our staff works year-round to find the best sources of free educational materials and obtain permission to tell our readers about them."

For more information, contact Educators Progress Service Inc., 214 Center Street, Randolph, WI 53956, call 888/951-4469 or visit [www.freeteachingaids.com](http://www.freeteachingaids.com).

OEA members can help out when they hear of free and reduced offers if they will e-mail those offers to [btreadaway@okea.org](mailto:btreadaway@okea.org).

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# States Must Move Forward, Even Without Clear ESEA Requirements

By Stacy Martin

Oklahoma's readiness for the federal "No Child Left Behind" Act of 2001 is mixed, in part due to unclear federal requirements and funding uncertainties, said Dr. Katie Dunlap, director of school improvement for the Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE).

The act introduces higher expectations for schools across the nation, and attempts to raise the performance of schools, teachers and students across the board.

Formally, it is known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The new, more rigorous standards it invokes apply to all children in every school. This includes the disadvantaged, special education and immigrant student populations who often lag behind their peer

groups.

The act contains some good news for most Oklahoma teachers, Dunlap said.

"In Oklahoma, it looks like we already qualify on most of the criteria for highly qualified teachers," she said.

However, this positive revelation should be tempered by the fact that the federal government has yet to release its finalized "highly qualified" teacher guidelines. Still, the state must forge ahead with implementation if deadlines are to be met.

Interestingly, the SDE must submit plans for achieving a "highly qualified" teaching force to the federal government this month, despite the absence of a firm federal definition, said Dunlap. The definition is one of several the federal government has

yet to finalize at a substantially late point in the Act's implementation.

The budget is another unknown. It remains unclear how federal and state budget woes may affect ESEA. What is known now is the federal government has increased its allocation to Oklahoma this year by \$79 million. However, next year, it plans to freeze appropriations.

This means that many mandates contained in ESEA may go underfunded or even unfunded. At the state level, budgets are similarly strained. Despite these uncertainties, the law means business. It provides penalties for failing to achieve certain performance standards. Accomplishing the act's standards results in continuing to receive federal funds.

The consequences grow more severe. Schools which repeatedly fail to

meet annual yearly progress performance can lose their staffs or even ultimately be closed.

"Our funding will be dependent on how well we do compared with other states," Dunlap said. "If states fail to meet the standards, the Secretary of Education (Rod Paige) will withhold money."

## ESEA Performance Goals

1) By 2013-14, all students will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and math.

2) All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and math.

3) By 2005-06, all students will be taught by highly-qualified teachers.

4) All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug-free and conducive to learning.

5) All students will graduate from high school.



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# You Decide

Some school employees have been asked to reopen their contracts to take cuts in benefits and pay, give back raises, clean their own classrooms and reduce their personal and sick leave days in order to prevent reductions in force. Do you agree or disagree with these requests during the current budget crisis?

*Editor's Note: We didn't receive any letters agreeing with the requests expressed in this issue's question. While we believe very few teachers support these ideas, most will do whatever they can to help a district through this crisis. Here are letters from two members who talk about why the requests to cut pay and benefits and clean their rooms are wrong.*

## Asking Teachers To Give Back Pay and Benefits Is Humiliating

It is so disturbing to me that education is usually hit hard by any type of budget crisis. For the most part, we are people who did not go into this profession exclusively for monetary richness. We chose to measure



Patricia Brame  
Mayfield Middle School  
Putnam City

our success by the lives we touch and the differences we make on a daily basis.

I have taught middle school students for six years and feel a sense of accomplishment when I am that “incredible interruption” that makes a difference in an adolescent’s life. It’s rewarding to know that I am the dif-

ference, but even more special when my students are the difference in *my* own life. It’s that reciprocal humanistic cycle of exchange that keeps teachers hungry for more. Decreasing education dollars subjects teachers to humiliation and sends a message of unworthiness despite our need to take part in such a worthy cause.

Let’s face it – teachers are on the front lines of education being expected to do *much* more than teach the required PASS objectives. Asking teachers to reopen contracts, decrease benefit packages or take any type of cut is an absolute shame. This is a devastating blow to the dedicated teachers of this state who are held accountable to teach, counsel, discipline and coach our kids.

*Cutbacks* will only be a *setback* when it comes to faculty morale, which is a direct correlation to the learning environment. Why slight the greatest asset this state has? Cutting education is *not* the solution. It’s time we work together as a state and do what is best for our kids.

## Relinquishing Personal Days and Sick Leave Is An Outrageous Request

Recently, some Oklahoma teachers have been asked to clean their classrooms. While I do not necessarily agree with this request or want to be one of the teachers upon whom this request is imposed, it seems to be the least of all evils directly affecting educators. It does nothing, though, for our much valued support staff.

Taking pay cuts and giving back raises does not seem feasible when one considers that most teachers do not work for the pleasure of the pay. Most of us have families to support and a lot of us are the sole income for our households. How can we provide an adequate life for our children and spouses?

Lastly, the question asks how we feel about reducing or relinquishing personal and sick days. This is an outrageous request for those of us who do not abuse the system with unnecessary absences.

I am expecting my first child and will have a limited amount of unused sick leave before I’ll have to use what little personal leave I have. After that, I’ll be recuperating without pay. The Family Medical Leave Act ensures that I’ll have a job to come back to, but that is time off without pay.

Those few sick days that I have earned will provide a small cushion

against the loss in salary I will take because I dared to have a child in the middle of the school year. Taking these sick days away from me will cause a greater expense, which in turn equates to yet another pay cut.



Celeste Kooy  
Tulsa Public Schools

I was working two jobs before I got pregnant. When I return, will I have a salary at all?

I am beginning to question why I went to college at all. I was making more working in the food industry before I became a teacher, and I had less debt. Our districts need to realize that if they did not have teachers, they would not have schools and then they would have no reason to exist at all. These current impositions have and will cause a mass exodus to other states, leaving behind a wasteland of educationally starved children in overstuffed classrooms.

## Next Issue's Question

**“Should the State of Oklahoma institute a lottery to benefit education?”**

E-mail your responses of no more than 300 words to Patti Razien at [prazien@okea.org](mailto:prazien@okea.org) or mail them to her at OEA Northwest Office, 2315 Downs Ave., Woodward, OK, 73801. The deadline is Jan. 6.

Governor-elect Henry is hoping to create a lottery in Oklahoma that will help fund education. Next issue’s question is



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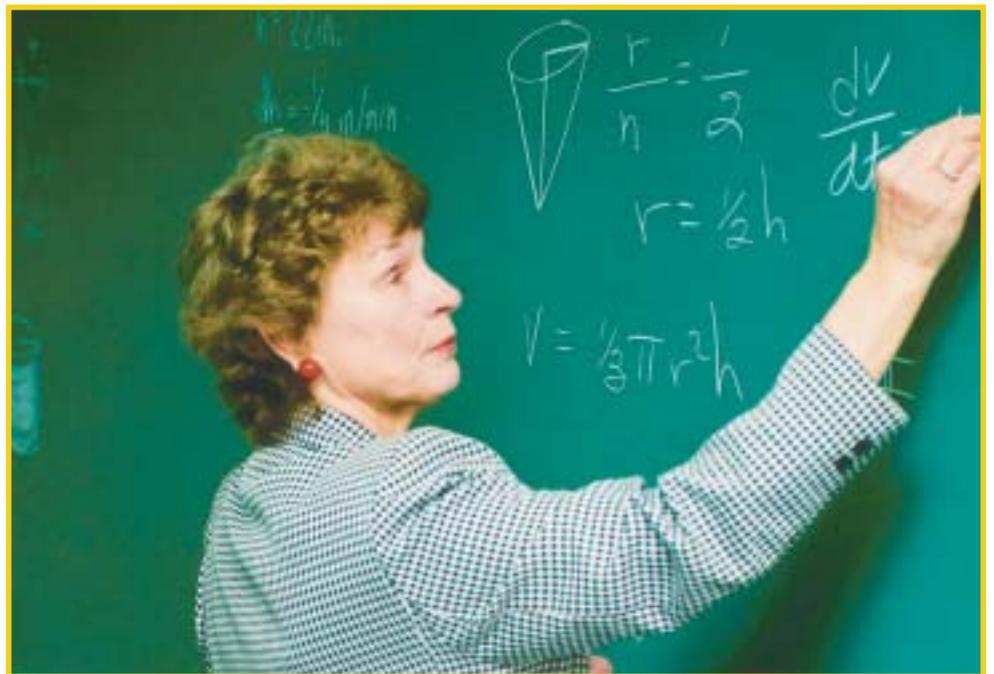
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*Pat Thomas-Cooper says her award is a reflection of a great vertical team.*

## Edmond North's Thomas-Cooper Earns Prestigious Siemens Award

*By Doug Folks*

Edmond North High School's Advanced Placement (AP) program is like a giant bulb of cotton candy. The more it twirls through the school picking up students, the bigger and sweeter it gets.

The latest success has arrived in the shape of a \$1,000 Siemens Award for Advanced Placement for Pat Thomas-Cooper, pre-AP and AP Calculus teacher at ENHS. She is one of only 18 high school math and science teachers from around the country to win the Siemens award this year.

While Thomas-Cooper accepts the glory of the program's success, she insists it is a reflection of the entire vertical team. The other team members, all of whom are OEA members, are Mary Green, pre-AP Algebra I; Tessa Tefertiller, pre-AP Geography; and Sharon Smith, pre-AP Algebra II and pre-AP Calculus.

"We don't have anything in mind but the betterment of the student," she said. "We want them to have success not just on the AP exam, but in college, too."

Two years ago, Thomas-Cooper won the Southwest AP Regional Award to become eligible for this year's Siemens honor. She says she won the Siemens award because North students do so well on the AP exam. Indeed, ENHS had a 100 percent pass rate for students taking the AP Calculus BC test and 92

percent passed the Calculus AB test.

Lourdes Carroll, ENHS counselor, calls Thomas-Cooper an inspirational master teacher who always pulls the best out of her students.

"She squeezes it out of them with a smile," Carroll said. "Every student is an individual to her, not just a statistic. They come to her for guidance not just in math, but for life situations as well."

Thomas-Cooper is just part of the incredible AP program at ENHS. About one-third of the school's 1,900 students take an AP class. In the spring of 2002, North students took 924 AP tests, passing 573 of them. The school has twice as many AP students as the other two Edmond high schools, offering AP classes in about 18 subjects including English, German, Spanish, history, music theory, studio art, chemistry and biology, to name just a few.

North has an open enrollment for AP classes, offering the challenge not only to gifted students but to every student willing to work hard, said Dr. Ed Story, ENHS principal.

"We've found that even kids that don't pass the exam, or just take the class (and don't sit for the exam), are so much more prepared for college," Story said.

He added that as North has increased its AP participation, ACT and SAT scores have increased as well.