

OEA

An affiliate of the
National Education Association

In this issue

David DuVall's
farewell

Page 3

Lawton, Enid receive
release time grants

Page 4

Love, respect fill
Milken winner's
classroom

Page 5

IDEA reauthorization
called "qualified
success"

Pages 7

National Board
Certified Class '04

Page 8-9

All aboard the
Polar Express!

Page 10

Periodical
Post Paid at
Okla. City, OK

The Education Focus

OEA's all-member publication

The Education Focus

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association

December/January 2004-05

A tenure of success

DuVall leaving for Colorado challenges

By Stacy Martin

David DuVall's tenure as executive director of the Oklahoma Education Association has been marked by dramatic gains for state educators.

The departing leader has also laid the groundwork for challenging Oklahoma's public education finance practices, a step which could forever change the way we look at school funding.

DuVall has resigned to take the same position for the Colorado Education Association on January 3. The OEA board has chosen Lela Odom, longtime associate executive director and 27-year OEA veteran, to replace DuVall. Currently the manager for the Teaching and Learning and Communications Centers, Odom has supervised most of OEA's various departments.

DuVall will be remembered as a tireless advocate for educators.

"We will miss David DuVall and the enormous contributions he made here," said OEA president Roy Bishop. "At the same time, we are very fortunate to have someone of Lela Odom's caliber to assume his responsibilities."

DuVall said he is confident OEA will do just fine without him.

"(OEA) has a great staff, great members, a wonderful board of directors and a vision of where we want to go," said DuVall. "And we never back down.

"We're about adequate funding, excellent facilities and quality teachers so Oklahoma's public education system can be world class, second to none. We're fighting to make life better for all of our members as well as every student. People are attracted to that



Outgoing executive director David DuVall talks about his 24-year OEA career.

kind of vision."

His tenure leading OEA was marked by a number of significant achievements.

One victory was state-paid, individual health insurance for both teachers and support professionals.

Additionally, DuVall and OEA were a significant force behind 2004's historic bill to raise teachers to the regional average salary over the next four years.

See "DuVall" on Page 3

Awards nominations due Jan. 31

Local Associations and individual members have until January 31 to complete official nominations for OEA's annual awards program.

The Association recognizes a full range of individuals and outside organizations for their contributions to public education as well as the OEA. Winners of this year's awards will be feted at the Awards Banquet, April 22, at the Meridian Conference Center in Oklahoma City. The event annually takes place during Delegate Assembly, which runs April 22-23.

Awards are presented for outstanding teaching, professional and student media coverage of education, and human and civil rights. There are also awards for outstanding legislators, businesses and private citizens that work to enhance and improve public education.

See Page 11 for a complete list of awards. For more information, call OEA Headquarters at 800/522-8091, or 405/528-7785. Nomination forms and award criteria can be found at www.okea.org/Awards/.

The best is yet to come

By Roy Bishop
OEA President

Discussion about the State Questions benefiting education has grown quiet over the past weeks.

"At the top of OEA's list will be items that improve teachers' working conditions and compensation..."

However, the best is yet to come. These two new revenue sources may generate as much as \$200 million in the first year, a figure likely to grow and grow.

Starting sometime in 2005, Oklahoma schools should begin enjoying at least part of their windfall. Most likely the Indian gaming revenues will be among the first to show up in classrooms around the state.

The Indian gaming bill is dedicated to education. Of the proceeds, 12 percent is earmarked for college scholar-

ships for Oklahoma youth. The remaining 88 percent goes to common education. In year one, analysts have estimated the proceeds will total at least \$71 million.

The funds will flow through the school funding formula so it will be distributed in proportions that resemble state aid (in smaller quantities, of course).

School districts may use the funds for a variety of purposes. At the top of OEA's list will be items that improve teachers' working conditions and compensation, including lower class size, technology, text books and the four-year regional salary increase plan.

Initially at least, the lottery is a slightly more complex proposition.

State officials must set up the lottery infrastructure. That means the state must set up an oversight board, establish rules and regulations, hire lottery commission staff, purchase lottery equipment and select ticket vendors, just to name a few.

Additionally, there are safeguards in place to assure that these funds will be spent as intended. We will partner with Governor Henry and the Legislature to assure that result.

In the future, our priorities will remain unchanged. We will continue to



President Roy Bishop

focus on teacher quality, high standards and respect for the profession. Achieving these core values will build a better Oklahoma for everyone.

Save those receipts! IRS allows \$250 credit for supplies

The Internal Revenue Service is advising teachers and other educators to save their receipts for books and other classroom supplies.

They will be able to deduct up to \$250 of such expenses again this year, following recently-enacted legislation.

The Working Families Tax Relief Act of 2004 reinstated the educator expense deduction for both 2004 and 2005 (it had expired at the end of last year). Expenses incurred any time this year may qualify for the deduction, not just those since the Act was signed on October 4.

The deduction is available to eligible educators in public or private elementary or secondary schools. To be eligible, a person must work at least 900 hours during a school year as a teacher, instructor, counselor, principal or aide.

An educator may subtract up to \$250 of qualified out-of-pocket expenses when figuring adjusted gross income. This deduction is available

whether or not the taxpayer itemizes deductions on Schedule A.

The IRS suggests that educators keep records of qualifying expenses in a folder or envelope with a label such as "Educator Expense Deduction," noting the date, amount and purpose of each purchase. This will help prevent a missed deduction at tax time.

For more information, call the IRS Tele-Tax system toll-free at 800/829-4477 and select Topic 458. Or go to the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov and use its search engine to find Tax Topic 458.

2003-04 OEA Audit Report

The financial statements of the Oklahoma Education Association for fiscal year ended August 31, 2004, were audited by Luton and Co. An unqualified opinion was issued by the accounting firm stating that the financial statements present fairly the financial position of the OEA. A brief summary of the 2003-04 General Operating Fund follows:

CURRENT ASSETS	\$2,614,672
OTHER ASSETS	2,500
TOTAL ASSETS	\$2,617,172
CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$ 624,173
LONG-TERM OBLIGATIONS	963,634
NET ASSETS:	
UNRESTRICTED	
Undesignated	678,225
Designated for building and related expenses	351,140
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$2,617,172
REVENUE:	
MEMBERSHIPS	\$5,101,940
NEA SUPPORT	1,022,205
OTHER	334,530
TOTAL REVENUE	6,458,675
EXPENSES	6,097,447
Transfers for Fixed Assets	-169,834
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$191,394

OEA

Volume 22, No. 3
A production of OEA's
Communications Center

Roy Bishop, President
Becky Felts, Vice President
David DuVall, Executive Director
Lela Odom, Associate Executive Director

The Education Focus

Doug Folks, Editor
Contributing Editors
Marty Bull
Stacy Martin
Jeff Savage
Bruce Treadaway
Patti Razien
Pam Westbrook, Proofing
Maureen Peters, Center Assistant

The Education Focus (ISSN 1542-1678) is published nine times annually with issues in September/October, November, December/January, February, March, April, May, June/July and August for \$5 by the Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105. Periodicals postage paid at Oklahoma City, OK, and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Education Focus*, PO Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154

DuVall leaving OEA at a high point

Continued from Page 1

In November, DuVall put his influence and that of OEA behind the state questions concerning tribal gaming and the Education Lottery. These two initiatives will provide the first new revenue streams for public education in over 14 years.

Finally, DuVall was the primary architect behind the adequacy and equity project to obtain a legal ruling in the school funding adequacy debate.

DuVall helped organize the Oklahoma Education Coalition creating a united force at the State Capitol among once disparate groups.

DuVall said he leaves OEA at a high point, when membership is up, the economy is recovering and the State Capitol victories are significant. He also departs with OEA on stronger financial footing, thanks to belt-tightening DuVall engineered.

Comanche special education teacher Cheryl Dowell is one OEA member who admits she is disappointed about DuVall's departure.

"It was an honor and a pleasure to serve on the OEA Board of Directors while David was the executive director," said Dowell, who served on the board from 1998 to 2004. "He leaves a legacy that will benefit all OEA members not only now but in the future.

"I wish David and his family the best of luck as they begin a new chapter in their lives."

The 24-year OEA staff veteran rose from the ranks of Oklahoma educators.

A native of Oklahoma City, DuVall first taught in Chickasha and later in Norman. During his five years there, he rose to the presidency of the Professional Educators of Norman (PEN).

DuVall's wife Darci is a retired Norman math teacher. The couple has a son, Joe, 16, a Norman North High School sophomore, and a daughter, Kate, a sophomore majoring in drama at the University of Oklahoma.

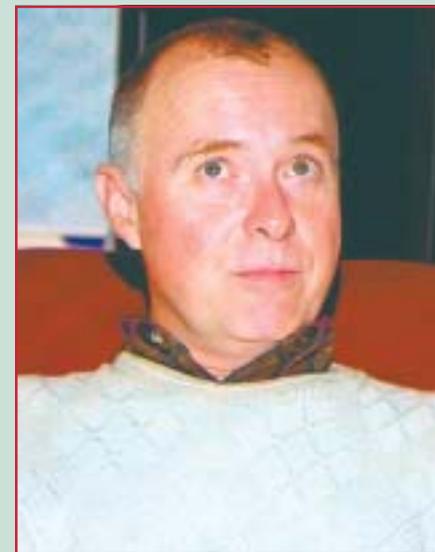
After joining OEA in 1981, DuVall served as a UniServ Director, Research Director and Associate Executive Director for Communications and Advocacy. He became Executive Director in 1997.

Colorado's overtures proved a siren song for DuVall. There, he will assume responsibility for an organization roughly

50 percent larger than OEA. In many ways, he feels he will be returning home.

DuVall's grandfather was a Colorado native. DuVall's father built the family cabin at Grand Lake, Colo. DuVall has fond memories of many summers spent there as a youth. Although he looks forward to doing more of that, he won't soon forget Oklahoma.

"I've been proud every day to be part of this organization and most proud to be executive director," DuVall said. "It's a wonderful organization with wonderful members who work hard every day. They go in early, work late, grade papers, and do lesson plans ... all to make a difference in the lives of kids in Oklahoma."



Another challenge beckons . . .

By David DuVall

"When you come to a fork in the road, take it." – Yogi Berra.

Beginning January 1, I will be Executive Director of the Colorado Education Association, which, like the OEA, is a wonderful organization with great people. As I embark on this phase of my life I feel as if I am leaving home for the first time and going away to college.

"I'm Sooner born, and Sooner bred, and when I die, I'll be Sooner dead." – University of Oklahoma fight song.

I have been proud to be a part of the Oklahoma Education Association for over 30 years as member, elected leader, staff and executive director. In all that time, the organization has always represented the best interests of Oklahoma's classroom teachers and education support professionals, our students, our communities and our state. I have discovered over the years the wisdom of our democratic

processes, the resourcefulness of our members, the nobility of our mission, and the truth of our vision.

"Today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth." – Lou Gehrig, July 4, 1939.

I have witnessed history. I was there in 1980 when 10,000 OEA members rallied to force a teacher pay raise and in 1990 when 20,000 OEA members spent four days walking around the Capitol in wind and rain to gather support for the passage of House Bill 1017 (welcome to morning playground duty at the Capitol).

I was there during the long process to create the Oklahoma Education Coalition and in 2000 when the Coalition-sponsored rally drew 30,000 education supporters to the Capitol steps to secure a \$3,000 across-the-board, teacher pay raise. I was there on Lobby Day when the Legislature passed state paid single premium health insurance for all education employees and I stood with Governor

Henry when he signed the measure into law.

The constant in all of these actions is the OEA. We do the right things and we do them right.

Through our collective action we have won impressive victories but have we reached the mountain top? No, we are far from it. We rank 50th in teacher salaries, we are in the bottom five in expenditures per child, our education support professional salaries are embarrassingly low, and we have to fight daily for the resources to meet the needs of our students.

So our common struggle will and must go on.

"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, / And sorry I could not travel both / And be one traveler, long I stood..." – Robert Frost.

In Oklahoma, it will go on without me. Life has its surprises and another challenge beckons. I have come to realize this: OEA is my home and the leaders, members and staff of this great organization are my family. I will always carry you in my heart.

PEAL, Enid EA receive release time grants



Judy Runnels (left) talks with Howell Elementary teacher T.J. Seymour. Runnels, who is now a full-time release president for the Lawton local affiliate, is working to improve communications with members throughout the district.

By Doug Folks

Members in Enid and Lawton are receiving extra attention this year, thanks to National Education Association grants that provide release time for their local presidents.

Judy Runnels, Professional Educators Association of Lawton (PEAL), is now a full-time release president, while Enid Education Association president Rick Moulton has one day of release time every week.

For PEAL, a full-time release president seems to be part of a natural progression of growth. Membership was below 400 in 1999, but has grown to more than 530 this year. The 2004-05 figure is a net 73 new members over last year.

"If we're running our organization correctly, and when the members are getting the most out of the benefits, there will always be a need for a full-time release president," said Runnels, who took a leave of absence from her middle school math position to serve full-time for PEAL.

Runnels and the other PEAL offic-

ers – Vice President Patsy Stoll, Secretary Ruth Ritter, Treasurer Gary Smith and Executive Committee members Dorothy Bradley, Pam Ramey, Catherine Fowler and Janice Havens – have spent a great deal of time developing member benefits programs and raising money for grants. PEAL members have access to discounts on any new vehicle at Aubrey Chevrolet (\$175 over invoice price) and a break on dental, vision, prescription and chiropractic services through AmeriPlan.

Fund-raisers at El Chico and the annual PEAL Golf Tournament provide money that members can access for classroom supplies.

PEAL's release time grant is a three-year commitment from NEA. The Lawton local set five goals for the grant:

1) Increase membership by 3 percent each of the three years – PEAL has already surpassed this goal, with nearly 50 more members today than it expected to have at the end of the grant.

2) Enhance communications – A monthly newsletter is already in place with plans underway for some type of

electronic communication.

Runnels is also visiting buildings regularly to meet face-to-face with members.

3) Increase legislative and political organizing efforts – PEAL took an active role in Lawton's bond election last year, and this year participated in candidate interviews prior to November's general election.

4) Increase member benefits – PEAL recently added Daffern Auto Service Center to its stable of discounts. Members now receive 10 percent discounts on all services at Daffern.

5) Increase community visibility – Runnels has reached out to other local Associations in the area, specifically working with the Duncan Education Association.

In Enid, President Moulton and the other officers have created a five-year plan that includes the three-year grant from the NEA and the OEA.

The grant will help pay substitutes for Moulton's class one day a week. The plan also calls for a significant financial commitment from the Enid Education Association (EEA) to fund the president's efforts. The local has committed more than \$3,000 during the

three-year grant, and will then fund the president's position in years four and five.

Through the grant, Moulton will have one release day a week during which he plans to visit a different Enid school site each week.

"I think being in the buildings and accessible to our members – and being seen by nonmembers while I'm working with our members – will have a big impact," said Moulton, who teaches ninth grade American government and serves as eighth grade head football coach and junior high boys and girls golf coach at Waller Junior High.

EEA is working to achieve four goals through the NEA/OEA grant:

1) Increase certified membership to 90 percent of potential. (As of early December, EEA had 360 members, or 73 percent of potential.);

2) Recruit support professionals and create an ESP unit that will work closely with EEA;

3) Identify and develop new leaders; and

4) Increase minority involvement and leadership in the local.

The biggest challenge may be organizing the support professionals. EEA has only three support members and a competing organization bargains the Enid support contract. Moulton says both the support employees and EEA would benefit by joining forces.

"I think they would be a stronger unit if they were a part of the OEA," he said. "Support professionals are just as important as certified employees, maybe even more important. Heck, you can't run a school without support professionals."



Enid EA President Rick Moulton

The NEA awards a few release time grants every year. OEA affiliates that are interested in applying for one of the grants should contact Charles McCauley, OEA associate executive director, at 800/522-8091.

Love and respect fill Milken Award winner's classroom

By Stacy Martin

Harrah fifth grade teacher Pam Holland may have won a \$25,000 Milken award for teaching excellence. But to her students, being in her class is priceless, and that's what really counts to her.

Holland was given the award in late October in a surprise, all-school assembly attended by state and local officials, students, peers and community leaders. The prize can be spent any way she chooses.

The Milken National Educator Awards were created in 1985 by Lowell Milken, chairman and co-founder of the Milken Family Foundation. The honor was created to celebrate the efforts of some of our nation's most outstanding teachers, principals and specialists in K-12 education. The Milken Foundation has now recognized 2,077 exceptional educators from 47 states and the District of Columbia and distributed more than \$50 million since the program's inception.

Early in her eight-year career, a principal asked Holland if she would

rather be loved or respected. She said she would rather be respected.

"I later found out that was the wrong answer," she said. "I've since learned that if they love you, they will respect you and not want to disappoint you."

Holland is a Great Expectations-certified teacher and last year was selected for the Educators' Leadership Academy. She is Russell Babb Elementary's Teacher of the Year, an academic coach and a member of several school committees.

The love and respect is obvious upon visiting Holland's classroom, where the students are quiet, respectful and always smiling.

It's no accident. Holland creates lesson plans which emphasize student-driven learning, minus the concept of failing.

Her teaching methods are built on the Great Expectations program, built upon a foundation that values the



Harrah's Pam Holland was surprised in an all-school assembly in late October when she was presented with the prestigious \$25,000 Milken National Educator Award.

ideas that all children can learn, academic excellence, mutual respect and self-esteem. She urges her children to learn how to learn, explore their own ideas, solve problems creatively and work as a team.

"I can't always be there but if they know how to learn, they'll be successful, no matter where they are," the Harrah educator said.

Holland practices "discovery learning," where children discover concepts during tasks. There are no mistakes, which encourages students to brainstorm rather than fear failure.

"They're detectives," Holland said. "I make a plan and put it into practice. The first thing we do is identify the problem. Then, I intentionally sabotage it, secretly, of course. That way they learn to overcome obstacles."

Growing up in Midwest City, Holland always knew she would teach.

I was lucky," she said. "I knew it was my calling. I watched my siblings try to figure out what they wanted to do."

Her grandfather taught Holland to love learning. During visits to his home, he created fun learning experiences for them by incorporating learning games into the visits.

Holland said during her own academic career, there were many great teachers who enriched her school experience and reinforced her career decision.

"There were so many who helped build my self-esteem and taught me to be a person who loves learning," Holland said.

Her Milken award came as quite a surprise, she said.

"How humbling when you're surrounded by such wonderful teachers every day," she said. "It makes me very conscious of meeting that standard every day."



Pam Holland helps Killian Sokolosky work through a math problem in her fifth grade class at Russell Babb Elementary in Harrah.

Legal Liaisons perform vital roll in Adequacy & Equity Project

By Marty Bull

As the Oklahoma Education Association's Adequacy and Equity Project gains momentum, more and more members are signing up as Legal Liaisons.

Introduced at the 2004 Delegate Assembly, the project is designed to address the underfunding of education in Okla-



Bartlesville's Debbie Brown

homa and proceed with appropriate litigation to compel the state to adequately and equitably fund schools. The strength of the case will greatly depend on the testimony provided by teachers, administrators, support professionals, education experts and parents.

"Our members have shown their support for this project," said OEA President Roy Bishop. "For us to make the case for adequacy and equity in Oklahoma's schools, it is crucial that we establish a communication system that connects our members with our legal department. The Legal Liaison system will allow us to do just that."

Legal Liaisons from every school district will link individuals who have information on such topics as inadequate and inequitable instructional resources, unsafe facilities or insufficient support services and low salaries directly to the OEA Center for Legal and Corporate Services. An email system will be constructed that will allow Liaisons to forward names, home phone numbers, mailing addresses and email addresses for further investigation by the litigation team.

The initial wave of Liaisons who signed commitment cards at Delegate Assembly, Summer Leadership Academy and at first-of-the-year activities are already receiving A&E updates from the OEA Office of the General Counsel.

"To be successful we must have a Legal Liaison at every school site," said Bishop. "It is imperative that our case cover every possible inadequate or inequitable scenario."

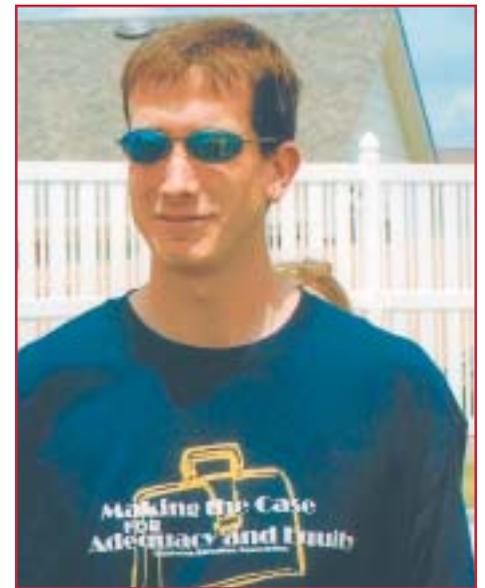
Peter Liesenfeld, Norman High School assistant band director, first heard about the project during the opening session of the 2004 Summer Leadership Academy.

"This project sounds like a great way to enable every teacher in Oklahoma the opportunity to meet the needs of their students," said Liesenfeld, a member of the Professional Educators of Norman (PEN). "With adequate funding we will have the opportunity to raise standards and then meet those standards."

When asked to sign up as a Liaison, the fifth-year teacher didn't hesitate.

"We all should be a part of this project," said Liesenfeld. "I wanted my colleagues to know by my example that this was an exciting and new approach to the problem."

Bartlesville's Debbie Brown also volunteered for the Legal Liaison program



Norman's Peter Liesenfeld

at last summer's Leadership Academy.

"I firmly believe in OEA and what they do to support teachers. If it wasn't for them we wouldn't have received increases in salary and health benefits," Brown said. "When I was asked to be a Legal Liaison at Summer Leadership, I signed up because it was the right thing to do and because I want to support OEA like they support me."

To qualify as a Legal Liaison, individuals must have a home email address and be willing to seek out colleagues who will share the impact of inadequate funding on their students, classroom or community.

If you are interested in serving in this capacity contact your local Association president or sign up online at www.okea.org.

Rising Star knows how to tackle a challenge

By Stacy Martin

Being picked one of Oklahoma's brightest young teachers should come as no surprise to Christy Edelen.

The Kingfisher High School geometry teacher and OEA member was named one of Oklahoma's Rising Stars by State Superintendent Sandy Garrett at October's State Teacher of the Year Ceremony at the State Fairgrounds. The award goes to just a few teachers with less than five year's experience and who were chosen their district's teacher of the year.

Edelen's life is tribute to the fact that she knows how to tackle a challenge, juggle multiple high priority tasks and achieve success at every turn.

She teaches high school geometry, serves as head girls' basketball coach, recently had a new baby and keeps up with a three-year-old toddler boy.

"(Coaching) is something I always saw myself doing," said Edelen. "All of my interests just fell into place."

Edelen played basketball at Verden High School and then at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO). Last year, she was inducted into the UCO Athletic Hall of Fame. One of only six women in the UCO Hall, Edelen is the Edmond university's women's all-time leading scorer and rebounder with 1,376 points and 796 rebounds.

Working with children both as a coach and a math teacher is gratifying for Edelen because she is able to help them discover the joy of achieving in two different settings.

She loves being around kids. The most special classroom moments are those when students suddenly grasp a difficult concept.

"Plus, I get to work with the best people in the world – other teachers," said Edelen.



Oklahoma Rising Star Christy Edelen

IDEA reauthorization: “a qualified success”

Full funding, “highly qualified” definition fail to meet NEA expectations

By Doug Folks

Congress’s recent reauthorization of IDEA – the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – is being called a “qualified success” by the National Education Association.

Exactly how the law will affect Oklahoma teachers is yet to be determined. The State Department of Education will now have to interpret the law and establish regulations that will guide school districts on how to carry out the mandate.

IDEA’s reauthorization comes after three years of negotiations and updates

and against various components of the law, participated in focus groups on issues surrounding special education, took part in informational conference calls, and helped conduct email lobbying of various legislators and their staffers, Bishop said.

“Patti Ralabate and Kim Anderson are the NEA staffers who work with the Cadre and with congressional staffers on the bill, and they were incredible throughout the process,” Bishop said. “They are so well respected on Capitol Hill. I think our members would be proud of how

NEA’s Special Education Cadre lobbied on Capitol Hill for and against various components of the law, participated in focus groups on issues surrounding special education, took part in informational conference calls, and helped conduct email lobbying of various legislators and their staffers.

to the bill that outlines how public schools educate students with disabilities. While the new law has components that NEA members and staff worked hard to make happen (or prevent from happening), funding and how special education teachers will meet highly qualified status remain the most pressing concerns.

“We can see some good things in the reauthorization,” said Katherine Bishop, who has spent all 13 years of her career as a special education teacher at Lake Park Elementary in Putnam City. She is also one of 25 members of the NEA’s Special Education Cadre, which worked closely with NEA staff who followed the bill through the process.

Over the last three years, Cadre members lobbied on Capitol Hill for

much they fought for them on this reauthorization.”

Ralabate is Senior Professional Associate for Special Needs at the NEA, but may be better known as NEA’s special education expert. Anderson, who works in government relations, is NEA’s chief lobbyist on IDEA.

The NEA was able to accomplish a number of goals in the reauthorization, including an increased focus on professional development, preparation, recruitment and retention; and a better balance and simplification of discipline procedures that continues to protect fundamental civil rights of students with disabilities.

Unfortunately, there are sections of the law that didn’t reach the hopes of NEA members. Full funding wasn’t realized – at least not yet – and special edu-



The reauthorization of IDEA includes a reallocation of money that will help Oklahoma recruit and retain more special education teachers, like Putnam City’s Donna Lewis, shown here working with Reed Curtis, one of her students at Lake Park Elementary.

cation students as a group will still have to meet Adequate Yearly Progress.

When IDEA was first authorized more than 25-years ago, Congress promised to fund the mandate at 40 percent. Unfortunately, funding has never been close to that promised level. However, the latest reauthorization does include a seven-year plan to reach 40 percent.

“The sad part is that even with a multiyear plan for full funding, the budget for the first fiscal year of this reauthorization is almost \$3 billion less than targeted,” Bishop said. IDEA funding for 2005 was supposed to be \$12.3 billion, but only \$10.675 billion has been set aside.

Bishop pointed out that the reauthorization eliminates the current CSPD money (state comprehensive system of personnel development) and replaces it with “Professional Development Grants,” which will eventually become a formula grant for all states and not

distributed on a competitive basis.

“The NEA worked hard to make this happen,” she said. “We should now see more money dedicated to professional development. It will allow us to recruit and retain special education teachers.”

Another positive outcome was that vouchers were defeated as a portion of the law by a strong, bipartisan vote.

Perhaps the most pressing aspect – and probably the most important to Oklahoma special education teachers – is how they will be required to meet “highly qualified” status to comply with the so-called No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

“The NEA recommendation for highly qualified was that special ed teachers have a degree in special ed and be licensed by the state as a special ed teacher,” said Bishop.

Congress accepted that suggestion, but it also went further and added NCLB-linked requirements.

See “IDEA” on Page 13

Need help understanding IDEA?

The NEA Special Education Cadre has more than a dozen training sessions that are designed to help teachers and administrators know how to implement the requirements of IDEA.

To find out more about the work-

shops, contact Katherine Bishop at kbishop@putnamcityschools.org, or call the OEA Center for Teaching and Learning at 800/522-8091, or 528-7785 in central Oklahoma.

Westwood Elementary leads the way for state's NBPTS Class of 2004

By Doug Folks

Oklahoma school districts looking for advice on how to motivate their teachers to pursue National Board Certification might want to call Stillwater.

The Payne County town may be best known for Eskimo Joe's, the Oklahoma State University Cowboys and the state's premier higher education agricultural program. But Stillwater is also home to one of the state's largest contingents of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs).

Oklahoma maintained its top 10 national ranking when the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) announced in late November that 229 state teachers received their national certification. A dozen of

them came from Stillwater, including nine from Westwood Elementary.

"We do a lot of professional development anyway, so it's almost like, 'Why wouldn't you go for it?'" said Dee Atkins, second grade teacher at Westwood who received her Generalist/Early Childhood certification.

Laura Flesner, president of the Stillwater Education Association and Title 1 reading teacher at Westwood who received her national certification, said a group decision was made to go through the process together. Flesner and Atkins were joined by Kathy Andrew, Celeste Fox, Amy Goad, Wendy Marcum-Noftsger, Marsha Nash and Leann Stephens. Jill Metzger had banked scores from 2003

and joined the group, too.

The eight new candidates made application to Education Leadership Oklahoma, which is the state's scholarship program that pays the NBPTS application fee. They were thrilled to find – somewhat unexpectedly – that they had all been accepted and began the process.

"There were a lot of late nights at school," Flesner said of the group's teamwork.

They attended OEA classes on reflective writing and a class offered through the OSU Education Extension.

"Last fall, we all took a weekend retreat to Dee Atkins' father's cabin on Lake Tenkiller," Flesner said. "We wrote big ideas on posters and had stuff taped all over the walls."

See "Colleagues" on Page 14



Nine teachers at Stillwater's Westwood Elementary all earned national certification recently. Pictured are (top row from left) Jill Metzger, Leann Stephens, (middle row) Celeste Fox, Laura Flesner, Kathy Andrew, (bottom) Amy Goad, Dee Atkins and Marsha Nash. (Wendy Marcum-Noftsger was not available for this photo.)

OEA members of the Class of 2004

Altus

Amanda Trimillos
Altus HS

Ardmore

Patti Green
Will Rogers ES

Berryhill

Judy Mann
Berryhill HS

Blair

Roberta Graves
Blair ES

Broken Arrow

Donna Forester
Vandever ES

Carnegie

Lori Graham
Carnegie ES

Catoosa

Donna Condley
J.W. Sam ES
Caleb Horton
Catoosa HS

Chandler

Pamela Anderson
Chandler JHS

Choctaw/Nicoma Park

Louise Groth
James Griffith IES

Chouteau-Mazie

Debra Evans
Chouteau-Mazie HS

Claremore

Denise Radcliff
Claremore HS

Davis

Earl Dalke
Davis HS

Deer Creek

Shana Glasgow
Deer Creek HS
Katherine Jagers
Deer Creek ES
Ann Rockhold
Deer Creek MS

Duncan

Carolyn Davis
Duncan HS
Kathryn Johnson
Duncan MS

Edmond

Peggy Carney
Chisholm ES
Brett Dickerson
North HS
Linda Gaylor
Sequoyah MS
Deborah Greear
North HS
Michelle Hasenfratz
Sequoyah MS
Clynnell Hibbs
Santa Fe HS
Marnie Horn
Chisholm ES
Cathy Javorsky
John Ross ES
Gregory Oppel
Memorial HS

New study confirms quality of NBCTs

A new study, released in early November, reaffirms that National Board Certified Teachers increase student achievement.

The study was authored by Leslie Vandervoort, Audrey Amrein-Beardsley and David Berliner, and was published by the Educational Policy Analysis Archives. It found that students of NBCTs surpassed students of non-Board certified teachers in nearly 75 percent of the comparisons.

According to an article on

The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality website (www.teachingquality.org), this latest study builds on earlier studies conducted by the Urban Institute and Lloyd Bond. Most significant about the findings is that all three studies, "...using different methods, samples, and approaches have all pointed to the positive impact that the National Board has on teaching and learning."

The Vandervoort study also drew upon a survey of NBCTs and their principals, which found the principals highly impressed

with NBCTs and the Board process:

- 75 percent of principals surveyed said they saw positive changes in how NBCTs taught after going through the process;
- 85 percent perceived NBCTs to be among the best teachers they had ever supervised; and
- 90 percent said the National Board process improves teacher quality.

Visit <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v12n46/> to view the entire Vandervoort study.

Diane Seibel Robie
Orvis Risner ES
Robin Thomas
Will Rogers ES

Elgin

Nancy Milan
Elgin ES

Enid

Linda Cinnamon
Garfield ES
Martha O'Banion
Hoover ES
Edna Strimple
McKinley ES

Eufaula

Diana Goodwin
Eufaula ES

Fort Gibson

Lori Duncan
Early Learning Center

Glenpool

Jill McConnell
Glenpool MS

Guymon

Joyce Shrock
Guymon HS

Jenks

Glen Driggars
Freshman Academy
Elizabeth Hargrove
West IES
Robyn Paliotta
Jenks HS

Jones

Stephany Gooden
Jones HS

Kellyville

Traci Staiger
Kellyville ES

Kingfisher

Deborah Maehs
Kingfisher MS

Latta

Stephen Stevens
Latta HS

Lawton

Eleonore Dennis
Central JHS
Linda Riley
Edison ES

McCord

Chris Hensley
McCord ES

Medford

Karen Buzzard
Medford HS
Tiesa Maltby
Medford HS

Miami

Mary Barker
Nichols ES

Midwest City-Del City

LeAnn Hanna
Monroney JHS
Lori Kennedy
Midwest City HS
Carl Ray
Del City ES

Moore

Ronda Boyd
Moore HS
Diann Brown
Santa Fe ES
Belinda Craig
Highland East JHS
Paula Gifford
Kingsgate ES
Beth Harper
West JHS
Lolietta Miller
Westmoore HS
Dosha Petete
Kelly ES
Lori Sosenko
Bryant ES
Marilee Tussing
Southgate-Rippetoe
Learning Center

Mooreland

Debbie Hargis
Mooreland ES

Morrison

Cynthia Altman
Morrison HS

Mulhall-Orlando

Deborah Bailey
Mulhall-Orlando HS

Muskogee

Jacqueline Bennett
Harris-Jobe ES
Rozlyn Bradley
Harris-Jobe ES
Carol Haddock
Sadler Arts Academy
Sandra Riley
Franklin Science Academy

Mustang

Maureen Fuller
Mustang Valley ES

Ninnekah

Patsy Lou Wilson
Ninnekah ES

Noble

Karen Jobe
Pioneer IES
Carol Parks
Noble HS
Terrie Thatcher
John K. Hubbard ES

Norman

Cynthia Hunter
Lakeview ES
Jamie Johnson
McKinley ES
Joye Oakley
Alcott MS
Audra Plummer
McKinley ES
Audra Urquhart
Norman North HS
Brenda Wagner
Norman HS

Northeast Technology Center

Clare Scott
Pryor Campus

Oklahoma City

Dorann Bickford
Wheeler Community
Learning Center
Sherrilee Goodin
Southern Hills ES
Allison Rumsey
Taft MS

Oktaha

Vickie Legg
Oktaha ES

Oologah-Talala

Jennifer Denslow
Oologah-Talala HS

Ponca City

Betsy Easley
Ponca City HS

Porum

Robin Whitman
Porum HS

Poteau

Thomas Brennan
Poteau HS

Pryor

Meleaia McClure
Pryor HS

Putnam City

Linda Cates
Northridge ES
Jennie Croslin
Putnam City West HS
Charlotte Fieker
Lake Park ES
Michelle Frank
Western Oaks MS
Janet Hulsey
Putnam City North HS
Michael Kraus
Western Oaks MS
Valerie Libby
Putnam City North HS
Donna Martin McMullen
Lake Park ES
Barbara Wooden-Howry
Putnam City West HS

Roland

Linda Holland
Roland JHS

Sallisaw

Pamela Davis
Eastside ES
Machelle York
Liberty ES

Sapulpa

Lisa Carr
Sapulpa MS
Krista Childress
Liberty ES
Natalie Fielden
Freedom ES
Nancy Toomey
Liberty ES

Sequoyah

Melissa Bedford
Sequoyah HS

Shawnee

Starla Howard
Will Rogers ES

Skiatook

Sherrie Redding
Newman MS

Stigler

Betty Doreen Forrester
Stigler ES
Debbie Thionnet
Stigler MS

Stillwater

Dee Atkins
Westwood ES
Lisa Cox
Richmond ES
Laura Flesner
Westwood ES
Celeste Fox
Westwood ES
Amy Goad
Westwood ES
Wendy Marcum-Noftsgger
Westwood ES
Jill Metzger
Westwood ES
Marsha Nash
Skyline & Westwood ESs
Leann Stephens
Westwood ES

Tahlequah

Patricia Rozell
Greenwood ES
Donna Spears
Greenwood ES

Tecumseh

Charity Peters
Tecumseh HS

Timberlake

Debra Crissup
Timberlake HS

Tulsa

Susan Bigge
B.T. Washington HS
Josephine Dixon
Bell ES
Leighann Dugger
Salk ES
Patricia Duncan
Nathan Hale HS
Ramona Edwards
Cherokee ES
Dawn Fisher
Alcott ES
Stephanie Holcomb
Emerson ES
Kathleen Kendall Walker
Kendall-Whittier ES
Phaedra Rumsey
Wright ES
Martha Simmons
Eliot ES
Jo Stafford
East Central HS
Paul Stevenson
Edison Preparatory MS
Jeree Youngker
Will Rogers HS

Union

Paula Bray
Union IHS
Kari Eddy
Cedar Ridge ES
Betsy Glad
Cedar Ridge ES

Valliant

Martha Brisco
Valliant MS

Walters

Carol Tulloh
Walters ES

Weatherford

Sharon Mahan
Burcham ES

Wilburton

Carrie Rymer
Wilburton HS

Woodward

Tacy Hurst
Woodward HS
Jo Lynn Love
Woodward HS

Editor's note: Every effort is made to list every OEA member who earns National Board Certification. However, we receive the list from other sources and sometimes our records don't match up. If we missed your name, please know it wasn't intentional and we would be happy to run a correction in our next issue. If we left you out, call or write Doug Folks, *Education Focus* editor, at 800/522-8091 or dfolks@okea.org. In the meantime, congratulations on an awesome accomplishment!

All aboard the Polar Express!

Enid students reach reading goal

By Patti Razien

Since its publication in 1985, Chris Van Allsburg's classic Christmas story *The Polar Express* has touched the lives of millions of readers, young and old. It is a heartwarming story about the power of belief that resonates across generations and cultures.

Unless you've been hiding in a cave, you know that the popular book has been turned into an animated feature movie starring Tom Hanks. To help promote the movie, the National Education Association, Warner Bros. Pictures and Houghton Mifflin Publishing sponsored The Polar Express Reading Challenge in October.

Thousands of students around the country rose to the challenge and read book after book – more than one million in all – to help buy books for school libraries in need.

Sherri Hendrie's split class of 21 fourth and fifth graders at Enid McKinley Elementary joined the challenge. The class set a goal of 850 books to be read in the three-week time frame, with the promise that Hendrie would throw them a Polar Express Pajama Party if they reached their goal.

Students immediately began reading everything they could get their hands on. A bulletin board was set up with an attached manila envelope where students would submit a detailed form for every five books they completed. Quizzes were taken on books read for the "Reading Counts" program in which they were already involved.

"Many of my students were in the library three and four times a day during our self-selected reading time,"

said Hendrie, who is in her 18th year at McKinley Elementary.

Hugo Cuellar, a 4th grader, read 120 of the fourth and fifth grade level reading books in Hendrie's classroom during the three-week challenge. Maddie Turner locked herself in her room for two hours on the night before the contest ended in order to complete her 20-book goal.

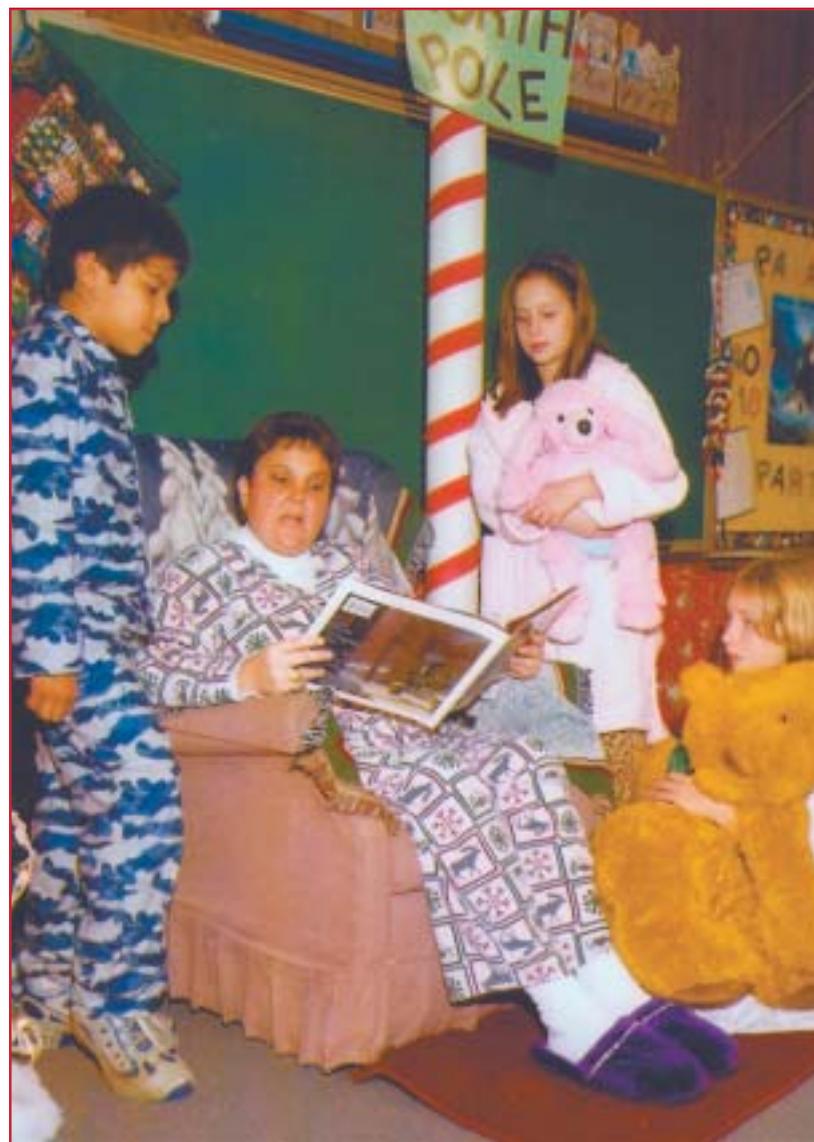
After the class reached its reading goal, Hendrie held true to her promise and staged the Pajama Party, complete with Christmas decorations and holiday treats.

Kids came to school dressed in pajamas and holding two train tickets.

The first ticket allowed them to board a makeshift train of chairs lined up in the center of the room. Each chair back had an itinerary taped to a snowman. Passengers boarded the train, stopped at the Music Depot and P.E. Depot, and participated in various "On Board" activities.

During the Pajama Party, centers were set up around the room involving language arts and reading activities. Students rotated among these, completing the activities.

• At the Reading Investigation area, students read a biography on Chris



Sherri Hendrie reads "The Polar Express" to students Gaston Luna (left), Maddie Turner (second from right) and Tara Trammell during the class's Polar Express Pajama Party. Hendrie's fourth and fifth graders read 850 books as part of the NEA's Polar Express Ready Challenge.

Van Allsburg and researched answers to a questionnaire.

- In the Creative Thinking area, students worked on mazes, word searches and letters to Santa.
- The Artistic Expression area allowed students to make reindeer out of Popsicle sticks and color sheets with characters from *The Polar Express*.
- The Literature area was where students conducted buddy reading with Christmas books. They also read non-fiction books about Earth's polar regions and wrote facts they'd learned from their reading.

Even the music, physical education and computer teachers became involved and geared their lessons around the Christmas theme. The librarian used the opportunity to teach the class about the Caldecott awards and other award-winning books.

"This experience actually gave them something to take away that they'll always remember," said Hendrie. "They actually lived the experience."

As the school bell rang ending the day, each child turned in their last train ticket for a special gift from their teacher: a bell with a poem written by Hendrie entitled, "I Will Always Believe In Me." The poem reminds each student that they are unique, beautiful and strong.

The class wrapped up the day by joining their parents, Hendrie and McKinley principal Jan Robinson at a screening of "The Polar Express" movie at the Enid Mall.

The train ride may be over, but this is one trip that will not soon be forgotten.



Every good pajama party includes fancy slippers.

Metro districts accept RAA reading challenge

Students from Moore, Midwest City-Del City and Putnam City School Districts are reading books by the ton as part of the OEA's second annual Read Across America (RAA) Reading Challenge.

Readers at the Oklahoma City Metro schools are vying for cash prizes from Staples, Saturn of Oklahoma City and Dillard's Department Stores. The Challenge runs through January 31. Outstanding readers will be honored on March 2 at the Governor's Mansion, where additional prizes will be awarded.

During last year's first annual RAA Reading Challenge, participating students read over 122,000 books. Cash prizes were awarded to students and their schools to celebrate Dr. Seuss' 100th birthday.

Read Across America is a reading initiative sponsored by the National Education Association and its state affiliates, including the OEA. RAA has been recognized as one of the best literacy promotions in America. Last year, over 50,000 Oklahoma students attended special OEA "Catavan" presentations.

OEA/Saturn blood drive runs through February

More than 3,800 blood donations were made during a special four-day pre-drive of the fifth annual blood drive sponsored by the Oklahoma Blood Institute (OBI) in partnership with the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA) and Saturn of Oklahoma City.

The drive will resume on December 17 and run through February 12. OEA members who donate blood on February 11 or 12 will have their names entered three times in a drawing for a new Saturn VUE. Student blood donors at the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University will also be eligible to win a new car.

The drawings will be held February 12 at the Saturn dealership at I-240 and Shields Blvd. in Oklahoma City.

Blood donations can be made at any OBI site, but for OEA members to receive the three chances for the car, the donation must be made at the Oklahoma City Saturn dealership. The goal this year is 10,000 donations, which would nearly double last year's national record 5,089 donations. For more details contact, Bruce Treadaway at btreadaway@okea.org.

OEA award nominations are due January 31!

OEA Board of Directors Awards

Nominations for the following awards must come from a current member of the OEA Board of Directors.

Friend of Education

OEA's highest award, the Friend of Education honors a person who has made significant contributions to the betterment of public education. Past winners have included Frosty Troy, Henry Zarrow, and Henry Bellmon, to name just three.

Claude A. Dyer Memorial Award

Given to an Oklahoma educator who has worked to bring about legislative action for equitable salaries and desirable working conditions, and has rendered leadership and direction in efforts to protect and advance the civil and human rights and responsibilities of educators.

Political Activist Award

Given to an individual or organization who exhibits a willingness and determination to promote the goals of the OEA through activities in the political arena.

OEA Outstanding Legislator

Presented to legislators for outstanding support of public education and education employees.

Stan R. Bryant Political Action

Given to the OEA Zone that had the largest per member contribution level for OEA-PAC in the previous year.

Human and Civil Rights Awards

Kate Frank Award

Presented to the OEA member and/or local Association rendering outstanding and significant service to advancing the cause of member welfare, rights and professionalism.

Tuskahoma Brown Miller Award

Presented to a business or group which has contributed significantly to the improvement of education.

F. D. Moon Educational Award

Presented to the person who has contributed significantly to the advancement of education for students.

Glenn Snider Human Relations

Presented to the school district, individual or organization best exemplifying the practice of effective human relations and concerns for human rights.

Instructional Excellence in Education

Teachers Teaching Teachers and Teachers Teaching Students

To recognize individual OEA members for outstanding contributions in instructional excellence, both with students and colleagues. The awards acknowledge the fact that the quality of education in this country can rise no higher than the quality of teaching.

OEA Education Support Professional

Honoring an individual ESP member whose activities reflect the contributions of an educational support professional to public education.

Advocate For Academic Freedom

Honors a person or organization whose contribution to the safeguarding of academic freedom has had a significant impact on the public schools in Oklahoma and the nation.

OEA Collective Bargaining Award

Presented to an individual or group making a significant contribution to the advancement of education through the collective bargaining process.

Marshall Gregory Awards

Recognizing Oklahoma reporters and broadcasters and their newspapers, radio and television stations for significant efforts to provide continuing and accurate coverage of the public schools, current education issues and the OEA. Categories for professionals and for high school journalists are offered.

Golden Apple Awards

Recognizing OEA local Associations for their consistent efforts to provide quality communications to all of their audiences, including members and other education personnel, local school administration, parents and the community in general.

Five Star Local Awards

The OEA 5 Star Local Program is intended to strengthen local Association programs and to recognize locals who meet the criteria in each program area. Application deadline for recognition at Delegate Assembly will be April 1, 2005. Application deadline for recognition at Summer Leadership Conference will be July 1, 2005. Five Star Local nomination forms can be found at www.okea.org/5StarLocal.

Visit www.okea.org/Awards/ for nomination forms and award criteria.

Mark your calendars for the 2005 Advocacy Conference, April 8-9 at the Waterford Hotel in Oklahoma City.

Art Institute offers scholarships for summer program

OKLAHOMA CITY — With the holiday season in full swing, summer plans may be the last thing on most people's minds.

But this month, hundreds of Oklahoma's most artistically talented high school students will begin preparing for auditions to the Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute (OSAI) at Quartz Mountain in southwestern Oklahoma. This prestigious arts academy, taught by nationally-renowned artists, takes place June 11-26, 2005.

Every selected student automatically receives a full scholarship to OSAI worth over \$2,000. Auditions begin in January and spaces fill quickly, so Oklahoma high school students are urged to apply as soon as possible.

OSAI offers professional instruction in the artistic disciplines of acting, creative writing, orchestra, chorus, drawing and painting, photography, film and video,



ballet, and modern dance. In addition to studying a chosen field, students are exposed to a variety of art forms and learning experiences. Students attend or participate in performances, gallery openings and poetry readings.

Nance Diamond, Oklahoma Arts Institute president, looks forward to the summer and hints OSAI students might

experience something unexpected.

"We're very excited about our plans for OSAI 2005," Diamond says.

"We've made a few changes, such as expanding the poetry program to include other types of creative writing. We also have a few fun surprises in mind for this summer."

Fine arts teachers are encouraged

to inform their students of the Quartz Mountain experience.

OSAI students are selected through a statewide, competitive audition process, beginning in late January. Students must call the Oklahoma Arts Institute at 405/319-9019 to schedule an audition and request an application. Additional information and applications are available online at www.okartinst.org.

Every accepted student receives a full scholarship to OSAI that includes tuition and room and board. Scholarships are provided by the Oklahoma State Department of Education, the Oklahoma Arts Council and private donors solicited by the Oklahoma Arts Institute.

The Oklahoma Arts Institute is a private, nonprofit organization developed in 1976, with a vision to cultivate established and emerging artists and educators through art workshops, immersion and awareness.

Searchable website planned for local contracts

A cash rebate will be offered to local Associations that provide the Oklahoma Education Association with electronic copies of their negotiated agreements.

The OEA is creating a new website that will feature a searchable data base of local contracts and links to other information critical to the negotiations process, such as the OEA Green Book and state education law, policy and regulations.

Funding for the project, which is part of the OEA's Adequacy and Equity Project, was approved by the 2004 Delegate Assembly. Locals who provide their local collective bargaining agreements will receive a per local member rebate.

Roy Bishop, OEA president, said the website will be password protected and available only to designated members.

"Several other state affiliates offer

this service and it's proving to be very valuable," Bishop said.

Once completed, the online data base will allow local bargaining teams to search collective bargaining agreements for specific language or review them in their entirety.

The OEA is working with Microsearch, a Boston company that has built similar websites for other NEA state affiliates. The OEA plans to unveil the site April 8 in Oklahoma

City at the Advocacy Conference.

"This will be a very dynamic site," Bishop said. "It will give local bargaining teams a wealth of research that they wouldn't have access to any other way."

Local bargaining chairs are encouraged to send their negotiated agreement on a CD to Debbie Moore, PO Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154. Or, they can email contracts as attachments to dmoore@okea.org. If no electronic version exists, a paper copy may be sent.

NEA Foundation grant deadline nears

The NEA Foundation's next round of Innovation Grant and Learning & Leadership Grant applications will be reviewed beginning February 1, with award notification by June 15.

Applications for these grants are accepted on an ongoing, year-round basis, so it's never too late to apply. Grants fund activities for 12 months from the award date.

Innovation Grants and Learning & Leadership Grants are funded in part by Staples Recycle for Education.

The NEA Foundation's grants are available for all subjects, including the arts, literacy, science and technology. Read about recent projects on the foundation's website, www.neafoundation.org, and then submit your own idea.

All U.S. practicing K-12 public school teachers, education support professionals and higher education faculty and staff at public colleges and universities are eligible to apply.

THANK GOD IT'S MONDAY!

Oklahoma City University helps students prepare for lives in which they look forward to their jobs and other pursuits.

ENROLL NOW!

Graduate admissions (405) 521-5351 or (800) 633-7242
gadmissions@okcu.edu • www.tgimatoou.com



Scholarships for teachers

We have tremendous scholarship opportunities for teachers, both working and laid off. Call (405) 521-5351 for more details.

Program excellence and proven results

We offer Master of Education degrees in curriculum and instruction, elementary education, and early childhood education with options in Montessori and Oklahoma teacher certification. Our graduates have the highest pass rate in Oklahoma for teacher certification.

Small class sizes and individual attention

Be a name, not a number.
Class size averages thirteen students.

100 OKLAHOMA CITY UNIVERSITY
CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF UNITED METHODIST SCHOLARSHIP AND SERVICE

Cafeteria plans

Should you participate?

By Liz Picone
NEA Member Benefits

Cafeteria plans are defined under Section 125 of the IRS Code as plans maintained by an employer that allow each participant to select among cash and one or more qualified non-taxable benefits.

In practice, a cafeteria plan (sometimes called a flexible benefit plan) is a benefit plan that allows an employee to have some choice in designing his or her own benefit package by selecting different types and/or levels of benefits that are funded with nontaxable employer dollars. They allow both employers and employees to save taxes on money they pay toward their group-care and out-of-pocket health expenses.

How does a cafeteria plan work?

The most common type of cafeteria plan provides a basic core of benefits including minimal levels of medical and life insurance, sick leave or disability benefits, plus a second layer of optional benefits.

At a minimum, the basic benefits should provide a reasonable level of protection against the major sources of personal risks. The employee can select the core benefit, or purchase a higher level of benefits with cafeteria dollars. The plan might also add benefits that were not previously offered as options.

Each eligible employee is allotted a predetermined number of dollars, credits or points with which he or she may purchase benefits from options made available by the employer. If the dollar amount allotted by the employer is inadequate to purchase the desired benefits, some plans allow employees to make additional purchases with before-tax contributions through payroll de-

duction (Flexible Spending Accounts).

If the benefits selected cost less than the allotted amount, the employee receives the difference in cash, if the plan so provides. The cash amount is taxable as ordinary income.

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)

A flexible spending account (FSA) offers a budgeting tool that helps pay for out-of-pocket medical, dental and dependant care expenses not covered by employer benefit plans.

These plans allow employees to reduce their taxable income by a set amount of money to cover medical expenses they incur that are not reimbursed by health insurance. Essentially, the pre-tax money is used to reimburse you for medical expenses that are not covered under your health insurance plan.

Consider this example:

Monthly Salary	\$2,000	\$2,000
FSA Contribution	\$100	0
Taxable Income	\$1,900	\$2,000
Federal Taxes (25%)	\$475	\$500
Income	\$1,425	\$1,500
Unreimbursed		
Medical Expense	0	\$100
Net Take Home Pay	<u>\$1,425</u>	<u>\$1,400</u>

Here is how it works:

An employee decides how much of his or her salary should be set aside before taxes are calculated. This amount is automatically deducted from the paycheck every pay period, just like any other payroll deduction, and is credited to an FSA account.

The employee pays his or her out-of-pocket expenses up front, then submits a claim and documentation and a reimbursement is made from his or her own account. An important point to remember is that the employer retains any funds remaining in the account at

the end of the plan year. This “Use-It-Or-Lose-It” provision in the law tends to limit participation in this plan.

Some common out-of-pocket expenses include:

- Eyeglasses and contact lenses
- Medical insurance deductibles
- Prescriptions
- Co-payments
- Orthodontia
- Dental treatments (crowns, root canals, etc.)
- X-ray and lab services
- Certain over-the-counter medications.

Dependent care expenses include:

- Care for a child under the age of 13
- Care for a disabled spouse or depen-

dent incapable of caring for him/herself

- Household-related services (visiting nurse)

Ineligible Expenses

- Insurance premiums
- Vision warranties and service contracts
- Vitamins and nutritional supplements
- Health or fitness club membership fees
- Cosmetic surgery not deemed medically necessary to alleviate, mitigate or prevent a medical condition.

It's your choice

Section 125 plans are tax-free benefit programs made possible through the IRS code. These plans offer employees a choice in the way they select and pay for employee benefits offered by their employers. It's a win-win situation for everyone – more take-home pay for employees, reduced payroll taxes for employers.

Oklahoma law requires all school districts to offer their employees access to a 125 plan. Check with your personnel director for more information.

IDEA defines “highly qualified” for special ed teachers

Continued from Page 7

Special education teachers who teach students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (those who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate standards) will also be required to have an elementary certification.

Those teaching above the elementary grade level must demonstrate the ability to teach at the appropriate instructional level for their students.

New special education teachers teaching multiple subjects must meet the NCLB HQ standard in at least one core subject area (language arts, math, or science) in order to be hired, and then will have two years from the date of employment to take advantage of a HOUSSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard

of Evaluation) to demonstrate competence in other core subject areas.

Veteran special education teachers teaching multiple subjects can take advantage of the HOUSSSE to demonstrate competence in other core subject areas.

Special education paraprofessionals must be appropriately trained and supervised, but only special education paraprofessionals who work in Title I schools will need to meet NCLB requirements.

Most sections of IDEA are retroactive to July 1, 2004. Highly qualified status must be met during the 2005-06 school year.

For a complete overview of the IDEA reauthorization, visit www.nea.org/lac/idea/.

Colleagues use teamwork to gain national certification

Continued from Page 8

Flesner is one of only four Oklahomans to earn the new Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood certification. She twice flew to Atlanta to work with a study group.

The Westwood 9 didn't wait for the official announcement to celebrate. After completing the portfolios and taking the tests, they came together

and toasted the work they'd done, knowing that for many applicants it is a three-year process, and that some of them might not make the list this year.

But when NBPTS opened its website to announce the winners, they began logging on to find they had all made it. Andrew found her name and felt relieved, but she became more and more nervous after finding out

Marcum-Noftsgger wasn't able to get into the system. She eventually found her name, and every one of the nine checked two and three times to make sure they had really earned the certification.

Westwood principal Karen Burr said it was a special day at Westwood as each of the nine discovered she had earned national certification.

"You'd hear someone scream down the hall, and then there would be the clicking of feet running down the hall. Then someone else would scream," said Burr, a former president of the Noble ACT. "It was a day I don't think I'll ever forget.

"I'm just so happy for them I can hardly stand it."

For Burr, the national certifications were not a surprise, but a validation of the quality that already existed at Westwood.

"I wasn't in this building (as a prin-

icipal) for four days and I already knew how great this faculty is," she said.

"They are so professional. They have the highest expectations for themselves and their students."

Burr added that students are already benefiting from the implementation of new teaching strategies that the Westwood 9 have discovered by going through the NBPTS process.

Oklahoma's 229 NBCTs represented the 10th largest state class. The state ranks ninth nationally with 1,083 certified teachers. Nationally, 8,056 teachers earned the prestigious credential for the Class of '04, bringing the U.S. total number of NBCTs to 40,200.

States with the highest number of teachers achieving National Board Certification this year were North Carolina (1,675), Florida (1,472), South Carolina (637), Georgia (450), California (443), Illinois (412), Mississippi (350), Louisiana (239) and Washington (235).

"Insider" sends weekly news to your home

Every week, OEA members are receiving timely news, thanks to *The Insider*, the Association's first electronic newsletter.

Local Association leaders and members of the OEA Center for Communications and regional teams are providing relevant and important news for the "e-newsletter," which is sent to members' home computers. And, according to the feedback, the response has been enthusiastic.

OEA members who would like to receive *The Insider* can subscribe simply by sending their home email addresses to Maureen Peters at mpeters@okea.org. News items for the *Insider* may be submitted to Bruce Treadaway at btreadaway@okea.org.

The *Insider* will continue to evolve, but it will always include the best information that OEA members can receive. Join today and begin receiving the *Insider* next Monday.

Core Energy ...

Oklahoma's oil and natural gas producers and royalty owners would like to introduce you to an exciting opportunity - **Core Energy**. This hands-on curriculum will open the minds of students to practical applications of the oil and natural gas industry. Developed for grades nine through 12, it offers modules in science, language arts, social studies and math, covering all the **Core** disciplines.

Receiving the information and materials to teach **Core Energy** is easy and free! All you have to do is attend a training workshop and be ready to energize your thinking skills.

Two workshops have been scheduled and are open for registration. However, if you cannot make these dates or locations, we encourage you to schedule a workshop in your area. To schedule or register for a workshop or for more information, contact Mindy Burney (800) 664-1301 ext. 230 or mburney@oerb.com.

Currently Scheduled Workshop Dates:

January 15, 2005

Union Intermediate High School • Broken Arrow

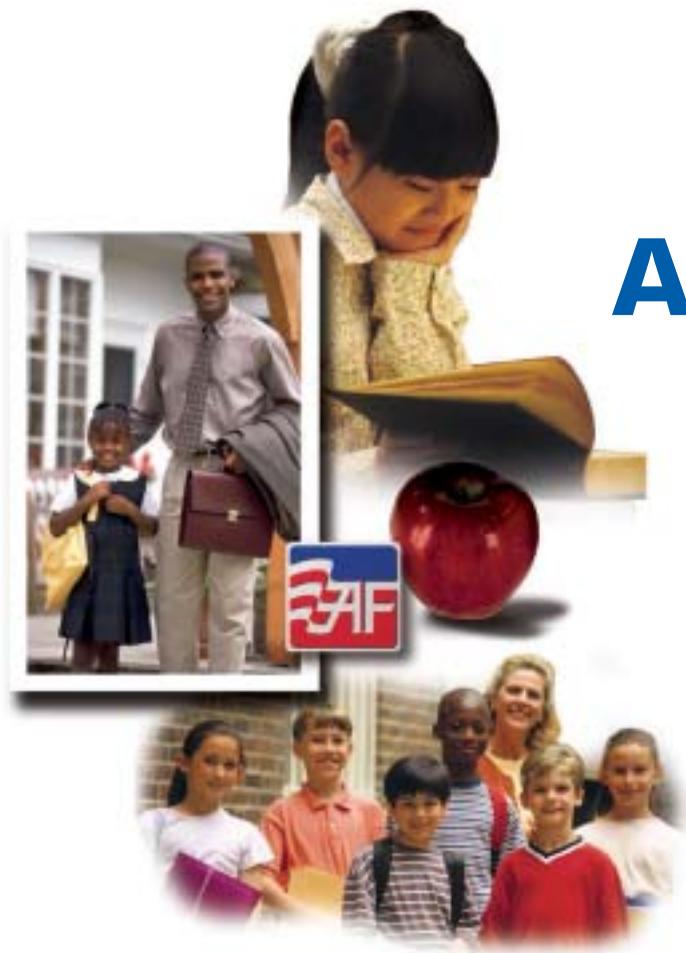
January 29, 2005

Edmond Memorial High School • Edmond



OERB®

...the Nucleus to Powerful Knowledge.



American Fidelity Assurance Company

*Providing Quality Products
and Services to the*

OKLAHOMA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

American Fidelity Assurance Company has been providing financial security solutions to the Oklahoma Education Association since 1949. With insurance products and services developed specifically for the education employee, our commitment to the members of the Oklahoma Education Association is to continue to provide quality products and services.

- **Disability Income Insurance** • **Accident**
- **Cancer Expense Protection** • **Tax-Deferred Annuities**
- **Life Insurance** • **Long-Term Care**
- **Section 125 "Cafeteria" Plans**

 **American Fidelity
Assurance Company**

A member of the American Fidelity Group[®]

Oklahoma City Branch Office

Kacey Taylor
7510 Broadway Ext., Ste. 202 • OKC, OK 73116
(405) 416-2116 or (800) 933-1853

Tulsa Branch Office

Martha Pate
4606 S. Garnett, Ste 100 • Tulsa, OK 74146
(918) 622-6994 or (800) 365-2782

Lawton Branch Office

Kacey Taylor
1 S.W. 11th Street, Ste 195 • Lawton, OK 73501
(580) 248-0011 or (800) 288-1239



"Where can I turn for a retirement program I can trust?"

The NEA Valuebuilder® Program is the only retirement savings program endorsed by the NEA.

The NEA Valuebuilder Program offers these advantages:

- A provider dedicated to the education market with over 100 years experience helping people prepare for retirement
- A choice between variable annuity or mutual fund accounts featuring 40 investment options from 14 different fund companies
- A program that includes your choice of Tax-Sheltered Accounts, IRAs and 457 Accounts



You'll receive a complimentary copy of our MoneyGuide for members.

If you're looking for a retirement program you can use to build your future, look to the only retirement program endorsed by the NEA – the NEA Valuebuilder Program.



Security Distributors, Inc., a member of the Security Benefit Group of Companies.

Call your NEA Valuebuilder Financial Counselor today toll free to personally take you through the retirement savings program.

1-877-NEA8668 ext 3655

You should consider the investment objectives, risks, and charges and expenses of the mutual funds and variable annuities available under the NEA Valuebuilder Program carefully before investing. You may obtain a prospectus that contains this and other information about the mutual funds and variable annuities by calling our customer service center at 1-800-888-2461. You should read the prospectus carefully before investing. Investing in variable annuities and mutual funds involves risk and there is no guarantee of investment results.



Variable annuities available through the NEA Valuebuilder Program are distributed by Security Distributors, Inc. and issued by Security Benefit Life Insurance Company (Form V6029). The NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund TSA, a Custodial Account under 403(b)(7) of the Internal Revenue Code, and the NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund 457, a Trust Account under 457(g) of the Internal Revenue Code, make available various mutual funds for investment. NEA Valuebuilder is a registered trademark of NEA's Member Benefits Corporation. Variable annuities are long-term investments suitable for retirement investing, and subject to fees, charges and market risks, including loss of principal.

VB391204



Chickasha High School juniors Holly Hardin (left) and Brady Watson helped OEA member Phyllis Jefferson educate students and faculty about important contributions made locally and nationally by African-Americans during Black History Month.

"Did You Know" celebrates Black History Month

By Doug Folks

Did you know that one of the first African-Americans to play in the National Football League was Chickasha's own Maurice Basset?

Did you know that Chickasha's Ada Lois Sipuel was the first African-American woman to attend the University of Oklahoma's Law School?

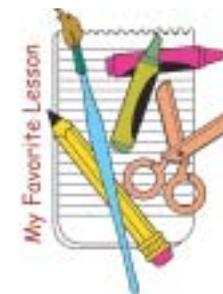
Did you know that African-Americans invented the elevator, the refrigerator and traffic lights?

Now you know, and thanks to OEA member Phyllis Jefferson, so do the students at Chickasha High School (CHS).

All of these bits of historical trivia, and many more, were compiled by Jefferson as part of her school's celebration of Black History Month last February.

"Our principal at the time, Debbie Reynolds, asked me to put together a program that would allow us to celebrate Black History Month," said Jefferson, a former president of the Chickasha United Teachers Association who teaches algebra I and II and honors trigonometry at CHS.

She gave the assignment some thought and came up with the "Did You Know" series. Using the material that Jefferson pulled together, members of CHS's Black Heritage Club shared the information as announce-



ments twice a day, three days a week.

"Our students and our faculty really loved the stories," Jefferson

said. "I had kids and teachers both asking me for copies, and asking me if those things really happened."

And Jefferson assured them that, yes, all of the facts were true. She talked with several senior citizens of Chickasha's African-American community to assemble stories of contributions made by local African-Americans. She also searched encyclopedias and the Internet to verify everything.

Jefferson was able to compile a large list of historical anecdotes, of both local and national figures, to share with students and faculty.

The Black Heritage Club also held a banquet last year to honor local individuals who had contributed to the advancement of African-Americans in Chickasha.

For more information on Black History Month, search NEA's website at www.nea.org.

If you have a favorite lesson plan or activity you'd like to share, send your ideas to Patti Razien at prazien@okea.org.