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Periodical  
Post Paid at  
Okla. City, OK

The Education Focus  
OEA's all-member publication

## A Chance to be Herself

Woodward's Merklin Named National Art Teacher of the Year

By Doug Folks

Roxy Merklin's love of art began when she realized it allowed her the opportunity to be herself.

Today, she works hard to give her Woodward High School students the same outlet, and she tells anyone who will listen just how important art is to the overall growth of a child.

That is just part of the reason why Merklin was recently named 2004 National Secondary Art Teacher of the Year by the National Art Education Association, adding to a long list of prestigious honors for this 35-year veteran of the classroom.

Merklin is the first Oklahoman to win the national art educator award, which is based on professional service and outstanding classroom practice. She previously won the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence secondary teaching award, the Governor's art education award, Oklahoma Art Educator of the Year, Western Region Secondary Art Educator of the Year, Christa McAuliffe Fellowship Award,



National Secondary Art Teacher of the Year Roxy Merklin (center) works with Kandice Sunderland (left) and Stephanie Brookhart during her Pre-Advanced Placement Art class at Woodward High School.

and was a finalist for Oklahoma Teacher of the Year (1989).

She quickly deflects credit for the awards with a great deal of humility.

"I've been very blessed," Merklin says quietly of the many honors she's received. "It's nice to be acknowledged for the profession you love. (But) it doesn't happen in a vacuum. The awards are a reflection of a school and a community that values art."

James Barnett, her 8<sup>th</sup> grade art teacher, was the man that inspired Merklin to take a career path in art. The class assignment was to paint an animal, and when she looked around the room she noticed the horse she was drawing was the only one colored purple and orange.

"When Mr. Barnett came by my desk, I was worried. He looked at

See "Merklin Inspires" on Page 8

## "Remarkable" Session One of the Best Ever

With fully state-paid individual health insurance, a plan to take teacher salaries to the regional average, and the first new revenue stream in years, Oklahoma's 2004 Legislative Session has to be considered one of the brightest ever for education.

"This remarkable legislative session could well go down as the finest in the Oklahoma Education Association's (OEA) history," said OEA President Roy Bishop. "We hit a home run on

every major item on our wish list.

"Our formula for success was simple. OEA forged strategic partnerships with Gov. Brad Henry, legislative leadership and other key lobbying forces, giving us unparalleled momentum and success."

The Association's vision for a long-term plan to raise Oklahoma teacher pay to the regional average was fulfilled during the 2004 Legislative session through SB 1272. Work will

continue in the next few years to achieve salaries matching the future regional average, which will surely rise, rather than today's average. In addition, a huge push is still needed to accomplish adequate overall education funding, said Bishop.

"This legislative session is a road map," said Bishop. "We still must drive to our destination. Our lobbying strategy presumes the regional average will

See "Gaming Legislation" on Page 6

# At Last!

## OEA's Vision Is Becoming Reality

By Roy Bishop  
OEA President

At last.

At last we have elected leaders at the Oklahoma State Capitol who are showing state teachers the respect they so richly deserve.

At last, teachers will finally begin receiving professional compensation

## OEA Members Receive Cash Awards from RadioShack

Three Oklahoma Education Association members have been named 2004 RadioShack National Teacher Award winners.

They are among 110 educators receiving RadioShack National Teacher Awards this year for demonstrating a commitment to academic excellence in mathematics, science or technology.

The OEA member honorees are:

**Richelle Krumsiek**, math teacher at Claremore High School, Claremore, \$3,000.

**Deborah Cornelison**, science teacher at Byng High School, Ada, \$3,000.

**Dan Howard**, science teacher at Tahlequah High School, Tahlequah, \$1,000.

"The cash awards go directly to the teachers," said Laura Moore, senior vice president and chief communications officer of RadioShack Corporation. "This truly is a personal reward for a job well-done."

RadioShack has awarded cash and prizes to 1,550 individuals for their commitment, excellence and innovation in the classroom since the RadioShack National Teacher Awards program began in 1988.

"The RadioShack National Teacher Awards program is RadioShack's multi-year corporate citizenship effort to improve math, science and technol-

ogy education," said Leonard Roberts, chairman and chief executive officer of RadioShack Corporation. "By investing in teachers, RadioShack is strengthening communities and ensuring that more American youth prosper. We are committed to rewarding and retaining quality teachers, which is essential to the continuing growth and prosperity of our nation."

for the professional job that they do each day.

At last, we are seeing the realization of the Oklahoma Education Association's vision: high standards, quality teachers and *respect for the profession*.

Goodness knows it has been a long

The National Teacher Awards program is funded by RadioShack Corporation. The program is open to all accredited public and private high schools. Award recipients are selected from a nationwide competitive call for applications. The selection process includes judging applicants on their commitment to education and their implementation of innovative classroom teaching methods.

For more information about the RadioShack National Teacher Awards, visit the program's Web site at <http://education.RadioShack.com/TeacherAwards>.

time coming.

The OEA has aggressively lobbied the Legislature, educated the public, and proclaimed through the media how critical these core values are. You, our members, have worked beside us every step of the way.

Without a doubt, it's a new day at the State Capitol. What changed? The OEA developed a consummate legislative plan that was well timed and well executed. We forged strategic partnerships and alliances along the way that assured successes at key junctures.

But our victories wouldn't have been possible without our members, who worked tirelessly each and every time we called upon them. They lobbied beside us at the Capitol; they called, wrote and emailed lawmakers.

Finally, we saw a renewed commitment by our Governor and Legislature to our educators. It is amazing what a



Roy Bishop

difference new leadership can make. Thankfully, years of neglect will now begin to fade away.

All of these factors contributed to this remarkably productive session at the State Capitol. It well may go down as the most successful education session so far.

Don't believe for a moment that any of this would have transpired without the OEA and its members. If there was any doubt before, this session should lay to rest any of those notions. The OEA is *the* leading advocate for public education in Oklahoma.

Period.



# OEA

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# \$197 Million Salary Plan is Product of a Close Partnership

*By Stacy Martin*

In the 2004 legislative session's final hours, lawmakers rocked the education community with passage of a \$197 million salary increase bill for teachers.

Governor Brad Henry signed the bill into law on June 9 before a room full of OEA members and media. Henry said the intent of the bill is to take Oklahoma teacher pay to the regional average, but he has higher aspirations.

"I fully intend for Oklahoma not to just meet the regional average ... but to exceed the regional average," he said during remarks prior to signing the bill. "It's time that we pay (teachers) a competitive wage at the very least."

The legislation resulted from a close partnership among the Oklahoma Education Association, Gov. Brad Henry's office and legislative leadership.

The legislation aims to move Oklahoma teacher pay from \$34,744 to the regional average, which today stands at \$37,589.

"Our work is far from over," said Roy Bishop, OEA president. "We will be working with the State Capitol leadership on an ongoing basis regarding anticipated increases in the regional pay number that's now being used. Our projections put the amount closer to \$41,624, so that's what we will be targeting."

Elected leaders at the state capitol said they passed the bill in hopes of stopping teacher flight. The raises start in the 2005-06 year and continue through 2008-09.

The bill calls for more significant increases for career teachers. Studies show their compensation has fallen behind more than their newer peers.

"This is the first time in 14 years

## *Oklahoma Salaries Fall in National Rankings*

Ironically, just as the Oklahoma Legislature was passing SB 1272, which would raise state teacher pay to the regional average, the NEA was releasing its latest Rankings and Estimates. The new rankings show state teacher salaries increased slightly over the previous report, but the state still fell from 47th to 48th in the national rankings.

Below is a look at the national rankings by average teacher salaries for Oklahoma and the surrounding states.

### **02/03 Average Teacher Salaries**

24. Colorado	\$42,679
32. Texas	\$39,974
42. Kansas	\$37,795
43. Arkansas	\$37,753
44. Missouri	\$37,655
45. Louisiana	\$37,166
46. New Mexico	\$36,965
48. Oklahoma	\$34,877
Regional Average	\$37,589
United States Average	\$45,891

that the Legislature has honored career educators for their many years of sacrifice," said Bishop.

The legislation passed its final hurdle in the house on a 97-1 vote.

Salary hikes will vary, but will be more dramatic for career teachers. Additionally, educators on the state minimum salary schedule will see nice increases from both the pay raise and health insurance measures, according to OEA leadership.

The current entry year salary of \$27,060 salary will rise to \$29,425 by 2009. At the other end of the scale, step 25 will jump from today's \$36,189 to \$43,475 by 2009.

"We struck a major blow for professional benefits and pay this year," said Bishop. "But it's important that as a state, and as an organization, we remain vigilant to make sure we continue to be competitive."



## Legislative Wrapup -- Pages 1 & 3-6

### *Jumping to the Regional Average*

	<b>04-05</b>	<b>05-06</b>	<b>06-07</b>	<b>07-08</b>	<b>08-09</b>
<b>Step</b>	<b>Pay Scale</b>				
0	27,060	28,000	28,425	28,900	29,425
1	28,221	28,375	28,850	29,375	29,950
2	28,553	28,750	29,275	29,850	30,475
3	28,885	29,125	29,700	30,325	31,000
4	29,217	29,500	30,125	30,800	31,525
5	29,549	29,900	30,575	31,300	32,075
6	29,881	30,300	31,025	31,800	32,625
7	30,213	30,700	31,475	32,300	33,175
8	30,545	31,100	31,925	32,800	33,725
9	30,877	31,500	32,375	33,300	34,275
10	31,209	31,925	32,850	33,825	34,850
11	31,541	32,350	33,325	34,350	35,425
12	31,873	32,775	33,800	34,875	36,000
13	32,205	33,200	34,275	35,400	36,575
14	32,537	33,625	34,750	35,925	37,150
15	32,869	34,050	35,225	36,450	37,725
16	33,201	34,475	35,700	36,975	38,300
17	33,533	34,900	36,175	37,500	38,875
18	33,865	35,325	36,650	38,025	39,450
19	34,197	35,750	37,125	38,550	40,025
20	34,529	36,175	37,600	39,075	40,600
21	34,861	36,600	38,075	39,600	41,175
22	35,193	37,025	38,550	40,125	41,750
23	35,525	37,450	39,025	40,650	42,325
24	35,857	37,875	39,500	41,175	42,900
25+	36,189	38,300	39,975	41,700	43,475

*This chart, which shows the increases in the bachelor's level steps on the State Minimum Salary Schedule, was signed into law by Governor Henry on June 9. Master's and doctorate schedules will have similar increases. It is expected that the regional average will continue to rise, which will require this chart to adjust higher to keep up. It is Henry's intention to do that, so it will be incumbent upon the OEA and its members to continue working with the governor and legislature over the next five years to ensure adequate funding is available to reach or exceed the regional average.*

# Keeping Teachers in Oklahoma

## Legislation's Goal is to End Educator Flight

By Stacy Martin

Elected leaders at the State Capitol hope this year's pro-education accomplishments will halt Oklahoma educators from moving to other states for higher pay and better benefits.

Putnam City teacher Misty Kint is one of them.

The Western Oaks Elementary School teacher came within inches of moving to Texas to teach last year. Now she doesn't have to.

"I don't have to even think about that now," said the six-year educator.



Misty Kint, Putnam City

"To get the health insurance bill was incredible ... and to go even further with the salary bill is unbelievable."

Kint used to live in Texas and still has close family there, including her parents. When she was offered a higher paying teaching job there last year, the temptation was almost too great.

"It would have been an easier life in Texas," she said. "But my heart is here. We just decided to live in a smaller house and to drive older cars. But we've had some financial pressures recently. It's been difficult.

"There's no doubt in my mind that (Gov.) Brad Henry is a true champion for education."

Deer Creek middle school educator



Angela Burnett, Deer Creek

Angela Burnett is happy to be wrapping up her first year teaching during a banner year for education at the State Capitol.

"I feel better," said Burnett, who teaches math and English in the north Oklahoma City suburban district. "I think there has been such an imbalance.

"We're 48<sup>th</sup> in pay, but at the same time, our teachers must meet some of the highest standards in terms of certification, standards and achievement."

But like many educators, pay was not the reason Burnett chose to teach. Not long ago, she was an Edmond

housewife with two young children.

She decided to help out at Deer Creek as a substitute. When Superintendent Dr. Pam Twidwell saw how wonderful Burnett was with the kids, she urged her to become certified.

Burnett said after she became certified, she and her family considered moving elsewhere for a better teaching opportunity. Due to her husband's work, they chose Oklahoma.

Overall, her impressions after her first year as a teacher are positive.

"I feel Oklahoma has a great respect for its teachers," she said.

"There is community support, and that's probably because I'm out here in Deer Creek. I think it can only get better."

Burnett said she and her children are currently covered on her husband's health insurance. Individually, she will likely pick up the school's health insurance, since it is now free.

For Laurayne Wudi, president of Jones Association of Classroom Teachers, the legislation is a huge step forward.

"For a small local like Jones, this is exciting news," said Wudi. "We're on the minimum salary schedule, so

only about 58 percent of the individual health insurance premium was paid before. This legislation means a bump of about \$1,400 annually for my members."



Laurayne Wudi, Jones

Wudi said her 48 members also take pride in their lobbying contributions at the State Capitol this year. The Jones teachers' mail campaigns, in-person lobbying and related activities clearly achieved results.

"We really accomplished something," she said. "We sent postcards to Gov. Henry; we sent people to the Capitol. It's very gratifying to see our work pay off."

## OEA Pushes for Passage of COLA for Retirees

The Oklahoma Education Association helped pass key legislation in the 2004 legislative session that will aid retired teachers, both now and in the future, Oklahoma Education Association leadership said.

The highlight of the legislative session was passage of a cost of living adjustment for Oklahoma's roughly 15,000 retired educators. The COLA will range from 2.5 percent to 4.5 percent per retiree, depending on current pension and years of experience. The average increase is expected to be

about 4 percent.

The COLA was part of a larger bill granting cost of living increases to all state pension plans' retirees. The OEA lobbied aggressively in support of the bill on behalf of retired teachers.

"Active teachers received increased compensation, and retired educators deserved similar consideration," said Bruce Hunt, OEA associate executive director.

New benefits have been extended to the so-called "Rule of 90" educators that previously were provided to

Rule of 80 educators. (Rule of 80 teachers can retire when their years of service and age equal 80. Age and years of service must add to 90 before Rule of 90 employees can retire with full benefits.)

Now, Rule of 90 educators may count 120 days of accrued sick leave toward a year of retirement service credit. In addition, another bill passed during the session will give Rule of 90 educators \$18,000 in life insurance protection in the event they die while still actively teaching.

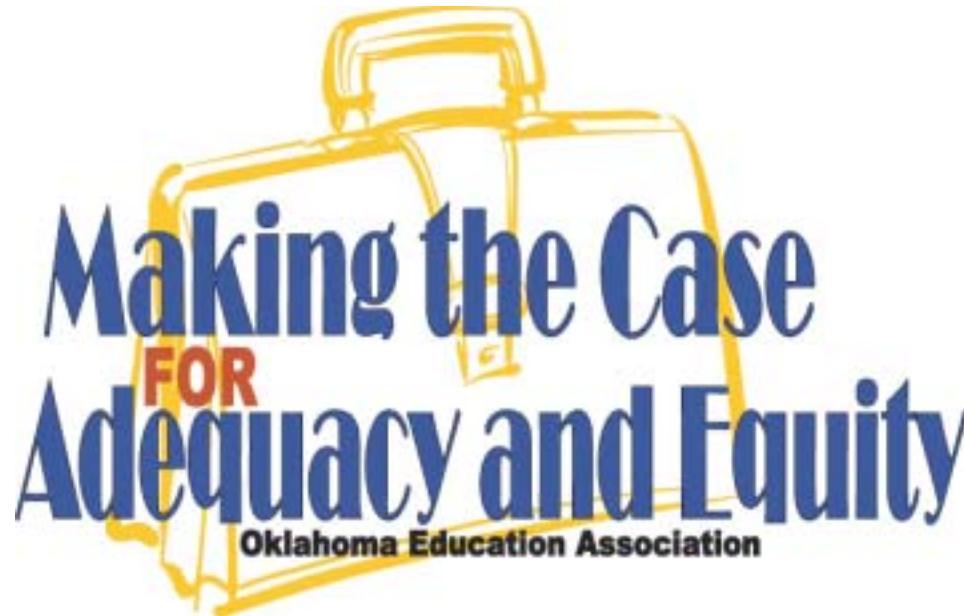
# A&E Program Enters Beginning Stages

*By Marty Bull*

The Adequacy and Equity Program (A&E) – the OEA’s efforts to secure a legal remedy that will properly fund the education guaranteed by the Oklahoma Constitution – is beginning to gear up.

After local representatives to April’s Delegate Assembly approved the project, many signed commitment cards pledging their dedication and support to the program’s success. Delegates who signed the cards will start receiving A&E updates very soon.

“OEA Delegates overwhelmingly supported this project,” said OEA President Roy Bishop. “To be successful, it’s imperative that we maintain a two-way communication at every level of the process.”



In addition to the updates, OEA’s Summer Leadership Academy will feature a track on how to organize around the A&E project.

As one of the Association’s most important projects for the next few

years, the plan’s success depends on the active support of all education employees.

“It takes money to offer the quality schools that communities demand,” said Bishop. “The A&E Project will

change the focus from short-term fixes to long-term solutions.”

The plan, which was outlined in detail at April’s Delegate Assembly, includes a litigation and legislative strategy, membership organizing efforts, and collective bargaining support.

OEA Regional Teams will work with local Associations to strengthen membership recruitment and retention activities, increase bargaining support, and continue grassroots support of legislative issues.

The OEA Center for Legal and Corporate Services will oversee the litigation from the compilation of information to the presentation of the case. As the litigation process unfolds, OEA members will have the opportunity to be a part of this history making effort by participating in the collection of information that supports the case.

The strength of the case will greatly depend on the testimony provided by teachers, administrators, support professionals, education experts and parents.

One of the most important components of the project is the identification of OEA Legal Liaisons at every work site in the state. Legal Liaisons 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 Legal Center. An email system will be constructed that will allow Liaisons to forward names, home phone numbers, addresses and email addresses for further investigation by the litigation team.

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 that inadequate funding has on their students, classrooms or communities.

Interested OEA members should contact their local Association president or sign up online at [www.okea.org/A&E](http://www.okea.org/A&E).

## *OEA Works with State Leadership To Put Gaming Bill In Front of State Voters*

*By Stacy Martin*

The Oklahoma Education Association and its lobbying partners joined forces to repeal SB 553, a bill the OEA had already worked hard to help get passed.

But there was method to the madness. The strategy was to circumvent a repeal effort that held the possibility of a statewide vote taking place as far off as 2006. Instead, the measure will be sent directly to a vote of the people in 2004, said Bruce Hunt, OEA chief lobbyist and associate executive director.

“This will ensure that there is no delay of the people’s opportunity to

decide this important issue in November,” said Hunt. “This would be the first new revenue stream for public education in 14 years.”

Originally, OEA and its members worked side by side with horsemen and Native American tribes to pass SB 553. The historic legislation prevailed by a close 52-47 vote, but a repeal effort soon followed.

The bill is expected to generate at least \$71 million annually for the Education Revolving Fund. Money from the fund can be used for a variety of school programs and services, including employee salaries, lower class sizes, advanced placement, the arts and

alternative education, among others.

The measure is an encouraging sign that the governor and the legislature have the vision, commitment and courage to start repairing the damage done to education, said OEA President Roy Bishop.

Oklahoma schools suffered \$300 million in budget cuts during the state’s recent budget crisis. At the same time, an estimated 3,000 teaching positions were lost.

The legislation regulates and derives revenue from the already-thriving tribal gaming industry, which now operates over 80 state casinos across the state. It also permits placing gaming machines in the state’s privately run race tracks.

Voting against the measure in next November’s elections will not end gambling in Oklahoma, Bishop said. A no vote will only prevent the state from regulating the industry and prevent education from benefiting from gaming fees..

## Sam Glenn to Give Convention Keynote

Motivational speaker Sam Glenn will provide the keynote address at the OEA Convention, October 21.

The Convention returns to the Tulsa Convention Center, and the Downtown Doubletree will once again serve as the host hotel.

During his career, Glenn has spoken to more than a million people and is the author of a half dozen inspirational books. He uses humor and chalk art performances to inspire his audiences to take action toward better results in their personal and professional lives.

# Gaming Legislation Gets Session Rolling Early

*Continued from on Page 1*

go up, so we are raising our sights beginning next year.”

The session moved Oklahoma teachers toward the professional level of pay and benefits that they deserve.

Midway through the session, lawmakers passed SB 553, the Native American gaming legislation that promises to pump \$71 million or more into schools. A small opposing group challenged that bill, so OEA worked with legislative leadership to repeal that bill and replace it with a like measure that will advance directly to the November general election.

The move circumvents the opposing group's efforts, while allowing the voters to decide its fate.

In 2003, OEA was deeply involved in the successful lottery initiative, which will be sent to a vote of the people in November. If approved, a majority of the proceeds would benefit schools. The lottery proposal and SB 553, if passed, will represent the state's first new revenue sources in several years.

Next, fully-paid individual health insurance prevailed at the State Capitol. For educators taking health insurance, the \$52 million bill means additional compensation of about \$1,400 annually. Previously, most teachers were paying this amount for premiums out of their salaries.

Legislators passed the landmark \$197 million salary increase bill the day before session's end. The legislation would move Oklahoma teacher pay from \$34,744 to at least the regional average, creating a professional level of compensation for state educators. The OEA is projecting the regional average will be \$41,624 at the time of full implementation of the bill.

# Movement Expected in WEP Repeal

The National Education Association reported in late May a breakthrough in its efforts to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

“The Public Servant Retirement Protection Act” (HR 4391/S 2455) calls for replacement of the WEP Social Security Offset with a more equitable formula and is seen as a “first step” in repealing the WEP. Under the proposed formula, most individuals affected would receive an increase in benefits. It includes “hold harmless” language that insures no one can lose a current benefit.

The WEP unfairly impacts public

sector workers, such as teachers and firefighters, who pay into Social Security in one job but retire from states, companies or school districts that do not withhold employee contributions.

“The bill does not fully address the problems with the WEP or deal with the Government Pension Offset (GPO),” said Roy Bishop, OEA president. “But, it is a first step toward repealing the WEP and it has the potential for passage this year.”

The formula is detailed at [www.nea.org/lac/socsec/newwep.html](http://www.nea.org/lac/socsec/newwep.html). A matrix allowing individuals to calculate how the formula

would affect their benefits was to be posted as soon as it was available.

Information released by the NEA says the intent of the new bill is only a “first step” to help members, and that if committee hearings reveal the bill's drawbacks outweigh its benefits, the NEA will withdraw its support. The national organization also promised to closely watch how Congress planned to pay the bill's estimated \$7.7 billion cost.

“The NEA remains totally committed to the elimination of the GPO and the WEP,” Bishop said. “This new bill may help us get there.”

# Latta's Stevens Wins Presidential Award for Science

*By Bruce Treadaway*

Susan Stevens, longtime OEA member and a local leader at Latta High School in Pontotoc County, has won her share of academic awards over the years. This year she has added to her honors by winning the Presidential Award for Mathematics and Science Teaching.

She had been a state finalist two other times before winning.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) administers the awards program for the White House. NSF is an independent federal agency that supports fundamental research and education across all fields of science and engineering.

One secondary science and one secondary math teacher were selected for the award from each state. Oklahoma's winner of the math award was Lori Martin of Norman High School, an OEA member who is currently on a leave of absence.

Stevens was nominated by her principal, and she submitted her application last May. She had to video her students during a classroom activity, and she had to provide an extensive analysis and commentary on her approach to teaching.

“In my opinion, this award is the most prestigious there is for accomplished science teaching,” she said.

With the award came an all-expense paid trip for Stevens and her husband Steve, who is also an OEA member, to Washington, D.C., during the Secretary of Education's Science Summit in March.

“We were honored with many receptions and special activities including a dinner cruise down the Potomac, a special after-hours reception at the Smithsonian, a tour of the White House with a photo opportunity that included President Bush, a state dinner in the Benjamin Franklin room, and a special award ceremony at the National Academy of Sciences.”

The award included a \$10,000 cash prize.

## A Banner Day

*Governor Brad Henry, surrounded by OEA members and legislators including Rep. Terry Harrison (far right), addresses the media and a crowded Blue Room at the State Capitol before signing SB 1272 into law. The bill sets out a plan to raise Oklahoma teacher salaries to the regional average. Henry acknowledged during his comments that the regional average will be a moving target, but that he fully intends to increase Oklahoma salaries as the average rises. See related stories and charts on Page 4.*



# An Educator Finds Her True Calling

## *Miami's Baldwin Named Oklahoma Counselor of the Year*

Counseling is a calling, believes Miami's Cindy Baldwin. And she says that teachers who receive mental health training are better prepared to deal with the problems students face today.

She began her career as a licensed practical nurse before becoming an elementary school teacher. Baldwin then spent 10 years in the classroom before becoming a certified school counselor. She continued her education and be-

gum in class," she said. "Schools are dealing with drug use, sexual activity and other special needs."

As a counselor, she uses her teaching skills, her nursing skills and her mental health training to meet the

needs of her students. She bases her practice on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and believes many of today's students are in situations where their basic needs are not being met.

"These basic needs must be met before learning can take place," Baldwin said.

Her role as a school counselor is diverse and eclectic. She counsels self-referred students and students referred by teachers. She prepares and implements guidance classes each week based on topics pertinent to her students at the time.

"I provided bicycle safety for first graders when four broken arms appeared in that class. My fifth graders

have been covering topics such as stress and anger management, along with social skills in preparation for middle school," Baldwin said.

"There is not a 'canned' program that fits the needs of my students, so I read, borrow and steal from other programs that will best meet the needs of my students."

Baldwin believes her mental health training is most important for her job, as well as for other teachers.

"You will see a day when teachers will have to have mental health training to work in a school," she said. "Mental health people are great, but people with an education background who have gone back for mental health training are what we really need in schools today."

Baldwin believes teachers have an incredible amount of responsibility, but they never know when they will make such a difference in a child's life that he or she will come back one day to say thanks.

"I had a senior recently walk through my school door and say, 'Remember, Mrs. Baldwin, that thing you showed us in first grade? Ten things to do besides hitting? Do you still do that?'"

"I said yes, and he said, 'I still think about that sometimes when I get really mad. I am going to be a CPA and I will come back to see you when I am rich and famous. I will never forget you, Mrs. Baldwin.'"

The Oklahoma Counseling Association and Oklahoma School Counselor Association would like to see a counselor in every school, with a ratio of one counselor for every 200 students.

"I believe you can identify an at risk student in kindergarten," Baldwin said. "In order to meet students' needs, there needs to be more elementary counselors. It's my philosophy that it is better to build a child than mend an adult."

Cindy Baldwin is trying to do just that.



*"Mental health people are great, but people with an education background who have gone back for mental health training is what we really need in schools today," said Cindy Baldwin, Oklahoma Counselor of the Year.*

Baldwin's dedication to Oklahoma students has earned her the 2004 Oklahoma Counselor of the Year Award by the Oklahoma Counseling Association. Now in her 23rd year of service in various capacities to the communities in northeastern Oklahoma, Baldwin splits time between Washington and Roosevelt Elementary Schools in Miami.

came a Licensed Professional Counselor, then a National Certified Counselor in 2003.

Baldwin decided to pursue a career change to counselor when, as a classroom teacher, she noticed she was spending more and more time dealing with nonacademic problems.

"The problems our schools face today are much greater than chewing

## Fulbright Offers Moroccan Exchange

July 1 is the deadline for English as a second language teachers to apply for a job-shadowing exchange with teachers in Morocco.

The program, offered by the Fulbright Teacher and Administrator Exchange, includes round-trip airfare and a \$3,000 cost of living stipend. Three- and six-week programs are available, with U.S. teachers traveling to Mo-

rocco in October. The Moroccan teachers will visit the U.S. for six weeks during the spring of 2005.

Fulbright is seeking high school teachers who teach English as a second language, French or Arabic for the Moroccan exchange program. Candidates must have at least three years of full-time teaching experience, be a U.S. citizen, have fluency in English,

and hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

Interested applicants should request an application form specifically for Morocco from Fulbright by calling 202/314-3527, email at Fulbright@grad.usda.gov, or by visiting the website, [www.fulbrightexchange.org](http://www.fulbrightexchange.org).

The application deadline is October 15, 2004, for Fulbright's 2005-06 program year. For specific information on host countries and program time frames, visit the website listed above.



*“There are no wrong answers in art, just lots of choices. Art offers students not only a place to experiment, but also a place to excel and find a niche in high school,” said Roxy Merklin, National Art Teacher of the Year.*

# Merklin Inspires Freedom to Create

*Continued from page 1*

what I’d done and said, ‘Good job. Very creative,’” Merklin said.

“I loved the class. It was nice to be allowed to be creative. I found art was where you can be yourself.”

That inspiration and freedom to create is just what she tries to instill in her own students. She teaches Pre-Advanced Placement (AP) Art, AP Studio Art and Independent Studies. Nearly a third of Woodward High School’s 650

students are part of the art program. Middle school students also have access to art classes, but there are no art teachers in the district’s elementary schools.

But that doesn’t stop Merklin from taking art to the lower grades. She and the district’s other art teachers (Edana Caldwell, Emily Lively and Amy Broadbent) conduct in-service programs to give Woodward elementary teachers ideas and skills on how to in-

corporate arts in the classroom.

Merklin also takes her high school students to the elementary schools so they can help teach younger students.

“There are no wrong answers in art, just lots of choices,” she said. “Art offers students not only a place to experiment, but also a place to excel and find a niche in high school. It’s important for kids to have experience in the arts. They need a creative outlet.”

Several of Merklin’s

students have become art teachers or entered art-related fields such as architecture, advertising, photography and interior design.

She is active in the art community, serving as an officer for the Woodward Arts and Theater Council; past president, editor and convention co-chair for the Oklahoma Arts Education Association; and recently served on the state Arts Assessment Task Force. A painter herself, Merklin has sold her work in a Santa Fe, NM, art show and had her work featured in various local art shows.

She is a two-time past president of the Woodward Education Association and was spokesperson for the local’s first negotiated contract. But of all she’s involved in, it is obvious that Merklin’s first love is the classroom.

“Every student should have a chance to experience art, from the time they enter school until they graduate. In grades K-4, it’s just as important for developmental growth as is physical education, English and math,” she said.

“Students with a background in the arts are developing higher level thinking skills and problem-solving that helps in all areas of life.”

## Roxy’s 5 Favorite Art Units

“Every day is a new day,” says Woodward High School’s Roxy Merklin, who was recently named National Secondary Teacher of the Year by the National Art Education Association. “I’m doing very few of the things I did 35 years ago.”

Here are Merklin’s (current) five favorite art units:

**1) Personality Trilogy** – Students learn to draw self-portraits from the realistic to the abstract. “I want them to draw themselves as they look outside and how they feel inside,” Merklin said.

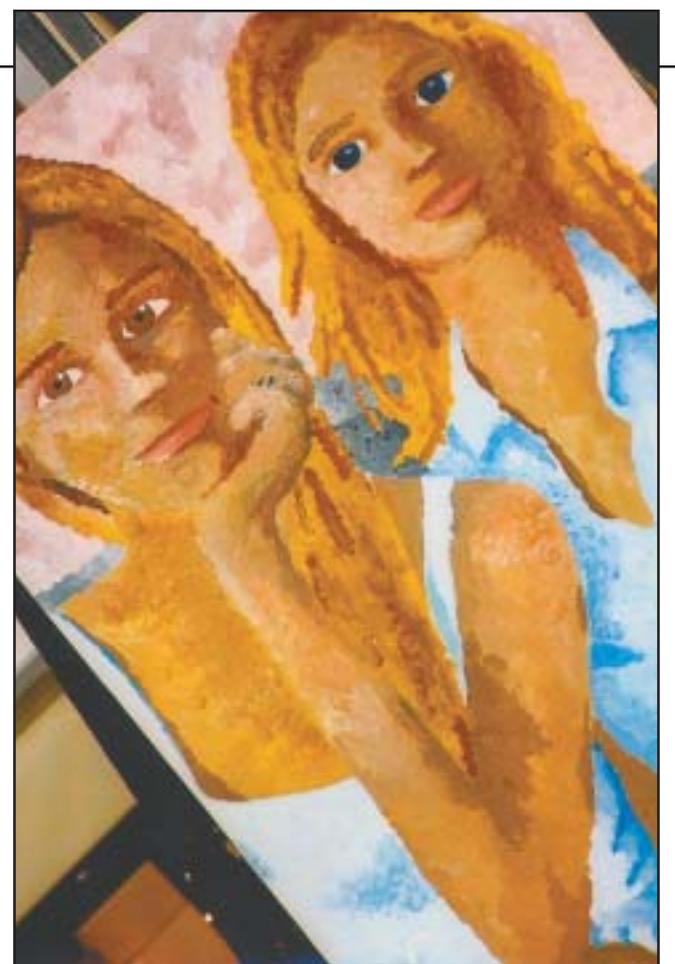
**2) Batik** – A process which uses dyes and hot wax to create an image on fabric. “This is a totally different process for most students. They become very creative with this unit,” she said.

**3) Tunnel Books and Bookmaking** – Students take two opposing views (e.g. love and hate) and

use two opposing colors to create a book that allows the reader to see both sides simultaneously.

**4) Reflective Drawing** – Students are required to draw a reflective object, such as a copper or silver pot. “The unit helps build observation skills because students find more detail in the object than they first realize,” Merklin said.

**5) Visual Journals** – Students write and draw about their daily experiences and their relationships in their Visual Journals throughout their art careers at Woodward High School. “The journals become mixed media pieces. They provide a healthy outlet for their frustrations. And, I let them keep some pages private, if they wish, when I’m grading the journals,” she said.



# State Website is Full of Arts Integration and Assessment Ideas

By Doug Folks

Oklahoma educators are now just a click away from a powerful tool that will help them integrate and assess the arts in their classrooms.

The State Department of Education (SDE) has added a vast, new arts integration and assessment section to its website, [www.sde.state.ok.us](http://www.sde.state.ok.us). The new site is the product of the Arts Assessment Task Force, which was created by the Oklahoma Legislature to make recommendations for appropriate fine arts assessment strategies and to provide technical assistance in the development of arts assessments and reporting mechanisms for next school year.

HB 1414, which became law in 2003, reinvented how Oklahoma students are to be assessed in the arts. Fine arts were removed from the fifth and eighth grade criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) and schools were given more flexibility to assess students on the Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) objectives for the arts.

Jenny Hendrick, a community volunteer and chair of the Arts Task Force, said all teachers can find valuable information at the website.

"It has been a very exciting process," said Hendrick, who is a former associate dean of the University of Oklahoma Medical School. "I think the website can be instructive for any teacher."

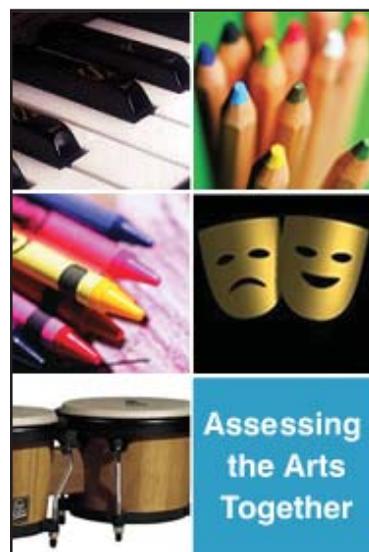
The site was created by Eric Hileman, director of instructional design for the SDE.

Beginning with the 2004-05 school year, schools have the option to assess students in the arts either through a written test, a portfolio or a performance. Each district must then submit a report to the SDE on its arts assessment program.

The arts website will help teachers find ideas for integrating arts into their

classes and it will provide administrators with sample reporting documents.

Hendrick said the task force, which included teachers, business people, administrators, OEA staff and SDE staff, worked hard to create a site that did not issue mandates, but one that would



provide a wealth of information.

"It's not a 'best practices' website," she said. "It has ideas that have worked in the classroom."

Among the site's highlights are:

 **Sample Tests** – Oklahoma is the only state in the country that has been allowed to publish CRT questions and provide teachers with an answer key. There are some 650 questions for fifth and eighth grade music and art, and registered users have access to the answer key;

 **Bulletin Board** – a section where teachers can share ideas on how to implement arts education and assessment;

 **Submit Ideas** – an easy-to-use tool that allows registered users to add information to the site, which Hendrick called "a work in progress."

 **Assessment and Integration ideas** – lesson plans for dance, drama, music and visual arts;

 **Arts Assessment Reporting Forms** – created by the SDE and available in Excel or pdf formats for reporting assessment results for grades three

through eight to the state; and

 **Arts links** – a long list of arts-related and arts assessment sites from around the country.

Hendrick said more than 8,000 teachers had registered with the site by mid-May. An email address and

self-created password are all that is needed to register. Also, teachers can create a secret word that can be given to students and parents, who in turn will use the secret word to access messages and lesson plans that the teacher has placed on the site.

## Teachers Helping Teachers

Oklahoma State Department of Education  
Sandy Garrett, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

It is a privilege of the State Department of Education to provide technical support for "Teachers Helping Teachers" an online sharing tool for teachers assessing the arts.

This Web site is a growing compilation of arts instruction and assessment ideas designed to assist teachers, schools and districts as they determine the most effective way to evaluate arts instruction in their settings.

Educators across Oklahoma are implementing Arts Assessment in Grades 3-8 in compliance with House Bill 1414. Oklahomans understand the value of arts education as a core discipline and in enhancing academic performance in other core areas.

## Schools Offered Arts Assessment Workshops

The Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) will host four Arts Assessment Workshops this summer to assist school districts with the implementation of arts assessments in Oklahoma schools.

HB 1414 removed arts assessment from standardized tests and now allows schools to assess students in fine arts through a test, a performance or a portfolio. Districts must start reporting how they assess students next spring. These workshops are designed to help schools make the transition.

Educators participating in the SDE workshops will receive one \$40 stipend for attending. A preliminary agenda is posted on the SDE website, [www.sde.state.ok.us](http://www.sde.state.ok.us). Click on "Curriculum" on the left menu to go to the registration information.

Workshops will be offered at the

following locations:

**June 29, Cherokee Community Ballroom** (next to the Restaurant of the Cherokees), Highway 62, Tahlequah, 918/456-0671, extension 2314.

**July 20, Quartz Mountain State Lodge**, Route 1 Box 40, Lone Wolf, [www.shopoklahoma.com/quartzmo.htm](http://www.shopoklahoma.com/quartzmo.htm), 580/563-3003.

**July 29, Chisholm Trail Heritage Center**, 1000 Chisholm Trail Parkway, Duncan, [www.onthechisholmtrail.com](http://www.onthechisholmtrail.com), 580/252-6692.

**August 12, Putnam City West High School**, 8500 Northwest 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Oklahoma City, [www.putnamcityschools.org/pcwest](http://www.putnamcityschools.org/pcwest), 405/787-1140.

For registration information, contact Glen Henry at 405/521-3034 or at [glen\\_henry@sde.state.ok.us](mailto:glen_henry@sde.state.ok.us).

# Myths & Misunderstandings of Long-Term Care

## Protect Your Retirement Savings From Catastrophe

Buying long-term care insurance can be one of the best ways to protect your retirement savings from a potentially catastrophic expense.

Long-term care includes a wide range of medical and support services for people with a disabling condition (Parkinson's, stroke, etc.), a prolonged illness (cancer), or cognitive disorder (Alzheimer's). Long-term care is not necessarily medical care but rather "custodial care." Custodial care involves providing an individual with assistance for daily living activities or supervision of someone who is cognitively impaired.

To better understand long-term care, think of the activities you performed when you woke up this morning. You probably:

- climbed out of bed
- walked to the bathroom
- used the toilet
- used the bath or shower
- got dressed
- ate breakfast

While you are healthy it is easy to take for granted these everyday routines. However, when you or a loved one is stricken with a disabling condition such as a stroke or Alzheimer's, performing these activities of daily living (ADL's) becomes impossible without the assistance of another person.

Long-term care can be provided in many settings such as nursing homes, your own home, assisted living facilities, or adult day care facilities. In 2003, the average private room in a nursing home cost more than \$66,000 a year. At an average of \$18 an hour, 24-hour in-home care can cost much more. If costs continue to rise by about 5 percent a year, the average price tag could reach \$175,000 a

year in 20 years.

"I'm Too Young to Need Long-Term Care Insurance."

A lot of us think that only senior citizens need to worry about long-term care, so we put off preparing for the possibility. Unfortunately, untimely accidents or illnesses can strike at any age. Forty percent of the 12 million Americans receiving long-term care are between the ages of 18 and 64. The truth is people of any age can develop serious conditions that require assistance with routine daily activities.

Bestselling author Suze Orman said it best in her book, *The 9 Steps to Financial Freedom*, "The longer you wait, the more it will cost." Long-term care insurance premiums are based on your age at the time you apply for coverage, so the premium you would pay increases with each birthday. (Once purchased however, the premiums remain the same despite increasing age.) Studies show that if an individual waits until age 79 to purchase a policy, the premiums are typically about 6 to 10 times higher than if the policy was purchased at age 50.

Another fact to remember is that you must be healthy to be eligible for long-term care insurance. Once your health begins to deteriorate or you suffer a debilitating accident, you may no longer be able to qualify for coverage.

"Medicare and Medicaid will cover my bills."

Medicare is generally available for those who are disabled and for people over age 65, but it only pays limited amounts for long-term care services and *only* if you meet Medicare's conditions for payment. Medicaid is the government program to help those in



financial need. It won't kick in until virtually all of your assets have been consumed.

Is Long-Term Care Insurance for You?

- I want to help preserve my financial independence.
- I don't want to use up my savings or income to pay for nursing home or home health services.
- I want to be able to pay for my own care services.
- I want to leave my estate to family or friends or charity.
- I want to ensure that an adequate income remains for my spouse should I need costly services.
- I don't want to burden my family or friends.
- I want the freedom to choose the care services I prefer.

- I don't believe the government will cover the care I may need in the future.
- I don't want to depend on Medicaid.

Are any of these important to you?

Long-term care insurance has evolved and typically covers a broad range of services including home health care, adult day care, assisted living facilities, and nursing home care. Like any insurance product, long-term care insurance allows the insured to pay an affordable premium to protect an unaffordable catastrophic event.

To speak with an LTC Specialist regarding more detailed plan information including rates, call 800/884-2675 or email your name and contact information to NEA Member Benefits Consultant Liz Picone at [Lpicone@neamb.com](mailto:Lpicone@neamb.com).

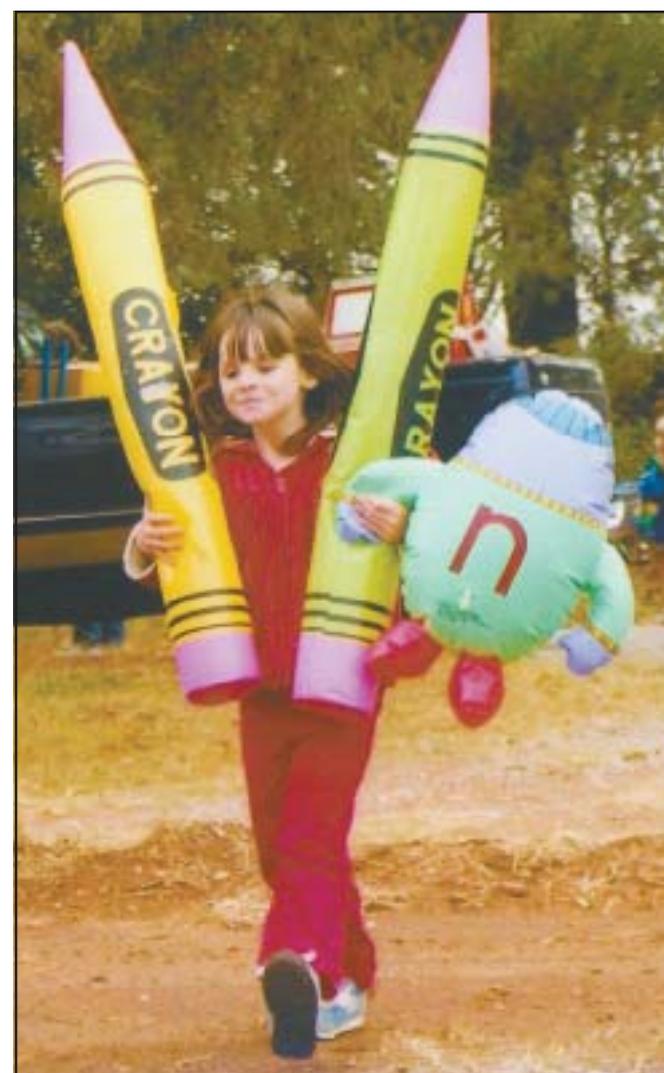
# Macomb Kindergarten Gets a New Home

Amy Smith's kindergarten class at Macomb Elementary received a new home this year, moving from the main elementary building to a house on the campus. Now, the all-day kindergarten class has its own space complete with a bathroom, a kitchen, and separate room that includes centers and a reading loft.

Students and their families helped move the classroom, and after Christmas holidays the class made the permanent move. Here are some before and after shots of the building and of the move.



*Coby Mason's job was to get the alligators from the old room in the elementary building to Macomb's new kindergarten house.*



*Kelsea Hasbell carries an arm load of classroom materials into the new building.*



*Workers tore out an inside wall, giving the kindergartners a "great room" in their new house.*



*Amy Smith (left) talks with members of her class in the new building.*



*A fresh coat of paint, a new sidewalk and a railing transformed the old house (above) into a new home for Macomb's kindergarten (right), which took time out for this class photo in late May.*



# Delegates Preparing for NEA's 2004 Representative Assembly in Nation's Capital

More than 100 teachers and education support professionals from Oklahoma will gather in Washington, D.C., for the 2004 National Education Association (NEA) Annual Meeting.

With the buzz of election-year politics serving as a backdrop, delegates will come together in the Washington Convention Center to recommend a candidate for U.S. president. NEA members will also rally around efforts to fix and fund the so-called No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

These and other issues will be tackled at NEA's Representative Assembly (RA), the largest democratic, deliberative body in the world. The elected delegates who set policy for the NEA's 2.7 million members can anticipate a packed agenda. NEA's push to make NCLB work better for educators and children is expected to get a big boost as more than 9,000 delegates, just a stone's throw from Capitol Hill, make their voices heard. The Oklahoma delegation will join thousands of NEA members under the banner of "Team NEA: Uniting the Nation for Great Public Schools."

A variety of pre-convention meetings, conferences and forums, ranging from curing the health care system to closing the student achievement gap, will be held June 27 - July 3. Over the next four days, July 4-7, the RA delegates will debate vital issues impacting public education and set Association policy and activities for the year ahead.

Yet it won't be all business. Delegates will have a chance to share the joy of reading with children from Washington-area schools during NEA's Read Across America Read-In. This year's Read-In will celebrate the diversity of America's children through books and stories that build bridges and honor our nation's diverse heritage.

## Other highlights:

- More than 250 NEA volunteers through the annual **Outreach To Teach** program will paint, landscape, clean and make repairs to Longfield Elementary School in nearby Forestville, Maryland.

- Experts will explore critical education issues, societal trends affecting students and education employees, the latest educational research and more at the **19th Annual Joint Conference on Concerns of Minorities and Women.**

- At the **Symposium on Critical Issues for Educators**, academics, labor specialists and consumer advocates will address the health care crisis facing the education community. Also, Ronald Ferguson of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government will discuss policies and practices needed to close the student achievement gap.

- Thirteen winners, many of them educators, will be honored at the **38th Annual NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner.** The annual awards commemorate the 1966 merger of NEA and the American Teachers Association – an historic African-American professional organization – and celebrate our multicultural roots.

- The **2004 National Teacher of the Year** Kathy Mellor, an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher at Davisville Middle School in North Kingstown, R.I., will address the delegates on the importance of partnerships between schools, families and the community.

- The delegates will recognize Allyson "Sunny" Story, a teacher's aide at Grant Elementary School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, as **NEA's Education Support Professional of the Year.**

- Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund, will receive the **2004 Friend of Education Award** for her tireless efforts to improve child development programs, child care and health care, and to eradicate childhood poverty.

Further information about the NEA's Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly can be found at [www.nea.org/annualmeeting](http://www.nea.org/annualmeeting).



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## 2004 Marshall Gregory Awards Honor Journalists

Each year, the Oklahoma Education Association honors professional and student journalists for outstanding coverage of public schools, education issues and the OEA. The Marshall Gregory Awards were presented at April's Awards Banquet during Delegate Assembly.

### Student Division – Print

Outstanding Photojournalism, Kate Callahan, *Ruff Draft*, Edmond Memorial H.S.

Outstanding News Story - Erin Smith, and Jessica Goldbeck, "Portraits in Earth and Sand," *Ruff Draft*, Edmond Memorial H.S.

Outstanding feature story, Mike Ding, "Oriental Students - The Struggle to Fit in a Foreign Land and Culture," *Ruff Draft*, Edmond North H.S.

Outstanding Editorial, Gianna Short, "No Child Left Behind is Leaving Schools Behind," *Ruff Draft*, Edmond Memorial H.S.

Outstanding Editorial, Layton Hill, "Admission Policy not a Means for Diversity," *Ruff Draft*, Edmond Memorial H.S.

Outstanding Editorial, Kevin Costello, "Why Fight to Give Free Speech to Iraq" and "Thanks to Dept. Homeland Security," *Ruff Draft*, Edmond North H.S.

Outstanding Year-Round News Stories, Ryan Spaulding, *Demon Pitchfork*, Duncan H.S.

Outstanding Year-Round Overall Coverage, *Ruff Draft*, Edmond Public Schools

### Student Division – Video

Outstanding Year-Round Series, "90 Mississippi Rush," Zac Peters, Matt Zellner, Alex Eschbach, Nathan Moss, TV Station Channel 18, Norman H.S.

Outstanding Feature Story, "Breaking Through," Matt Zellner, Channel 18 TV, Norman H.S.

### Professional Division – Video

Outstanding Single Event Series, "Spin The Education Wheel," Janna Clark, KOKI-Fox 23 News, Tulsa

Outstanding Feature Story, "Pride of Broken Arrow," Janna Clark and Andrew Mohler, KOKI-Fox 23 News, Tulsa,

Outstanding Photojournalism, "The Pride of Broken Arrow," Doug Johnson, KOKI-Fox 23 News, Tulsa,

Outstanding News Story, "Cutting Back Teachers," Janna Clark and Jeff Gould, KOKI-Fox 23 News, Tulsa

Outstanding Year-Round News Stories, Janna Clark, KOKI-Fox 23 News, Tulsa

Outstanding Year-Round Feature Stories, Janna Clark, KOKI-Fox 23 News, Tulsa,

Outstanding Year-Round Photojournalism, Jeff Gould, KOKI-Fox 23 News, Tulsa

### Professional Division – Print

Outstanding Feature Story, "School Funding 101," John Williams, *The Edmond Sun*

Outstanding News Story, "Read Across America Initiative Rolls Into Norman," William Savage III, *Norman Transcript*

Outstanding Feature Story, "On the River, In the Woods," Heide Brandes, *Oklahoma County Newspapers*

Outstanding Year-Round Features, Heide Brandes, *Oklahoma County Newspapers*

Outstanding Year-Round News Stories, Heide Brandes, *Oklahoma County Newspapers*

Outstanding Year-Round Series, "Bullies," Danaline Bryant, *Lawton Constitution*

### Professional Division – Special Recognition Awards

Outstanding Year Round Coverage Series, "Update," Joe Wynn, Executive Director of Communications, Lawton Public Schools

Outstanding Feature, "Back-to-School Issue," Kristi Hayes, *The Ponca City News*

# Take Advantage of Your Personal Legal Services

By Joe E. White, Jr.  
The White Law Firm

The Personal Legal Services Program ("PLSP") was designed and implemented by your OEA General Counsel's Office and the White Law Firm. Great care was taken to ensure PLSP would be easily accessible and offer the type of legal services that would meet the needs of OEA members and their families.

Teachers and Education Support Professionals (ESP) across the state who maintain an active OEA membership receive a variety of valuable legal services, typically at *no charge*. For example, drafting of wills (including amendments), uncontested divorces, uncontested modifications to divorce decrees (including child support), consultation and assistance in creditor disputes, name changes and misdemeanor cases are fully covered and require no out-of-pocket costs to an OEA member, his or her spouse or dependent children.

Other legal services are provided at a substantially reduced rate resulting in a huge savings to OEA members and their families. Reduced rate services include personal injury cases, nursing home negligence and insurance bad faith, just to name a few.

The White Law Firm takes great pride in the legal service we provide to our clientele. We have had the pleasure to represent OEA members and their families through this program for over seven years. Since 1996, we have represented in excess of 5,000 teachers or their loved ones in a wide variety of cases. The level of service that we provide to all OEA members and their families has led numerous OEA members to recommend us to their friends and other family members. Even with this large volume of cases, the White Law Firm takes the time to provide personal service to each client we help.

The White Law Firm carefully evaluates each case to ensure that we

*Page 14/Oklahoma Education Association*



Attorney Joe E. White, Jr.

obtain the maximum compensation for the loss suffered by our client. Our results in helping clients with personal injury, nursing home negligence and insurance bad faith cases by way of judgment or settlement currently exceed \$30 million dollars. We have found that juries across this great state appreciate the teachers and ESPs in their communities that are working hard to educate the next generation of Oklahomans. Personally speaking, any time I am fortunate enough to represent a teacher who has been injured through someone's negligence, juries appear more willing to fully compensate that person because of who they are and what they represent.

Please familiarize yourself with all of the available benefits that accompany your OEA membership. I particularly encourage you to review the OEA membership benefits associated with the PLSP. The White Law Firm maintains three attorneys and one paralegal who are ready, willing and able to assist at a moment's notice.

In closing, every education employee should know the ABC's of protecting themselves and their loved ones and who to turn to when help is needed. We are proud to be associated with the OEA and the members it represents. Our goal is to keep you informed that we are here for you and to keep PLSP in mind the next time you need help.

## PLSP Highlights

The OEA is the only state organization in the NEA family to offer legal assistance to its members for off-the-job legal problems. Through the Personal Legal Services Program, members have access to free legal services, or services at discounted costs.

If you need help for one of the following services, call OEA's Center for Legal and Corporate Services at 800/522-8091, or 528-7785 in central Oklahoma.

### Free services include:

- Wills, including amendments;
- Name changes;
- Uncontested modifications to divorce decrees;
- Defense of misdemeanor charges;

- Paternity support enforcement;
- Powers of attorney;
- Uncontested divorces;
- Uncontested adoptions (stepparent adoptions only); and
- Consultation and assistance in creditor disputes.

**Other situations allow a member five hours of free legal service**, with any additional time covered at a reduced rate. Those situations include:

- Personal injury;
- Felony charges;
- Contested modifications to divorce decrees;
- Wrongful death;
- Nursing home neglect;
- Contested divorces; and
- Contested adoptions.



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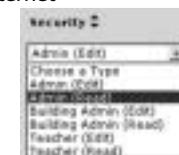
- € Faster IEP's
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# U.S. Senate Approves Reauthorization of IDEA

The U.S. Senate overwhelmingly passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2003 by a vote of 95-3 in mid-May. It appears the bill is finally moving to reauthorization after two and one-half years of work. After the Senate vote, the bill was to move to conference where it is hoped that a better clarification of “highly qualified” will be hammered out.

Following are some of the major provisions of the Senate bill.

### Highly Qualified

- Gives special education teachers until 2006-07 to meet the highly qualified definition.

Highly Qualified is defined as:

- All special education teachers must be licensed/certified by their state as special education teachers, must not have emergency/temporary credentials, and must demonstrate knowledge of special education and special education teaching skills; *and*
- New Elementary: The teacher has passed an elementary level test of basic skills (which can be the same as that taken for licensure, if applicable);
- New Middle and Secondary: The teacher passes a test or holds a major (or course equivalence) in each of the core academic subjects taught;
- Veteran Special Education Teachers: Certified/Licensed and demonstrates competency in each core academic subject taught either through a test or through the State HOUSSE standard.

### Exceptions

- Special education teachers who provide consultative services to a highly qualified core academic subject teacher must only have full state certification/licensure.
- Special education teachers at the middle and secondary level who teach

students with significant cognitive disabilities must be certified/licensed and have passed a test of basic skills, akin to the elementary level test.

### Discipline

- Allows a student with a disability to be removed from class (in the same manner a non-disabled student would be) to an interim alternative setting for not more than 10 days for a violation of a school code.

- In the case of immediate removal (no questions asked), a disabled student may also be removed for up to 45 days for causing serious bodily harm or committing aggravated assault against another student or school personnel. (Current law allows this removal to occur only when a student with a disability brings drugs or a weapon to school.)

### Paperwork

- Allows up to 15 states to participate in a demonstration project to reduce paperwork. The Secretary of Education, in granting applications may not waive paperwork designed to protect the civil rights of the child or his family.
- Allows for a voluntary 3-year IEP for students between 18-21 years of age.
- The notice of procedural safeguards need only be given once per year, or upon parent request.

### IEPs

- Provides for fewer IEP meetings, as the parent and LEA can agree to make minor modifications to the IEP without having to convene the entire team.

### Professional Development

- 100 percent of State Improvement Grants must be spent on personnel preparation, training and professional development.

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