

OEA

An affiliate of the
National Education Association

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The Education Focus

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association

August 2005

Changing minds and attitudes

OEA's Math PDI revolutionizes teaching methods

By Marty Bull

Students around the state are experiencing a rejuvenated attitude toward math, thanks to a revolutionary new teaching method.

The Oklahoma Education Association, through its Mathematics Professional Development Institutes (PDI), is helping teachers drastically change how they teach math. Some teachers call the method "liberating," and the benefits can be found in improving math scores on achievement tests.

In 2001, the OEA Teaching and Learning Center embarked on one of the most intensive teacher training programs ever offered to Oklahoma teachers. Currently in its second three-year cycle, the OEA Math PDI, as coordinated through the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation (OCTP), has proven to be an effective training tool.

One of the key elements established



Healdton's Karen Glenn (left) and Rebecca McLemore have completely redesigned the way they teach math after attending an OEA Math Professional Development Institute in Ardmore. The teaching change is improving math grades.

by OCTP for a provider to be considered for the project was the background and experience to deliver quality professional development.

"When OCTP initially requested bids, we knew no one could coordinate this type of extensive training better than the OEA staff," said OEA Executive Director Lela Odom. "The fact

we were chosen to implement this program not only once, but twice, is a reflection of our success in developing not only this training program but the wide variety of training opportunities we offer to both teachers and support professionals."

Sharon McSpadden Moore coordi-

See "OEA training" on Page 3

Join the strongest voice for public education

Just like professionals across our community who are members of their respective professional organizations, every educator should belong to the Oklahoma Education Association.

No other professional education association fights harder for its members or for public education. The OEA is *the* voice of public education and the staunchest advocate for education employees.

If you already belong to the OEA,

thank you for being part of Oklahoma's most influential education association. Public education faces continual challenges, and we appreciate that you are part of our efforts to protect and improve public education for our students.

As a member, you can enhance the abilities of your professional organization by recruiting your colleagues. Not only will our voice be stronger, but many of your colleagues have a great deal to offer the Association.

If you aren't a member, we invite you to join us. This issue of *The Education Focus* is full of stories of how members utilized OEA services, stories of how the Association works for you and your students, and lists of products and services that can be accessed only by OEA members.

For membership information, see the OEA representative in your building, visit our website at www.okea.org or call us at 800/522-8091.

Our future depends on you

By Roy Bishop
OEA President

In a few days, most of Oklahoma will be back in school. The new school year always brings a great deal of excitement as we prepare to meet new students and challenges.

As you put the finishing touches on your rooms, and work on your lesson plans, I'd like you to seriously take a look at your level of involvement in the Oklahoma Education Association.

Many of our members say that they would love to be involved in some aspect of the Association but no one ever asks them. Today I'm asking you to get involved in the Association.

There are a number of ways that you can do this. First, I would like to challenge you to sit down with the faculty in your district and take a serious look at ways in which we can address the issue of achievement gaps.

The NEA and the OEA are committed to closing those gaps. The future for many of our children depends on us to provide the expertise to help make a difference in their lives. Not only do we have to consistently take a look at what we teach and how children learn, we must find ways to enhance parental engagement.

No matter what we do, we must also look at how Oklahoma funds education. Providing for a constitutionally adequate and equitable education for all students needs to be taking place. We will continue to address adequacy and equity issues, but we need your help. We need you to sign up to be a Legal Liaison from your building and district. You can make a difference in the success of our A & E Project and also change the lives of your students.

I know that many of you would like

to find out what's going on in the Association in a more up-to-date manner.

You can do that by signing up to receive OEA's electronic newsletter, *The Insider*. This weekly e-newsletter provides you with updates to give you even more knowledge about how your Association is working for you.

Today I'm asking you to be a build-

The future for many of our children depends on us to provide the expertise to help make a difference in their lives.

ing representative. Providing your building with quality representation at your local Association meetings ensures your voices are heard.

I know that your time is valuable. But there are many areas where you can get involved without having to commit hours and hours of your time and still make a difference. Talk to your local leaders and let them know that you want to help. There are many ways in which you can help your local be successful.

Are you interested in the legislative process? Today I'm asking you to commit to sending out emails and making a phone call or two to your legislator sometime during the next legislative session. Or if you would rather visit your representative in person, schedule an appointment to let him or her know how

Grants will benefit school libraries

The NEA Foundation recently announced a new award to help public schools serving economically disadvantaged students purchase books for school libraries.

The Foundation makes these \$5,000 awards on behalf of the National Education Association, with generous support from Warner Brothers, Inc.

There are two deadlines to submit an application: September 15, 2005, and February 1, 2006. Visit www.neafoundation.org for more information and an application. Applications will be accepted only as email attachments.



President Roy Bishop

important it is to better fund education.

Today I'm asking you to help strengthen and reward our members.

Check into the National Board Certification process and encourage your peers to look into it as well.

Find people to nominate for OEA awards. Let your peers know they are doing a great job.

If you don't have time to commit to the Association, today I'm asking you to commit to donating \$10 to the OEA's political action fund. Your contributions can make a difference in electing friends of education and passing state questions that make a difference for kids and schools.

If I haven't listed an idea that really strikes a cord, don't be discouraged. Talk to someone in the Association at the local or state level and we'll find your place in the OEA. We are *the voice* of education and the professional educator's association dedicated to improving public education for everyone.

I appreciate all that you will be doing for the OEA. Have a great year.

Send your comments to Roy at rbishop@okea.org.

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Need Help?

Do you need assistance with a personnel matter? Would you like to invite an OEA Teaching and Learning Specialist to provide a training in your building? Does your local Association need organizing help? Call your regional office and ask for help.

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800/522-8091 or 405/528-7785

Northeast and Tulsa Metro Teams

800/331-5143 or 918/665-2282

Northwest Team

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Southeast Team

800/563-4230 or 405/275-4060

Join today!

Membership in the OEA provides security, symbolizes professionalism and brings with it a wealth of benefits.

Visit www.okea.org for more information, and call 800/522-8091 to find out how to join today.

OEA

Oklahoma Education Association

OEA training is changing the way math is taught

Continued from Page 1

nates OEA's Math PDI. She and the other Teaching and Learning Center specialists recruit trainers and participants. Trainers are practicing teachers who have been recruited because of their strong math backgrounds and presentation skills.

As of last spring, all six Teaching and Learning Specialists are facilitating

PDI's in their respective regions. To date, over 500 teachers from over 120 different school sites have participated in the project. That number will increase this year as several new training opportunities are added.

According to Moore, teachers are the students in the first year of the three-year PDI training cycle.

"The goal is to focus participants on problem-centered curriculum and help them develop a broader view of mathematics," said Moore. "The training is not designed to discount traditional methods but to give teachers options on how to teach math concepts, which in turn gives their students more learning opportunities."

In the second year, the focus shifts to student learning and effective ways to engage students in mathematics, while continuing to deepen teachers' curriculum vision. And in year three, emphasis moves toward the full implementation of the curriculum and a more in-depth look at what students are learning as they move through grades 5 through 8.

But the true test of effective training is how it translates to the classroom. Healdton's Karen Glenn was convinced early on that the Math PDI she was attending in Ardmore could change how math was taught to her fifth graders.

"I knew I would be more successful if the other fifth grade teacher and I could learn together, so I called her and she came on over," said Glenn. "And just after a few days we both knew how we taught math had changed forever."

Glenn's teaching partner, Rebecca McLemore, credits the PDI for trans-



In June, 35 teachers attended a Math PDI "training of trainers" at OEA Headquarters in Oklahoma City. Included among the group were (from left) Dale Rogers, Seminole; Gayla Mears, Norman, trainer Nancy Ferguson, a math coach from Cartwright Schools in Phoenix, Ariz.; Barbara Jackson, Claremore; and Heather Sparks, Edmond.

forming her teaching style.

"I found the information liberating," said the 11-year teaching veteran. "I am now more focused on the goals and standards, and my students have responded accordingly."

Both Glenn and McLemore report that some students remain more comfortable with the traditional methods than the hands-on methods introduced.

"We still use traditional methods, but by offering alternative methods we've opened the doors for other students," said Glenn. "My students and I look forward to math class."

The PDIs are designed to train teachers in effective delivery of the state-approved curriculum and the Priority Academic Students Skills (PASS) using the National Science Foundation math curriculum, *Investigations and Connected Math*. Before attending the OEA PDI, McLemore would begin at page one

in the fifth grade math book, go to page two, three, and so on. But with the rush to get through the book by the end of the year, some concepts were not given the time they needed.

"I've learned to use the standards to direct how I use our materials," said McLemore. "Now I pick information that my students need to meet the standard, use fewer problems, slow down and watch them learn."

But as with any training strategy, the proof of learning is the assessment.

"I took a sneak peek at our test scores," said McLemore. "Our students more than met the standards in fractions, percentages and decimals. I believe it happened because we changed how we taught math. If OEA offers anything else, bring it on. I want it!"

If you are interested in learning more about the OEA Math PDIs, please contact your OEA regional teaching and learning specialist.

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OEA brings training to your school

OEA Teaching and Learning Specialists will present a workshop for your local Association, your building, your grade level or most any group that includes members that you can bring together. Offerings include "I Can Do It!," a classroom management session for newer teachers, anti-bullying, safe schools, and dealing with difficult people. For a list of trainings offered by the T&L Center, visit www.okea.org/ForMembers/professionaldevelopment.htm

Political success starts at home

Hometown lobbyists are backbone of OEA program

By Stacy Martin

The dedication of hometown lobbyist members is the heart and soul of the Oklahoma Education Association's successful lobbying program, said OEA President Roy Bishop.

Across the state, scores of committed members tirelessly lobby legislators in their hometown districts and at the State Capitol to advance pro-public education issues and fight legislation that hurts schools and those who work in them.

The hometown lobbyist's primary responsibility is to establish and maintain contact with one or two local legislators.

The tools of a hometown lobbyist are telephone calls, email and in-person lobbying both at home and at the State Capitol.

The goal is, first, to develop a relationship with a lawmaker; second, to provide information to the lawmaker; and finally, seek to influence lawmakers' views and votes.

But that's not the end of the story. If the local legislator is a friend of education, hometown lobbyists sometimes volunteer to work in the candidate's campaign.

"That's our primary success story – getting people involved in campaigns on behalf of candidates," said Bishop. "While lawmakers or prospective lawmakers appreciate our financial contributions, they always really appreciate the contributions of time, effort, resources and expertise by OEA members."

Indeed, the odds of lobbying success at the State Capitol are increased many times over when hometown lobbyists have given their time to help the lawmaker become elected.

Broken Arrow kindergarten teacher Marci Hawkins believes deeply in the importance of hometown lobbyists.

"It's very, very important for our representatives to put a face with those they represent," she said. "When they see a face and hear a personal



Broken Arrow's
Marci Hawkins

story, it has a big impact on them."

Hawkins said on one or two occasions she has worked with lawmakers who may not have fully appreciated the value of public education issues. She quickly learned that she could often sway even those legislators' opinions with a personal visit. She also realized that sometimes a one-on-one encounter with a teacher can make all the difference.

It's also very important to lobby representatives because "they can't be



Lawton's
Dorothy Bradley

experts on everything." The Broken Arrow Democrat does not restrict lobbying to her party. Nor does she restrict her efforts to urban legislators.

She highly recommends that OEA members work with their legislators when in Oklahoma City or in their hometowns.

Lawton educator Dorothy Bradley agrees that being a hometown lobbyist is very gratifying. She's realized the value of the lobbying process.

"We seem to do pretty well around

PAC process involves members at every step

Many Oklahoma Education Association members choose to make voluntary contributions to OEA's nonpartisan political action committee (OEA-PAC).

They know that the political environment is a significant factor affecting their jobs every day. In fact, their job conditions rise and fall as a result of political forces.

Voluntary PAC contributions are designed to help elect friends of education to political office. Dues dollars are never used to support political candidates.

The Association uses an in-depth process to find candidates who will vote favorably on public education legislation, using members at every step. First-time candidates complete a questionnaire and incumbents' voting records are examined. Every candidate who participates in the process also sits for an interview with a panel of members.

Recommended candidates typically receive financial support for their campaign expenses, but the contribution amount differs depending on the political race and the needs of the candidate.

By recommending the candidate, OEA is asking members to consider voting for the candidate. But the PAC knows that its recommendations are but one source for members to consider before entering the voting booth.

"We go through this process so that we can help our members make informed decisions regarding political candidates," said Roy Bishop, OEA president.

"We are well aware of the changing political climate in Oklahoma," he added. "It's more important than ever to identify and support proponents of public education at the State Capitol."

here," said the Taft Alternative School teacher. "I wanted to have some say in the (legislative) process and in what they do up there (at the Capitol). I want them to know we're paying attention."

"I'm very proud of our efforts. We seem to have succeeded in convincing teachers they have to become involved in the political process. We're working hard every day but (lawmakers) need to take care of us, too."

Bishop said members such as Bradley and Hawkins are priceless.

"All we want is an opportunity to explain the story of OEA and its members to decision makers at the State Capitol," said Bishop. "Hometown lobbyists play a vital role in opening those doors in a very personal, successful manner."

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A lesson in perseverance

Advocacy specialists never back down from a fight

By Doug Folks

Members who find themselves in difficult situations quickly discover one thing: an Oklahoma Education Association advocacy specialist *never* backs off.

If an administrator stonewalls on a decision or insists with moving forward with firing a teacher even when the facts don't support the action, an OEA advocate keeps pushing for the member. The Association ensures that due process is allowed to take its proper

course and that every fact of the case is brought to light.

Most importantly, OEA advocacy specialists stay with the situation until a solution is worked out.

A perfect example of OEA perseverance recently played out. What started as a simple question became a

yearlong fight for teachers in a small rural district.

Cathy (who asked that her real name not be used) just wanted to know if she was being paid correctly. For the previous two years, her district had paid \$158.11 monthly (almost \$1,900 annually) toward her health insurance. When the state began paying 100 percent of her individual premium, Cathy expected to see an additional \$158.11 in her check each month.

Surprisingly, Cathy's first paycheck of 2004-05 was just \$60 more than her last check of '03-04. So, she called the OEA and asked if someone could take a look at her pay stub.

Cathy's request to have an advocate review her check stub in September was an easy enough task. It is something advocacy specialists do on a regular basis. The solution, while not quite so easy for a school district, could have happened fairly quickly and was required by law. Instead, it took OEA, Cathy and other teachers in her district until mid-May to receive what was legally and rightfully theirs.

"I really appreciate the perseverance of David Williams and the OEA in this matter," said Cathy, who, with her husband, stood up for every teacher in her district. "David never gave up on getting a resolution to the problem, and his patience with the district was tremendous."

Problems were obvious

The Oklahoma State Legislature passed a law in 2004 that provided 100 percent state payment of teachers' individual health care premiums. That

The settlement involved 12 teachers and cost the district more than \$29,000. Even though some of those teachers are not OEA members, they all benefited from OEA's tenacity.

amount, formerly paid by a combination of state, district and employee funds, was to go back to the employee as cash in most cases. That included Cathy's district, which employs less than 30 teachers and has an enrollment of about 230 students.

Cathy sent her first '04-05 pay stub and all of her stubs from the previous two years to Williams so he could compare numbers and determine how she was being paid. The numbers immediately revealed problems.

"At first glance two things became clear," Williams said. "First, the district had been using an incorrect Flexible Benefit Amount (FBA) number during the previous school year; and, second, the district had incorrectly taken back their \$158.11 monthly insurance payment, thus lowering Cathy's total compensation and violating state law."

Williams found that during 2002-03 and 2003-04 the district had paid \$158.11 per month toward individual health insurance premiums for those teachers taking insurance. The district payment combined with the FBA had not only covered the payment for health and dental insurance, but there was also a little left over which those teachers received as cash.

The long road to resolution

Williams notified school officials in early November of possible payroll

problems which would impact the 2004-05 school year and perhaps include mistakes from the previous two years. Based on Williams' research, the district owed teachers who had

taken health insurance through the district \$559.24 in back FBA cash payments covering '02-03 and '03-04.

He also informed the district that it had illegally taken back from these same teachers the monthly payment of \$158.11, which had been the district's insurance payment.

"They listened politely but didn't necessarily agree with my analysis," Williams said. "The change to state-paid health care premium payments was confusing, and how it affected payroll seemed to be different in every district."

The State Department of Education (SDE) confirmed that Cathy and her colleagues had received an incorrect FBA amount. Even so, the district balked at making the proper payments. Williams met with the administration again in December and January, asking when teachers could expect reimbursement for the FBA underpayment and correct the current year take-back.

Finally, at a meeting in April, district officials agreed to pay what was owed the teachers. By mid-May, every teacher who had taken district insurance received \$2,456.56, reimbursing them for back FBA payments and current-year underpayments.

The settlement involved 12 teachers and cost the district more than \$29,000. Even though some of those teachers are not OEA members, they all benefited from OEA's tenacity.

"This district made a mistake, but I don't think it was done intentionally,"

See "Advocates" on Page 12

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Delegates honored to carry the message

Sense of unity found at NEA Representative Assembly

By Stacy Martin

Oklahoma's delegates were overwhelmed by the honor of carrying Oklahoma's message to the National Education Association's Representative Assembly recently in Los Angeles.

Nearly 100 Oklahomans were among the roughly 8,000 delegates who met in California to help chart the year's course for the NEA.

First-time delegate Margaret Bujold had not realized the magnitude of the event she was undertaking.

"My rookie year was definitely an eye opening experience," said the Tulsa school teacher. "I met tons of people. I especially liked talking to people who are doing the same things we are, such as the Adequacy & Equity Project."

Indeed, she was struck by the fact that educators across the nation are fighting for the same causes as Oklahoma. That gave her a sense of camaraderie and unity and galvanized her commitment to education issues even further, she said.

Bujold said she also enjoyed watching parliamentary procedure in action. She did not personally speak during the process, preferring instead to watch and learn.

"I loved that I finally saw how things worked," she said. "The biggest thing I realized is how teachers could not (want to be) a part of this. They're the ones who make up NEA and make all these things we do at the national level happen. They shape the guidelines such as which items go and which don't. It's amazing."

The RA covered topics of critical importance to creating great public schools for every child. NEA President Reg Weaver, who was elected to a second term, called for a new covenant with the nation in support of that goal.



NEA delegates backed their California Teachers Association (CTA) colleagues with a rally at RA in protest against Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's broken promises to schools and his anti-school employee ballot initiatives. OEA members Pat Ritter (left) and Candye Chavez (center) were part of a 300-member march to deliver resolutions to the governor's Los Angeles office. Ritter and Chavez are joined here by (from left) OEA President Roy Bishop, CTA President Barbara Kerr and CTA member Lisa Buckner.

The six hallmarks of his covenant are:

- parental involvement,
- fixing and funding the so-called No Child Left Behind Law,
- high quality instruction,
- high quality schools and support professionals,
- quality teachers in every classroom, and
- teachers who give their best to students every day.

"Remember that you are the keepers of the dream that represents the public in public education," Weaver told the delegates. "Let us call on the nation to give us its best so that we can give America's public school students our very best."

Weaver urged teachers, education support professionals, school administrators, higher education faculty, retired, and student members in attendance to carry the covenants of shared responsibility back to their schools, communities and states.

Oklahoma Education Association president Roy Bishop championed Weaver's plan.

"We must address excellence on all levels," said Bishop. "Our teachers in Oklahoma have always understood that achieving excellence in our public schools requires commitment on many levels."

"It is a well known fact that Oklahoma teachers give their very best every day under very challenging circumstances."

Veteran Idabel delegate Carolyn White couldn't agree more.

"Until all stakeholders in education are responsible, we aren't going to have the extremely excellent education system that we are all striving for," said the southeastern Oklahoma teacher, a delegate since 1989.

NEA delegates backed their California Teachers Association (CTA) colleagues in protest against Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's broken promises to schools to the tune of \$2 billion and his anti-school employee ballot initiatives. The Governor "borrowed" \$2 billion from California schools last year and failed to repay it this year as promised.

Weaver led a rally highlighting

school funding issues across the nation by drawing attention to California's situation. The rally was followed by a two mile march of about 300 NEA members from all 50 states and Washington, D.C., to deliver a petition against the governor's actions to his downtown Los Angeles office.

White supported the action regarding Schwarzenegger.

"I was very pleased that we were proactive in stepping out in front to help our California educators," said White "What happened in California happens somewhere else a little later. California just gets it first."

White is also well-versed in critical political issues that are debated at the RA, which is one reason she enjoys participating so much. White said she is very proud to be part of the Oklahoma contingent.

"We ask the tough questions and truly vote the conscience of the people of Oklahoma," White said. "We attend all the sessions and stay focused on the business at hand. Every single one of us thinks about the people back home and votes accordingly."

Putnam City ACT delegate Candye Chavez was one of two Oklahomans chosen to march to Schwarzenegger's office to deliver the proclamation against his action towards public education.

"He called us a special interest group. That's right and I'm very proud of it too," said Chavez, a special education teacher at Putnam City High School.

Among other highlights, Weaver announced a nationwide effort to attract and retain quality teachers and education support professionals. NEA will mobilize its members to fight for a \$40,000 minimum starting salary for teachers as well as enhanced pay for veteran teachers and an appropriate living wage for other school personnel.

Members determine OEA's direction, service offerings

"I am the NEA."

That phrase symbolizes the very essence of the National Education Association, as well as its state affiliates such as the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA). NEA/OEA are products of its membership. It is not a group of people in a Washington, D.C., ivory tower making decisions for the masses.

Those four short words – I am the NEA – aptly and simply describe the 2.7 million-member organization. The NEA and its state affiliates are volunteer organizations run by mem-

bers. They set the tone and direction of the Association, and guide staff through projects and services that benefit members. From budgets to legislative agendas to how OEA's annual convention operates, members have final approval.

The democratic nature of OEA is what sets it apart from other professional education associations.

Each April, the OEA Delegate Assembly convenes to vote on a budget and consider action items that direct the work of the Association. The delegates are elected by their local Associations from around the state. They represent the interests and concerns of their colleagues during the annual meeting.

Much of OEA's work is established by standing committees (see the box to the right). Every three years, the OEA president appoints members and chairs for the various committees. Each group meets at least twice a year on "Committee Saturdays" in the fall and in February.

The committees are charged by the OEA Board of Directors to review and enhance the programs and services of OEA. They make recommendations to the Board for changes or additions to those services.

Locally, volunteers are the lifeblood of the OEA. From building representatives to bargaining

teams and officers, local Associations spread the word of the organization, mobilize members for a variety of projects, and keep the ideals of public education alive.

"Volunteers are more than just the backbone of our organization," said Roy Bishop, OEA president. "They are the legs, the minds and the voice of the OEA. We're only as good as our local leaders, and we have some very dedicated, dynamic leaders. We are able to achieve so much because of them."

There are volunteer and leadership opportunities in the Association for every member, from local to state to national levels. Get involved with your local, be an active part of public education's proudest advocate.

"Volunteers are the legs, the minds and the voice of the OEA."

Center for Governance

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Committees offer volunteer opportunities

Standing committees of the Oklahoma Education Association provide a great opportunity for members to have a voice at the state level. If you are interested in serving on a state committee, send an email with your request to President Roy Bishop at rbishop@okea.org.

For a look at the charges of each OEA committee, visit www.okea.org/Governance/committee.htm.

- Affiliate Relations
- Budget
- Collective Bargaining
- Communications
- Constitution and Bylaws
- Convention
- Credentials
- Elections
- Education Support Professionals
- Forces on Education
- Human and Civil Rights
- Instruction and Professional Development
- Legal and Corporate Services
- Legislative
- Member Benefits
- Political Action Committee
- Resolutions
- Review Board
- Standing Rules

LA gala

Members of the Oklahoma delegation at the NEA Representative Assembly in Los Angeles attended the Human and Civil Rights Banquet prior to the annual meeting. Among OEA's group were (top row, left to right) Vice President Becky Felts, President Roy Bishop, NEA Director Linda Hampton of Pleasant Grove, (bottom row) Janet Stearns, Tulsa CTA; and Joie Estes and Diane Hill, both from Muskogee. Also attending, but not pictured, were Anne Witte, OEA-OKC; Katherine Bishop, Putnam City ACT; Executive Director Lela Odom; and Associate Executive Directors Charles McCauley, Bruce Hunt and Dr. Dottie Caldwell.

Organizing is an art for education support professionals

By Bruce Treadaway

It happened in Lawton with the privatization of certain support services.

It happened in Boone-Apache when 25 ESP employees were threatened with a reduction in force (RIF).

It happened in Crooked Oak when the ESP local decided to bargain its first contract.

It happened in Broken Arrow when the AFT petitioned for the right to bargain.

It happened in Checotah when a bus driver was threatened with loss of his job.

The above situations may or may not be familiar to Education Support Professional (ESP) members of the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA). These situations do occur, though, and when they do the OEA is there with over 100 years of experience in assisting ESP lo-

cals to organize and to address the diverse situations that develop surrounding each of the issues.

ESP organizing is an art. Some ESP individuals have innate skills that allow them to lead, organize and execute plans. General rules should be followed when organizing or revitalizing an ESP local. No special order of events or activities fits all situations, but the following are essential:

Usually a common concern brings an ESP local together, such as:

1. Unfair treatment;
2. Threat to job security, benefits or working conditions;
3. Arbitrary decisions by administrators;
4. No one listens when concerns are voiced; or
5. Strength in numbers.

- Paternity support enforcement
- Powers of attorney
- Uncontested divorces
- Uncontested adoptions (stepparent adoptions only)
- 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

PLSP offers unique security

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

Leaders must be identified, recruited and trained.

1. ESP locals must take control of their actions, and leaders must be in place to make that happen.

2. Every ESP group has to have a spokesperson, but there should be a constant recruitment and training of new leaders to assist and assume control when needed.

3. OEA/NEA organizers should assist local ESP leaders, not vice versa.

4. Membership or a sense of belonging must be strong.

5. It takes a community. One person, or even a few, can't do everything.

6. Strength comes from numbers.

It's not enough to voice support. Membership and dues support are essential for the success of any ESP local.

Structure is important. An ESP local should have:

1. A constitution – rules to follow.

2. Dues structure – activities require financing.

3. Officers – President, vice president, secretary-treasurer, building reps, and committee members.

4. Meetings – the only way to conduct local business.

5. Activities – show the local is alive and dynamic.

6. Elections – vital to the health of a local.

7. Delegation of power – The president and executive committee can't do it all.

8. Communication – A method of regular communications is essential, no matter the size of the local.

9. Support/assistance – State and national organizations are essential and provide added value of membership.

When an ESP local is formed, much

Electronic field trips to Williamsburg offered

The Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence is offering scholarships for Oklahoma public school teachers in grades 5 and 8 to receive subscriptions to the 2005-06 series of Colonial Williamsburg Electronic Field Trips. Applications, which will be accepted

of the above takes place, or else there would be no need to organize. When an ESP local has atrophied and become nonfunctioning, it is more difficult to arouse members and nonmembers to action. Past experience, good or bad, comes into play. Personal feelings and past relationships may be present and probably will inhibit whatever the ESP local is attempting to accomplish.

As the old adage says, "Each generation must fight its own battles." This is true with education associations just as it is for any other group. When any situation becomes unbearable, petty differences must be put aside and individuals must work together to accomplish a common goal.

Success does not come without planning, organizing and execution of the plan that develops. Success will happen if an ESP local will utilize its own power with the added strength of organizers from the OEA/NEA. More ESP employees are joining the OEA/NEA daily, so the opportunities for local ESP organizing will continue to grow.

The most important aspect is to respond when the opportunity presents itself. Ignoring a situation in hopes that it will get better doesn't work. Thinking that a family situation exists where administration or management will take care of everyone is a pipe dream, eventually leading to weakness and an inability to act.

It is never too late to organize, and it is never too late to take control of any local situation, whether it be bargaining, privatization of services, member rights, communicating with the public or media, or training or lobbying at the state and national levels. The OEA and the NEA are there to help every step of the way.

through September 12, are available at www.ofe.org.

Each subscription to the Electronic Field Trip series normally costs \$500.

For more information, contact Brenda Wheelock at 405/236-0006 or email bwheelock@ofe.org.

Communication is key for a strong local

By Jeff Savage

Have you been in a group and it seemed like no one ever knew what was going on? Did you notice that the group seemed to be disorganized and possibly dysfunctional? Did it seem like only a few in the group did most of the work?

So, just how do you make the local Association more effective?

One of the most important attributes of a good Association is its ability to effectively communicate with its members. Regardless of the size of your membership, every local should take time to study the best methods for communicating with its members.

There are numerous ways to communicate within your group. External communication occurs through this publication, *The Education Focus*, which is a monthly newspaper for all OEA members. If members have home email addresses, they may sign up for the "OEA Insider" and receive a weekly e-newsletter with information on timely issues facing the Association and public education in Oklahoma.

Another external communication is through the website, www.okea.org. The site provides valuable information with numerous links to other sites of interest to people concerned

with education in Oklahoma.

No matter how top-shelf the printed communication may be, nothing is more effective than personal, face-to-face communication with members or potential members. OEA staff makes every possible effort to meet with each local on request as well as spontaneously.

The communication techniques that OEA utilizes can also be effective in a local Association. A monthly newsletter to each member, or a welcome back letter to all members and potential members outlining the goals of the organization are good examples. A website may be effective for a local to get information distrib-

uted in a timely manner.

Whatever methods you choose, make sure your members know what is going on. It's very demoralizing to hear about what's happening in your local from outside sources.

Before you get overwhelmed at the prospect of any of these methods, be sure and contact your regional communications specialist for assistance in any of these forms of communications.

Your Association can not represent you without your involvement! Your voice needs to be heard and your help is needed in communicating the Association message to others.

SOEA project named nation's best

The Student Oklahoma Education Association (SOEA) Outreach to Teach Project was recently named Outstanding Communities Learning through America's Schools (CLASS) Project for 2004-05. The honor was presented at the annual National Education Association (NEA) Student Leadership Conference in Los Angeles in late June.

In March, SOEA's Outreach to Teach tackled the enormous task of refurbishing several areas of Oklahoma City's Willow Brook Elementary.

In addition to SOEA, local student chapters and state affiliates nominated for the Outstanding CLASS Project Award included projects from Wisconsin, Kansas, Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois and Massachusetts.

Representing Oklahoma at the Student Leadership Conference and Honors Banquet were Katy Cook, SOEA president and a student at Langston's Tulsa Campus; Marty Imhof, University of Science and Arts; Jen Lakely, Katrina Oldham, Kynda Yates, and Amanda Rogers, Northwestern Oklahoma State; Beverly Warden, Northwestern Oklahoma State SOEA advisor; Jerry Warden, Alva EA member; and Floyd Cox, SOEA student organizer.



Northwestern Oklahoma State Student OEA advisor Kristal Randall and her husband Brian paint Willow Brook Elementary's sign during March's Outreach to Teach, a project named the nation's best student project at a recent national conference.

Center for Communications

Communications Specialists

Marty Bull

Tulsa Metro Team
mbull@okea.org
800/331-5143, 918/665-2282

Doug Folks

Southwest Team
dfolks@okea.org
800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

Stacy Martin

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Maureen Peters, Team Assistant
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Dr. Dottie Caldwell

Associate Executive Director
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Maybe. Maybe not.

Supreme Court rules both ways on Ten Commandments issue

By **Brandon Webb**
Associate General Counsel

When I started law school, if someone asked for a legal opinion I had no idea what my reply should be. After three years of law school, when asked for an opinion I could answer with confidence, "it depends."

From Your Counsel

In light of the latest U.S. Supreme Court decisions concerning the posting of the Ten Commandments, the Supreme Court Justices apparently received the same legal training I did. The Court looked at two separate cases of displaying the Ten Commandments in public places, reviewed the facts, studied the law, gave deep thought to each issue, and said ... "it depends."

We begin in Texas

The grounds surrounding the Texas State Capitol cover 22 acres and are sprinkled with 17 monuments and 22 historical markers which commemorate the people, ideals and events that comprise Texan identity. One of those monuments stands six-feet high by three-feet wide and has the Ten Commandments inscribed upon it. This monument was given to the State of Texas in 1961, by the Fraternal Order of Eagles (FOE), a social, civic and patriotic organization. The FOE provided free Ten Commandment displays to states across the country in an effort to reduce juvenile delinquency.

Forty years after the Commandment monument was donated, a man who frequently visits the Texas State Capitol believed that the granite structure violated the First Amendment and sought legal action to have the display removed from government property.

In a 5-4 decision handed down in June (*Van Orden v. Perry*), the Supreme Court ruled that the Ten Com-

mandments monument in question did not violate the Constitution and could remain on the State Capitol grounds. The Court's opinion asserted that even though the Commandments monument is religious, it also has a historical purpose in this case.

The Court claimed that the inclusion of the Commandments configured among other historical monuments had a dual significance, encompassing both religion and government. This dual purpose, coupled with the fact that no one had challenged its presence in 40 years, led the Court to conclude that the Commandments monument was constitutional and should remain in place.

Notwithstanding its ruling, the Court reiterated its position that there are limits to displays of religious messages and some religious displays could still violate the constitution. The Court made a point to reaffirm its 1980 decision in *Stone v. Graham*, which held that posting the Ten Commandments in public schools can be unconstitutional.

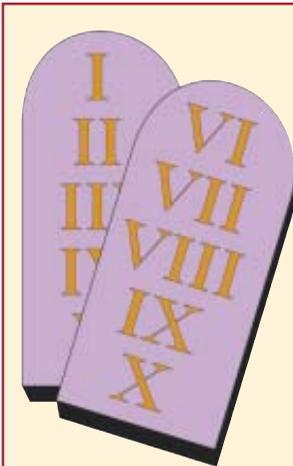
On to Kentucky

On the same summer day when the Texas opinion was issued, the Court also ruled in *McCreary County, Kentucky v. ACLU*, that framed copies of the Ten Commandments which had been displayed in Kentucky county courthouses could not be posted.

After a lawsuit was filed complaining about the Ten Commandments being posted on courthouse walls, the Kentucky counties added eight smaller documents around the Commandments. As the legal challenges contin-

ued, the counties changed attorneys and revised the displays again, making all documents the same size. The ancillary documents included copies of the Declaration of Independence and The Star Spangled Banner.

In the Kentucky case, the Court was again divided 5-4. However, this time the majority ruled that a Ten Commandments display was unconstitutional. Unlike the Texas case, the majority said the primary purpose of the Kentucky displays was to advance



The U.S. Supreme Court looked at two separate cases of displaying the Ten Commandments in public places, reviewed the facts, studied the law, gave deep thought to each issue, and said ... "it depends."

religion and, therefore, violated the First Amendment. Moreover, the Court said it could not find an analytical or historical connection between the Ten Commandments and the other documents which were part of the display.

Nevertheless, the Supreme Court acknowledged that its own courtroom depicts Moses holding the Ten Commandments, and readily admitted that under the right context and purpose the government can display the Commandments or other religious symbols.

In requiring the removal of the Kentucky Commandments, the majority once again referenced *Stone v. Graham*. Twenty-five years ago, the Court ruled in *Stone* that copies of the Ten Commandments posted in public schools were unconstitutional due to the lack of an educational purpose and the primary effect of advancing religion. Even though the Commandments were purchased with private contributions and contained



Brandon Webb

small print on the bottom of the display stating that the Commandments helped form U.S. law, the Court held the display still violated the First Amendment. The Court maintained that religion which is integrated into the curriculum and used in appropriate study can be constitutional, but did not occur in this instance.

To post or not to post?

So how do these two diverse opinions affect government-sponsored religion in Oklahoma schools? Well, it depends.

The question of placing religious displays on government property remains a very "fact-specific" question. While the Court may allow the government to post religious displays which have a historical or educational purpose, the Justices continue to affirm the special nature of public schools, the need to avoid the appearance of promoting religion to impressionable children, and the unconstitutional nature of state sponsored messages which have the primary purpose of advancing religion.

Staples stores love teachers

Each August, local Staples outlets host a Teacher Appreciation Day. Teachers receive a goodie bag with discounts worth at least \$250, and some local stores add their own giveaways.

Check with your local Staples for the date of its Teacher Appreciation Day. Visit www.staples.com to find the Staples nearest you.

Legal Liaisons will soon begin collecting evidence

By Marty Bull

OEA's Adequacy and Equity Project will take a major step this fall toward seeking a legal ruling that ensures a constitutionally adequate education for every child in Oklahoma.

Beginning in September, the OEA Office of the General Counsel will begin the arduous task of collecting information from teachers, support employees and parents to begin preparing evidence to support the case for adequacy and equity.

First presented at the 2004 Delegate Assembly, the three year Adequacy and Equity plan includes not only litigation and legislative components, but increased membership organizing efforts and collective bargaining support.

An important component of the litigation strategy is building the Legal Liaison infrastructure. Legal Liaisons will be the electronic connection between school sites and the OEA litigation team. According to OEA President Roy Bishop, A & E Legal Liaisons need to be prepared to gather information to share with the

Legal Department.

"We are moving forward and making our case for adequacy and equity," said Bishop. "When the OEA Legal team begins soliciting stories of inadequate funding, it's imperative that our Legal Liaisons respond immediately and accurately."

Bishop also encourages local Associations to continue to build the Legal Liaison electronic network. "The more people we have involved, the more compelling our stories of inadequate funding will be."

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. If you are interested in serving in this

capacity contact your local Association president or register online at www.okea.org/A&E.

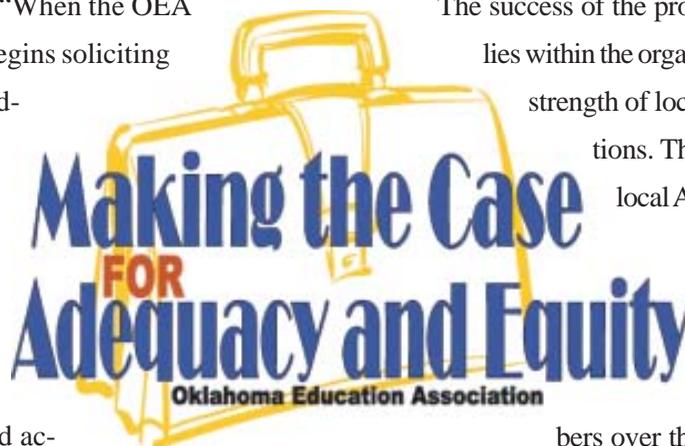
The success of the project also lies within the organizational strength of local Associations. The work of local Associations in recruiting over 740 new members over the course of last year was a sign of the commitment local leaders have to building a strong organization.

"To meet our goals, we must continue to build strong locals by connecting with teachers and support professionals," said Bishop. "I challenge every local to take the time to talk one on one with every potential member and ask them to join us in our quest to adequately fund education."

The project's bargaining support phase has given birth to an invaluable tool to help bargaining teams prepare for negotiations. Unveiled at this year's Advocacy Conference, teams now have access to a dynamic search engine that allows them to review one entire contract or search all available contracts for a specific topic.

In addition, the password-protected website provides links to other research materials such as the Oklahoma School Law Book, the OEA Green Book and district by district financial information. Over 40 locals have already transmitted their contracts online and now have access to the data provided.

To learn more about what you can do to help make the case for adequacy and equity, visit www.okea.org/A&E or look for updates in this publication and the *OEA Insider*, a weekly e-newsletter.



Advocates never back off

Continued from Page 5

Williams said. "The frustrating part was getting them to agree to remedy the underpayment. That \$29,000 was no doubt difficult for the district to absorb, but it was money the teachers were legally entitled to.

"If we hadn't continued to discuss the situation with the district, I'm not sure those teachers would have ever received their money."

This story is a prime example of how OEA advocates work relentlessly for teachers and support professionals. What started as a simple question – "Am I being paid correctly?" – became a lesson in perseverance.

There were times when the underpayment issue could have been turned over to attorneys, which would have cost the district a great

deal more money in legal fees than just what it owed its teachers. Or, the SDE could have become involved by paying the teachers' the underpayment and withholding that amount from the district's future allocations. But with Cathy's patience and Williams' perseverance, the proper settlement was reached.

It is unfortunate that problems like those Cathy faced happen at all, but OEA members can take comfort in knowing they have help if those situations arise. If you think you are not being paid correctly, your job is being threatened, or even if you need help with a simple matter like responding to an evaluation, call your regional advocacy specialist.



"WE LOVE OUR ORGANIZED, EDUCATED, EDUCATOR PATIENTS."

Jon W. Blaschke, M.D.
Rheumatology

Patient-aware medical care for
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OEA membership includes benefits and discounts

Financial Services Programs

- OEA Visa Gold Card with fixed interest rate of 9.49 percent and no annual fee, offered through the *Oklahoma Educators Credit Union*. 800/324-8259

Insurance Programs

- Home health care in custodial, intermediate and skilled care with no lifetime maximum through *National Teacher Associates*, which also offers specific dread disease coverage. 800/825-5682
- Permanent cash value insurance through *Horace Mann Insurance Company*. 800/999-1030
- Whole life plans available through *American Fidelity Assurance Company*. 800/654-8489
- Disability Income Protection and

Group Life available through *American Fidelity Assurance Company*. 800/654-8489

Investment Programs

All programs provide no-cost, financial planning and tax reform seminars with products that feature choice, consistent performance and flexibility:

- *NEA Valuebuilder* 800/632-8258
- *American Fidelity Assurance Company* 800/654-8489
- *Horace Mann Insurance Company* 800/999-1030

Discount Programs

- *Flowers USA* – Send fresh flowers, plants, balloons and gift baskets from Flowers USA. Save 15 percent by referencing department code #1052. Call 800/243-3687 for delivery

anywhere in the world.

- *Jiffy Lube* – A subsidiary of Pennzoil Company, Jiffy Lube will honor a 10 percent discount for standardized fluid maintenance services at any participating Jiffy Lube service center. Just show your OEA membership card. 800/252-0554, ext. 6838

- *American Automobile Association* – AAA will waive the one-time enrollment fee of \$15 for any OEA member when joining. Access this discount by contacting Carol Turner Bales at AAA, 800/926-9922.

- *Oklahoma Today Magazine* – Subscribe to *Oklahoma Today* and learn about the people and places of Oklahoma. Members receive six issues full of award-winning stories and photographs for \$17 per year. Call 405/521-2496 or 800/777-1793 and mention OEA to receive this rate.

- *Vantage Deluxe World Travel* – The largest organization providing affinity group travel. As such, it can offer the best values and the highest quality programs in the market place to OEA members. 800/634-2180.

- *Oklahoma Breast Care Center* – Providing discounts on mammograms, ultrasound and litescan. 405/755-2273, or 877/349-8677

- *Bose Corporation*, makers of highly acclaimed audio products, offers special pricing to OEA members on all Bose home-audio products. Whether in

your office, classroom or home, just imagine yourself surrounded with Bose concert like sound! Bose Corporation has the perfect pricing just for you. Special OEA pricing is available through the Educators Direct Group at 800/643-2673, and press 2.

- *Journey House Travel* offers special travel packages and the capability of recommending alternative itineraries with possible lower fares. They can offer some discounted hotel and car rates with their increased buying power through their affiliation with American Express. Journey House provides \$300,000 insurance coverage on every airline ticket issued by the agency at no cost to the traveler. Call 405/843-9447 or toll-free at 800/737-9447 to make your travel arrangements.

- *LaQuinta Hotel* offers an OEA special rate with up to 35 percent off, available at participating hotels. There are over 375 LaQuinta Inn and LaQuinta Inns & Suites locations nationwide. 800/531-5900

- *AmeriPlan Dental Services* can save up to 80 percent on Dental Services. \$11.95 per month for an individual membership, or \$19.95 per month for your entire household. 877/349-3625 or 405/550-0170

- *Alamo NEA Car Rental* program offers discounts up to 25 percent off using I.D. Number 613575 and rate code by coupon DB31. 800/354-2322

- *Hertz NEA Car Rental* offers member discounts at participating locations in the U.S. and around the world. Use discount number 0050655. 800/654-2210

OEA EDUCATORS WELCOME TO EDUCATOR ACCESS!

What is Educator Access?

Educator Access is a group discount program created specially for OEA members. Printed right on your membership card, the Access logo is honored at over 100,000 locations, saving you up to 50% on purchases you make every day.



How Does It Work?

1. Find offers from education-supporting merchants in your area.

Log in to the members-only portion of the OEA Web site using the ID number on your membership card. Then, browse the online savings directory of participating merchants by entering the city or ZIP Code where you are – or plan to be. You'll instantly get a list of discounts and special offers in that area.

2. Redeem your offer.

Click on a merchant from your list and follow its redemption instructions. *Note: Some merchants may ask for a coupon when redeeming your discount. These merchants are clearly identified in your search results by the words "Coupon required." To get your coupon, click the merchant's name in your search listing, then click the "print coupon" icon on the following page.*

3. Enjoy the savings.

With your membership card, you can save up to 50% on everyday purchases like:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| • Fast food | • Movie tickets | • Hotel rooms |
| • Casual dining | • Video rentals | • Vacation packages |
| • Dry cleaning | • Family entertainment | • Luxury cruises |
| • Auto service & repair | • Golf | • Outdoor recreation |
| • Health & beauty products | • Ski passes | • And a lot more... |

Who Supports Educator Access?

Among the 110,000+ name-brand retailers in the program, here are just a few we think you'll recognize:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| • Dell Computers | • Mrs. Fields Cookies | • A&W |
| • Valvoline | • Meineke | • ChemDry |
| • Best Western | • Holiday Inn | • The Sharper Image |
| • Carnival Cruise Lines | • Pearle Vision | • FTD.com |



Questions? Contact Educator Access at:
1-877-428-4692 • customerservice@memberweb.com • www.okea.org

Important Association dates for 2005-06

Oct. 1 – Student OEA Fall Conference, Oklahoma City

Oct. 20 – OEA Convention, Tulsa Convention Center

Nov. 13-19 – American Education Week

Nov. 16 – Education Support Professional Day

Feb. 24-25 – OEA Advocacy Conference, Waterford Hotel, Oklahoma City

Feb. 27 - March 3 – Read Across America Week

March 3-4 – Student OEA Convention, Oklahoma City

April 28-29 – OEA Delegate Assembly, Oklahoma City

June 30 - July 5 – NEA Representative Assembly, Orlando, FL

Membership pays!

Value found in products and services offered through NEA

Association Provided Insurance

Your membership includes \$1 million in civil liability insurance, and \$35,000 in criminal liability. Also, you receive \$1,000 in accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D) insurance, plus an additional \$4,000 if the accident occurs on the job with additional coverage available through American Fidelity Assurance. (800/637-8489)

Life Insurance Programs* (800/637-4636)

NEA Preferred Term Life Plan – Provides \$100,000 to \$500,000 of very affordable life insurance for healthy members.

NEA Term Life Insurance Plan – Provides decreasing term insurance with benefit amounts ranging from \$50,000 to \$150,000. Optional spouse and dependent coverage.

NEA AD&D/AD&D Plus Insurance Plan – You can cover your entire family with AD&D insurance. Choose from plans with rates starting at \$19 per year and coverage options up to \$520,000.

NEA DUES-TAB® Insurance – Free coverage for eligible members. DUES-TAB is a special benefit that pays up to \$50,000 in AD&D insurance or dismemberment that occurs on the job or while acting on Association business, and a \$150,000 benefit for death due to unlawful homicide while actively engaged in their occupation.

NEA Guaranteed Issue Life Plan – For NEA members 50 and older – you cannot be turned down for coverage.

NEA Level Premium Term Life Insurance Plan – Provides up to \$250,000 of decreasing term life insurance coverage with a premium that does not increase. Receive a special 20 percent discount when you purchase a minimum of \$40,000 or \$100,000, depending on your age.

NEA Home Protection® Plan – Life insurance benefits of up to \$300,000 with optional disability benefits.

Health and Disability Insurance Programs (800/637-4636)

NEA MemberCare® Critical Illness Program – Up to \$100,000 protection against the financial disaster caused by catastrophic illness. Pays a lump-sum benefit to member upon first diagnosis of a wide array of critical conditions.

NEA MemberCare® Long-Term Care Insurance Program – Provides financial support in paying for necessary long-term care services like nursing home, home health care and assisted living facility care.

NEA MemberCare® In-Hospital Plan – Helps you pay the “extra” expenses associated with a hospital stay.

NEA MemberCare® Medicare Supplement Program* – Coverage for hospital and medical expenses not covered by Medicare after age 65. It includes a supplemental discount package and hard-to-beat prices. You get to choose your own doctor.

NEA Income Protection® Plan – Helps replace your income if you are out of work due to illness or injury.

Casualty Insurance Programs

NEA Members Auto & Home Insurance™ – An auto and home insurance program designed to meet the needs of NEA members, with exclusive rates and excellent benefits. It's all made possible by NEA Member Benefits and a unique collaboration of insurance providers managed by California Casualty. (800/800-9410)

NEA Homeowners® Insurance – Provided through Horace Mann, this plan offers inflation-proof protection for owners and renters at school and at home. (800/999-1030)

Savings, Deposit and Investment Programs (800/637-4636)

NEA-sponsored, FDIC-Insured Money Market Account – Superior yields with easy access to your funds.

NEA-sponsored GoldCertificate® CD – Some of the highest yields in the nation. FDIC in-

sured up to \$100,000 per depositor, with terms from six to 60 months.

NEA Valuebuilder® Program – Build a retirement nest egg with the only annuity and mutual fund program sponsored by the NEA. (800/632-8258)

Credit Programs (800/637-4636)

NEA Line of Credit® – Access a credit line between \$500 and \$25,000** using personalized checks.

NEA Credit Card Program®*** – Superior benefits exclusive to NEA members with the NEA Platinum Plus MasterCard®, NEA Premier Gold® MasterCard®, or the NEA School Days® MasterCard®. Benefits to members include no annual fee, low introductory rates, travel benefits and competitive interest rates.

New NEA WorldPoints Program – Earn 1 point for every dollar spent. Redeem points for cash, travel and merchandise rewards.

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NEA National Board Certification Loans – A low-cost line of credit designed to cover the assessment fee for National Board Certification. (800/637-4636)

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Special Discount Programs (800/637-4636)

NEA Car Rental Programs – Enjoy free unlimited mileage and special year-round savings when you rent a car from Hertz or Alamo through the NEA Car Rental Program.

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(800/637-4636)

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- NEA Homeowner's Insurance
- NEA Tax-Deferred Annuities
- NEA MemberCare Long-Term Care
 - A Simple Guide to Home Financing
 - Understanding Medicare and Medicare Supplement Insurance
 - How Much Income Protection Do You Need?
 - NEA Survivor's Guide
 - Managing Credit
 - 23 Financial Mistakes You Can't Afford to Make
 - Healthy, Wealthy and Wise
 - Understanding the Taxpayer Relief Act
 - Disability Income Insurance Consumer Guide

*Provided by the NEA Members Insurance Trust®

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For more information, contact your NEA Member Benefits Consultant:

Liz Picone
800/609-6580
lpicone@neamb.com

NEA Member Benefits Member Service Center (800/637-4636)

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (ET)
Hearing-impaired members call 800/445-1269 TTY.

www.neamb.com



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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.

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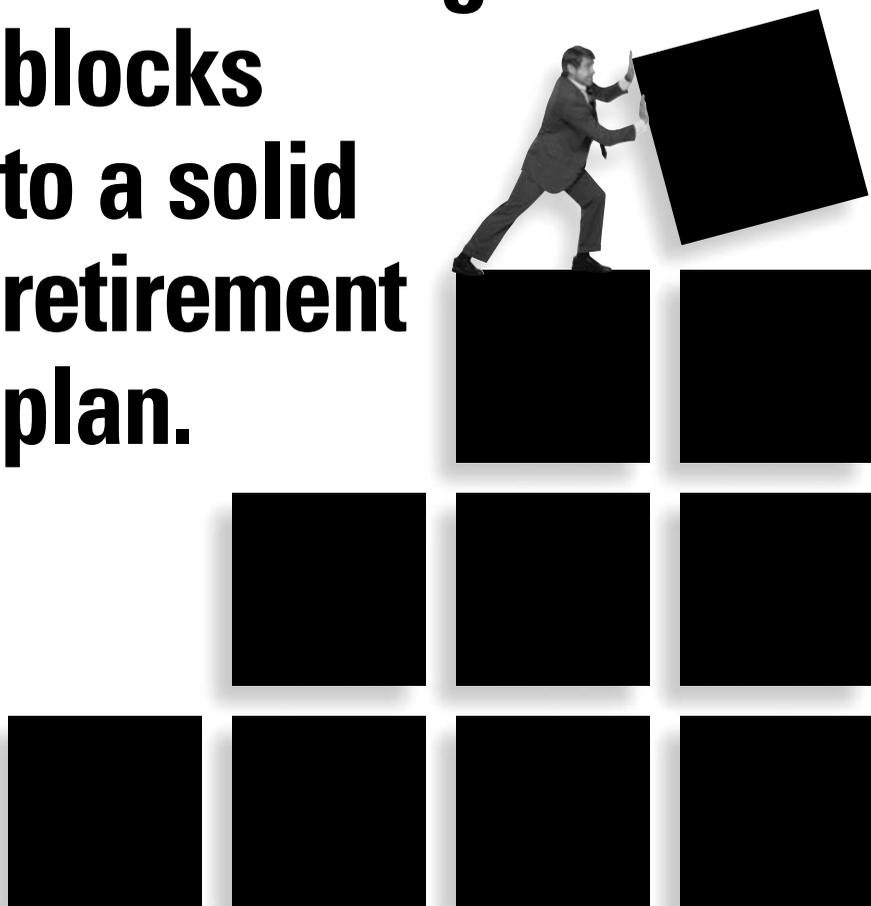
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Building a solid retirement plan takes knowledge and expertise. The NEA Valuebuilder® Program has a long history of helping educational professionals achieve their retirement goals. For more information on how we can help you achieve yours, call 1-877-NEA-8668, ext. 112655.



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Experts in Retirement Planning for Educators

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.

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“Highly qualified” deadline moved for paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals recently received good news on meeting “highly qualified” status, thanks to the work of the National Education Association (NEA) and its state affiliates.

The U.S. Department of Education has extended the deadline by which paraprofessionals must meet highly qualified requirements of President Bush’s so-called “No Child Left Behind Act.”

The deadline has been extended from January 8, 2006, to the end of the 2005-2006 school year. As a result of the change, the timeline for paraprofessionals working in Title I schools will be the same as that of teachers.

The extension, long sought by the NEA, was made public in a letter to Congressman Mike Simpson (R-ID) from Deputy Secretary of Education Raymond Simon in mid-June. The Idaho Education Association and NEA lobbyist Steve Nousen were instrumental in securing this big win for paraprofessionals.

In addition, the NEA worked closely through its partnership with the American Federation of Teachers to ask all state affiliates and state departments of education to call for the extension.

Retired life memberships still a bargain

Active members who are 45 years or older are eligible to purchase an NEA-Retired (NEA-R) lifetime membership, and for the next year that membership will be a real bargain.

NEA-Retired lifetime membership dues are currently \$100, but are expected to double in September 2006.

There are numerous NEA services and discounts that you enjoy as an active member and will want to keep when you retire. You must be an NEA-R member to continue receiving those discounts and services.

To buy a lifetime membership in NEA-R, send a check or money order today to the Oklahoma Retired Educators Association, P.O. Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154.

For more information on retired memberships in both the NEA-R and the Oklahoma Retired Educators Association (OREA), call Tonia Caruthers at 800/522-8091. A complete list of benefits for NEA-R members can be found at www.neamb.com.

NEA grant deadline coming in September

There is still time to write a proposal for The NEA Foundation’s Innovation Grants and Learning and Leadership Grants.

All proposals received by September 15 will be reviewed, with notification by February 15, 2006.

Applications for these grants are accepted on an ongoing, year-round basis, so it’s never too late to apply. Proposals received after September 15 will be considered in the next review cycle. 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 nationwide program that’s good for the environment and great for public schools.

All members who are practicing K-12 public school teachers, education support professionals and higher education faculty and staff at public colleges and universities are encouraged to apply. Grant amounts are either \$2,000 or \$5,000.

Applying for a grant is easy. Visit www.neafoundation.org today for more information, including guidelines and a downloadable application; or call 202/822-7840.