

# OEA

An affiliate of the  
National Education Association

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

# The Education Focus

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association

May 2005

## True friends of education

*Gov. and Mrs. Henry given OEA's highest honor*

*By Doug Folks*

Many a politician has won an elected office on the promise that education would be his first priority.

Shawnee's Brad Henry made such a promise and pulled what many consider a major upset to win the governor's mansion in 2002. But there are two major differences in his promise and the standard "education first" campaign pledge: He made good on his promise almost immediately, and his wife Kim was there encouraging his every move.

Unless you've been locked away grading essay tests for the last few years, you know that in two short years in office, Brad Henry has done more to improve public education than many politicians do in a career. And you also know that first lady Kim Henry, a former teacher and member of the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA), is a dynamic advocate for students, teachers and public schools.

Gov. and Mrs. Henry have been awarded OEA's highest honor, the Friend of Education, for their dedication and commitment to schools, the adults who work in them and the young people who grow up in them. The award was presented to the Henrys at OEA's awards banquet April 22.

"Working with Brad Henry is like working with a parent who is concerned for his child," said OEA President Roy Bishop. "He is someone who is genuinely concerned about every student and every teacher in Oklahoma."

A short list of Gov. Henry's accom-



*Gov. Brad and Mrs. Kim Henry are both great ambassadors of public education. The governor has made good on campaign promises to place education first at the Capitol; and the first lady, a former high school teacher and OEA member, promotes education at many of her speaking engagements. This photo appears on the first page of the governor's official website, and was taken by Mark Zimmerman of The Edmond Sun.*

plishments includes:

- > Raising teacher pay to the regional average by 2007-08;
- > Paying 100 percent of teachers' individual health insurance premiums;
- > Pumping an estimated \$221 million a year into education with the passage

of the Education Lottery and Tribal Gaming Compact;

- > Earmarking \$2 million for early childhood education;
- > Creating a fully-funded endowed chair program at state colleges and

*See "First lady brings" on Page 3*

## *No test required for special ed teachers to meet "highly qualified"*

Special education teachers in Oklahoma will soon know exactly what they must do to be considered "highly qualified" and meet the requirements of President Bush's so-called "No Child Left Behind Act."

Oklahoma Education Association (OEA) President Roy Bishop, Associate Executive Director Dr. Dottie

Caldwell, and Teaching and Learning Specialist Larry Miller recently attended a meeting of stakeholders regarding the state's Highly Qualified Multi-Subject HOUSSE for Special Education teachers. The Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) meeting also included representatives

*See "Special ed matrix" on Page 2*

# An AYP for legislators

By Roy Bishop  
OEA President

As I write this column, the April 1 deadline to “Put Education First” has come and gone without an agreement. The House leadership and its staff, who championed education issues during the last election cycle, has not only failed to follow through, but they’ve ignored the law.

In this case, there is no penalty for not following the law. It is another misuse of the public’s top priority. I’ve reached the point where I’m fed up with these self-serving people who will release all kinds of great sound-bites in support of schools, but won’t stick to their own mandate when it comes to getting it done by the deadline.

Everyone talks about accountability,

## *Special ed matrix expected to be similar to regular education HOUSSE*

*Continued from Page 1*

from the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation and the State Regents for Higher Education.

The group reviewed the state’s proposed HOUSSE (Highly Objective Uniform Statewide Standard of Evaluation) and decided on a number of technical details surrounding the building of the matrix. One important outcome was that elementary and secondary special ed teachers will both determine their highly qualified status from the same HOUSSE.

“The best thing to come out of this process is that special ed teachers will not have to take a test to be highly qualified,” said Bishop. “That was OEA’s biggest goal. Our special ed teachers have more than proven their worth as educators, and they don’t need to take another test to prove it.”

Instead, special education teachers will complete a matrix similar to Oklahoma’s HOUSSE for regular edu-

but where is theirs? If education misses a deadline, a benchmark score, or any other of a thousand mandates (many of them unfunded), we hear about it. And not only do we hear about it, we have to deal with condemnations and new legislation that makes

*Perhaps the best way to make legislators accountable is to give them their own AYP – “Are You Progressing.”*

it more difficult for our kids, teachers and schools to be successful.

Perhaps the best way to make legislators accountable is to give them their own AYP. For schools, AYP is “Adequate Yearly Progress,” which must be met or risk losing everything. However, for legislators we’ll call it the

education teachers. Holding National Board Certification in special ed will automatically earn highly qualified status.

Other details of the HOUSSE will be available when it is released by the SDE later this spring.

“Larry Miller is our staff expert on special education and he was involved with the State Department throughout every step of the process,” Bishop said. “He made sure our members concerns were met.

“No other education association has had as much input in the special ed HOUSSE as OEA.”

“Are You Progressing” in efforts to put education first. AYP is a yearly mandate for schools, but since legislators work only 90 days each spring, we’ll judge them on a weekly basis.

- **Week 1** – Fail to meet AYP and nothing major happens except that you will be required to answer questions from the media on why you ignore the law that you wrote.

- **Week 2** – You move to the first week of Legislator Improvement (LI). The state will give eligible voters the option of voting in the next election in a legislative district of someone who voted to put education first.

- **Week 3** – You move to week 2 of LI. Governing by press release is prohibited. Eligible voters who stayed in your district are given the option of using representatives from the Oklahoma Education Coalition to explain why “put education first” was ignored.

- **Week 4** – Your 3<sup>rd</sup> week in LI. You will continue all the previous activities but also be required to do at least one of the following:

- replace your staff
- have OEA members appointed to assist you
- extend the legislative work week
- contract with a member of the opposite party to meet the AYP.

- **Week 5** – Your 4<sup>th</sup> week in LI means that you must plan for redistricting. You must replace your staff, be prepared to step-down, and turn your district over to the governor.

- **Week 6** – Your 5<sup>th</sup> week in LI



President Roy Bishop

means that you must implement your redistricting plan. The governor will set a special election in your district for failure to meet “Are You Progressing” to put education first.

We will hear from those who failed to put education first. They will tell us that we don’t know how the legislature works, and that we aren’t in their shoes day in and day out at the Capitol.

They will tell us that it’s difficult to work with members of the opposite party and all of the constituents who ask so much of them. They will tell us that if they read all of the bills that were written, they’d have to work on Thursday afternoons – and all day Friday!, which they don’t do now – and late into weekend nights. And they will tell us that it’s not fair to judge them on a “one-size-fits-all” law.

Accountability can be a wonderful thing, especially if you are truly committed to it. But when you use it for political gain, you should be prepared to deal with the criticisms and consequences.

The governor and Senate have put education first, it’s now time for the House to do the same.

# OEA

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# First lady brings teacher's perspective to the Governor's mansion

Continued from Page 1

universities; and

> Providing full funding for the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program (OHLAP), the state college scholarship program.

This session, Henry's education program includes funding for all-day kindergarten and more training for math teachers.

"Gov. Henry truly understands the meaning of long-term commitment. He understands how providing quality education is the best way to grow our state economically," Bishop said.

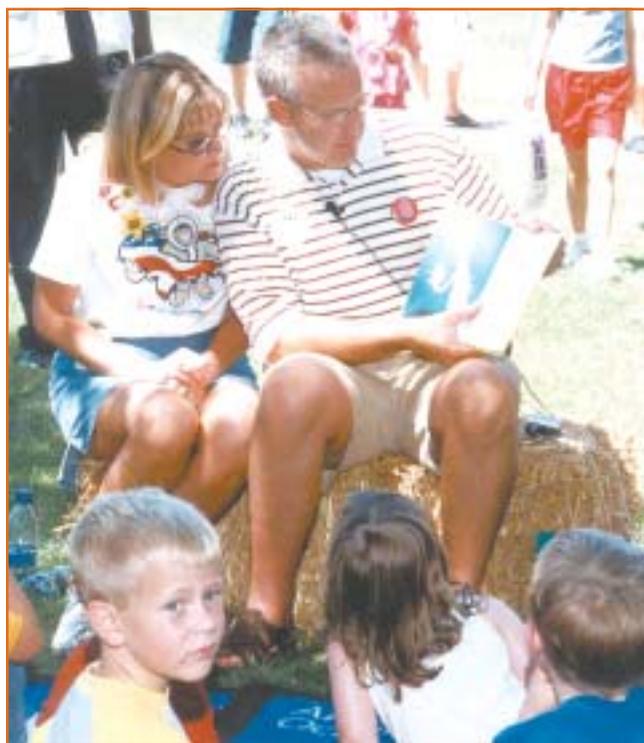
If you haven't seen Kim Henry talk to a crowd about the importance of reading or how dedicated Oklahoma teachers are, then you've missed a chance to be truly inspired.

"Kim brings a teacher's perspective to our state's highest office," Bishop said. "She's one of us, and she's a mom, too. When she talks about teachers and the success of students, you just know that our state has the right two people in the Governor's Mansion."

OEA has been giving the Friend of Education award since 1988. Past



recipients have included *Oklahoma Observer* editor Frosty Troy, Tulsa philanthropist Henry Zarrow, former Gov. Henry Bellmon, the late Congressman Mike Synar, and John Rex, chief operating officer of American



Fidelity Assurance.

"It's a great compliment to be mentioned in the same breath with all of those honorees, no matter what the subject, but obviously, I am honored to be recognized for my contributions to education," Gov. Henry said. "The roots of public education run deep in my family, and it is very gratifying to be honored for my work in such an important area."

Kim Henry expressed the same gratitude.

"It is an honor for me to receive the Friend of Education award," she said. "As a mother of three and a former high school teacher, I have a special love for the world of education, and so it is a sincere and wonderful honor for my efforts to be recognized by the education community."

Kim added that her position has offered her a unique role in Oklahoma education.

"One of the best things about being first lady has been the opportunity to have a role in setting education initiatives," she said. "Although I dearly miss being in the classroom, one consolation has been the ability to travel throughout the state and press forward with reforms to elevate Oklahoma's public education system to even

greater heights."

While Gov. Henry is proud of his accomplishments for education so far, he still has goals to reach before leaving office.

"First, I want to keep the commitments we've made thus far. It's critical that lawmakers fund my plan to raise teacher pay to the regional average," he said. "My goal is not just to meet the regional

average but to exceed it, and that's what I will be aiming for in the years to come.

"I believe we have the best teachers



and schools in the country, but historically, we haven't done a good job of providing them with the resources they need. My focus will remain on improving school funding and support."

In a recent OEA education poll (see page 12), 91 percent of OEA members and 86 percent of nonmembers said they have a favorable attitude toward Gov. Henry. One could expect that rating to remain high, or even rise, as the Henrys continue their work for education from the Governor's Mansion.

What OEA members say about . . .

Gov. Brad Henry

*"It's been a long time since we had a governor who has done so much for education. I know that Gov. and Mrs. Henry are very sincere in their efforts."*

Dian Bell, secretary, Checotah High School

*"With the Education Lottery, Gov. Henry looked for a new source of revenue for education. He didn't just identify a problem without bringing an answer."*

Connie Jenson, 3rd grade teacher, Newcastle Elementary

*"Gov. Henry's proposal to get us to the regional average salary is right on target for what we've been looking for. He gives us a new lease on the prospect of staying in the classroom."*

Steve Hawkins, 2nd grade teacher, Vinita Elementary

1st Lady Kim Henry

*"Kim has added a realistic perspective of teaching to the governor's office and to the legislature. She's done the same thing as a mother, too. She is genuinely concerned about her own children, but also every student in Oklahoma."*

Sabra Tucker, 3rd grade teacher, Sequoyah Elementary, Shawnee

*"It's nice to have someone like Kim Henry in our corner. She's been there. She understands about going into the classroom everyday and seeing kids at their best and at their worst."*

Greg Johnson, vocal music teacher, Mustang High School

*"Oklahoma's children are lucky and all of our futures are brighter because Kim Henry is not a First Lady who happens to be a teacher — she is a teacher who happens to be First Lady."*

Carolyn Crowder, NEA Executive Committee Member and 4th grade teacher in Mustang

# Stockley provides loud, clear voice for academic freedom

By Doug Folks

The Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association last year found itself fighting both with and against the Tulsa School Board on three different issues of academic freedom. Each battle required quick, organized efforts. In each case, TCTA provided a constant voice for teachers and academic freedom, prevailing, at least temporarily, in each instance.

Steve Stockley, TCTA president, has been awarded the OEA Advocate

## Advocate for Academic Freedom

for Academic Freedom Award for his determined and proactive leadership in these three “landmark” events.

Behind Stockley’s leadership, TCTA

- fought off elimination of the Academic Freedom Policy from the TPS School Board Manual;
- opposed an effort to force Tulsa high school teachers to teach the same lesson the same way on the same day; and
- provided a consistent voice of reason over the offering of a professional development workshop on teaching about the Arab world.

When the Tulsa board proposed eliminating the district policy on Academic Freedom, one Tulsa teacher described the action as, “...an outright attempt to dictate not just a vision for what is taught, but the minute details for how this vision is delivered.”

TCTA, through Stockley, provided the sole voice to argue the policy’s retention. Stockley lobbied board members and shared the concerns of his members with the board and the administration. Thanks to his efforts, the Board Policy Committee voted to withdraw the proposed removal.

While nothing official has ever been

sent to teachers, TCTA members at Tulsa high schools continue to report that the idea of a “lockstep district syllabus” is being considered. As word of this trend began circulating, Stockley quickly formed an ad hoc committee on curriculum to investigate the threat to academic freedom.

Stockley was able to gain written agreement with the district’s curriculum director that Tulsa Schools determine “what” is taught, the state and

district can determine “when”

something is taught, but the teacher still has the right, within professional standards, to personally create and perform “how” a subject is taught.

In October 2004, the Tulsa schools offered its teachers a workshop en-

## Rachel Maze does it all for Tulsa students

By Doug Folks

Rachel Maze is the ultimate volunteer, giving of her time and leadership year round. Luckily for the students of Tulsa Public Schools, she gives unselfishly of herself for education.

For all that she does for education, Maze has been awarded the OEA’s F.D. Moon Educational Award. Established in 1972, the award is presented annually to a person who has contributed significantly to the advancement of education for students.

Maze is the first two-time winner of the Moon award, having also won it in 1992.

She first volunteered when her sons entered public school. Since then, Maze has worked for the Parent Teachers Association, serving two terms as president for the Tulsa Coun-



Tulsa CTA President Steve Stockley took on three separate issues during the last year, each time providing a strong voice for academic freedom.

itled, “Content and Strategies for Teaching About the Arab World.” The Saturday workshop was clearly publicized as “...voluntary and for information only.” Still, a very small but very vocal group of religious and political extremists bombarded local media demanding the workshop be censored.

Again, TCTA, through Stockley, was the voice of reason. In spite of scores of calls from angry and threatening individuals, Stockley defended the workshop and

the right of teachers to gain more knowledge to help them teach children. His work did not go unnoticed.

“This scares me. I have never seen such hysteria demanding censorship,” said a local journalist. “I’ve never seen people who claim to be religious stir up such pure hatred. TCTA has changed my opinion of unions forever. No voice has been louder, clearer and less fearful in the defense of academic and constitutional freedom than (TCTA).”

cil of PTAs and serves today as the Council’s parliamentarian.

She has worked alongside teachers as a science enrichment volunteer and a guest reader in classrooms. Maze has promoted education by working with Tulsa Public Schools’

Partners-In-Education, the Tulsa Metropolitan Ministries, the Tulsa Metro Chamber of Commerce, the Tulsa Education Fund, and, most recently, as director of the Foundation for Tulsa Schools.

“TPS had not passed a school bond issue in years until Rachel became chairman of the Tulsa Public Schools Bond Development Committee in 1995,” writes Robyn Sanzalone and Dan Tanner in their nomination of

Maze.

It was Maze’s leadership that helped create a 20-year plan that would fairly and adequately address the needs of Tulsa students. She has been the guiding force behind millions

of dollars in fund-raising through bond issues and through the Foundation.

As successful and giving as Maze is, her desire for the spotlight and recognition is almost nonexistent, says Steve Stockley, Tulsa CTA president.

“Ms. Maze is one of the most humble, kind and charitable people I have been honored to meet,” Stockley says. “Her newspaper clippings and citations would fill notebooks, yet she has kept almost nothing.”

## F.D. Moon Educational Award

# Leadership team creates support network

By Patti Razien

An amazing team of teachers from the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association is mentoring new teachers through a dynamic project.

The New Teacher Initiative Leadership Team is this year's winner of the OEA Excellence in Education award

## Teachers Teaching Teachers

for "Teachers Teaching Teachers." The prize recognizes OEA members for their outstanding contributions in instructional excellence with students and colleagues.

The NTI Leadership Team consists of six teacher consultants of the Oklahoma State University Writing Project and two members who joined the team two years ago as new teachers and are now mentoring other new teachers within the Tulsa district. They work side-by-side with new teachers to empower them in their classrooms.

Comprising the NTI Leadership Team are East Central High School teachers Eileen Simmons, English; Greg Stiver, art; Brad Cagle, math; Stephanie Cagle, social studies; Jo Anne Stafford, English; Jennifer Potts, Choteau Elementary 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher; Donna Berryhill, Fulton Teaching and Learning Academy resource teacher in professional development; and Patricia Mumford, Cooper Elementary co-director of the OSU Writing Project.

Combined, these eight teachers represent 124 years of teaching experience, five Teachers of the Year, and two National Board Certified Teachers.

For the past four years the OSU Writing Project and Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) have collaborated to create the New Teacher Initiative, which creates a support system for new teachers within the Tulsa Public Schools. The target audience is Tulsa teachers in their first three years of teaching. The goal is to

support them and to help them be successful in their classrooms.

Monthly meetings for these new teachers are held to teach various educational strategies. At the end of each meeting, the new educators have the opportunity to discuss their needs and the strategies they would

like to learn. During the summer, there are two week-long

mini institutes during which teaching strategies are modeled and new teachers are introduced to research that underlies the strategies.

Besides addressing the needs of new teachers and increasing teacher retention in TPS, all teachers, both new and seasoned, become or continue to be reflective practitioners and continue to build a community of professional teachers.



Members of Tulsa CTA's New Teacher Initiative Leadership Team are (clockwise from bottom left) Eileen Simmons; Stephanie Cagle; Patricia Mumford; Greg Stiver; Dr. Britton Gildersleeve, director of the Oklahoma State University Writing Project; Jennifer Potts; Donna Berryhill; Brad Cagle; and JoAnne Stafford.

## PC's Rice nurtures new composers

By Patti Razien

Mozart and Beethoven better watch out! Under the guidance of Vivian Rice, Putnam City fifth graders are learning to write rhythm and add notes to compose their own songs.

A music specialist for grades 1-5 at Coronado Elementary, Rice is being honored with the Oklahoma Education

Association's Excellence in Education Award for Teachers Teaching Students.

Composing a song, then learning the symbols to express it, permits the student to experience the transmutation of ideas and feelings

into music and the transcription of that music into signs that are meaningful to others. This contributes to student's musical and cognitive growth.

Once the compositions have been completed and performed, Rice guides the students to evaluate their work.

"Creativity is not taught, only guided. Students are natural inventors of song," she said.

Rice has taught music in Putnam City Schools since 1994. Before that, her professional career centered on music, whether as a musician, vocalist or music coordinator.

She is a National Board Certified Teacher who has won numerous awards and honors including Excellent Educator, Teacher of the Year in 1997-

1998, presenter at the Oklahoma Music Educators Association, and winner of over 10 grants from the Putnam City Foundation.

"I believe teaching involves my body, mind and spirit. Teaching is helping and allowing students to learn," she said. "I guide students to be active participants in their learning. I share my love for music as I adapt to the children's learning style.

"With a safe and secure environment my students involve themselves singing, playing instruments, studying music theory or music history, or dancing."

To the students of Coronado Elementary, Vivian Rice is music to their ears.

## Teachers Teaching Students



Putnam City's Vivian Rice

# Dedication, leadership earn Perea ESP Award

By Doug Folks

Michael Perea joined the Oklahoma Education Association because he realized the organization could provide him with support and some real benefits.

But he also joined because he felt he might be able to give something back as well. That “something” turned out to be dedication and leadership.

## Support Professional of the Year

Those attributes and the results of his enthusiasm have earned Perea the OEA Education Support Professional of the Year Award.

Perea is a bit of a renaissance man in Chickasha.

- By day, he is technology assistant

for Chickasha Public Schools, overseeing the installation, maintenance and repair of some 900 personal computers throughout the district.

- As CASE president, Perea is strengthening the local by getting members involved in the organization and developing leaders for the coming years.

- Away from the job, Perea is senior pastor for Freedom Fellowship, a small, nondenominational Christian congregation that occupies a storefront church in downtown Chickasha. It’s right next to the pool hall if you are looking to visit.

He is also chaplain for the Grady County Jail and Grady Memorial Hospital, speaks at graduation and conducts the baccalaureate.

“Whether wearing his technology hat, his CASE hat or his counselor’s (pastor’s) hat, Mr. Perea is always in the service mode.

He genuinely cares about the people he serves and never shirks any responsibility set before him,” wrote Robyn McLemore, Chickasha’s director of education programs in her nominating Perea for the ESP award.

The most tangible result of his work as CASE president was a huge jump in membership. He was able to sign 50 new members at the first meeting of the school year for the largest increase in members of any Oklahoma support local.

Perea’s plan to grow CASE hasn’t

stopped with a great meeting to open the year. He has held meetings with guest speakers throughout the school year, and is grooming several members to one day step into office and keep CASE growing.

“I try to make our meetings relevant to their lives,” he said. “I’ve tried to show them how we can combine our voices to be a stronger organization.”



No matter which hat Chickasha Association of Support Employees President Michael Perea is wearing, he is always providing service.

# Bargaining is a year-round process in Putnam City

By Doug Folks

The Putnam City Association of Classroom Teachers (PACT) operates with a philosophy that bargaining isn’t something relegated to the summer months. Instead, negotiations are a continuing process that includes open and ongoing discussions with the school board and administration.

This attitude towards bargaining and PACT’s organization surrounding the process has earned the local OEA’s 2005 Collective Bargaining Award.

It’s hard to pinpoint a beginning to something that never really starts, but January can be seen as the top of a continuing circle. That’s when filing opens for seats on the bargaining team. In February and March, the PACT Executive Committee interviews candidates for the team and recommends a slate of candidates for the building reps to vote on.



Members of the Putnam City ACT bargaining team include (from left) Jody Williams, Vicki Vaughan, Vivian Rice and Katherine Bishop. Not pictured are Jan Sands, Candye Chavez, Bruce Hubbard and Rhonda Lee.

In April, the team sets goals and develops a survey in which members tell the team what issues need to be addressed during negotiations. Survey results are tabulated in May and a written request to bargain is sent to the administration.

Using results from the survey, PACT bargains with the school

board in June and July, and wraps up a settlement in August. The team provides a training session in October to help building reps and other interested teachers to understand the negotiated

agreement. And in January, the process starts again with filing for seats on the team.

Throughout the year, PACT’s bargaining team is communicating with members across the district.

“Our focus as a team is always, ‘How does this impact student learn-

## Collective Bargaining Award

ing,’” said Katherine Bishop, PACT bargaining spokesperson, of the team’s philosophy toward negotiations.

Last year, the team won a huge victory when they were able to get the district to agree to pay 35 percent of a salary protection insurance policy for every teacher. Bishop said a PC member has already been able to benefit from the true fringe benefit.

“I am so impressed with the way the team works with their administration,” said Pam Westbrook, advocacy specialist for the Oklahoma City Metro team. “When both sides focus on the goal of furthering student learning, the outcome of negotiations is always successful.”

# Byng science teacher is OEA's nominee for national award

By Bruce Treadaway

Byng secondary science teacher Deborah Cornelison is certainly a familiar face to many Oklahoma Education Association members. She has won over 10 professional awards, but she may well win the award that would imprint her with the success that she so richly deserves.

## Oklahoma's NFIE Nominee

Cornelison is Oklahoma's nominee this year for the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence. The top prize is \$25,000, a commemorative plaque and national recognition. Ten semifinalists will travel to Washington, D.C., for final interviews. From those, five finalists will be named. These five will receive the Horace Mann-NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence, which includes \$10,000 cash and an expenses-paid trip to the awards



Byng science teacher Deborah Cornelison, surrounded by some of her students, is Oklahoma's nominee for the National Foundation for Instructional Excellence Award.

gala in Washington, D.C. These awardees are considered finalists for the \$25,000 national prize.

This reporter spent some time in Cornelison's class recently, and just taking pictures proved difficult because she is a whirlwind of activity with each of her students receiving a tremendous amount of attention. Comments from

her students were, "She explains things so well. It's easy to understand in her class," and "She wants us to always do our best."

Todd Crabtree, current Byng Schools administrator and Cornelison's mentor teacher when she began her career, says, "I know Deborah Cornelison to be truly dedicated to

teaching. From my perspective as an administrator, a former science teacher, and a parent of two students she taught, I feel that you could find no one more deserving of this award."

Cortney Timmons, a former Byng student says, "Many Byng students can tell success stories, and none could have happened without Ms.

Cornelison's inspiration and guidance. Ms. Cornelison believed in us and helped make every outcome positive. She taught us not only science, but also discipline, responsibility, perseverance and everything else it takes to be able to celebrate excellence."

On the eve of her OEA recognition, Cornelison received word that one of her ninth grade science research teams in the U.S. Army's eCYBERMISSION contest won first place in the Southwest/Pacific region. Each student will receive a \$3,000 savings bond and travel to Washington, D.C., in June to present their project. The Byng students will be competing against three other teams for the \$5,000 national award. This is the first Oklahoma team to win the regional award.

Tireless and professional, Deborah Cornelison's influence will be felt for generations to come in the Byng community and in Oklahoma.

# Legislators step out front for education

By Patti Razien

Each year the Oklahoma Education Association recognizes an outstanding legislator who has been instrumental in the formation and passage of educational reform benefiting the educational



Sen. Kenneth Corn

employees of Oklahoma.

This year, Sen. Kenneth Corn and Rep. Terry Harrison share the honor of OEA's 2005 Outstanding Legislator for the work they have done in the field of public education. Corn, (D-Howe) represents Senate District 4, which includes Leflore and Sequoyah Counties. Harrison, (D-McAlister) represents House District 18, which includes parts of McIntosh and Pittsburg Counties.

During the 2004 legislative session, Corn continued a well-established pattern of leadership and support for Oklahoma public schools as he served as author of the OEA teacher salary bill which will bring Oklahoma teachers' salaries to at

## Outstanding Legislators

least the regional average over a four-year period. In his role as chairman of the Senate Retirement and Group Health Committee, more than any other legislator, he provided leadership to grant a cost-of-living raise to current retirees and made benefits more equitable for all classes of future retirees.

Harrison's short tenure in the House has been marked by courage and determination to do what is right for Oklahoma's public education and school employees. He was the House author of HB1968 to bring teachers' salaries to at least the regional average

over the four-year period.

In addition, he was a recognized advocate for improved education funding, enhanced retirement

benefits for teachers and other school employees, and a staunch opponent of those who would bring harm to the Oklahoma public schools in our state.

Both Corn and Harrison are champions of public education in areas of salaries, employee benefits, job security and school funding. With their persistent efforts Oklahoma's educational employees will continue to benefit.



Rep. Terry Harrison

# Best of the best

## 2005 OEA awards

**Friends of Education**  
Governor Brad Henry and  
First Lady Kim Henry

**Outstanding Legislators**  
Senator Kenneth Corn and  
Representative Terry Harrison

**Stan Bryant Political Action**  
Zone SW-A, Linda Long, Zone  
Director, and Charlene Bower,  
PAC Representative

**Advocate for Academic  
Freedom**  
Steve Stockley, Tulsa CTA

**Human and Civil  
Rights Awards**  
F. D. Moon Award  
Rachel Maze, Tulsa

**Excellence in Education –  
Teachers Teaching Students**  
Vivian Rice, Putnam City ACT

**Excellence in Education –  
Teachers Teaching Teachers**  
Tulsa's New Teacher Initiative  
Leadership Team – Donna Berryhill,  
Brad Cagle, Stephanie Cagle,  
Patricia Mumford, Jennifer Potts,  
Eileen Simmons, Greg Stiver, and  
JoAnne Stafford

**NEA Foundation Award for  
Teaching Excellence,  
Oklahoma Nominee**  
Deborah Cornelison, Byng EA

**Education Support  
Professional Award**  
Michael Perea, Chickasha

**Collective Bargaining  
Award**  
Putnam City ACT

### Marshall Gregory Awards

**Student Division – Print**  
Year Round Photojournalism  
Blaine Bertrem, Edmond North H.S.

Single Coverage Photojournalism  
Anthony Fernandez, Edmond North  
Single Coverage Photojournalism  
Nimisha Verma, Edmond Memorial

Single Event News Story  
Haley Doran, Edmond North,  
“Program Helps Get Freshmen Ready  
for High School Expectations”

Single Event Feature Story  
Kerry Dixon, Edmond North, “Far  
From Home, North Counselor  
Found Freedom”

Single Event Feature Story  
Taniel Longacre, Edmond Santa Fe,  
“Media Center Ghoulng Up  
For Teen Read Week”

Single Event Editorial  
Julie Brown, Edmond North, “Media  
Coverage of High School  
‘Threats’ Overdone”

Special Recognition Award – Year  
Round News Coverage  
Staff of the Ruff Draft, Edmond Public  
Schools; Edmond Memorial, Carol  
Heitz, adviser; Edmond North, Judy  
Ackerman, adviser; Edmond Santa Fe,  
Terri McGill, adviser

**Student Division – Video**  
Year Round News – Norman North  
Broadcast Class, Timberwolf Tracks

Single Event Feature Story  
Amina Benalioulhaj, Norman North,  
“Free Speech”

Single Event Feature Story  
Amanda Custer, Norman High,  
“SAT Changes”

Special Recognition Award  
Norman High, TNT Show, PSAs

### Professional Division – Video

Single Event Feature  
Janna Clark, Fox 23 News, Tulsa,  
“Rose Hill School”

Year Round Features  
Janna Clark, Fox 23 News, “Making  
Music,” “Full Day Kindergarten,”  
“Schools Attuned,” and “A Jazzier  
Facility”

Year Round Feature Series  
Ashli Simms, KOTV-Chan. 6, Tulsa,  
“Raising the Grade”

Year Round Series  
Joint Award KOTV Ch. 6, Tulsa, and  
KWTU Ch. 9, Okla. City, “Raising  
The Grade: Betting on Education”

Year Round Photojournalism  
Doug Johnson, FOX 23 News, Tulsa

Single Event Photojournalism  
Aaron Primmer, FOX 23 News, Tulsa  
“Making Music”

**Professional Division – Print**  
Single Event News  
Sean Kennedy, Tahlequah Daily Press,  
“Teachers, Parents Hope Special Ed  
Will Get Its Due”

Single Event Editorial  
Kim Poindexter, Tahlequah Daily  
Press, “Boards, Parents,  
Administrators Often The Problem,  
Not The Teachers”

Year Round Series  
Danaline Bryant, Lawton Constitution,  
“LPS School Bond Issues”

Year Round News  
Tulsa World's Community World,  
Delbert Schafer, editor, “Closing the  
Book on Central,” “Shaping Habits At  
An Early Age,” “Memorial Choir  
Doesn't Miss A Beat,”

Year Round Editorials  
Ken Neal, Tulsa World

**Golden Apple Awards**  
**External Communications**  
Edmond ACT – EACT Web Page,  
www.edmondact.com,  
Melanie Dry, webmaster

Mid-Del ACT – “School Board  
Candidate Forum,” Jamie McCoy,  
President

**Internal Communications**  
Professional Educators' Association  
of Lawton (PEAL),  
PEAL in Action newsletter

Edmond ACT – EACT Insight  
newsletter, Gail Williams and Dee  
Ann Wallar, Editors

Sand Springs EA, *In Focus*  
newsletter, Lynda Bynum and Shari  
Ogburn, Editors

Professional Educators of Norman,  
Printed Series of Communications,  
Sheri Childress, President

Tulsa Classroom Teachers  
Association, *TCTA Connection*  
newsletter, Steve Stockley, President

Tulsa Classroom Teachers  
Association, TCTA Email  
Communications, Steve Stockley,  
President

Tulsa Classroom Teachers  
Association, TCTA webpage,  
www.tulsateacher.org, Rachel  
Gunnels, Webmaster

### Special Communications Projects

Professional Educators' Association  
of Lawton (PEAL), PEAL 3rd  
Annual Golf Tournament, Ruth Ritter,  
Chairperson

### Five Star Local Program 5 Star Locals

*These local associations  
demonstrated excellence in all five  
program areas: Advocacy,  
Communications, Legislative and  
Political Organizing, Organizational  
Development, and Teaching and  
Learning*

Edmond ACT  
Enid EA  
McLoud ACT  
Mid-Del ACT  
Moore ACT  
PEAL (Lawton)  
PEN (Norman)  
Ponca City ACT  
Putnam City ACT  
Sand Springs EA  
Tulsa CTA

### 3 Star Locals

Mustang EA  
*Earned stars in Communications,  
Advocacy, and Teaching  
and Learning*

# Retirement Q & A

## *A look at some of the basics, and what could be on the horizon*

As employees in any industry near retirement age, they begin researching their retirement plans. They want to know exactly when can they retire with full benefits, and how much their pensions will be worth.

Education employees are no different. However, education retirement can sometimes be a little confusing. Structural changes to the Oklahoma Teachers Retirement System (TRS) more than a decade ago created employee subgroups based on the initial date of TRS membership. Therefore, it's impossible to cite one example and explain to every Oklahoma teacher, support professional and administrator how the law and TRS rules will impact them.

Below are some general questions and answers on retirement for education employees. There is also a look at the two-tier system that employees hired prior to July 1, 1992, fall under for retirement.

### **Q – When can I retire?**

**A** – Education employees can retire with full benefits when they reach a combination of years and service that total 80 or 90, depending on when the individual joined TRS. “Rule of 80” employees are those who joined TRS prior to July 1, 1992. These employees need 80 or more points to retire with full benefits. For example, 55 years of age plus 25 years of service equals 80 points. “Rule of 90” members joined the system on or after July 1, 1992. Their age and years of service must equal or exceed 90 points.

**Q – In 1987, teachers were required to sign a form capping their retirement based on either \$25,000 in annual salary or at**

**\$40,000. How do these two plans work?**

**A** – The \$25,000 or \$40,000 cap affects only Rule of 80 members. It says that retirement will be based on the average salary of the three high-

not paid all contributions and any applicable interest for any year after June 30, 1987, shall have the average salary limited to no more than \$25,000 for years of service performed prior to July 1, 1995.

form. Your school district should have also kept a record of your election.

**Q – My district didn't keep that information. Does TRS have a copy of my election form?**

**A** – Districts were supposed to send copies of the forms to TRS, but not all did. If a form cannot be found, it is assumed that the employee never signed one. However, TRS has a record of employee contributions and can determine whether contributions were made on income between \$25,000 and \$40,000 for the period in question.

**Q – What is the status of the TRS's unfunded liability?**

**A** – The TRS is at 47 percent of complete funding. It remains one of the most significantly underfunded, major public pension plans in the country. The current funding level has declined slightly in the last few years primarily due to enhanced retiree benefits and the legislative requirement that TRS assume a 1 percent annual cost of living allowance (COLA). The Education Lottery will supply a new revenue stream (5 percent of net proceeds). It is estimated the lottery will add between \$3 million to \$5 million to TRS in the first year of the lottery.

**Q – What are the definitions and differences of a defined benefit and a defined contribution retirement plan?**

**A** – A defined benefit guarantees a benefit at retirement, based on a calculation method that is not affected by any outside sources.

A defined contribution *does not guarantee a benefit*. Under this system, money contributed by you and/or by your district would be invested in

*See “No guarantee” on Page 14*

## The Two-Tier System

*Here is an example of how the two-tier system for retirement works. This formula applies only to Rule of 80 members of the TRS.*

In 1987, teacher Betty Jo Chalkboard elected to cap retirement contributions at \$40,000. Now, after 30 years of service, she is retiring. During her last three years of service, she averaged \$43,400, so her retirement will be figured on a two-tier system. Here is the calculation for Betty Jo's retirement.

16 (years of service before '95)  
x .02 (TRS retirement calculation)  
= .32  
x \$40,000 (the cap)  
= \$12,800  
÷ 12 (divided by 12 months)  
\$1,066.67 (unreduced monthly benefit)

14 (years of service after '95)  
x .02 (retirement calculation)  
= .28  
x \$43,400 (3 highest years)  
= \$12,152  
÷ 12 (divided by 12 months)  
= \$1,012.67 (unreduced monthly benefits)  
+ \$1,066.67 (pre-95 years)  
= **\$2,079.34 total monthly retirement**

est years of salary for which contributions were made.

If the final average salary is under \$40,000, that figure will apply to all creditable service years. If the final average salary exceeds \$40,000, the member will have a two tier retirement calculation (see the calculation chart in the box on this page). All years prior to July 1, 1995, will be calculated at \$40,000 and all years after July 1, 1995, will be calculated on the average salary for the three years of highest pay.

A member who elected to contribute only on compensation up to \$25,000 shall have the average salary limited to no more than \$25,000 for years of service performed prior to July 1, 1995.

A member who elected to contribute on compensation up to \$40,000, but has

**Q – What about the plan for Rule of 90 employees?**

**A** – Retirement benefits for Rule of 90 employees are based on multiplying 2 percent times the average of the five highest consecutive years of service times the number of years of service (e.g. .02 x \$45,000 average salary x 35 years = \$31,500). However, Rule of 90 employees hired before July 1, 1995, will have their retirement capped for those years before the '95-96 school year at \$25,000 or \$40,000, according to the election they made when they were hired.

**Q – I don't remember signing a document that capped my retirement contributions. How can I find out what I elected?**

**A** – Check your own records to see if you received and kept a copy of the

# Targeted locals attend national training

## Local leaders return with new energy, ideas

By Marty Bull

An intensive, week-long training session recently proved to be a great energizer for several local leaders, and some of them are already putting what they learned into action.

Oklahoma Education Association (OEA) Vice President Becky Felts recently headed a delegation of local Association leaders at NEA's *Strong Affiliates: Organized for Membership and Collective Action* conference. Held in St. Louis, the five-day training was a component of the NEA Great Public Schools Project that was launched here in Oklahoma in January.

Local Association presidents or their designees from each of the 11 targeted local OEA/NEA affiliates, along with Felts and OEA Associate Executive Director Charles McCauley, joined leadership teams from across the country to gain insight into building stronger locals. The interactive training model was built around a variety of skill sessions to assist local Associations in building strong foundations for

organizational development and membership recruitment.

Participants attended the skill session of their choice and then shared what they learned with other members of the leadership team. Each day offered plenty of team time, and the Oklahoma leaders took full advantage of the opportunity.

"I was impressed with the time allotted for brainstorming with our team," said Mid-Del ACT President Jamie McCoy. "It gave us the opportunity to develop ideas that we could use in our individual locals."

Not only did Oklahoma's participants have the opportunity to share ideas with one another but they were exposed to numerous suggestions from other states as well. One such idea was the 'Ask Me' button. The basic concept was to use the buttons during membership recruitment but after in-depth discussions, the Oklahoma delegation developed a much broader use.

"We want to use them throughout the school year as a visual signal to our members that the building rep has some important information to share," said Yukon EA President Alicia Priest. "I think that it will add to our visibility at the building level. You will definitely be seeing



OEA Vice President Becky Felts (far right) discusses lessons learned at a Great Public Schools skills session with attendees (from left) Jill Dudley, Moore ACT president; Jan Sands, Putnam City ACT president; and Jamie McCoy, Mid-Del ACT president.

'Ask Me' buttons in Yukon."

The combination of high energy and renewed emphasis on working with nonmembers inspired Putnam City ACT President Jan Sands to use her new skills immediately.

"It seems we spend so much time working with member rights issues, we forget to connect with nonmembers and sometimes with our members," said Sands. "I was so energized I went out, made a connection and now we have a brand new member."

Having Felts and McCauley play an active role throughout the training added to Professional Educators Association of Lawton President Judy Runnels overall positive impression of the training experience.

"Not only was the training fabulous from start to finish, we also had the opportunity to work with our state leaders," said Runnels. "Becky and Charles were part of the team every step of the way."

According to President Jill Dudley, the development of the Moore ACT Great Public School Organizing Plan and the opportunity to attend such an extensive training will help MACT implement some important organizational components.

"Networking with other Association leaders from across the state and from across the nation will go a long way in helping us meet our goals."

The participants will get a chance to continue their networking when the NEA Great Public Schools targeted locals meet again April 26-27 to discuss progress on their individual plans.

"I've really enjoyed the information sharing during this process," said Yukon's Priest. "It's great to hear other ideas and then try them back home."



Alicia Priest, Yukon Professional Educators Association



Judy Runnels, Professional Educators Association of Lawton president

# Myth vs. Fact

## Child Abuse Reporting

By Heath Merchen  
Associate General Counsel

The OEA Legal Department annually receives a large number of calls regarding child abuse issues. Sadly, countless members are misinformed about their reporting obligations and many districts run afoul of the statutory requirements. The following article is designed to help dispel the most common myths relating to child abuse reporting.

### From Your Counsel

**Myth:** If I don't believe the child's story, I don't have to report it.

**Fact:** Your job isn't to assess credibility, it is to report. However, if you do not believe the child's story, you should tell that to the DHS worker or police officer you contact. Reporting abuse doesn't mean acting as an advocate for the prosecution. Rather, you simply convey all information you possess to the DHS worker or police officer.

**Myth:** Telling my counselor or principal about the concern meets my reporting obligation, and if my principal tells me not to report, I don't need to.

**Fact:** We deal with numerous calls annually from school staff members who have been instructed by their principals just to tell the counselor or not to report the incident at all. The principal may not believe the child, wants to avoid dealing with angry parents, doesn't want a police investigation on his or her campus, hopes to duck negative press, etc. Regardless of the motivation, you have the obligation to report the alleged abuse yourself and no administrator can lawfully direct you to do otherwise or relieve you of your individual reporting obligation under the statute.

In addition, if your district procedure states or implies that you should let

someone else make the DHS call, you need to make the DHS call anyway (violate the procedure, not the law), but in all other respects follow the pro-

*Your job isn't to assess credibility, it is to report.*

cedures set forth in your district. In short, you have to report child abuse cases to DHS yourself regardless of your internal district procedures or your principal's directives.

**Myth:** If I didn't hear it first hand, I don't have to report it.

**Fact:** First hand, third hand, written on a bathroom stall, or an anonymous phone call – you have to report the alleged abuse. Every person “having reason to believe” a child is being abused must report it, and it is not your right to assess the credibility of the source.

**Myth:** If I call DHS and the person answering the telephone tells me not to report this type of incident again, I should do as they advise.

**Fact:** Many DHS workers are well informed, qualified individuals who will work to assist you and provide accurate answers. Some won't and many don't fully understand the laws they are supposed to enforce. Don't rely on their legal advice – make the call, and if it annoys the DHS worker, so be it.

**Myth:** If a child is in imminent danger, calling DHS is enough.

**Fact:** DHS is as understaffed and overburdened as any other state agency, and it is unlikely that they will be able to immediately respond to every situation where a child is facing imminent harm. In situations where you believe a child will be facing an imminent threat, call 911 in addition to DHS.

**Myth:** As long as I made the call, DHS will keep the record that I contacted them so I won't get in trouble for failing to report.

**Fact:** Sometimes they will, sometimes they won't. Especially in cases where the DHS worker tells you that the information you reported isn't reliable enough

to act on or doesn't constitute abuse, keep a record of the time and date you called, the name of the individual you spoke with, the number you called, and what information you conveyed.

**Myth:** Being strict or chastising a student constitutes child abuse.

**Fact:** While “threatened physical harm” to a child constitutes abuse, simply yelling at a child (while it may be inappropriate) does not meet the statutory definition of child abuse. The same is true of making a child feel guilty or embarrassing a child – even though it, here again, may be inappropriate and unprofessional conduct.

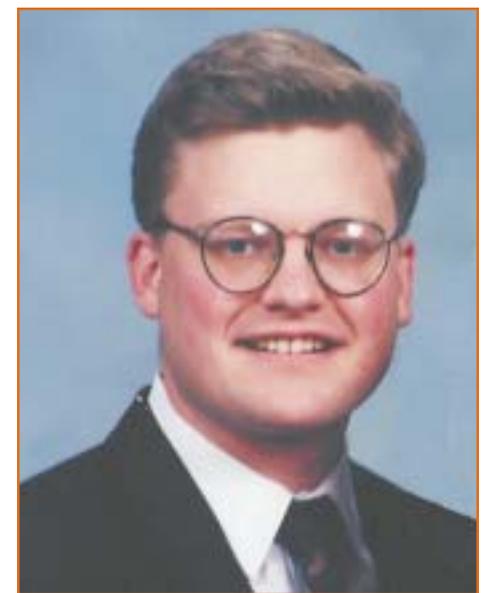
## NBPTS is looking for a few good assessors

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards® (NBPTS) is taking applications for national certification assessors.

The summertime employment pays \$125 a day, and offers graduate credit opportunities from several institutions. In addition, assessors are provided lunch and snacks while working 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. for two to three weeks.

Working as an NBPTS assessor is a unique professional development opportunity that offers in-depth interaction with other experienced teachers and exposure to more examples of teaching than most educators will typically see during their entire careers.

To qualify for the positions candidates must have:



Heath Merchen

Unfortunately, many districts in attempting to discipline staff members will apply the term “child abuse” to actions that, while not professional, in no way constitute abuse. Similarly, simply seeing a parent yelling at a child or exercising reasonable parental discipline (including spanking), does not constitute child abuse under Oklahoma law.

The above article by no means answers every child abuse reporting question, but hopefully gives you some useful guidance. The safest bet is to always keep student safety as your first priority and call your advocate with questions when specific concerns arise.

- a bachelor's degree,
- a valid teaching license or certificate,
- three years of teaching experience in a pre-K through 12 setting,
- be teaching at least halftime in the certificate area they are applying to assess, or be a National Board Certified Teacher® in the certificate area, and
- Not be a current or non-achieving candidate for National Board Certification.

For more information, call 1/800-22TEACH, or visit [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org).

NBPTS is a private, nonprofit organization governed by a board of directors comprised of education, corporate and government leaders, the majority of whom are classroom teachers.

# Members and nonmembers agree: OEA is moving in the right direction

By Doug Folks

An overwhelming majority of members believe that the Oklahoma Education Association is doing the right things.

Somewhat surprisingly, many nonmembers feel the same way.

The findings are from a telephone survey conducted by Hamilton Beattie and Staff for the OEA in mid-January. The polling firm called 400 members and 200 nonmembers, and the survey has a plus or minus margin of error of 4 percent.

“What was most encouraging about the results to me was that our members, and even the majority of nonmembers, see OEA in a positive light,” said Lela Odom, OEA executive director.

Among the more encouraging findings were:

- 95 percent of members and 60 percent of nonmembers have a favorable opinion of OEA;
- 74 percent of members and 36 percent of nonmembers think OEA is moving in the right direction. Only 30 percent of nonmembers think the opposite;
- 92 percent of members approve of OEA’s job performance; 61 percent of nonmembers agree;
- 80 percent of members say OEA works for their priorities while 44 percent of nonmembers agree. Only 29 percent of nonmembers disagree;
- Members (87 percent) and nonmembers (60 percent) both say OEA stands up for teachers; and
- 94 percent of members trust OEA’s information, and so do 68 percent of nonmembers.

“I was a little surprised to learn that

so many nonmembers see OEA in a positive light,” Odom said. “So many times we only hear negative comments from nonmembers.”

Hamilton Beattie asked members to rank their own priorities on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being a very high priority. The results also confirmed OEA is on the right track.

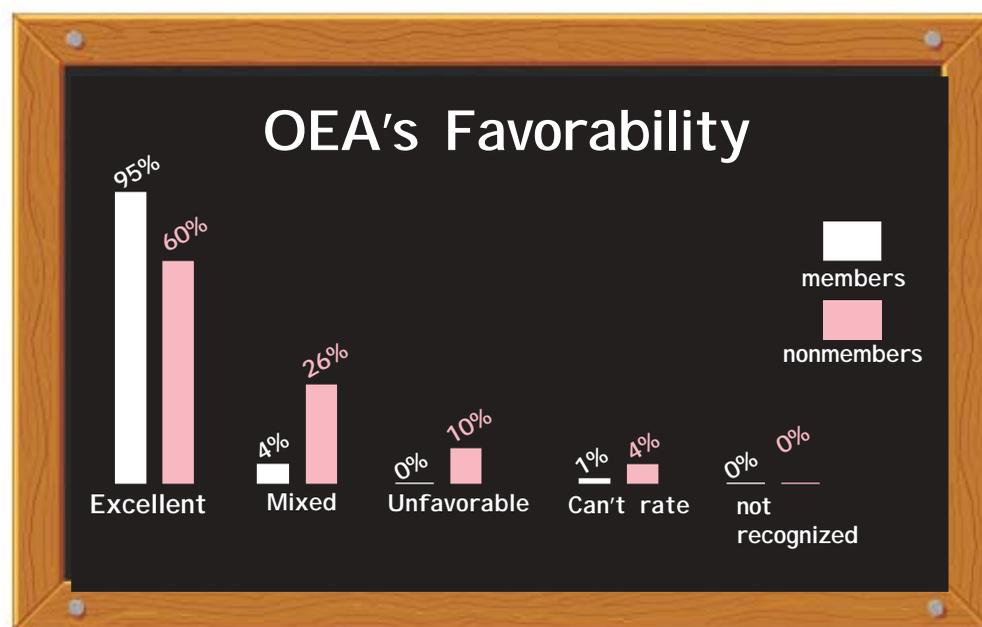
For instance, public awareness of education and protecting new revenue both averaged 9.2. Odom pointed out that OEA’s budget for 2005-06 reflects the two high priorities. The Association plans to dedicate money to reinstitute an image advertising campaign next fall and is continuing to pursue the Adequacy and Equity Project, which will ask the courts to determine the adequacy of current education funding.

“During our budget hearings last fall, we heard over and over again that members want us to bring back the media campaign,” she said.

While the majority of the information was positive for OEA, it also gave the organization some ideas of where to work harder. For instance, only 41 percent of members and 31 percent of nonmembers think OEA does a good job of reaching out to nonmembers.

Among its recommendations, Hamilton Beattie suggested the OEA develop talking points for local membership recruiters, increase email with nonmembers, and do a better job of reaching out and communicating with nonmembers.

“Polling information is important, and it is almost always helpful in keeping us on the right track,” Odom said. “We’ll use the polling data to strengthen our programs and our service delivery system.”



## NEA Foundation's grant review deadline is fast approaching

The NEA Foundation’s next round of Innovation Grants and Learning & Leadership Grants is right around the corner. As this school year comes to a close, why not send an application to begin planning for next year?

All applications received by June 1, 2005, will be reviewed, with award notification by November 15. Applications for these grants are accepted on an ongoing, year-round basis, so it’s never too late to apply. Grants fund activities for 12 months from the award date.

Innovation Grants and Learning & Leadership Grants are funded in part by Staples Recycle for Education, the nationwide program that’s good for the environment and great for public schools. Since July 2003, Recycle for

Education has helped raise more than \$1.8 million for public education!

NEA members received over 1,500 grants throughout the years. Innovation Grants and Learning & Leadership Grants are available for all subjects, including the arts, literacy, science, and technology.

All members who are practicing K-12 public school teachers, education support professionals or higher education faculty and staff at public colleges and universities are encouraged to apply. NEA now offers bigger and better grants – either \$2,000 or \$5,000 per project.

Applying for a grant is easy. Visit [www.neafoundation.org](http://www.neafoundation.org) today for more information, including guidelines and an application. Or call 202/822-7840.

# College aid cuts: Make your voice heard

By Reg Weaver  
NEA President

America's children need Drew Schnobelen.

He's a senior at a state university in Idaho, and studying to be a high school teacher. With a growing need for highly qualified teachers in America, he will be a welcome addition to any school.

It hasn't been easy for Drew, and college students like him, to complete their degrees and enter the workforce. In fact, it's getting harder and harder for middle- and low-income families to get the financial aid necessary to attend college and earn a four-year degree.

At many universities and colleges, tuition has skyrocketed – in some cases there are double-digit percentage increases from one year to the next. In Drew's case, that

means he'll be paying off \$25,000 in loans once he graduates. That's a lot of debt for someone just starting out on a teachers' salary.

Also, Congress is debating legislation that might make it even more difficult by further cutting federal aid for higher education in this year's federal budget.

In the Pell Grant program alone, formula changes already mean 90,000 middle- and low-income students would no longer receive a Pell Grant and an additional 1.3 million would see decreases in their allocation.

This decrease in assistance seems even more absurd when the average disbursement of the Pell Grant is only \$2,400 – an amount that pays for only a fraction of a semester at most colleges and universities.

It's amazing to me that some members of Congress will in one breath ex-



NEA President Reg Weaver

pound on the need to make America's workforce more globally competitive and then turn around and vote to decrease federal aid to higher education.

By doing this, Congress is not just hurting Drew's generation, but creating a cycle that will be felt for generations to come.

Without federal student aid, many

middle- and low-income families will not be able to provide their children with higher education, making it harder to get a good-paying job, making it harder for them to send their own children off to college.

Representative government requires participation. Unless we the people make our voices heard, members of Congress will continue to make choices that meet short-term political goals, rather than long-term economic and educational goals.

Let's make sure our voices are heard. Find out more at NEA's Legislative Action Center at [nea.org](http://nea.org).

It's time for Congress to really invest in our future, and make sure that students like Drew have access to higher education, so that America's economy can grow and succeed for generations to come.

## OEA elections results

# NEA Director Linda Hampton wins re-election

### NEA Director

Linda Hampton, Pleasant Grove CTA

### OEA Board of Directors/ NEA Delegate (Years 1 & 2 of 3-year term)

#### Zone Northeast B

John Lefler, Muskogee EA

#### Zone Northwest B

Carla Wilson, Guthrie ACT

#### Zone Okla. City B

Jan Sands, Putnam City ACT

#### Zone Okla. City D

Lori Burris, Mid-Del ACT

#### Zone Tulsa E

Janet Brewster, Broken Arrow EA

#### Zone Southwest E

Sheri Childress, Norman PEN

#### Zone Southeast B

Lawrence E. Lane, Checotah EA

#### Zone Southeast C

Sharon Hill-Wooten, Idabel EA 170\*

Deborah R. Tustin, Poteau 143

#### Zone Tulsa B

Patti Ferguson, Tulsa CTA 927\*

Sandy J. Conner, Tulsa CTA 157

### NEA Category I / Delegate-At-Large

#### Northwest

Mary Hamilton, Alva CT\*

#### Okla. City Metro

Roma Clark, Moore ACT\*

Sherrie Stout, Mid-Del ACT\*

#### Southeast

Ann Weaver, Muldrow CA\*

Lawrence E. Lane, Checotah EA\*

#### Southwest

Terrie Keck, Marlow ACT\*

#### Tulsa Metro

Dr. Karen Dawson, Tulsa CTA\*

Lupe E. Johnson, Tulsa CTA\*

Ana J. Ortega, Tulsa CTA\*

### NEA Category II (Administrators) / Delegate-At-Large

Todd Crabtree, Byng EA

### OEA Ethnic Minority Delegate-At-Large

#### 2005 OEA Delegate Assembly

Lupe E. Johnson, Tulsa CTA\*

Denise Rhodes, Quapaw CTA\*

Candas A. Bullock, Coweta EA\*  
Gerald Thompson, Bartlesville EA\*  
Sharon K. Hill-Wooten, Idabel EA\*  
Debra Hatler, Ketchum PEAK\*  
Lori A. Wakefield, Ketchum PEAK\*

### Administrator-At-Large 2005 OEA Delegate Assembly

Raford Ulrich, Poteau EA

### NEA Retired Delegate-At-Large 2005 NEA Representative Assembly

Joyce Drew Parsons, Okla. City 287\*  
Tommy Fulton, Del City 260\*  
Theo L. Crawley, Weleetka 145  
Joy Dennis, Enid 142  
Edith LaForge, Tulsa 98  
Shirley Nero, Warner 94

### OEA Retired Delegate-At-Large 2005 OEA Delegate Assembly

Jane Mershon, Lawton 229\*  
Joy Dennis, Enid 203\*  
Theo L. Crawley, Weleetka 190\*  
Shirley Nero, Warner 153\*  
Edith LaForge, Tulsa 125

(\* -- elected to the position)

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# No guarantee offered by defined contribution

*Continued from Page 9*

some manner. What you receive at retirement would be based on the success or failure of those investments. If the market is up, your retirement could be great. But if you wanted to retire when the market is experiencing a severe down turn, your retirement could be just as bad.

OEA believes a defined benefit pension plan is far superior to a defined contribution plan.

**Q – If a defined contribution plan were to be passed, what effect would such a bill have on the unfunded liability of the TRS?**

**A –** At the beginning of the current legislative session, a Republican member of the House pre-filed a bill that would have established a defined contribution plan. It would have forced teachers hired next school year into a

defined contribution plan and given current teachers the option of staying with the current plan or moving permanently to a defined contribution. The bill was never heard in committee and died there.

This type of bill could potentially cripple the TRS because new teachers would no longer be making contributions to the system. Without employee contributions continuing to fund the TRS, the state would have to find an alternate funding source or the unfunded liability of the system would continue to increase dramatically.

**Q – Is there any education retirement legislation, good or bad, currently alive in the legislature?**

**A –** At press time, it was unclear of the intentions of House and Senate leadership in terms of changes to the system or benefits this session.



Susan Kelly (above), president of Microsearch, describes the dynamics of a new, searchable website for OEA members. At left, Advocacy Conference participants take part in an exercise during a breakout session. Nearly 200 local leaders attended the conference in early April.



## Protected website should prove invaluable to bargaining teams

Oklahoma negotiating teams now have an invaluable tool to help them get ready for bargaining.

A new password-protected website was unveiled at the Advocacy Conference in early April to nearly 200 local leaders. Through okea-research.org, local bargaining teams can now search other contracts in a variety of ways, said Microsearch President Susan Kelly.

Kelly's company has contracted with OEA to build the site, which is part of The OEA Adequacy and Equity Project as approved by the 2004 Delegate Assembly.

A dynamic search engine allows a team to look at an entire contract from a particular district, or search all con-

tracts in the database for a specific item. In addition to the local contracts, the site will have links to other research material, including the Oklahoma Law Book and the OEA Green Book, which provides financial information on every Oklahoma school district.

OEA is still collecting electronic versions of local negotiated agreements. Local presidents should send their local agreement on a computer disk (preferably in Microsoft Word format) to Debbie Moore, A&E Project, PO Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154; or by email at dmoore@okea.org.

Locals that do provide the local agreement electronically will receive a rebate of \$1 per member of the local.

**OEA**

**Summer Leadership Academy  
July 27 - 28, 2005**

**Holiday Inn Select  
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**Connecting with members and potential members is essential to building strong local Associations. The 2005 OEA SLA is designed to boost leadership skills through a basic organizational framework that will attract new members while increasing the Association's viability for continuing members.**

**\$30**

Registration fee includes training materials, all breaks, and lunch on the 28th.

**\$65**

Participants staying overnight must make reservations directly through the Holiday Inn Select by calling 800.836.9635. plus tax (king or double beds) Please reference OEA-SLA to receive the conference rate.

**Quality Standards Respect**

**Need more info?  
Cindy Manning, 800.522.8091, or www.okea.org**



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# Choosing the right IRA for you

## *Tips from Liz Picone NEA Member Benefits*

Since its initial introduction, few investment opportunities have helped more people prepare for retirement than the Individual Retirement Account (IRA).

There are currently two different kinds of IRAs designed for retirement planning: the Traditional IRA and the Roth IRA. Deciding which one is best for you depends on your own unique set of circumstances.

The first step is to determine your eligibility for the different IRAs, and then the suitability of each to your retirement plan. To find out your eligibility, take this short quiz.

## The Traditional (deductible) IRA

1. Are you under age 70 1/2?
2. Do you have earned income?

If you answered "yes" to both of these questions and do not participate in an employer-sponsored plan, you are eligible to start contributing to a Traditional IRA today. Even if you do participate in an employer plan, you may still be eligible. It's a good idea to check with a financial professional to get all the details.

## The Roth IRA

1. Do you have earned income?
2. Are you single with an Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) below \$95,000, OR married with a joint AGI below \$150,000?

If you answered "yes" to both of these questions you are eligible to start contributing to a Roth IRA.

## Contribution Limits

The contribution limits for both types of IRAs are:

Tax year 2004 – \$3,000

Tax years 2005-07 – \$4,000

Tax year 2008 and beyond – \$5,000

There are also catch-up provisions that allow additional contributions when certain criteria are met. It's best to consult with your NEA Valuebuilder® Financial Counselor to get all the information.

## Determining which IRA is best for you

You may well be eligible for either IRA, so it's a good idea to look at the benefits of each to determine which one best suits your retirement goals. Depending on your circumstances, contributions to a Traditional IRA may be tax deductible and the earnings growth tax-deferred. When distributions are taken from the IRA, however, they are taxable.

On the other hand, contributions to a Roth IRA are never tax deductible, but distributions are completely tax free if the Roth IRA has been held for five years and the account owner has either attained age 59 1/2, died, become disabled or used the proceeds up to \$10,000 (lifetime maximum) for a "first time" home purchase.

As with any major financial decision, it is wise to consult with a financial professional to weigh the benefits of each type of IRA. If you are not currently working with a financial advisor, an NEA Valuebuilder Financial Counselor will be happy to meet with you and discuss your choices. Both a Traditional and Roth IRA are available as part of the NEA Valuebuilder Program.

To find the NEA Valuebuilder rep assigned to your area go to [www.okea.org/MemberBenefits/okvaluebuilderreps.htm](http://www.okea.org/MemberBenefits/okvaluebuilderreps.htm) or call 800/632-8258.