

OEA

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National Education Association

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Periodical
Post Paid at
Okla. City, OK

The Education Focus

OEA's all-member publication

The Education Focus

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association

November 2006

Finding the right reason Hasler-Reid takes long way around to teaching

By Doug Folks

If Linda Hasler-Reid was ever interested in becoming a teacher while growing up, it would be easy to understand why.

After all, her mother was a teacher in Herculaneum, Mo., a small town just south of St. Louis. And, her grandmother taught in a one-room school house in Mississippi where she sometimes received farm produce as payment for teaching. So, surely Hasler-Reid heard tales of education heroics every day.

But those women didn't inspire Oklahoma's new State Teacher of the Year to enter the teaching profession. Was it a wonderful teacher she had during high school?

Well, Hasler-Reid's favorite teacher of all time was Larry Wegman, her high school biology teacher.

"He was awesome," she said. "He used hands-on techniques before hands-on techniques were popular. We would go out in the woods near our school and identify flowers by looking at them. He brought in whale songs. He brought wolves to school when we were doing animal research.

"The pitiful thing is I didn't realize he was my favorite teacher until well after high school."

But, no, he was not her inspiration to teach.

"I wanted to be a physical therapist or a journalist," said Hasler-Reid, a Spanish teacher in her 13th year in Muskogee Public Schools who was named Oklahoma's Teacher of the Year in late September.

"Those (professions) seemed glamor-



Teacher of the Year Linda Hasler-Reid works with Dennis Bunner, one of her students in Advanced Spanish at Muskogee's 7th and 8th Grade Center.

ous and fun and different from what I was used to in my house. I think, as a kid, it's kind of normal, at least at first, to not be what your family business is."

One of five siblings, Hasler-Reid grew up in St. Louis., moving to Muskogee right out of high school. She

was married at 18 and quickly had four children of her own. College had never really been in the picture.

In addition to being a wife and mom, she was working as a church secretary or a "floral salesperson." So, as time

See "Teacher of the Year" on Page 3

Seeking a few good nominations

Official nominations for OEA's annual awards program are due January 31.

The Association recognizes a full range of individuals and outside organizations for their contributions to public education as well as to the OEA. Winners will be recognized at the Awards Banquet, April 27, at the Clarion Meridian Conference Center in Oklahoma City. Awards are presented for outstanding teaching, pro-

fessional and student media coverage of education, and human and civil rights. There are also awards for outstanding legislators, businesses and private citizens who work to enhance and improve public education.

See Page 14 for a complete list of awards. For more information, call OEA Headquarters at 800/522-8091, or 405/528-7785. Nomination forms and award criteria can be found at www.okea.org/Awards/.

Make the commitment: Vote on November 7

By Roy Bishop
OEA President

A few days before the Oklahoma Primary Election, I read an article in *USA Today* that talked about how low the voter turnout had been in primaries all across the country.

From Virginia's low of 3.5 percent to Oregon's high of 39 percent, the results weren't just low, they were embarrassingly low. And Oklahoma wasn't any different.

Only 22 percent of Oklahoma's registered voters turned out for the primary election.

If you're one of the 78 percent who didn't vote, then you haven't earned the right to complain about low teacher salaries, high class size, crazy state and federal mandates and a variety of issues that affect you and your profession.

We can't allow ourselves to get so busy with our lives that voting becomes a hassle instead of a cherished responsibility.

What message are we sending our young people if the adults around them won't find the time to vote? Our children learn about what is important by our words and actions. If our children hear us talking about not making it to

the polls, we shouldn't expect them to make voting a priority either.

People can make excuses for not voting: "I'm too busy," "Time slipped away," "It's only one vote," "It's only a primary," "It doesn't affect education," and a thousand others.

This leads to low voter turnout and apathy towards the process for future generations.

When I voted in this year's primary, it wasn't much different. Among thousands of registered voters, I was number 68 in my precinct. My wife, who voted towards the end of the day, was 128. While the turnout numbers were sad, I did witness something that gave me hope.

At the polling place were two women who seemed to be mother and daughter. It appeared one was voting for the first time. Both pulled out their ID's and were ready to prove to the volunteer that they were registered voters.

After we cast our ballots and were walking out to the parking lot, I saw the mother take out a camera and encouraged her daughter to stand by the "Vote Here" sign. With great pride, the daughter smiled as her mother took the picture. What an outstanding way to



President Roy Bishop

model and commemorate the occasion. It was not only a photo opportunity, but a celebration, too.

It was a pleasure to see two people genuinely excited about the voting process. Imagine what we could accomplish if we all felt that way about voting.

Imagine taking your son, daughter, grandson or granddaughter out to vote for the first time and celebrating the event. Taking pictures or having lunch or dinner afterwards adds to significant events in families' lives.

Yes, it will take some time and commitment on our part, but isn't it the type of experience that will lead to civic responsibility for both young and old alike?

I'm talking about getting involved in the basic process of democracy – the responsibility to vote.

As we celebrate Oklahoma's 100th birthday, and OEA's 118th, we are at a crossroads when it comes to educational issues – like the so-called No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates, adequate funding, and low salaries to name a few. Are you prepared to participate in the political process?

There are tough decisions to be made. We can ignore the role that politics plays with education and then complain when ridiculous mandates come from the state and federal government.

Or, we can acknowledge the role of education and politics, and vote for, and elect, statesman who will make a difference for all of what we believe in, and provide a great public school for every child.

The Education Focus

Volume 24, No. 2
A production of OEA's
Communications Center

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

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

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OEA
Oklahoma Education Association

Arkansas native joins OEA staff

Jennifer Smith has joined the Oklahoma Education Association staff as an assistant in the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Student OEA program.

A native of Little Rock, Ark., Jennifer had completed most of her undergraduate work at the University of Central Arkansas and was working toward a doctorate of pharmacy at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences before moving to Oklahoma.

Her husband, Joel, is an orthopedic surgeon in his first year of residency at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center.

Jennifer was Miss Arkansas USA 2004 and was named Miss Photogenic at the Miss USA pageant in 2004. She was also Miss Teen Arkansas International in 2003.



Jennifer Smith

Hasler-Reid's own children spark her interest in becoming a teacher



Linda Hasler-Reid addresses the audience for the first time after being named Oklahoma's 2007 State Teacher of the year.

Spanish or in public schools. She took a job at Muskogee's West Middle School because that's where there was an opening. Her plan was to teach high school while getting a doctorate, and then move on to teach college students.

Today, Oklahoma's top teacher teaches Spanish for high school credit at Muskogee's 7th and 8th Grade Center. She's married to Michael Reid, a math

teacher in the same building (her children are from a previous marriage). The family educational legacy will live on – her youngest son, John, and his fiancée are both education majors at NSU. Oldest daughter Shannon is a vice president of marketing for Bank First in Muskogee; Bryan recently left the Marines and is attending career tech; and Caitlin is a pre-physicians assistant major at NSU.

While it may appear her career path has been one of random forks in the road, or at least more serendipitous than planned, it takes only a few minutes of conversation to realize Hasler-Reid is just where she wants to be.

"I really, really, really love my job," she says with sincere enthusiasm.

"If it's just a job, you shouldn't be in this profession," she said. "Teachers don't teach because of the paycheck, obviously. I absolutely think we teach because it's something we feel we're supposed to do."

passed, what drew Hasler-Reid into the teaching profession?

"When the oldest of my kids was ready to begin school, genuinely, I realized what an important job it was to teach," she said. "I just worried myself silly with what kind of teacher she will have, will they take care of her.

"Quite sincerely, once I married and had my own children, I realized (teaching) is the most important job in the world."

Even so, it would be several years before Hasler-Reid acted on her instincts. When the youngest of her four children entered school, she enrolled at Northeastern State University (NSU) in Tahlequah and later graduated with a bachelor's in English Education.

While trying to find scholarship money to finish college, Hasler-Reid discovered there was more money available for a minor in Spanish.

Just like she didn't plan on being a teacher, she didn't plan on teaching

In addition to teaching Spanish, Hasler-Reid is a certified sports nutritionist and personal trainer. She's taught fitness classes for 20 years and serves as a health and fitness director at a local health club.

She is also a National Board Certified teacher in World Languages other than English.

Being named State Teacher of the Year has been very humbling for Hasler-Reid

"It was really very difficult for me at first to accept being even the district teacher of the year, and even more so the State Teacher of the Year," she said. "I know hundreds of amazing teachers that are every bit as accomplished as I am. Many of them taught me the things that I do well. It's a little humbling to have the title Teacher of the Year over some of those people

that I learn from every day.

"I'm just a representative of those people. I can name 10 teachers in this district who are amazing and taught me."

For the next year, Hasler-Reid will serve as Oklahoma's ambassador of teaching. She'll miss the classroom terribly, because that's where she finds her energy. But she's also excited about sharing the story of why teaching is our greatest profession.

During her travels, she will tell audiences about National Board Certification and encourage Oklahoma's educators to retain their passion for teaching. She plans to encourage high school and college students to pursue teaching as a career, and offer workshops in grant writing and childhood nutrition.

Where ever her new title takes her, Linda Hasler-Reid knows where she'll be when her year as Oklahoma's Teacher of the Year is complete: right back in Muskogee helping middle school students learn a new language.

Random questions with the Teacher of the Year

Favorite school cafeteria food – "The nachos! Because we have a little lady that makes the most killer pico de gallo."

Favorite duty – "Outside at lunch, if it's a pretty day."

Guilty pleasure – "Reality TV. I love Project Runway and the Amazing Race. My husband and I actually filled out an application for the Amazing Race, but we're going to wait a year to turn it in."

Favorite subject other than Spanish – "Science. I think the study of the human body, how it works, how it functions is fascinating. Science is the owner's manual for the body you've received."

Biggest fear as a teacher – "To ever be unkind or hurt a child and not realize it; like hurt their feelings and not realize it to be able to go back and fix it."

She won Teacher of the Year because – "What I hope it is, is that my heart for kids showed (in the interview)."

Why she wants her classes to be fun – "If you hate baseball, you're quitting the team. If you hate Spanish, you may not be physically able to leave the class, but you can surely mentally check out on your desire to do it. You learn more about something you love."

Why new teachers should be OEA members – "You really *need* to be a member of your local and OEA. Not only is there personal support if you have a legal issue, but as a profession, they just do so much to help you. The work of our local is why we're one of the highest paying districts in the state."

Connie Sloan

McAlester High School; junior and senior chemistry and AP chemistry.

What did you gain from the Teacher of the Year competition? “Meeting with other Teacher of the Year finalists was tremendous. I formed bonds that I’ll use forever, and I’ve added to my support system.”

What are your word’s to live by? “Teaching becomes what you are. Keep a positive attitude. Enjoy relaxation time as much as possible and always smile at the kids.”

What’s your best advice for new teachers? “Stay organized. Keep

copies of everything. Keep a personal list of each of your students. Your very first students are landmarks. That’s where you begin. Find a mentor. I didn’t have one and that’s why I recommend one. I train new teachers at the first of every year. I feed off their youth.”

Read any good books lately? “James Patterson’s ‘Suzanne’s Diary’ and ‘The Guardian.’ I also like Sharon Sala, an Oklahoma author who writes great mysteries.”

Describe your classroom methods in three words. “Care, enthusiasm and energy.”

If you were Secretary of Education for a day, what would you change? “I’d provide more maintenance and custodial staff at every school and give them raises. A safe, clean, well-kept environment helps everyone learn better.”

What is your biggest challenge in the classroom today? “Helping kids locate their interests and directions without putting a dollar sign on them. Kids are so monetarily directed they don’t think about what



Connie Sloan (right) and Gabrielle Edwards.

they really want to do. We have to get them away from TVs and dollars. Life is beautiful, but they frequently don’t see it.”

Interview by Bruce Treadaway

Vicki Stuever

Chislom High School; Pre-AP English I, AP English IV, English IV, Psychology



Vicki Stuever (right) and freshman Chloe Fuksa.

What was the best thing about being a TOY Finalist? “The support and encouragement from my colleagues, students, former students, administrators and the community was overwhelming. I also got to meet so many wonderful people throughout this time.”

What motivates students today? “Praise, innovative as-

signments and belief in them.”

What are your words to live by? “If there is a will, there is a way.”

Best advice for brand new teachers? “Be fair, firm and consistent.”

Best advice for veteran teachers? “We are lifelong learners and need to continue modeling an enthusiasm and passion to teach. Don’t get into that ‘safe mode.’ If you let that happen it’s time to retire or rewire.”

Where do you find inspiration on those tough days? “I find inspiration from my students. Just showing you care means so much.”

What’s the best excuse you’ve heard for not having homework completed? “A student said his grandmother put it in the garbage disposal.”

Who inspired you to be a teacher? “Mrs. Blubaugh. I loved her discussions and writing.”

Interview by Patti Serio

Diana Beaulieu

Liberty Elementary, Broken Arrow; 3rd Grade

What motivates students today? “I can truly say that students will always be motivated if their educational environment fosters a sense of community. When students feel they are an important member of their learning community, they are motivated to contribute to that community in a positive way.”

Best advice for new teachers: “Find the one teacher in your building that you admire and hope to be like some day. Get to know that teacher very well. Just as our students need positive role-models, so do our newest teachers. Learning from a master teacher will benefit you

throughout your career.”

Read any good books lately? “Yes, Lou Holtz’s autobiography, ‘Wins, Losses, and Lessons.’ This book is a very inspirational account of his belief system.

Where do you find inspiration on those tough days? “My husband, Bill, of 32 years has always been there for me to support me, love me and cheer me up.”

Best excuse you’ve heard for not having homework complete? “Actually, the excuse is why I didn’t have a student’s homework ... my dog actu-

ally ate a student’s homework assignment and I couldn’t return it to him.”

Who inspired you to be a teacher? “To answer this question, I really have to tell you who my hero is and that person is my father, Henry Walker. He had wanted to become a teacher and coach but his dream was interrupted by an enlistment in the U.S. Navy. Unfortunately, he never saw that dream become a reality, but instilled in all five of his children the importance of an education. He always held the teachers in our community of 1500 on the highest pedestal and made me dream about becoming a teacher. With his encouragement that dream became a

reality when I became the first of three teachers in my family.

Three words that best describe your classroom method: “Fair, consistent, and compassionate.”

Interview by Marty Bull



Diana Beaulieu with Emma O'Rourke (left) and Adison Coffman (right).

Raylene Harrison

Orvis Risner Elementary, Edmond; 1st and 2nd grade reading

What is your biggest challenge as a reading specialist? Identifying the children with the greatest need and being able to zero in on them diagnostically to determine what they need to succeed. Classroom teachers have several kids in their class, which makes it hard for them to be able to determine if a student has a reading problem and how to work on that issue. I have the opportunity to work with the kids one-on-one and find out if they have a language barrier, or if they are just shy or they may not be able to

understand the directions. I also try to work with their confidence because it is so easy to convince a child that he can't read, but it could take a lifetime to convince him that he *can* read.

What is public education's biggest challenge? The inadequacies start so much earlier in today's curricula. So many things are being taught in kindergarten and once it is written down as being part of the curriculum, you are expected to know it. Well, 85 percent of the kids going in to first grade will know it but there are 15-20 percent of

kids that didn't get it, that can't read; they are already behind. Reading is definitely a process and you can't have spurts where things just fall into place. You have to lay that foundation early to ensure success.

What motivates you to get out of bed on those tough days? That little child who I know is waiting on me, depending on me to be here to tell me they are excited about what they read at home. Sometimes they just need someone to talk to and sometimes I can be that person because at times it is just me



Raylene Harrison and Christian Resendiz.

and that one child.

Interview by Adrienne Covington

Mary McDonald

Enid High School; AP English literature and composition, English literature, Shakespeare



Mary McDonald

What was the best thing about being a TOY Finalist? "The recognition is an affirmation of my teaching strategies; it is an outstanding opportunity to bring attention to the Enid community and what we do here to help our young people become better prepared for their diverse roles on this ever-changing stage of the 21st century."

What are your words to live by? "Shakespeare's words – all from Hamlet: 'To thine own self be true,' which reminds me to maintain my integrity; and 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your

philosophy,' which reminds me to keep an open mind and not to judge others.

What is your best advice for veteran teachers? "Keep an open mind and a sense of humor."

Read any good books lately? "I've just finished the Pulitzer Prize winner 'Middlesex' by Jeffrey Eugenides. I'm enjoying discussing it with a student of mine who just finished it a few days before I did."

Where do you find inspiration on those tough days? "I find inspiration in the listening ear of a friend. In the words of Shakespeare, 'Time and hour runs through the roughest day.' And in my own sense of humor – if I can laugh, I'm still alive."

Best excuse you've heard for not

having homework completed? "Literally, 'the dog ate my homework and my textbook,' from a senior boy who had a black Labrador puppy. (The student) had to pay \$60 for the literature text. I believed him because just the week before my own Lab puppy had eaten my new pair of reading glasses."

If you weren't a teacher, what would you be doing? "I love teaching. In the summers, I present at AP Summer Institutes. I cannot imagine doing anything else."

If you were Secretary of Education for a day, what would you change? "I would try to get more money for public education."

Interview by Patti Serio

Lisa Steadman

Woodward Middle School, 8th grade science

What motivates students today? "Attention – they need to know you care about them by listening to them and understanding their needs and abilities."

What are your words to live by? "My favorite quote is from the movie *Batman Begins*, "It's not who you are underneath, it's what you do that defines you."

What is your best advice for all teachers, both brand new and veteran? "My advice to fellow and future

educators would be to tell the 'good news' about education in our great state. Too often all the public hears are the negative stories, but there are so many more positive than negative things happening in education, and we need to be more proactive about telling the good news."

Read any good books lately? "'Freedom Writers.' This will be coming out October 23 in Oklahoma as a movie. It's a good inspirational book

for teachers. We all have difficult students. Ellen Gruwell was successful with 150 students – 100 percent graduated and went to college."

Who inspired you to be a teacher? "I am a third-generation teacher, following in the footsteps of two model teachers – my grandmother and my mother. So, when I reflect on why I became a teacher, I think of them."

If you were Secretary of Education for a day, what would you change? "With all the recent violence in schools, I would find a way

to provide more funding for security in small rural schools and communities."

Interview by Patti Serio



Lisa Steadman (center) with Cheyanna Johnson (left) and Jonathan Woods.

Jana Smithey

Fairview Elementary, Elk City; 3rd Grade

What are your words to live by?

"I think we need the three Rs – responsibility, resourcefulness and respect. My students know that if they can find the answer on their own, I will not tell them the answer."

Best advice for veteran teachers?

"Just keep your eye on what's worked. We have so many new things that they introduce. Sometimes they work, and sometimes they don't. And we always know the tried and the true, and what we can go back to; what's always going to stand the test of time."

Best excuse you've heard for not having homework completed?

"I'm sure I've heard it all. I had a little girl who brought me a note signed by her 'mother' that said she hadn't been able to do her homework because she had gas the night before. Of course, the mother hadn't signed it, an older sister had. We have moms and dads send notes saying they didn't have time to do homework (because) they had a football game to go to."

Who inspired you to be a teacher?

"A teacher I had at this school, Vera

Jones. She was my favorite teacher and it's probably a good thing because I had her for three years."

If you weren't a teacher, what would you be doing?

"This is all I've ever wanted to do, other than be a mother. Teaching allowed me to do motherhood without much interference because we had the same hours. And teaching is a lot like mothering."

What is public education's biggest challenge?

"Getting parents to become parents again, and to take the responsibility for their kids. To be able to count on parents to give us children who are ready to learn



Jana Smithey (left) and Akeisha Sharp.

and ready to fit into society."

Interview by Doug Folks

Diane Brown

Angus Valley Elementary, Sand Springs; 4th Grade



Diane Brown

What motivates students today?

"It's a broad spectrum. Some students

are motivated by the love of learning. You can tell others come from homes that encourage inquisitive minds and some are motivated by getting things done and others just want to get their teachers or parents off their backs."

Where do you find inspiration?

"Teacher stories. I re-read James Herndon stories about teachers and how tough it was during the 60s and 70s. I find them inspirational. I'm a member of the Episcopal church and I find strength in faith and strength in

community. And my little 6-foot, 7-inch 18 year old. He brings joy to my life and makes me smile."

Best excuse you've heard for not having homework completed?

"My baby brother ate it. The best note I ever received was from a parent that said, 'We read the note you sent home and we've decided to send her to a third world country. Ha Ha, Just kidding. We'll talk to her at home.'"

If you weren't a teacher, what

would you be doing? "My students

all think I should be a stand up comedian, but if I weren't teaching I'd probably be a physician, because I have a strong desire to help people and I like to connect intellectually."

If you were Secretary of Education for a day, what would you change?

"I would change the makeup of every committee that was created to help improve education and replace at least 50 percent with educators."

Interview by Marty Bull

Teacher of the Year Finalists

Sabra Tucker

Sequoyah Elementary, Shawnee; 3rd Grade

What was the best thing about being a Teacher of the Year finalist?

"The opportunity to represent my fellow teachers and the excellence that they exhibit every day."

What motivates students today?

"Fun! If school is fun and interesting, students are engaged. My job is to make the classroom experience fun and interesting. If I play music and provide hands-on activities, the students are right there with me. It takes a great deal of energy to be an elementary teacher in today's classroom."

What are your words to live by?

"Bloom where you're planted. Make a difference where you are."

What's your best advice for veteran teachers? "Never ... never ... never ... give up," from Winston Churchill."

Where do you find your inspiration?

"Wherever I can. I am inspired by my teaching colleagues. I look for humor in what kids do. I like to use quotes like, 'Let's put the fun back in dysfunctional.' I also do deep breathing."

Who inspired you to become a teacher? "Mandy Hillhouse. I was Director of Children's Ministries at



Sabra Tucker

my church. Mandy observed me and said that I should go into teaching. Now she is following me as Shawnee ACT president for this year. If she

hadn't suggested teaching, I would never have done it."

What is public education's biggest challenge?

"At our last Shawnee ACT building rep meeting, the same question came up, and my answer was, 'Be a professional. Don't gripe about your school. Don't gossip about your school. Always offer a solution.'"

What would you do if you were Secretary of Education for a day?

"I would raise teacher pay in Oklahoma! I would work toward teachers being esteemed and respected, and I would mandate that teachers be a part of every decision concerning public education."

Interview by Bruce Treadaway

Inclusion that works

Teachers need plenty of time to accept and prepare for mainstreaming of special ed students

By Doug Folks

Principal Kathy Taber and the faculty at Norman's Jefferson Elementary developed an inclusion model for special education students 17 years ago. While there are constant challenges and it takes a good deal of planning, professional development and time to prepare for the model and accept it, Jefferson serves a shining example of mainstreaming success.

Norman parents of special education children love inclusion and students many times benefit from what Taber calls "double services." For instance,

a child that struggles with reading will get guided reading from the regular classroom teacher and, later, one-on-one help from the resource teacher.

Schools across Oklahoma are looking at inclusion models since U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings ruled this summer that Oklahoma's multi-subject HOUSSE would not work for special education highly qualified status. Now, special ed teachers must pass the subject matter test for

every subject in which they are teachers of record, or build a revised HOUSSE that now offers fewer avenues to reach highly qualified status.

Working closely with the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA), the Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) long ago determined that special education teachers need only to complete the multi-subject HOUSSE (High Objective Uni-

"Inclusion is like a visit to the park. When you go to the park, you're mostly watching your child. But you see other kids and if somebody falls off the slide or is having trouble tying a shoe, you're going to help them."

Kathy Taber, Jefferson Elementary Principal

form State Standard of Evaluation) to become highly qualified. Spellings ruled against Oklahoma, sending us back to the drawing board.

Of all the controversial components of the so-called No Child Left Behind Act, this has to be the most disappointing to Sooner State teachers. Regardless of how Oklahoma teachers feel about the ruling, school goes on and student learning must continue.

To meet the new requirement, the

SDE recommends schools mainstream their special ed students into regular classrooms and for special ed and regular classroom teachers to co-teach.

While this model often brings out every emotion imaginable –

from frustration and fear to anger and disillusionment – it is a model that can and does work effectively, as is evident at Jefferson Elementary.

At the end of Taber's first year as principal, she realized that growth had scattered grade level classrooms and special ed rooms throughout the building. She asked her teachers to help her rearrange the building and they quickly realized problems with special ed. Mentally retarded (MR) students were being discriminated against because they had lunch, PE and music separate from other students in their grade levels. At the same time, regular classroom teachers didn't know what their learning disabled (LD) kids were doing in lab and special ed teachers didn't know what was happening in the regular classrooms.

Taber attributes the inclusion idea to special ed teacher Johnna Harstook, who today is fully certified in MR and LD. She works with the 4th and 5th grades while Jane McGill, who is also certified in MR and LD, works with kindergarten through second grade. Together, they decide who should work with individual third graders.

In the beginning of Jefferson's inclusion program, regular teachers were fearful of having special ed students in their classes. Taber says they were mainly concerned about having to deal with outrageous behavior, but they soon found that didn't happen often.

Taber allowed one grade level to pilot the inclusion model, and soon other regular classroom teachers began to realize the benefit of another teacher in the classroom.

"We did a lot of readiness with the



Jefferson Elementary principal Kathy Taber says an inclusion program for special education children takes plenty of planning and discussion, and it works best when the faculty is given time to physically and mentally prepare for the model.

regular ed teachers before (inclusion was instituted)," she said. "As we began, our special ed team was very committed to making it work. We had talked about it at length."

The faculty did a lot of work to prepare for the new model. Taber brought in professional development sessions on topics such as, "how do you get past feeling threatened with another teacher in your room," and "how do you use another teacher for something other than filing your papers or pulling a child to the side."

Taber compares the co-teaching model to visiting a park.

"When you go to the park, you're mostly watching your child. But you see other kids and if somebody falls off the slide or is having trouble tying a shoe, you're going to help them," she said.

Parents of special education children love inclusion, Taber said.

"I hear parents say, 'I am so glad. I remember when the special ed kids were ridiculed and made fun of, and that doesn't happen here because my child is treated like everybody else,'"

Please see "Inclusion" on Page 12



Good communications is vital to a successful inclusion program. Special Ed teacher Jane McGill (left) and Jennifer Davidson, both members of the Professional Educators of Norman, co-teach third graders at Jefferson Elementary, which has mainstreamed its special education students for 17 years.

Believe it, Big Brother is watching

By Heath Merchen

Associate General Counsel

Q — When is the email you read and send while at work considered private?

A — Never.

Q — When is information about what websites you visit, what articles you read, or what information you enter on the computer while at work considered private?

A — Never.

Q — When is it okay to use the paper in your printer at work, the school's computer or any other school equipment to conduct your own personal business?

A — You guessed it. Never.

Q — How often do parents and your administration think it's a good thing to IM a student, text a student, or call a student on your cell phone?

A — Never ... and if one of those students ever falsifies a sex-related report about you, the very fact that you IM'd the student will be enough to convince some jurors that you're guilty — regardless of the content.

For any who disagree with the above advice, there is a long list of teachers, support employees and even administrators throughout Oklahoma who have faced reprimands, suspensions, terminations, and criminal charges for these actions. Sadly, however, many still fail to heed our warnings and are just one click or text away from the same fate.

In hopes of stemming the flow of these cases, which are extremely difficult to defend since the district usually has caught the staff member red-handed, (and sometimes red-faced for those accessing more provocative websites), we have put together the following list of the four big DON'Ts regarding technology use on the job.

1. Do not use your district email for personal business and never IM (instant message) a student, text a student, or post anything on their Myspace page (or accept any posts

from students on yours).

a. This includes emailing any OEA staff member or discussing OEA or local business with other staff members.

b. In some districts the local Association has an agreement whereby notices and other generic materials can be sent by Association officials through email or the inner-office mail system and the Association pays a fee for access. Even in those districts, the privilege should be used only by officers of the Association, and only for local Association issues. If you have a need to

Do not use your district email for personal business and never IM (instant message) a student, text a student, or post anything on their Myspace page (or accept any posts from students on yours).

interact with others regarding personal matters, use your personal email.

c. If using personal email, access it from home, not school. Once you access it from your school site, the district can review any personal emails you opened. In addition, many emails automatically open suggestive websites that will show up on the district's server records.

d. If someone hears that you are exchanging text messages with a student, emailing them directly, calling them on your cell phone, or posting on their Myspace page, the first presumption is that you are some kind of pervert — it doesn't matter that the content is innocuous. So don't ... period.

2. Do not access pornography or suggestive materials from work.

a. The district knows what you are accessing and your web access can be tracked with minimal effort.

b. You will get caught and you may get fired. For your sake and ours, don't do it.

3. Do not forward jokes, inspirational messages, religious messages, political messages or any other type of mass email to other staff members.

a. What is a seemingly harmless

joke or inspirational quote to you may be considered an insult to someone else, resulting in a complaint, an investigation, discipline, or worse.

b. Once you forward an email, you could be held responsible for anyone the receiving party forwards it to on down the line.

c. The bulk of emails sent regarding sympathetic tales of woe, inspirational "true stories," or warnings of imminent danger are false urban legends that have absolutely no basis in fact. Trust me, nobody in Las Vegas has ever

been found unconscious in a bathtub filled with ice after having his kidney stolen (at least not according to the Las Vegas Police Department).

4. Do not send a criticism, an angry response or any kind of negative information through email, especially to your principal, superintendent or a parent.

a. Emails come across as cold, and



Heath Merchen

even if you don't mean to offend, offense may be taken. Such concerns are better delivered face to face.

b. If you have a gripe, talk it over with your OEA advocate before proceeding. Sadly, members have emailed some horribly insulting responses to their supervisors, students and even parents.

Please don't simply read these warnings, but heed them, as adhering to these guidelines will help keep you and your fellow staff members out of trouble. If you have questions or concerns, please contact your OEA advocate as soon as possible.

Inclusion does get easier, but challenges remain

Continued from Page 11

she said.

Obviously, Taber says, not every child can be fully included.

So, after 17 years, does inclusion get easier? Taber says, yes, in some ways, but the model takes constant work and nurturing.

"In a way it's easier because I don't have to fight the attitude battle with the teachers," she said. "We've learned how to make modifications and adaptations. Just reducing the number of problems a student has in an assignment is not necessarily the best modification for that student."

Taber says the schedule is the one

constant challenge.

"Every child that we get is a new puzzle. As they grow up, they continually present new challenges," Taber said. For example, a child may be mostly included in the second grade, but by fourth grade the other kids have moved faster and farther. You constantly have to go back to the IEP and what you know about the child."

Time is the key to making inclusion work, Taber says. Regular ed teachers must be given time to see the benefits of co-teaching, such as meeting the needs of students that are problematic, but who don't qualify for any special services.

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OEA Awards honor those committed to public education

OEA Board of Directors Awards

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

Friend of Education

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

Claude A. Dyer Memorial Award

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

Political Activist Award

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

Outstanding Legislator

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

Stan R. Bryant Political Action

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

Local associations earn rebates

Rebate checks were recently sent to 28 local associations that sent electronic copies of their negotiated agreements to the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA).

The agreements can be seen on OEA's searchable Microsearch Online Documents website, okea-research.org.

Bargaining locals that send their 2006-07 negotiated agreements elec-

Advocate For Academic Freedom

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

Human and Civil Rights Awards

Kate Frank Award

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

Tuskahoma Brown Miller Award

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

F. D. Moon Educational Award

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

Glenn Snider Human Relations Award

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

OEA Education Support Professional

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

tronically to the OEA are eligible for a \$1-per-member rebate, payable in September 2007. Email your negotiated agreement (preferably in Microsoft Word) or send it on disk or CD to Debbie Moore at dmoore@okea.org, or to OEA, PO Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK, 73154. For more information on the Microsearch website, contact your regional advocacy specialist.

OEA Collective Bargaining Award

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

Instructional Excellence in Education: Teachers Teaching Teachers and Teachers Teaching Students

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

Marshall Gregory Awards

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

Golden Apple Awards

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

Five Star Local Awards

The OEA 5 Star Local Program is intended to strengthen local Association programs and to recognize locals who meet the criteria in each program area. Application deadline for recognition at Delegate Assembly will be April 1, 2007. The application deadline is July 1, 2007, for recognition at the Summer Leadership Academy. Five Star Local nomination forms can be found at www.okea.org/5StarLocal.

OEA Award nomination forms and criteria can be found at www.okea.org/Awards/.

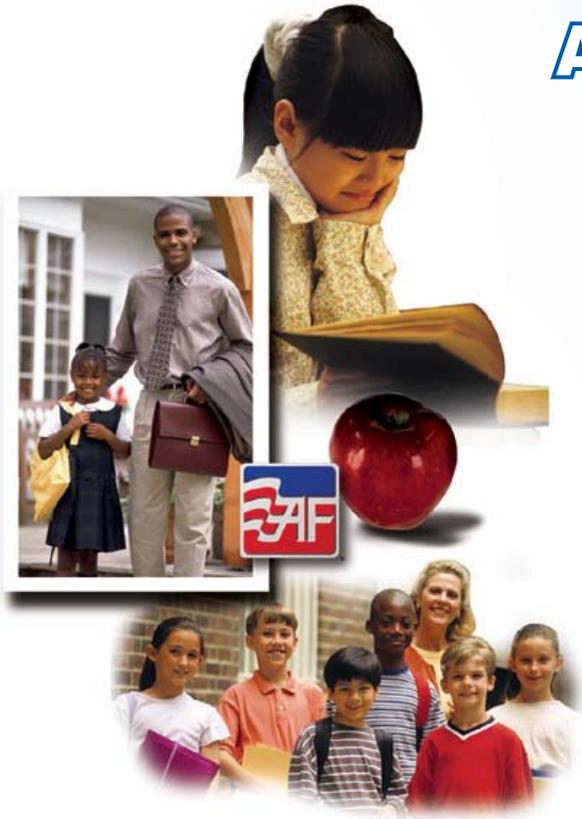
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The publication's title is The Education Focus (Publication No. 1542-1678). The filing date of the statement is September 2006. It is published monthly, with the exception of three issues which are published bimonthly. Nine issues are published annually, in September-October, November, December-January, February, March, April, May, June-July and August. The annual subscription price is \$5.00. The complete mailing address of the known office of the publication and of the General Business Office of the Publisher is: Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105-3117. Doug Folks (phone number 405/528-7785) is the contact person. The publisher is the Oklahoma Education Association, P.O. Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154-0485. Doug Folks is the Editor and Dr. Dottie Caldwell is the Managing Editor. Owner of the publication is the Oklahoma Education Association, P.O. Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154-0485. There are no bondholders, mortgagees, or other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax have not changed during the preceding 12 months. The name of the publication is The Education Focus. The issue date for the circulation data which follows is August 2006. The data is classified as follows: a. the average number of copies of each issue during preceding 12 months, and b. the actual number copies of the single issue published nearest the filing date. Total number of copies: a. 24,456; b. 28,000. Paid or requested circulation through (1) outside-county mail subscriptions stated on Form 3541: a. 24,769; b. 24,838; (2) in-county subscriptions: a. none; and b. none; (3) through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other non-USPS paid distribution: a. 471; b. 2,948; (4) other classes mailed through the USPS: a. none; b. none. Total paid and/or requested circulation: a. 24,240; b. 27,786. Free distribution by mail for (1) outside-county: a. 116; b. 114; (2) in-county: a. none; b. none; (3) other classes mailed through the USPS: a. none; b. none. Free distribution outside the mail: a. none; b. none. Total free distribution: a. 116; b. 114. Total distribution: a. 25,356; b. 27,900. Copies not distributed (office use, leftovers, spoiled): a. 100; b. 100. Total printed: a. 24,456; b. 28,000. Percentage of paid and or requested circulation is: a. 99.5% and b. 99.6%. The statement of ownership will be published in the November 2006, issue of the publication. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions. Doug Folks, Editor.

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First year teacher Lynn Desaire (center) with some of her students. From left, Reva Loving, Rashaad Cole, Sydney Jackson, Meosha Carney, and Javier Cruz.

Tulsa rookie looks at her 9-week grades

By Lynn Desaire

It's report card time!

I can't believe it has only been nine weeks since I became a teacher. I have learned more in this first quarter of teaching than in all four years of college. Before I assign grades to my students I need to take some time to assign a grade to myself.

Reflection! There is that word again. It's all I heard in college. I thought if I had to "reflect" on one more thing I was going to drop out!

Now, here I am, reflecting on my first nine weeks as a teacher. It is such a relief to be over those first day jitters and the first couple of weeks of uncertainty. As a white woman from a very rural community I was apprehensive about coming to an inner city school. Would I be respected? Would they even take me seriously? The answer is yes; these students are hungry for knowledge and do their best to absorb all that I throw at them.

I thought when I started here, that classroom management would be my biggest challenge. Instead, it's time management that frustrates me. There simply are not enough hours in the day to teach my students everything they



The Residency Diaries

need to know.

I feel obligated to prepare them for the multitude of tests that they will take this year, and unable to teach them other important information because of it. We spend so much time on reading and math that science and social studies seem a million miles away.

I know I am doing the right thing, and that they need a strong base in reading and math, but I can't help but feel that I am cheating them out of a well-rounded education. My hope is that as time goes on I will improve my time management skills and be able to fit everything in.

So what is my grade? I'm giving myself mostly B's, which I think is pretty good for my first nine weeks as a teacher. If I continue to reflect and be aware of my weaknesses and how to improve on them, then I am confident that next nine weeks I can be a straight A teacher! My students deserve nothing less.

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