

THE EDUCATION FOCUS

FOR THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE OKLAHOMA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

February 2012



Spread the word

Be informed, get involved in the legislative process



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- Oklahoma Education Association
- Student Oklahoma Education Association
- Oklahomans for Great Public Schools

On Twitter –

- twitter.com/okea

Need help? Call us.

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

Oklahoma City Metro, Southeast and Southwest Teams
800/522-8091 or 405/528-7785

Northeast and Tulsa Metro Teams
800/331-5143 or 918/665-2282

Northwest Team
800/439-0393 or 580/256-0071

The Education Focus

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Linda S. Hampton, President
Alicia Priest, Vice President
Lela Odom, Executive Director
Dr. Dottie Hager, Assoc. Exec. Dir.

Communications Center
Doug Folks, Editor
Ashley Knuckles, Social Media
Kandis West, Media Relations
Maureen Peters, Center Assistant

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



Be a strong voice in your community

By Linda Hampton
OEA President

Every decision in public education is a political decision. I'm not sure who originally coined this phrase, but it is definitely true.

Every decision which affects a school or students is decided by a person or group who was elected to either a national or state position, or a person elected to a local school board. An elected official decides your class size, the length of your school day, the regulations regarding buses and cafeterias, your evaluation and your salary.

Who is better to be involved in this process than you?

Whether you are a Democrat, Republican or Independent, you need to be involved and informed. Laws and reforms enacted during the 90 days of the legislative session can, and do, impact you and your profession for years to come.

OEA's GLEE Week (Giving Legislators an Educational Experience) set the stage for this year's legislative session, which starts February 6. Legislators visited schools all over Oklahoma and had a first-hand educational experience in classrooms, on buses and in cafeterias. They saw our profession from our point of view. For many it was an eye-opening experience, and for others it reinforced the need to support public schools and listen to the concerns of those working in them.

In every case, it gave the legislator a real, live school employee that he or she can contact when the legislator has questions about education.

There are several things on the political horizon which will affect public education. Common Core State Standards and the new evaluation

system will bring changes to how we teach children. There are changes being considered to the EOI (end of instruction) tests. Rules concerning the A to F grading system will be determined. On the national level, we all know the impact NCLB has had on our schools, and NEA is our voice in the reauthorization process.

At OEA, we realize you are busy educating Oklahoma's children and your schedule is full, so we have implemented ways to keep you current and informed during the legislative session. Each week, we send our electronic newsletter the *OEA Legislative Update* to home email addresses. We also post real-time updates from committee meetings and debates on the House and Senate floors on our Facebook page and Twitter profile.

(If you aren't receiving the *Update* or our weekly e-newsletter the *Insider*, send your home email address to Brenda Snider at bsnider@okea.org.)

Lobby Day (March 28) is always very successful, but it is important to remember that lobbying is more than just a one-day experience at the



President Linda Hampton

Capitol. It includes talking about our profession at home. Talk to your legislators when you see them at ball games, in church or in the grocery store. Let your friends, family and the parents of your students know what they can do to make public schools the best they can be.

Just as OEA is at the Capitol every day for you, we need you to be a voice in your community. You are the expert about what is going on in your school building.

Oklahoma children are counting on you to be their voice about what's needed in public education. Together we will make a difference!

Western Region leaders convene in OKC

More than 450 local and state leaders from NEA's Western Region were in Oklahoma City January 20-22 for the Western Region Leadership Conference. Attendees heard presentations from all three NEA officers – President Dennis Van Roekel (pictured here), Vice President Lily Eskelsen and Secretary/Treasurer Becky Pringle. American Fidelity Assurance



sponsored tours of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum for the attendees and their families. As the host state affiliate, the OEA sponsored a community outreach project that encouraged the conferees to donate to the Regional Food Bank's Food for Kids/Childhood Hunger Programs.

Activism runs in this family

By Kandis West

Little Terrie stared in amazement at the woman. The way she dutifully performed with both grace and precision. Her movements were methodical, yet far from mundane. The neat shuffling of the paper, the careful marks of her red pen. Terrie wanted it.

It was then, while watching her third grade teacher at Washington Irving Elementary in Durant, that Terrie Keck decided she wanted to be a teacher, too.

“I thought it was so glamorous to grade papers. That was just the ultimate,” Keck said, laughing while recounting her calling to the education profession.

Keck, Southwest C zone director, has been teaching and advocating for her profession for 30 years. Last spring, when her rights as a teacher were threatened, Keck took action. She rallied members and nonmembers alike when Rep. Corey Holland of Marlow proposed a bill that would have eliminated collective bargaining for public education employees.

“Postcards were written, e-mails sent and one-on-one visits made. Marlow made the difference,” Keck said proudly.

She felt “personally hurt” by the legislation. “This is my life. I live this every day,” she said.

Holland eventually withdrew the bill after continued pressure from local teachers and community members.

“OEA believes public education employees have the statutory right to engage in collective bargaining. Collective action speaks to the core of who we are and Terrie Keck and the Marlow Association of Classroom Teachers helped preserve that freedom,” said Linda Hampton, Oklahoma Education Association president.

Keck said her advocacy for pub-



lic education will not stop any time soon. She was born into a family of educators who believe belonging to OEA is the professional and responsible thing to do. Both parents were teachers, and Keck and her sisters – they are triplets – are or were teachers. Jerrie Goforth teaches in Durant and is a member of the Rock Creek School Board. Sherrie Stout, a former OEA Board member, is retired from Mid-Del Public Schools.

“My dad taught and coached all over Oklahoma and he was always a member of OEA. When I started teaching, he said ‘You will be a member.’”

While their dad may have influenced his daughters’ career decisions, it was their mom, 74-year-old Jean Smith, who really fueled their fire for advocacy.

“My mom’s parents owned some businesses in Bokchito (in Bryan County), so when something needed to be done for the schools, my mom and grandparents were behind it. Whether it was to serve on the board,

Jean Smith (second from left) gave each of her triplets, Terrie Keck, Sherrie Stout and Jerrie Goforth, the fire to advocate for public education.

pass a bond election or pick up elderly people in town and take them to vote, my momma was there.”

Smith was also there when it was time to rally for teacher’s rights last March, standing in support of her girls as if it were a little league game or dance recital. All four came to OEA’s Red Rally and lobbied as a team at the Capitol.

There is no doubt the family tradition of activism will continue. Terrie’s son, Tanner, is an SOEA member at the University of Central Oklahoma who will soon be a teacher, a wrestling coach and, you guessed it – an OEA member.

“OEA is a part of our lives. I love it. I have met wonderful people. I have seen Oklahoma through the friends I have made and OEA has given me the opportunities to do things and go places,” Keck said.

2 parties, 1 goal

A Democrat and a Republican share similar advice

By Doug Folks

Cari Manzer and Stephany Gooden have a lot in common: they both teach at a suburban elementary school, they believe public schools have great things going on, and they take a pro-active role promoting public education with their elected officials.

The one difference between the two Oklahoma Education Association members is party affiliation. Manzer is a Democrat, Gooden a Republican. But both believe education should transcend party lines and both parties should be working to make things better for children.

It has always been important for OEA members to be politically active. Now, with Republicans holding a majority in both houses of Oklahoma's legislature, it is important for teachers registered as Republicans to share their stories and experiences to help their party make the best decisions for education.

Democratic members still have an important role, too, even if they feel outnumbered at the capitol.

Top 50 Cyberlobbyist

Manzer, a fifth grade teacher at Norman's John Adams Elementary, considered majoring in political science in college before becoming a teacher. Now in her sixth year teaching, she's able to channel that interest to her students by teaching her favorite subjects – social studies, the American Revolution and democracy.

Manzer first became interested in politics at the National Education Association's Representative Assembly

in New Orleans in 2010. A retirement issue in Oklahoma and a jobs bill in Congress were hot topics. A cell phone campaign was conducted during the RA to encourage congressmen to vote for the jobs bill.

"One of our congressmen, who was on a teeter-totter, for lack of a better word ... was one that could be (swayed to vote with our issue). So we all got out our cell phones and started calling and he actually did vote with us and that helped pass that bill."

The activity made Manzer feel like she could make a difference. She's continued to contact legislators at home and in Washington, D.C. In fact, her efforts to communicate with Oklahoma's congressional delegation placed her on the NEA's Top 50 Cyberlobbyists list for last year. Manzer sent 244 emails to congressmen last year, tying her for 40th for the most contacts.

Jacquelin Woods of Flossmoor, Ill., topped the list after sending 1,252 emails.

"I was very surprised (to make the list) because I didn't realize I had sent that many emails," Manzer said.

"I've heard that if an elected official receives 15 emails on the same topic, he will really begin to look in to the issue. Just think what we could do with several people writing emails."

Manzer said she likes to use the NEA's Legislative Action Center websites to write to congressmen because the service gives a summary of talking points or even a sample letter. Members can send the pre-written messages or write their own.

"I think it's a good starting point for those who are (just starting to) write their legislators and wanting to know what to say," she said.

Manzer will contact members of either party and encourage them to vote on a certain issue. She also keeps handy the names and contact information of the House and Senate education committees.

The fact Oklahoma's legislature is overwhelmingly Republican has not stopped Manzer from lobbying via email and in person.

See "Education" on Page 10



Democrat Cari Manzer (left) and Republican Stephany Gooden both believe education should transcend party lines.

Contact info for your legislators

State Senate, 405/524-0126, www.oksenate.gov

State House of Representatives, 405/521-2711 or 800/522-8502,
www.lsb.state.ok.us/house/ohorpage.htm

Governor Mary Fallin – www.ok.gov/governor

For individual legislator email addresses, visit okea.org/legislative and click on "Contact Your State Legislators."

OEA's 2012 Legislative Agenda

The 2012 Legislative Agenda was created by and recommended to the Oklahoma Education Association Board of Directors by the OEA Legislative Committee. The document provides a starting point and a guide to the legislation members want to see passed in the coming session.

Recruiting and Keeping Quality Teachers and Support Professionals

- Increase teacher salaries \$2,000 across the board.
- In addition, provide increased funding for teaching experience, higher degree and certification attainment, and working in hard to staff subject areas or locations
- Increase Education Support Professionals salaries \$1,000 across the board.
- Provide supplemental funding for 2012 National Board Certified Teacher stipend and scholarship program.

Education Employees Health Insurance and Retirement

- Provide health insurance benefits that are equal to what legislators and state employees receive.
- Increase the OSEEGIB/EBC Board to include representatives from the constituent groups (i.e. education employees).
- Provide for a sound Teacher Retirement System that provides fair COLA's and increased health insurance subsidies.
- Investigate the sale of the Oklahoma Lottery with proceeds going to the Teachers' Retirement System.

School Culture

- Increased time during the student day – Teachers must have time to plan, collaborate and learn in order to have a successful learning community. OEA supports mandating a minimum of 300 minutes per week during the student day. This time should be structured to allow for teachers to plan and discuss how to best implement instruction.
- Professional development to empower quality instruction – Teachers are faced with a more diverse student population than ever before. Many of today's students do not speak English fluently. Additional challenges are experienced by students that come from non-traditional families and backgrounds of poverty.
- Two-year teacher mentoring program – More than 35 percent of our newest teachers have come to teaching through Alternative Certification. All new teachers must

have quality professional mentoring in order to provide quality instruction and support to stay in teaching.

- Reward outstanding students who enter teacher education programs at state colleges and universities.
- Increase the ability of teachers and support professionals to have input into school decision making
- Expand alternative school settings to provide avenues to help deal with chronic classroom discipline issues. Provide counseling and other strategies to change disruptive and violent behavior.

Accountability and Classroom Instruction

- Complete a student data tracking system designed to inform instruction and provide needed data to teachers and other school personnel regarding the instructor's and school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Create a student evaluation system that focuses on the growth of individual student learning and can be also used to inform instruction. Test data should be returned as soon as possible to help teachers and administrators best plan for student success.

Our Kids Deserve the Best

- Support legislation to ensure all available monies are directed to the classroom.
- Provide adequate operations funding to enable districts to have textbooks, technology, instructional materials, supplies and transportation funding.
- Provide funding to keep our schools clean, comfortable and safe for all our students.
- Provide additional funding so that our students can receive the additional instruction they need for remediation in order to meet third grade reading and ACE requirements.
- Require that class sizes be small enough to allow for the individual attention our students need, and provide support professional assistance to all classes that exceed the state limits. Eliminate exemptions from class size requirements.
- Support the reinstatement of funding for programs cut in the State Department of Education's 2011-12 Budget (including but not limited to Literacy First, Great Expectations, Oklahoma Technology Assistance Center, National Board Certified Teacher stipends).
- Support changes to the manner and degree that tax credits and exemptions are provided to special interests in order to provide additional funding for schools.
- Virtual education should be offered in a similar manner as alternative education.

G.L.E.E.-ful legislators

In mid-November, nearly 50 Oklahoma legislators spent all or part of a day in a public school. They helped teach classes, served as bus monitors, served lunch, answered phones and stayed after school for club meetings.

G.L.E.E. Week (Giving Legislators an Educational Experience) was held in conjunction with American Education Week.

Each legislator worked with an OEA member (or members), allowing both the elected official and the teacher or support professional a chance to build a relationship. It is the hope of the Association that those relationships are put to use during this spring's legislative session. These representatives and senators now have a direct line to people in public education, and our members have a direct line to the Capitol.

Thank you to the many OEA members who made G.L.E.E. Week a success, and thank you to the legislators who took part in the event. Following is a list of legislators by region who participated.

Northeast Region

Rep. Mike Brown, Tahlequah High School & Hulbert Public Schools
Rep. William Fourkiller, Sequoyah Elementary & Tahlequah High School, Tahlequah
Rep. Wade Rousselot, William R. Teague Elementary, Wagoner
Sen. Jim Wilson, Hulbert Public Schools & Tahlequah High School

Northwest Region

Rep. Gus Blackwell, Buffalo Public Schools
Rep. John Enns, Skyview Elementary, Yukon
Sen. Jim Halligan, Stillwater Public Schools
Rep. Mike Jackson, Yukon Public Schools

Sen. Bryce Marlatt, Buffalo Public Schools
Rep. Colby Schwartz, Surry Hills Elementary, Yukon

Oklahoma City Metro

Rep. Scott Inman, Highland Park Elementary & Del City High School, Del City
Rep. Jason Nelson, Putnam City North High School
House Speaker Kris Steele, Jones Elementary

Southeast Region

Rep. John Bennett, Tommie Spear Middle School, Sallisaw
Rep. Ed Cannaday, Eufaula Alternative High School
Rep. Josh Cockroft, McLoud Early Childhood Center
Sen. Harry Coates, Seminole Public Schools
Rep. Donnie Condit, McAlester Public Schools
Sen. Charlie Laster, Shawnee Public Schools
Rep. James Lockhart, Pocola Public Schools
Rep. Tom Newell, McLoud Intermediate School
Rep. R.C. Pruett, Hugo Public Schools
Rep. Brian Renegar, Hartshorne Public Schools
House Speaker Kris Steele, McLoud High School

Southwest Region

Sen. Don Barrington, Jackson Elementary, Lawton
Rep. Josh Cockroft, Little Axe & Noble Public Schools
Rep. Ann Coody, Sullivan Village Elementary, Lawton
Rep. Joe Dorman, Geronimo Road Elementary, Lawton
Rep. Corey Holland, Marlow Public Schools
Rep. Dennis Johnson, Duncan Public Schools

Sen. Ron Justice, Tuttle Middle School
Rep. Scott Martin, Truman Elementary, Norman
Sen. Jonathon Nichols, Cleveland & Roosevelt Elementary Schools, Norman
Rep. Leslie Osborn, Tuttle Middle School
Sen. John Sparks, Lincoln Elementary, Norman
Sen. Anthony Sykes, Duncan Public Schools
Rep. Emily Virgin, Adams Elementary, Norman

Tulsa Metro Region

Sen. Tom Adelson, Lee Elementary, Tulsa
Rep. David Brumbaugh, Peters & Wolf Creek Elementary School, Broken Arrow
Rep. Dennis Casey, Edison High School, Tulsa
Sen. Brian Crain, Hale High School, Tulsa
Rep. Lee Denney, Clinton Middle School, Tulsa
Sen. Judy Eason-McIntyre, McLain High School, Tulsa
Rep. Dan Kirby, Lewis and Clark Elementary School, Tulsa
Rep. Jeannie McDaniel, Will Rogers High School, Tulsa
Rep. Ron Peters, Carver Middle School, Tulsa
Rep. Eric Proctor, Bell Elementary School, Tulsa
Rep. Mike Ritze, Spring Creek Elementary, Broken Arrow
Rep. Seneca Scott, Celia Clinton Elementary School, Tulsa
Sen. Gary Stanislawski, Eliot Elementary, Tulsa
Rep. Weldon Watson, Memorial High School, Tulsa

Save the date!
OEA Lobby Day
March 28

NBCT Class of 2011 includes 174 Okies

Oklahoma maintained its top 10 ranking when the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) announced in December that 174 Sooner State teachers had earned National Board Certification.

NBPTS announced in a White House ceremony that 6,200 teachers make up the national class of 2011, bringing the total number of NBCTs to nearly 100,000.

Oklahoma ranks 9th nationally with 2,994 NBCTs.

“National Board Certification is synonymous with great teaching. While our nation is focused on the need for the highest quality teachers, board certification truly is the

gold standard,” said Ronald Thorpe, NBPTS president and CEO.

Thorpe referred to two recent studies showing that more than half (55 percent) of all board certified teachers work in high-need schools (according to the National Center for Education Statistics) and to a National Research Council report that found students who were taught by board certified teachers show higher gains on achievement tests than those taught by other teachers.

Following is a list of the 69 OEA members of the Class of 2011.

Oklahoma City Metro

Bethany

Dana Christoffersen, Bethany HS

Edmond

Scott Haselwood, Memorial HS

Kathryn Hayes, Westfield ES

Veronica Tolliver, Washington

Irving ES

Moore

Amy Braun, Northmoor ES

Byron Church, Highland West JHS

Debra Detamore, Moore HS

Shelly Lee, Southmoore HS

Lindsay MacDonald, Westmoore HS

Putnam City

Nathan Brubaker, Putnam City HS

Laura Hardee, Northridge ES

Michelle Koehn, Putnam City HS

Western Heights

Creshia Cecil, Western Heights MS

Allison Lindsey, Council Grove ES

Georgie Melot, Greenvale ES

Northeast Region

Bartlesville

Bridgette Laramie, Madison MS

Rexanne McCrary, Bartlesville MH

Andrea Satterfield, Central MS

Elizabeth Sonnenfeld, Central MS

Muskogee

Joy Fields, Creek ES

Teresa Pointer, Whittier ES

Oologah-Talala

Jennifer Puckett, Lower ES

Gera Worthington, Upper ES

Pryor

Katya Bonea, Pryor JHS

Deana McCloud, Pryor JHS

Jamie Smith, Roosevelt ES

Tahlequah

Elsie Morris, Tahlequah HS

Monica Phillips, Sequoyah ES

Lara Searcy, Tahlequah HS

Sarah Williams, Cherokee ES

Northwest Region

Covington-Douglas

Kimberly Pearson, Covington-

Douglas ES

Mustang

Lynda Langford, Centennial ES

Piedmont

Cindy Lacefield, Stone Ridge ES

Ponca City

Melinda Holder, Trout ES

Susan Rhoads, West MS

Stillwater

Kristy Self, Stillwater JHS

Southeast Region

Checotah

Carol Brinsfield, Checotah IS

Dale

Holly Thompson, Dale JHS

Meeker

Julie Johnson, Meeker ES

Muldrow

Lana Dial, Muldrow ES

North Rock Creek

Kimberly Lewis, North Rock Creek ES

Okmulgee

Gail Jackson, Okmulgee MS

Pocola

Julie Lang, Pocola ES

Shawnee

Ann Palmer, Shawnee HS

Southwest Region

Anadarko

Jennifer McLemore, East ES

Chickasha

Erica Cossey, Lincoln ES

Mary Morris, Southwest ES

Lone Grove

JoAnn Holt, Lone Grove Primary ES

Newcastle

Vivian Cisneros, Newcastle HS

Jill Folsom, Newcastle HS

Andrea Thomas, Newcastle HS

Norman

Dawn Kulpa, Norman HS

Samantha Zearley, Norman North HS

Tulsa Metro

Broken Arrow

Karla Cox, Country Lane ES

Nancy Dowe, Leisure Park ES

Erica Housley, East ES

Kelly Parrott, Park Lane ES

Jessica Payne, Rhoades ES

Diana Snow, Wolf Creek ES

Jenks

Courtney Connelly, Jenks HS

Tonya Morgan, Jenks HS

Owasso

Robin Peyton, Northeast ES

Sand Springs

Jaden Hunter, Clyde Boyd MS

Kelli Shockley, Garfield ES

Tulsa Area Career Tech

Teresa Pinksten, Riverside Campus

Union

Natalie Hutto, Alternative School

Courtney Shelton, Roy Clark ES

Ask for a copy of your policy

By Richard Wilkinson
OEA General Counsel

Second of two articles in a series.

The last “From Your Counsel” column (*The Truth About Liability Insurance*, December/January 2011-12) discussed the myths, rumors and flat out misrepresentations that permeate faculty lounges, emails and even some websites – all in an attempt to lure education employees into believing they need a specific amount of liability insurance coverage to protect their employment.

That article discussed the truth about how much liability insurance you really need and the protections that are afforded school employees

The legal services provided by the OEA to its members are not provided through an insurance policy.

by the Oklahoma Governmental Tort Claims Act. This article discusses how to read a liability insurance policy, what those policies typically provide, and compares other policies to the NEA EEL policy as well as the other legal services provided by the OEA.

Ask For a Copy

The first thing you should do before joining an education association is ask for a copy of the insurance policy. You would not buy a home owner or automobile insurance policy without first obtaining a copy of the policy and its terms – and an educator employment liability (EEL) policy is no different, except that there are vast differences in what various EEL poli-

From Your Counsel

cies provide and what they cover.

You should not settle for a “summary” or a “comparison” of a specific policy – you should obtain a copy of the certificate of insurance or the declarations contained in a particular policy. If you are told that you can’t get a copy of a certificate of insurance, then you should immediately recognize a red flag – an insurer is required to provide to its insured the terms and conditions of the coverage bargained for in the insurance contract.

The NEA EEL policy is provided to every member as part of their OEA membership and to every prospective member that wants a copy of the policy. There is nothing to hide and the certificate of insurance is relatively easy to read and understand.

Review Your Policy

Second, you should review what is covered and the policy limits for the various coverages contained in the policy. For example, the NEA EEL policy provides coverage up to \$1 million per occurrence for any claims against a school employee that arise out of their education employment activities. There are no aggregate limits to this coverage. In other words, if somehow a judgment was entered for \$1 million against every OEA member in a particular year, the NEA EEL policy would cover all of those claims, regardless of the cumulative total.



Richard Wilkinson

Other policies contain an aggregate limit for the amount of judgments that will be paid in a particular year. For instance, an EEL policy offered by the American Association of Educators (AAE) and underwritten by Savers Property & Casualty Insurance Company contains a \$2 million aggregate for all acts and omissions during the policy period. So, if somehow a judgment was entered for \$1 million against every person covered by that policy in a particular year, the policy only pays claims up to the \$2 million aggregate, not the total amount of claims made.

So, while you may think you have \$2 million in liability protection, that is true only if no other claims are made during the policy period. Aggregate policy limits are common in these policies and it is important to understand what coverages are limited and how.

Beware of Comparisons

Third, you should be wary of any “comparisons” of the “legal protection” afforded by an insurance policy with the other legal services provided by the OEA. Those comparisons likely mean that the other group is offering its “legal protection” through an insurance policy and not through the organization.

For example, the AAE policy mentioned above contains coverage for defense against adverse employment

See “OEA policy” on Page 12

Get creative for cash

Members' students invited to enter RAA poster contest

The pictures our mind draws while we're reading are priceless, but being able to put those pictures on paper could be worth a few bucks for some talented Oklahoma students.

The *Education Focus* is seeking entries in the Oklahoma Education Association Read Across America poster contest. First place in each division will receive a \$75 VISA gift card, second place will receive a \$50 VISA gift card, and honorable mention winners will receive a certificate.

The rules are simple – have your students draw a picture inspired by a favorite book and enter for a chance to win. The winners will be featured in the April-May issue of the *Education Focus* and on our website, okea.org.

- Pictures will be judged on creativity, use of color and content.

- Entries must be submitted on white, unlined 8 ½ x 11 paper. DO NOT FOLD.

- On the back of each entry, list the book that inspired the drawing, student's name, age, grade, name of

school and teacher, a parent's or guardian's name, home address and daytime phone number.

First, second and honorable mention will be chosen in four categories: Kindergarten through 2nd grade; 3rd -5th grade; 6th-8th grade; and 9th-12th grade.

- All entries will become the property of the OEA and must meet all contest rules to be eligible for prizes.

- All entries must be received by Monday, March 5. Mail to OEA Focus on Reading, PO Box 18485, Okla. City, OK 73154; or hand-deliver them to OEA Headquarters at 323 E. Madison, Okla. City, OK, 73105.

- Late entries or entries from non-OEA members will not be judged.



"Even Monsters Need Haircuts," by Thackerville's Drake Wells, won the 4th-6th grade category in 2011.

For more information, contact Editor Doug Folks at 800/522-8091, 405/528-7785, or dfolks@okea.org.

Website has great ideas for your for Read Across America event

Need an idea for your school's Read Across America celebration? Looking for a proclamation your mayor can sign, announcing March 2 as Read Across America Day in your community?

The National Education Association's website – nea.org/readacross – is a treasure trove of ideas, resources and information. You can find downloadable versions of bookmarks, the proclamation, the Reader's Oath and other resources. One section includes the "13

Seuss-gestions" of things you can do to make your reading celebration the best ever.

We want to see how you celebrate. If you'll share photos of your event with OEA, we'll share them with the world via our website. Email photos (shot at the highest resolution your camera will bare) to *Education Focus* editor Doug Folks at dfolks@okea.org.



Broken Arrow's (from left) Katy Cook, Libby Van Dolan and Greer Nichols during a 2011 performance.

Filing opens Feb. 1 for OEA board seats, state races

Eight positions on the Oklahoma Education Association Board of Directors are open for candidates in this spring's Association elections. In addition, there are spots for Administrator at-Large on the board and at-large positions to the OEA Delegate Assembly and the NEA Representative Assembly.

Filing will be open from February 1-17, with online elections planned for March. A link to the voting site will be distributed prior to the election. Members will also be able to access the voting site from okea.org.

The OEA Board of Directors is designed to represent members at the grassroots level. Each zone is made up of at least 1,000 Association members who elect their representative on the board.

The newly elected Zone Directors will take office on July 6.

At-large delegates to the Delegate Assembly and NEA RA will serve at this year's meetings. The OEA annual meeting is April 27-28 at the Embassy Suites in Norman and

the RA is set for June 30 – July 5 in Washington, D.C.

Filing forms will be available February 1 at okea.org, at OEA Headquarters in Oklahoma City or at regional OEA offices in Tulsa and Woodward.

For more information on the elections or filing forms, contact Rheta Kennedy at 800/522-8091, 405/528-7785 or rkennedy@okea.org.

OEA Board of Directors

All eight open positions are for three-year terms which expire in 2015. Also, these board members will serve as NEA Delegates in 2013 and 2014.

Southwest A – Representing Beckham, Caddo, Comanche, Cotton, Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, Roger Mills, Tillman and Washita Counties.

Tulsa Metro A – Representing Tulsa CTA.

Tulsa Metro E – Representing Berryhill, Bixby, Broken Arrow, Jenks and Leonard.

Oklahoma City Metro A – Representing Crooked Oak, Harrah, Mid-America Bible College, Moore, Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts, and Oklahoma City Community College.

Oklahoma City Metro C – Representing Edmond, Oklahoma City Schools and the University of Central Oklahoma.

Northwest A – Representing Alfalfa, Beaver, Cimarron, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Garfield, Grant, Harper, Major, Texas, Woods and Woodward Counties.

Northeast A – Representing Adair, Craig, Delaware, Mayes, Nowata and Ottawa Counties.

Northeast C – Representing Cherokee and Muskogee Counties.

Statewide Openings

OEA Board of Directors

Administrator At-Large.

OEA Delegate Assembly

OEA/NEA Retired Delegate(s)-at-Large to OEA/DA.

OEA Administrator Delegate(s)-at-Large to OEA/DA.

OEA Ethnic Minority Delegate(s)-at-Large to OEA/DA.

(The total number of at-large delegates in each category is determined by how many delegates eligible in each category are elected locally.)

NEA Representative Assembly

NEA Retired Delegate(s)-at-Large to the NEA/RA (successor delegates only)

Regional Positions Open

The number of Category I Delegates-at-Large for the 2012 NEA RA and which geographic regions they will represent was not available at press time. Those positions will be announced in The Insider and on the OEA website, okea.org, by early February.

Get wild about reading & RAA

Bogey and Ellie, two of the Oklahoma City Zoo's giraffes, have graciously agreed to serve as honorary chairs of the Oklahoma Education Association's 2012 Read Across America celebration.

Copies of the poster, shown here, are now available through the OEA's regional teams.

Bogey (on the left in the photo) and Ellie were joined at the poster shoot by (back row) OEA VP Alicia Priest; Zoe Boyce and Brayden Tate, both from Bethel; OEA President Linda Hampton; (front row) Kenna Priest, Yukon; Peja West, Oklahoma City; Rylee Robison, Moore; and Kennedy Lewis, Oklahoma City.



Education should transcend politics

Continued from Page 3

“In Oklahoma, what we have to realize is that we are all people, whether we are registered Democrat or Republican or independent. Building relationships with legislators is what’s going to help us in the long run, especially on hot button issues like our retirement, and things that could affect us (as teachers) such as class size,” Manzer said.

“(As Democrats) we need to be aware of what’s going on, be cognizant, so we can make a difference. We need to call (elected leaders) whether they are (of) our political party and start building those positive relationships that could help us in the long run.”

Sharing experiences

Gooden, a library media specialist at Moore’s Central Elementary, contacts members of both parties as well. She holds sentiments similar to Manzer’s when it comes to lobbying elected officials.

“It’s about kids. There shouldn’t be a party division in education. We should all have the same goal,” Gooden said.

She has written to legislators of both parties, and sent thank-you notes to both sides. Gooden believes legislators don’t consider her party affiliation when she’s lobbying them.

“I think they look at me as a teacher, not a Republican,” she said. “I’ve had encouraging words from some and not so encouraging words from others.”

Members of both political parties will tell you they are for public education. The two sides just disagree which path to take to reach the desired destination. When there is a bill that promotes an answer that Gooden sees as bad for education, she shares her personal experiences to try and

Most of your dues are deductible

Members who itemize deductions and meet the two percent requirement for additional miscellaneous deductions are able to deduct most of their membership dues. Below is a chart of how much can be deducted (all but the 8.1 percent attributed to lobbying). Members should also check with their local associations for the amount of non-deductible local dues spent on lobbying.

For additional help, contact your tax professional.

Full-time active certified	\$428.03
Halftime active certified	\$224.02
Full-time active support	\$231.52
Halftime active support	\$126.01
Substitute	\$140.02
Reserve certified	\$204.02
Reserve support	\$106.01

“Building relationships with legislators is what’s going to help us in the long run, especially on hot button issues like our retirement, and things that could affect us (as teachers) such as class size.”

Norman’s Cari Manzer

sway the legislator.

She says the current controversy surrounded the unfunded stipend for National Board Certification is a perfect example.

“Going through the National Board process was probably my best professional development experience, even more so than my master’s,” Gooden said. “It really showed me how to teach more meaningfully, to reflect. I’ve tried to educate our legislators on that fact and encourage them to support the (National Board Certification) process.”

Gooden’s advice for Republican members is to start creating relationships with elected leaders of their party.

“Contact them, tell your story, let them see (what’s really happening in) education,” she said. “Education should not belong to either party.”



Law-related Education

www.okbar.org/public/lre

Lawyers in the Classroom

www.okbar.org/public/lre/programs

Representative Democracy in America

www.representativedemocracy.org

We the People:

The Citizen and the Constitution

www.civiced.org

Project Citizen

www.civiced.org

Peaceful Resolutions for Oklahoma Students

www.oscn.net/static/adr/pros

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Conference registration waived for ESPs

Registration is free for education support professionals (ESPs) who attend the 2012 Advocacy Conference, and ESP locals are eligible to receive one free hotel room for the conference.

The Advocacy Conference is set for February 17-18 at the Waterford Marriott Hotel in Oklahoma City. Registration for both certified and support members is open until February 15.

ESP members do not pay a registration fee, but they must register for the conference online at advocacyconference-rss.eventbrite.com/. Participants may also reach the conference registration site from OEA's website, okea.org. Each ESP local located at least 100 miles from the conference site is eligible for one, free double-occupancy room at the conference. For more information, ESPs should contact Marty Bull at mbull@okea.org, 800/331-5143 or 918/665-2282.

Rep. Scott Inman will provide the keynote presentation on Saturday the 18th. Robb Gray, state project coordinator at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, will open the conference at 7 p.m. on the 17th.

Breakout sessions will include Protecting Your Rights and Your Contract, Power in Negotiations, Equal Access, Foundations for Successful Bargain-

ing, Member Rights and an update on House Bill 2033, which two years ago established several reforms that will soon take effect.

The afternoon will feature back-to-back sessions on teacher evaluation. The first session will be a review and discussion of the Tulsa Teacher Leader Effectiveness Model, which was recently selected as the state's presumptive default evaluation system. In the second session, participants will be provided with an introduction to value-added qualitative measurements and will participate in a discussion on gathering evidence to support and document performance on the teacher rubric.

For the second consecutive year, ESPs will have their own track, featuring presentations by NEA ESP regional organizer, Rafael Rivera, OEA General Counsel Richard Wilkinson and Federal Mediators Bobby Thompson and John Doern.

Participants must make their own lodging reservations by contacting the Waterford Marriott Hotel at 800/228-9290 or 405/848-4782. The hotel is offering a special conference rate of \$81 (plus tax), single or double occupancy. Request the "OEA special rate" when reserving rooms for the conference.

For more information on the conference, contact Melanie Engh at mengh@okea.org, 800/522-8091 or 405/528-7785.

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People with disabilities experience exclusion more than people without disabilities. You can help create new understandings. You and your students have the potential to make a world of difference in someone's life.

The Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council and the Newspapers in Education program have created curriculum to teach students about creating positive communities. Free printed Student's Guides are available by contacting the ODDC.

Electronic copies of the Student's Guide and a Teacher's Guide are available online at:

<http://nie.newsok.com/programs>

(scroll down to A Place for You & Me).



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OEA policy, legal assistance are separate

Continued from Page 7

action, with relatively low limits of coverage. Under that policy, you are limited in the amount of fees that are available for having an attorney attend a due process hearing before a local school board and you are limited in the amount of fees that are available to pursue additional legal action.

Contrast those limitations to the legal services that are provided to OEA members for defense of adverse employment action through the Kate Frank/DuShane Legal Services Program – which has no limits to the amount of fees available for a board hearing or other litigation – and you can see why other groups may want to provide a “comparison” instead of the actual EEL policy language.

The legal services provided by the OEA to its members are not provided through an insurance policy; they are

provided by and through the OEA and those services are not diminished by coverage limits that may be contained in an insurance policy. The professional and personal legal services offered by OEA to its members are totally separate from the NEA EEL policy that provides for the liability protection available to every OEA member.

You should make sure that you are comparing “apples to apples” when reviewing an EEL policy and/or any comparison of the OEA legal programs to the “legal protection” that is supposedly available with other groups.

Finally, like most anything else, the age old adage that “you get what you pay for” is equally applicable

Make sure you are comparing “apples to apples” when reviewing EEL policies or legal programs with those of the OEA.

when reviewing these policies and any comparisons of the legal protection that is available through the OEA and other groups or organizations. Protect yourself – ask the right questions and understand what those policies provide – and you will be thankful in the event you ever need those protections.

If you have questions about any of the coverages contained in the NEA EEL policy or any of the legal programs offered by the OEA to its members, contact the Center for Legal and Corporate Services (800/522-8091) or your Regional Advocacy UniServ Specialist (okea.org/advocacystaff).



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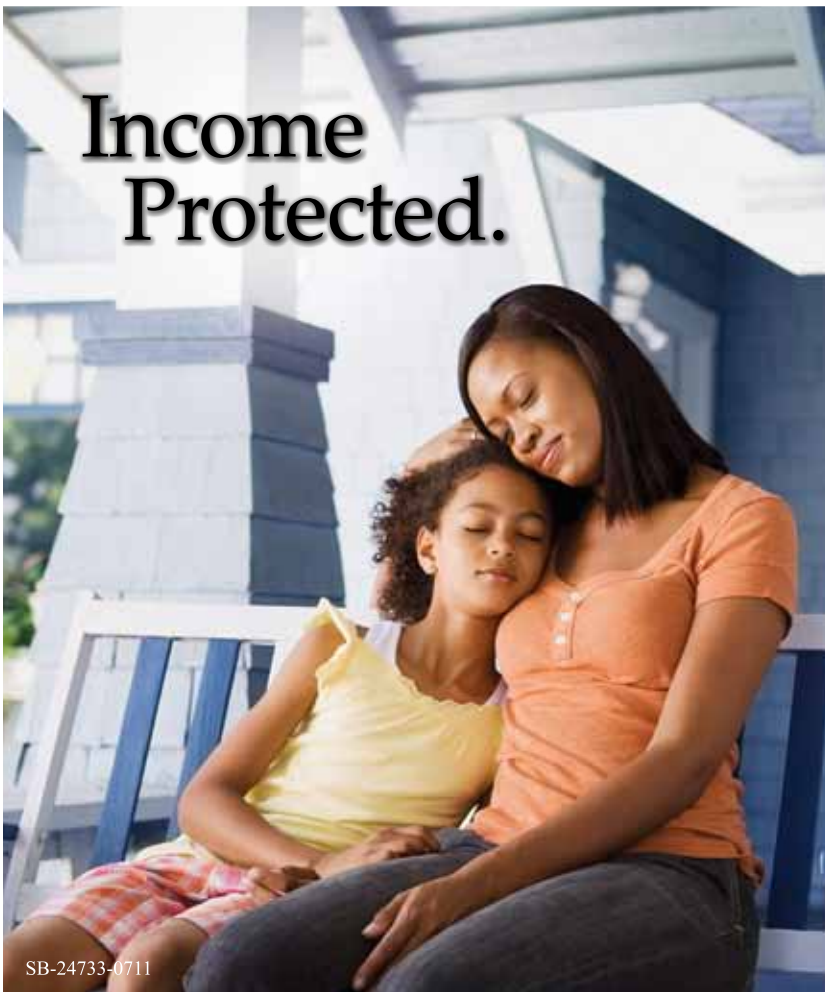
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