

THE EDUCATION FOCUS

FOR THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE OKLAHOMA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY 2011



LEGISLATION ISSUE

New Look, Same Focus.

OEA unveils a new logo and continues its commitment to putting education first.



Oklahoma Education Association
putting education first



A wind of change

The first session of the 53rd Oklahoma Legislature opens February 7 and education will no doubt see a different attitude from our elected leaders. How will a Republican-majority government treat education? How bad will the budget shortfall hit our schools?

Page 2 New State Superintendent Janet Barresi offers a glimpse of what she plans for education in Oklahoma.



Page 4 A new philosophy of how to run state government is in full swing at the capitol. So, what can education expect from the coming legislative session?

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Join the conversation with OEA!



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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 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

Southeast Team

800/563-4230 or 405/275-4060

The Education Focus

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These changes won't keep us from being part of the process

*By Becky Felts
OEA President*

If you follow politics at all – even if you don't – you've already realized big changes are coming our way this session. Republicans are in full charge at 23rd and Lincoln in Oklahoma City, with Mary Fallin in the governor's office, large majorities in each house, and Janet Barresi in office as the State Superintendent of Instruction. There will be plenty of new ideas presented for education; some we'll like, others we won't.

Contrary to what our critics may say, we work with all politicians, regardless of party. Our goals are better schools, better teachers, better results. Just because there is a power shift in state government doesn't mean that we will stop doing what we're good at – and that's being a vocal advocate for public schools in the political process.

With all the changes and the new philosophy, it will be as important as ever for us to stay politically active at the capitol as well as at home. It will be up to all of us to reach out to our legislators when various issues are being debated. They will need to know how those ideas will affect your jobs as education professionals, the students under your care and the schools for which you work.

Legislators work Monday through mid-day Thursdays most of the session, heading home to touch base with their constituents at the end of the week. Education needs to be one of the constituency groups legislators hear from on a regular basis. Start planning now for an at-home meeting or two with your legislators as part of a local association meeting during

the spring or a legislative forum for the entire community.

Stay up-to-date with what's going on at the Capitol by subscribing to OEA's Legislative Update e-newsletter. (The Update is sent to home email addresses only, so make sure we have your home email by sending it to your regional team assistant or to Brenda Snider in membership processing at bsnider@okea.org.)

The update will also be posted on the Legislative page of our website, okea.org.

Make plans to join us for Lobby Day, March 23.

It will be important that you talk with other members and other colleagues in your building about what



President Becky Felts

you're hearing from OEA and about what's coming out of the legislature. Make sure everyone understands the issues and the consequences of any changes to current education law.

The circle of communication needs to continue – share how your colleagues feel about the issues when you talk to your legislator again.

Through collective action, we have achieved a great deal. There is no reason we should stop now.



New look, same focus

The Oklahoma Education Association is taking on a new look, but the focus remains the same – an association dedicated to advocating for public education and the employees that dedicate their lives to educating our children.

Accompanying the new logo is a slogan – “putting education first” – that serves as a commitment to students and educators, placing their importance above all others.

The new visual, which includes an outline of a graduate in the transformed “A,” symbolizes everything that OEA does is for the betterment of public education.

- Creating reform that protects our members while improving the education experience.
- Lobbying for better pay and benefits that allows schools to recruit and retain great teachers and dedicated support professionals.
- Advocating for our members so that they are allowed to do what they were hired to do – teach the young people of Oklahoma.
- Promoting excellence in the classroom by providing world-class professional development.

A very aggressive agenda

Barresi plans restructuring of education

Interview by Doug Folks

It is an obvious understatement to say Oklahoma's education system is about to change, for a number of reasons. Republicans have not only taken control of both houses of state government, but also every major state office. The demands to improve public education is a national conversation, with groups from all sides weighing in.

Of all the political changes, one of the most important to Oklahoma is the office of State Superintendent. After 20 years of leading the State Department of Education, Sandy Garrett did not run for re-election and Janet Barresi, a former dentist and education reformer, was swept into office.

Barresi started her professional career in education as a speech pathologist in Norman and Harrah. She completely flipped careers in 1984 when she earned a DDS and started a 24-year career as a dentist. But when her twin sons were about to reach middle school, she returned to education in an historic way. In 1996, she established Oklahoma's first charter school in the Oklahoma City Public Schools District, Independence Charter Middle School.

She would later found Harding Charter Preparatory High School, which Newsweek this year ranked 68th among the best high schools in the country.

Her reputation in education earned her appointments to high-level task forces, including Gov. Henry's Achieving Classroom Excellence as chairwoman of the ACE II Task Force,

Speaker Chris Benge's Teacher Performance Pay Initiative and on the Education Funding Reform Task Force.

With just three days as State Superintendent as her title, Barresi spent a few minutes with the *Education Focus* to answer a few questions on her plans for education, including restructuring the State Department.

Education Focus: Why did you run for state superintendent?

Janet Barresi: "I can tell you that with 15 years of experience working in education reform ... it became clear to me that ... we need to focus on improving education, reforming education, to meet the demands of the needs of the 21st Century. So I didn't get in this job to be state superintendent, I got in this job to change children's lives."

EF: Have you set specific goals as you enter office?

JB: "We have a very aggressive agenda as we go forward. We have to rethink how we're delivering education to the children of Oklahoma. In terms of our teaching, we have to get away from the very monolithic tradition of a teacher lecturing to students. I understand that's already being done in some schools throughout the state. Teachers being able to focus on students and focus on kids with different learning styles, kids that sometimes may learn differently than the average child, and helping teachers increase their capacity so they can be much more effective in the classroom."

"If we're rethinking education, then the next thing we have to do is restructure ... the State Department of Education ... to meet the needs of (every) district. We're going to be transforming the SDE from less of a regulatory agency to one that is more of a service agency."

EF: Can you give us some ex-

amples of how you will be a service rather than a regulatory agency?

JB: "I need to run (the SDE) more efficiently so we can be sure we get more money into the classroom. We also need to help districts do that. This year, if there are rules or regs that the districts need to be relieved from – with the focus of getting more money into their classrooms – then, certainly, we're going to be looking at those (issues) and making sure they, first of all, benefit students and then allow that district to achieve that goal of getting more money into the classroom."

EF: The latest figures show more than 5,000 more students enrolled this year in Oklahoma schools, and an increase of more than 25,000 students in the last five years. What plans to do you have to help schools meet their mounting financial responsibilities?

JB: "Certainly, the rest of this year will be challenging, and going forward into next year it will be even more so. The state is still facing a considerable deficit. That's the reality of the situation. We're going to work with superintendents and their boards to see what we can do on a case-by-case basis for every district to remove or relax regulations on them – rules, mandates – that are causing them to perhaps not be as efficient as they can be."

EF: Teachers are increasingly becoming more frustrated at the number of required tests and the regimentation of instruction in their classrooms. Do you see this as a wave of the future, or is there a way to do this without test, test, test?

JB: "As you know, there is a certain amount of tests that are required by the state of Oklahoma and the remainder of tests that teachers are required to administer are required by their districts. Having said that,



Photo by Dong Folks.

State Superintendent Janet Barresi

let me address tests by the state of Oklahoma. In our grades three, five and eight, we have end-of-the-year tests. First of all, I'm very concerned they're written only to compare Oklahoma's kids against Oklahoma's kids. And these tests are largely memory tests, which then drives the teacher in instruction to do drilling work with their students during a period of time and it's a mad rush until the end of the year.

"The results only come back in the summertime. We need tests that tell teachers what children know and where the gaps are in learning and they have to have that information as quickly as possible.

"I would like to move more towards a framework that provides formative tests during the year. First of all, it's a test that's going to tell a teacher in a timely manner what a child knows and where the gaps are.

"Also what that will do is allow our new teacher evaluation system, that is (now) being developed, that

(students must pass) four out of seven ... high stakes tests that the ACE legislation mandated. (These tests are) supposed to show that a high school diploma means something. However, with the installation of the common core standards, which the legislature voted to approve last year, along with those common core standards come common assessments.

"As you know, there are two groups that receive large federal grants to develop those common assessments. One is a group called Smarter Balance and the other is called PARCC (The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, sponsored by achieve.org).

"Currently, the state is a member of both of those organizations. That does not allow us to join the governing board of either of those groups. We just have to sit at the back of the room and get what we get. It is my plan to end our membership in the Smarter Balance group and go with PARCC because we have been asked

growth component to show. I think teachers ... shouldn't have to hang their hat on just one test score. We need to be able to have teachers show growth through the year and how their students have improved. I'd like teachers to also get extra credit for how much they were able to improve the performance of children in the lowest quartile within their classes.

"(As for high school) end-of-instruction examinations ...

to join the governing board of that organization and therefore we'll have a direct say-so in how those exams are designed. Those tests are expected to be field tested in 2012 and to become operational by 2014.

"So, we will be transitioning from the ACE tests into these common assessment types of tests. These tests will be focused on assessing not only on what a child knows in terms of facts but also ... assess a child's cognitive skills, their abstract reasoning, their analysis, synthesis of information, those critical-thinking skills that are so important for these kids to have to be successful in the 21st Century."

EF: Oklahoma City Schools recently voted to move all of their schools to a year-round calendar. Is that a viable model for all schools?

JB: "It is being done in different schools across the country with varied results. First of all, it's a local control issue, but it gets down to this: If there is complete buy-in by the personnel within the district, everyone from administration down to classroom teachers and all those that are involved with the children, it will be successful if there is an appropriate amount of planning, and useful use of that down time."

EF: So year-round school isn't something you feel the state should require of all districts?

JB: "No. I don't like mandates. I'm a local control type of fan and advocate. I'm sure Oklahoma City would be happy to share its best practices in this area and the results. My bottom line is this: I want to see the numbers. I want to see the academic outcomes as a result of this process, after they've had it in for a couple, three years. I want to see how it facilitates outcomes, how it facilitates learning."

See the entire interview with Janet Barresi at okea.org/about-oea/media-center.

A new philosophy rules

By Doug Folks

There's a new sheriff in town, so to speak, in the form of a huge shift in political philosophy toward education at the capitol.

New laws that spring from this philosophical change will be ideas we've seen offered up over the last 10 years, some more than once. The ruling majority believes strongly in strict accountability not only for students but also for teachers and administrators. They want local control, which can mean fewer protections and/or fewer mandates from the state government. And they like parental choice (i.e. vouchers and tax credits that take away from public education).

Here's a look at some key areas and what type of bills very likely will be considered before the end of the session.

Financial issues – The hard truth of the state budget is that there is somewhere between \$200 million and \$600 million of one-time money that must be replaced first. Much of that was federal stimulus money that will not be renewed. Legislators have already told state agencies to expect 10 percent cuts. They will have some tough budget decisions to make, and will need input from school employees to understand how cuts affect the classroom.

Compounding the economic reality is a movement to lower school funding by lowering the amount your property taxes can rise by as little as 1 percent per year (even if your house increases in value by much more). Also, there is talk of completely exempting certain groups (e.g. senior citizens) from any prop-

erty tax increases, regardless of their income level.

Changes like this will lower the local money coming to schools, therefore creating a double whammy of less state money and less local money. Also, the legislature may give school districts much more latitude on how they spend their money. This could be good or bad, depending on your local board and leadership. Teacher and support professional input in the process will be key.

Teacher Due Process – The local-control philosophy for due process means boards should have the ability to hire and fire. Senate Bill 1 has already been filed and it would do away with an appeal beyond the local school board, creating one due process system for all teachers whether they have career status or are probationary. There are some legislators who want to make teachers at-will employees, just like workers in the private sector.

Retirement – There is a belief by some legislators that the Teachers' Retirement System is in danger of becoming insolvent – even though TRS's actuaries say the system can pay full benefits into year 2058 without any changes to current funding methods. Proposals include moving to a defined contribution, freezing all future COLAs (cost of living increases), increasing the retirement age to 65, changing the calculation to exclude benefits, and removing the ability of retiring employees to count 120 days of accrued sick leave toward a year's worth of service.

Testing – Oklahoma's current type of testing will be reconsidered. The new philosophy calls for more student-growth testing, and holding school districts and teachers accountable. That could include "merit pay" for teachers and administrators whose children show growth as well as the potential loss of employment if students don't show growth.

Charter schools – Expect further expansion of charter schools not only to more communities, but also into online instruction. Also, charter schools may be given more of an ability to fund themselves through bond issues and other methods.

As always, the OEA will be active at the legislative session, monitoring all agencies that have an effect on education, lobbying all legislators on your behalf and working to get members to the capitol to help give a face to education's story.

The Association has scheduled a lobby day for Wednesday, March 23. Start making plans now to bring a contingent from your district, including teachers, support professionals and administrators.

"Our members need to establish relationships with their legislators and use every bit of their influence on behalf of public education," said Becky Felts, OEA president. "It will be important that we weigh in on the various bills that come up this session. Let's help the legislature make wise decisions by ensuring they understand what's best for our students."

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."

Save the date!
OEA Lobby Day
March 23

Got talent?

Students invited to enter RAA poster contest

Oklahoma kids have talent and we want to see it and share it with our readers.

The *Education Focus* is seeking entries in the OEA 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 illustrated, 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 Oklahoma Education Association and must meet all contest rules to be eligible for prizes.



Garber's Tylie Hoffman was an honorable mention winner last year for "Little Tiger's Big Surprise."

- All entries must be received by Friday, March 4, 2011. 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.

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

Olympic legends serve as cochairs

Readers young and old just may be ready to "flip" into a good book when they see the Oklahoma Education Association's 2011 Read Across America poster. Former Olympic gold medalists Bart Conner and Nadia Comaneci grace the poster and serve as OEA's honorary chairs for this year's reading celebration.

A copy of the poster can found on

the next two pages, ready for you to (gently) remove it from this issue and hang in your room!

Conner is the only American male gymnast to win gold medals at every level of national and international competition. He was a member of the U.S. Olympic teams in 1976, 1980 and 1984, winning two gold medals at the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

At the 1976 Montreal Games, a 14-year-old Romanian girl won the hearts of fans worldwide, and became known simply as Nadia. By the end of those games, she had earned seven perfect 10s, three gold medals, one silver and one bronze. Four years later, at the Moscow Olympics, Comaneci earned two more gold medals and two silvers.

Conner and Comaneci were married in a lavish state wedding in Bucharest, Romania, in 1996. Their son, Dylan, is four years old.

Today, Bart and Nadia run the Bart Conner Gymnastics Academy in Norman, where more than 1,000 gymnasts train at every level, from beginning motor skill development to elite athletes aiming for college scholarships and spots of the U.S. national team. They continue to travel the world delivering inspirational speeches, as well as promoting charities, gymnastics, fitness and healthy lifestyles.

Website is your resource for great ideas

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 Focus editor Doug Folks at dfolks@okea.org.

Flip into a Good Book!



OEA

Oklahoma Education Association

TM & © 1997 Dr. Seuss Enterprises, L.P.
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Read Across Ameri

Olympic Gold Medalists Bart Conner and Nadia Comaneci
join OEA President Becky Felts and VP Linda Hampton
in a celebration of reading.



Photo courtesy of Blunck Studios, Moore, OK

ca ~ March 2, 2011

Still at the top

225 new NBCTs keeps Oklahoma in top 10

By Doug Folks

Oklahoma maintained its top 10 status for the number of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) when 225 state teachers earned the elite status in November.

Included in the Class of 2010 are 105 members of the Oklahoma Education Association (see the list of OEA members on the next page).

Oklahoma's 225 new NBCTs was the 10th most in the country, according to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS),

the organization that sets and maintains the standards for teaching excellence. The state ranks ninth nationally with 2,820 total NBCTs over time.

More than 8,600 teachers nationwide achieved National Board Certification in 2010. This achievement brings the total number of teachers certified by NBPTS to more than 91,000. Approximately half of all NBCTs teach in Title I eligible, high-need schools, as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics.

A voluntary assessment program

designed to develop, recognize and retain accomplished teachers, National Board Certification is achieved through a performance-based assessment that typically takes one to three years to complete. While state licensing systems set basic requirements to teach in each state, NBCTs have successfully demonstrated advanced teaching knowledge, skills and practices.

Edmond had the most new NBCTs with 13, followed by Tulsa (12), Moore (10), Norman (9) and Oklahoma City (8).

Among Oklahoma's newest members of the prestigious certification was Debbie Sears, a special ed teacher in Durant. Unfortunately, she passed away in November without knowing she had earned her NBC.

In an interview with the *Education Focus*, newly elected State Superintendent Janet Barresi gave special recognition to Sears.

"I would like to extend my sympathies to her husband and to her family," she said. "I want her husband to know she will be recognized (as a member of Oklahoma's NBCT Class of 2010)."

The 2010 legislature placed a two-year moratorium on the funding for scholarships to apply for National Board Certification and on the \$5,000 stipends for anyone who earns the certification after starting the process later than June 30, 2010.

The Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation is asking the legislature to reinstate 200 scholarships next budget year, 200 more the following year, and to reinstate the yearly stipends for Fiscal Year 2012.

Barresi offered her support for the NBPTS program when asked if she would support fighting for funding to continue the program in Oklahoma.

"Anything we can do to help encourage teachers to pursue professional development to help them be more effective in front of the children, certainly that is something I will support completely," she said.

OEA to screen important film

High stakes testing brings heavy consequences, according to the film documentary "Race to Nowhere."

"Cheating is commonplace, stress-related illness, depression and burnout are rampant, and ironically, young people arrive at college and the workplace unprepared and uninspired," according to the film's producers.

In an effort to spark a dialogue on how to prepare our children for the future without all the collateral damage, the Oklahoma Education Association will host screenings of this important film on February 28 in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. A panel discussion will take place at both venues as well.

The Oklahoma City screening will begin at 6 p.m. at the Moore Norman Technology Center's Franklin Road Campus, 4701 12th Avenue NW in north Norman. The panel discussion will follow at 7:45 p.m.

In Tulsa, the Circle Cinema, 10 S. Lewis Ave., is donating its theater for two screenings, at 5:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. A panel discussion will be held between showings, from 7:10-7:50 p.m. *TulsaKids Magazine* is a cosponsor of the Tulsa event.

Seating is limited in both locations, so advanced reservations are required to guarantee a seat. Attendees may register on OEA's website, okea.org. For more information on the Oklahoma City screening contact Bonnie Hammock at bhammock@okea.org, 800/522-8091 or 405/528-7785. For the Tulsa screenings, contact Kim Meigs at kmeigs@okea.org, 800/331-5143 or 918/665-2282.



OEA's Class of 2010

National Board Certified Teachers

OKC Metro Region

Deer Creek – Cristin Clements, Grove Valley El; Kristy Vandorn, Deer Creek MS

Edmond – Carina Chiossi-Plett, Santa Fe HS; Cindy Church, Cheyenne MS; Shele Cook, Washington Irving El; Brian Hunter, Edmond North HS; Regan Killackey, Memorial HS; Tristin Pitts, Cheyenne MS; Shawna Richardson, Cheyenne MS; Natalie Slayton, Cheyenne MS; Brenda Stone, John Ross El

Mid-Del – Amy LeClaire, Traub El

Moore – Hart Brown, Vista Academy; Sarah Lawrence, Moore HS; Kimberly Paxson, Moore HS; Teresa Potter, Fisher El; Megan Schmidt, Heritage Trails El; Brandy Sitts, Central El; David Wall, Central JH; Brandon Wilmarth, Southmoore HS

Oklahoma City – Cynthia Lindauer, Wilson El; Kristin Whitmore, Sequoyah El

Putnam City – Molly Baugh, PC North HS; Linda Deason, Windsor Hills El; Shannon Elliott, Central El; Carrie Lenhart, Central El; Annia Morris, PC North HS

Western Heights – Faye Willbourn, Winds West El

Northeast Region

Bartlesville – Alex Claussen, Bartlesville HS

Justus-Tiawaha – Erica Hougland, South Campus Grades 4-6

Tahlequah – Lesley Presley, Tahlequah MS

Wagoner – Grace McMahan, Lincoln Preschool; Jennifer Simpson, Lincoln Preschool

Northwest Region

Alva – Krista Starbuck, Alva MS

Blackwell – Tommy Webb, Blackwell MS

Chisholm – Geri Ayers, Chisholm MS; Deborah Erbs, Chisholm MS; Martha Millard, Chisholm HS

Cushing – Betty Bowen, Cushing MS

Enid – Barbara Baker, Waller JH; Christy Hermanski, McKinley El; Jena Kodesh, Enid HS; Carolyn Labrue, McKinley El; Varna Nolen, Longfellow JH; Jaci Tolbert, Monroe El

Mustang – Tammy Damasiewicz, Mustang MS; Sharolyn Davis, Mustang MH; Jennifer Dean, Mustang HS; Russell Randolph, Mustang MH

Okeene – Tara Fisher, Okeene High School

Perkins-Tryon – Jana Shelton, Perkins-Tryon JH

Stillwater – Jennifer White, Stillwater HS

Tonkawa – Kelly Martin, Tonkawa El

Yukon – Maschielle Brakefield, Surrey Hills El; Cathy Smith, Surrey Hills El

Southeast Region

Bethel – Misty Mader, Bethel MS

Dale – Allison Robinson, Dale HS

Hugo – Sarah Henson, Hugo JR

Okemah – Sherry Walker, Okemah MS

Pocola – Patricia Tate, Pocola El

Prague – Cherie Serre, Prague HS

Stigler – Valorie Lewis, Stigler El

Valliant – Stephanie Coulter, Valliant El

Wilburton – Virginia Hollingback, Wilburton HS

Southwest Region

Anadarko – Dovie Cole, East El

Comanche – Misti Mitchell-Bain, Comanche MS

Cyril – Debra McPherson, Cyril HS

Duncan – Barbara Bailey, Wilson El

Durant – Alicia Farley, Durant HS; Debbie Sears, deceased

Elgin – Julie Jackson, Elgin El

Hinton – Sherry Jackson, Hinton HS

Lawton – Jennifer Keller, Lawton HS

Noble – Jessica Gates, Hubbard El

Norman – Irma Munsie, Norman North HS; Kara Newton, McKinley El

Tulsa Metro Region

Bixby – Molly Damer, Central El; Sherry Girard, Bixby MS; Virginia Porto, Bixby HS

Broken Arrow – Jo Curlee, Leisure Park El; Jentri Guinn, 5th & 6th Grade Center; Jennifer

Jones, Rhoades El; Ashley Newcomb, Centennial MS

Jenks – Laura Whitman-Qi, East El

Owasso – Dayna Dunn, Hodson El; Stacy Papp, Hodson El

Sand Springs – Tracy Grayson, Central Fine Arts Academy

Sapulpa – Jennifer Henderson, Sapulpa JH

Tulsa – Emily Baker, Robertson El; Linda Brown, Grissom El; Stacy Burcham-Otto, Jefferson El; Hannah Smith, Grissom El; Jeanne Hart, Carver MS; Alicia Hobbs, Owens El; Sheryl Miller, Patrick Henry El; Jeffrey Mosburg, B.T. Washington HS; Courtney Deming, Cooper El

Union – Bradley Hepner, 8th Grade Center; Cynthia Johnson, Union HS; Debbie Romo, 7th Grade Center; Katrina Philpot, Cedar Ridge El; Angela Sanders, Roy Clark El; Pegi Seizinger, Cedar Ridge El; Nancy Strozier, Rosa Parks El

Every effort was made to include all OEA members who earned National Board Certification in the Class of 2010. But the list is not generated by the OEA, and sometimes we are not able to properly identify all members who earned the prestigious certification. If we missed your name, email Editor Doug Folks (dfolks@okea.org) and we'll include your name in the next issue of the Education Focus.

AG says SDE required to fund Teacher Retirement Offset

By Richard Wilkinson
OEA General Counsel

The August 2010 “From Your Counsel” column in the *Education Focus* asked, “Is your retirement offset safe?” The question was posed in view of the then recent action of the Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) voting to adopt a budget for the 2010-11 fiscal year that did not fund the retirement credit – a deduction from the teacher’s portion of the required

ment offset. The OEA was the only education employee organization that advocated for the change of course by the SDE – because the offset is an obligation of the state, is required to be “picked up and paid” by the state, and because teachers and other education employees should not be required to fund the retirement credit.

While the action of the SDE only covers a portion of the total cost of the retirement offset, the SDE also voted to seek a supplemental appro-



Richard Wilkinson

From Your Counsel

tion owed to the TRS or is paid to the teacher as additional compensation in those local school districts that pay for the employee contribution to the TRS.

A few school districts initially required employees to “pick up” the state’s portion of the retirement offset, but those problems were resolved in those few districts after the request for the Attorney General opinion was submitted by the TRS.

The law remains clear: Education employees should not be required to fund the offset. So, if you have questions or if you believe that the retirement offset is not being handled properly in your school district, contact your OEA Regional Advocacy UniServ Specialist for additional information.

“The law remains clear: Education employees should not be required to fund the offset.”

retirement contribution paid to the Oklahoma Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS) – leaving in doubt how the retirement credit would be paid for the 2010-11 fiscal year and the possible impact that would have on retirement benefits for teachers.

In response to a formal question by the executive director of the TRS, Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson issued an opinion (2010 OK AG 14) on November 29, 2010, ruling that the SDE has a statutory obligation to transfer appropriated money every year to the Teachers’ Retirement System as required by Oklahoma statutes. Edmondson also ruled that the SDE has a statutory obligation to transfer appropriated money to the TRS every year, regardless of whether the Legislature provides a line item directing such allocation or whether it defers such discretion to the SDE.

On December 16, 2010, the SDE reversed course and voted to approve sending \$18 million dollars to the TRS to cover a portion of the retire-

priation from the Legislature for the current year to cover the remaining portion of the retirement offset.

The retirement credit is based on years of service and ranges from roughly \$60 per year for a beginning teacher to \$1,400 a year for a teacher with 25 or more years of experience. The credit is either applied to the amount of the employee contribu-

Most of OEA/NEA 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 13.2 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	\$402.21
Halftime active certified	\$206.05
Full-time active support	\$214.60
Halftime active support	\$112.52
Substitute	\$133.05
Reserve certified	\$196.05
Reserve support	\$105.52

Filing opens for 9 OEA Board seats

Nine positions on the Oklahoma Education Association Board of Directors are open for candidates in this spring's Association elections. Filing is open February 1-18 for those spots as well as at-large spots to the OEA Delegate Assembly and the NEA Representative Assembly.

The elections will be held in March.

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 29-30 in Oklahoma City and the RA is set for June 30 – July 5 in Chicago.

Filing forms are available at okea.org on the Local Association Forms page and at OEA Headquarters in Oklahoma City or at regional OEA offices in Tulsa, Woodward and Shawnee.

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



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www.representativedemocracy.org

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www.civiced.org

Project Citizen

www.civiced.org

Peaceful Resolutions for Oklahoma Students

www.oscn.net/static/adr/pros

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OEA Board of Directors positions

All nine open positions are for three-year terms which expire in 2014. Also, these board members will serve as NEA Delegates in 2012 and 2013.

Southwest E, representing Cleveland and McClain Counties.

Southeast B, representing Haskell, Hughes, McIntosh, Okfuskee, Okmulgee and Sequoyah Counties.

Southeast C, representing Atoka, Choctaw, Coal, Latimer, LeFlore, McCurtain, Pittsburg and Pushmataha Counties.

Tulsa Metro B, representing Tulsa CTA and Tulsa PSET.

Tulsa Metro D, representing Oral Roberts University, Okla. State University-Tulsa, Langston University-Tulsa, Sand Springs EA, Tulsa Community College, Tulsa Technology Center, Union CTA, Union ESP and the University of Tulsa.

Oklahoma City Metro B, representing Bethany ACT, Oklahoma City University, Putnam City, Putnam City ESP, Southern Nazarene University and Western Heights EA.

Oklahoma City Metro D, representing Choctaw/Nicomma Park ACT, Crutchfield ACT, Deer Creek ACT, Jones PEA, Luther EA, Mid-Del ACT, Mid-Del SEMD, Mid-Del AVT, Millwood ACT and Rose State College.

Northwest B, representing Kay, Logan, Noble and Payne Counties.

Northeast B, representing Muskogee and Wagoner Counties.

Statewide Openings

OEA Delegate Assembly Positions

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.

(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 Positions

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

Regional Openings

The number of Category I Delegates-at-Large for the 2011 NEA Representative Assembly and which geographic regions they will represent had not been determined by press time. Check the OEA website, okea.org, for more information after January 23.

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