

The
Education

FOCUS

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association • October/November 2013

Peter Markes **Classroom Maestro**

TOY Finalists discuss

- Discipline
- What the public doesn't understand about education
- Unlikely sources of inspiration
- *and more*

Putting education first

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State Teacher of the Year Peter Markes probably could have made a living as a performer, but teaching was always his only choice.

5 A conversation with Peter Markes

The Edmond North Orchestra teacher and State Teacher of the Year shares his thoughts on a variety of topics including testing and what's on his iPod.



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The Education Focus

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OEA
Oklahoma Education Association
putting education first.

Our actions give a voice to public school students

By Linda Hampton
OEA President

When visiting with students, I am reminded that, sadly, they don't have a voice in what is happening to their education.

Parents want the best future possible for their child. Teachers and support professionals want their students to be successful. Yet, in the current climate of using education for politics and profit, what subliminal – and often overt – messages are students getting from those who make the decisions about their education and their futures?

Oklahoma students are asking for quality teachers, yet attempts to retain and recruit quality teachers are being undermined. We are 49th in the nation in pay and our pensions are being threatened. Add to this all the reforms that are being laid at the feet of teachers in the name of 'change,' and it becomes easy to see why the education profession in Oklahoma is not attracting and retaining teachers.

Oklahoma students are asking to have tests that are meaningful and give useful feedback, yet they are being

excessively tested for no reason other than to meet some arbitrary guideline. Testing should never be used for labeling and punishing a student, teacher or school district. Testing should be to improve education – period.

Oklahoma students are asking for class sizes which allow them to participate and grow, yet many of the 'reformers' are saying that class size doesn't matter. Common sense should prevail. Try throwing a birthday party and instead of inviting five or six five-year-olds increase it to 20. Did it make a difference? Try having 25 teenagers to your house and tell me if you could conduct a group study session. Common sense is missing from those who say class size doesn't matter.

Oklahoma students are asking for their education to be the best it can be for them now, yet they are told we are trying new 'reforms' that eventually will, or won't, change education. They seem to be part of a giant experiment called "reform." Today's students don't get "overs;" this is their time. Oklahoma's children should not be pawns in a scheme to turn education into

“We care about our students and about making their hopes and dreams become reality.”



President Linda Hampton

for-profit businesses.

Oklahoma students aren't asking for the moon, they are asking for a great public education, and this is where we, my friends, come in. We have to make our voices heard. We care about our students and about making their hopes and dreams become reality. It's because

of them we go to work every day. We jump through all the hoops the detractors throw in our way,

because our students deserve a great public education. It's because of them we stay in education and fight the good fight on their behalf.

We have a very special gift – the ability to open our hearts to children and to make them the best they can be. We won't give up – they're worth it!

Thanks for all you do – your students appreciate you!



Invite your legislators to experience public education first-hand.

Find the GLEE Week toolkit at okea.org/gleeweek2013.

Pension reform efforts escalate

By Amanda Ewing
Associate Executive Director

This fall, we are seeing an increase in the efforts to change the pension benefits of the state's public employees. In the last few weeks, both the House and Senate Pension Committees held interim studies on the topic, with OEA voicing objections to harming the retirement security of current and future employees at both meetings.

Elected officials involved in this pension reform movement don't hide the fact that if they get their way, future employees in this state will receive lower retirement benefits. The biggest point of contention comes when talking about current employees. Those in favor of "reform" say current employees won't see a change. We say, "Prove it!"

because any way we do the math we see current employees' pensions, and the stability of the current Oklahoma Teachers Retirement System, being a major casualty of these changes.

As a current employee, you are paying into the system and ensuring current retirees receive their pension payments. If new employees are moved to a different system, who's going to be there to pay in when it's your turn to retire?

Somewhere along the way, our elected officials seem to have forgotten the value of their public servant constituents. These have always been low-paying jobs when compared to the private sector. When you enter the education profession, you accept a specific trade-off: you opt to forgo the higher salary up-front, and likely the financial stability that would allow you to develop your own

investment portfolio throughout your life, in exchange for a rewarding career educating Oklahoma's youth and the promise that after a lifetime of doing so the state will provide you a small pension on which you can live.

Instead of honoring that deal, many lawmakers today paint public employees as drains on state tax dollars. They equate receiving a well-deserved pension after providing the state a much-needed service to living off of the government.

This fight is much too important to stand on the sidelines and watch. There is an important final joint House and Senate interim study on this issue coming up November 20. Our elected leaders need to know this issue matters to every one of you. Your community needs to understand that the people who are teaching their children, feeding them in the cafeteria, and driving the bus route to get them to school are facing a real crisis.

If you haven't already, contact your legislator, write an opinion editorial in your local newspaper and talk to your friends and family about this issue. You can find resources to help you do so at okea.org/pensions.

A Quick Comparison

Our Current System: Defined **BENEFIT**

- The employee, the school district and the state contribute to the employee's retirement account.
- The Teachers Retirement System invests that money to help fully fund retirement for everyone.
- Upon retirement, the employee is **GUARANTEED** a certain dollar amount in monthly retirement payments for life.

Treasurer Ken Miller's Plan: Defined **CONTRIBUTION**

- The employee, the school district and the state contribute to the employee's retirement account.
- The employee or the state will choose investments that grow or shrink, **depending** on the stock market.
- Upon retirement, the employee will receive only the money accumulated in the account. The monthly payments last only as long as the money.

Who's fighting for us?

Keeping Oklahoma's Promises, a coalition of active and retired education professionals, firefighters, police officers, nurses, corrections employees, and others concerned about these changes.

Sign the petition at
keepokpromises.org

Whose idea is this?

State Treasurer Ken Miller thinks changing the pension system on the backs of teachers is a great way to save the state money.

The John Arnold Foundation run by the **Texas billionaire** who made millions running Enron before it went under, has contributed \$2 million and is sending so-called experts into Oklahoma to advise our legislators and leaders as to why they need pension reform.



get connected



facebook Oklahoma Education Association Shares, Likes and Comments, Oh My!

OEA CONGRATS to Sally Lawrence, Moore PS, on being OEA's Member Highlight!
8/23/13

OEA "Teach" begins in 5 minutes on CBS! Can't wait to see it! Let us know your thoughts about the show.
9/6/13

Roy Bishop: Awesome and thanks for sponsoring!

Keri Marlin: The footage of the actual teaching part is great. Realistic and honest.



WHAT HAPPENS IN AN INTERNET MINUTE?

- 204 million Emails sent
- 20 million Photo views on Flickr
- 2+ million Google search queries
- 277,000 Facebook logins
- 100,000 New tweets on Twitter
- 100+ New LinkedIn accounts
- 20 New victims of identity theft
- 6 Wikipedia articles published

OEA
9/16/13



November 18-22, for more information go to www.nea.org/aew

OEA
9/26/13

CONGRATS to Patti Ferguson-Palmer, Tulsa PS, on being OEA's Member Highlight!



Social Media EXPLAINED



Twitter: I'm drinking coffee



Facebook: I really enjoy drinking coffee



LinkedIn: I have skills, including drinking coffee



YouTube: Watch me drink coffee



Pinterest: Here's a recipe with coffee



Instagram: A picture of me with coffee



Foursquare: This is where I drink coffee



twitter @okea

Tickling Tweets



Kevin Hime: we need teachers and admin to unite for students not leaders trying to drive a wedge between for politics



OKEA: Oklahoma Department of Education has garnered a grade of "F-" in a new Cato Institute report: <http://capitolbeatok.com/reports/cato-institute-gives-f-to-state-public-education-spending-transparency>
died laughing



Trent Ratterree: (in response to CCSS) I think pretending we're changing all standards but meanwhile neglecting science/social studies standards bc of "Oklahomans values" is a mistake



OKEA: Teachers, parents vent frustration over increased testing <http://bit.ly/1aR0bSY> via @tulsaworld



OKEA: Latest from @okeducationtruths regarding SDE's investigation of JenksPS, opt-out testing. ... "the investigation is an attempt to bully people." <http://okeducationtruths.wordpress.com/>

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String music

Teaching was always the first option for TOY Peter Markes

By Doug Folks

Peter Markes has a musical talent that has taken him all over the world, playing in such exotic locales as China, Malaysia, Bulgaria and Korea, not to mention Oklahoma City. He started taking piano lessons at age 3, Suzuki violin at 4 and taught himself how to play guitar at 12.

Without a hint of ego or braggadocio, Markes (pronounced mar-kess) will tell you that he can pick up any stringed instrument and teach himself how to play it, just by ear. And he can play back for you anything you play first, just like the average guy can repeat something said to him in his native language.

“Starting that young, music became a language I could understand and translate very well,” he said. “It’s not like a mystery or a special gift. You know English. There are two-year-olds who know Chinese. They’re Chinese children.”

Ironically, performing and playing music is a side gig for Markes. First and foremost, he is a high school orchestra teacher at Edmond North High School, a husband and father. For the next year, he will serve as Oklahoma’s education ambassador in his role as 2014 State Teacher of the Year.

When his name was called as winner of the state’s highest honor for teaching, Markes’ reaction was one of quiet confidence. It’s a demeanor that is evident in

any conversation with him. He obviously knows who he is and where he’s going.

“I was going to be excited and relieved either way,” he says of the announcement during the Teacher of the Year ceremony in late September. “Mainly to know what lies ahead. If I got to remain in my classroom, that would be wonderful. Now that I won’t, obviously that’s bittersweet. I told my students, ‘I won’t be here, but I’ll do more good for you and people like you by being in our community.’”

The State Department of Education has restored full funding to the TOY Program, which means Markes’ classes will have a full-time substitute and he’ll spend most of his time traveling to speak to a wide variety of audiences.

As a performer, Peter plays rhythm guitar and some violin with Kyle Dillingham and Horseshoe Road, which plays a mix of bluegrass, blues, gospel, Western Swing, Gypsy Jazz, country and rock. He and Dillingham have played together for 20 years. Markes also played violin in the Oklahoma City Philharmonic before starting a family and occasionally plays in

See “Performing” on Page 12

A conversation with Peter Markes

Education Focus: What is your best tip for maintaining classroom discipline?

Peter Markes: Keep students engaged. I don't want that to be construed to mean 'busy.' And never, ever be too serious. We need to laugh, and it sounds cheesy, but we need to love each other and support each other.

EF: What is the best piece of teaching advice you received?

PM: Do only the things you can do; not to be misconstrued as lazy. The other was, remain professionally active. Attend conferences, maintain your memberships, be an active leader in your organizations. So get out there and be a leader and make positive change because it affects those kids out in the classroom.

EF: Where is the most unlikely place you've found ideas for your classroom?

PM: From the other disciplines. Just

watching other teachers teach.

EF: If you could change something about public education, what would that be?

PM: This is tricky, but I would say the amount of time we have with students. More time doesn't always mean better results. If we have just five more minutes every day, at the end of a school year, that's almost an entire extra month of school.

EF: What do people not understand about education and the process?

PM: How hard the teachers and students work. It's easy to view the holidays teachers have (and think they don't work as hard). This year I worked, probably, three hours a day on school in June, July and August. Now that's not a 10-hour or 12-hour school day we usually have, but I think that's a miscon-

ception, so it's tough for them to want to fund education more.

EF: How much testing is enough?

PM: If (students) know, we've done our job. If I can find out if they know something, then I've done my job.

EF: What advice would you give to someone entering the profession?

PM: Absolutely do it. And never, ever, ever say it is your backup. Whenever they say that, I correct them, 'No. That's your fall forward. That should be

“Keep students engaged. And never, ever be too serious.” your fist choice and then you can fall back on performance or

anything else.' I tell them right away it will be one of the most rewarding things they'll do and no matter what, they're going to end up being a teacher whether it pays the mortgage or not. I encourage them to have patience and be organized.

EF: What motivates students?

PM: Success. If they feel successful, they're motivated to do it again. It's true for students who are 13 or 34 or 68. If I feel successful, I want the next carrot of success.

EF: Is there something you learned the hard way that you didn't learn in college?

PM: Form strong relationships and always be kind. There's a great quote from a music education leader, Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser, 'If it comes between being right and kind, always choose kind.' You can go back later and be right.

EF: What's on your iPod that your kids would be surprised to hear?

PM: All kinds of stuff. They know that I love James Taylor, but also they've heard me play Miley Cyrus, "Party in the USA." It's on a playlist called, "Wake Up." And Katy Perry "Firework," and (Journey's) "Don't Stop Believing" – all energetic songs. Lady Gaga, "Just Dance."



Photo by Doug Folks.

Playing along

Teacher of the Year Peter Markes jams with some of his orchestra students. From left Margo Giddens, Kelsie Box, Emily Kelting, Markes and Kamala Frazier.

Deep thoughts

Teacher of the Year finalists weigh in on some heavy topics

Seven of the finalists for 2014 State Teacher of the Year – all OEA members – recently sat down with The Education Focus and shared their ideas on a number of topics. From tips on discipline, to common misconceptions of education, testing, good advice for potential teachers and unusual places they find ideas for the classroom. See what they say about these topics on the next four pages, and take a look at these outstanding educators at work in their classrooms!

Interviews and photos by Doug Folks

What do people not understand about education?

“Just the diversity of learners. You have kids who are gifted and very bright ... the middle kids ... kids who struggle for a myriad of reasons. You’re talking about several different types of curriculum and maintaining a classroom with one teacher. You have to be a master teacher with an incredible amount of preparation to make that day go smoothly so all kids can learn.” – **Barbara Bayless**

“What it really entails. I think, sometimes, people look at it as a glamorous job. You’re off in the summers and you have all the holidays and you do bulletin boards, but it’s high-level accountability right now.” – **Therese Rawlinson**

“People don’t understand the types of students we have on a day-to-day basis – and they’re all wonderful – but the backgrounds they come from.” – **Chelsea Roberts**

“Certainly that we do so much. We’re getting these kids prepared for the future, but it goes back to they really think we’re day care. I’m not quite sure how we’re going to change that unless we become more professional. We test, test, test, but teachers have to know and understand their craft.” – **Dana Moore**

“I hear lots of ‘you only work until 3 o’clock, and you have the summers off,’ and that’s not true. I may be with students until 3 o’clock, but there are committees, and grading papers, and doing research and writing exams. – **Betina Jones-Parra**

“The teachers are so respectful of the students, and relate to them with such amazing grace ... Every teacher in this building, their first goal, is to want to have a child succeed.” – **Eddie Lou Strimple**

Eddie Lou Strimple

McKinley Elementary, Enid.
Elementary Music

On discipline – “It’s the preparation, the transitions between lessons, and it’s not being afraid to call parents. If there’s a problem, it’s a parent-teacher team that’s going to fix the problem.”

Eddie Lou Strimple pounds out some rhythms with students (from left) Jillian Craig, Skylar Melcher and Colton Sutton.





Dana Moore

*Woodland Hills Elementary,
Lawton. Kindergarten*

On discipline – “You’ve got to be prepared, but also know that you’re going to have to be flexible.”

Dana Moore works with two of her kindergartners, Alex Lopez and Ali Biscaino.

How much testing is enough?

“That is the million dollar question. You have to have benchmarks, because I want to know if I’m doing a good job as a teacher. I want to see how my kids do at the end of the year. It’s, like, over a month we lose of classroom time with all of our kids because of our testing.” – **Chelsea Roberts**

“I believe we need to have some testing, to ensure that our kids are learning and making progress. Unfortunately, the testing that our state and our country have gone to is test, test, test. I think there are lots of different ways we can see that a child is progressing and is able to apply a task without it being a standardized test. – **Dana Moore**

“I don’t really know how to answer that. I absolutely understand the validity of testing because you have to know what a student knows. But I think now so much of our public educa-

tion emphasis is on one day, one snapshot. What’s enough? I can tell you what’s too much, and I think everybody agrees, this has just gotten a little out of control.” – **Barbara Bayless**

“We do need some pencil and paper tests because our brain remembers when we write and we need to demonstrate our knowledge. But sitting hours for tests several times year? We could be teaching a whole lot of stuff during that testing time.” – **Eddie Lou Strimple**

“I think benchmark testing. You give one benchmark test at the beginning, one in the middle and then one at the end. I don’t mind standardized tests, but now it’s just gotten out of hand. I think testing should be done within your class, not one test on one day of the year.” – **Mara Richards**



Chelsea Roberts

*Woodward Middle School.
8th grade American History, 6th
grade Gifted and Talented*

On discipline – “It all comes down to respect. I drill respect into their heads from day one. I try to deal with discipline inside my classroom, as much as possible. Principals are busy enough.”

Chelsea Roberts with students Juan Soto and Katelyn Gartrell.

Mara Richards

Durant Middle School. 8th Grade Science, AP Physical Science

On discipline – “I’m very consistent. If I say, ‘OK, that is your first warning;’ that is your first warning. I stick with what I say I’m going to do.”

Mara Richards discusses a rock sample with Dani Gideon (left) and Victoria McCarty.



What is the most unlikely place you found an idea for your classroom?

“In the middle of the night, 2 in the morning. I’m telling you, it’ll just come like a lightning bolt. I’ll be thinking about it and reading and researching and my brain’s always going, but when I get my best thoughts, they are always in the middle of the night.” – **Therese Rawlinson**

“They just come from everywhere. In the bathroom. I was struggling with a concept, I don’t remember what the concept was, but it just came to me while I was in the bathroom.” – **Betina Jones-Parra**

“I use a lot of sports examples, especially with motion and forces. To explain momentum, I might say, ‘You threw the ball. The ball was going one direction at one speed and you caught it and now you’re running with it.’” – **Mara Richards**

“I’d say Pinterest but I think everyone does that. We tease, asking if we could get professional development for Pinterest. I can pretty much find anything I could use and ideas by going to a garage sale, talking to people; kind of the trash-to-treasure type of thing. It never turns off.” – **Dana Moore**

“Let’s just list some and see which ones are unlikely: the Dollar Store, other teachers, Pinterest, Chili’s on a Friday afternoon with my fellow music teachers. It’s an amazing time. Sharing stories, sharing ideas.

“The Dollar Store – It is amazing to walk through a place where there’s just little stuff. You just find little trinkety stuff that will motivate children. It will drive your teaching. It will make their day happier and my day happier, because learning is fun.” – **Eddie Lou Strimple**

Therese Rawlinson

Jane Phillips Elementary, Bartlesville. 5th Grade

On discipline – “Building a community and trust and valuing each other. We have to go back to do procedures, procedures, procedures; expectations, expectations. But I have to do it in a way where I give everybody self-respect.”

Therese Rawlinson with LaQuante Williams (left) and Kiambra LeFlore.





Betina Jones-Parra

Noble High School. Trigonometry, Honors Algebra II, Sophomore math, AP Calculus

On discipline – “I’ve created a relationship with my students ... they trust me, so, they do what they’re supposed to do.”

Betina Jones-Parra helps students with a mathematical mapping exercise. From left, Jonathan Blevins, Jordan Tanequodle and Harlea Parks.

What advice do you give people considering teaching?

“Find the positive group. There are all kinds of things that are wrong and you can find all kinds of people who will tell you what’s wrong. But you find people who give you hope and always talk about people respectfully.” – **Therese Rawlinson**

“The first year will always be different than every other year, ever. So you cannot decide teaching is not for you based on your first year. You have to muddle through. You have to get through your second year and then you’ll know if it’s for you or not.” – **Betina Jones-Parra**

“First of all, be sure you want to do it. It’s not an easy life. Are you committed to it? Is your family committed to it? If you’re doing it well, it’s a 24/7 job, and a lot of your summer.” – **Eddie Lou Strimple**

“First of all I would say, ‘Do it ... Good for you! Awesome!’ Not every day is going to be easy, but overall it’s going to be worth it. I can’t think of a more rewarding job.” – **Chelsea Roberts**

“It isn’t for everybody and it shouldn’t be for everybody. I can’t even imagine another occupation that gives you more rewards that you see on an hourly basis, truly. But it is a lot of work to do it right because you’ve got students at every level under the sun and not everybody learns the same way, nor should they. To be an excellent teacher, you have to be an excellent learner.” – **Barbara Bayless**

“Make sure that you know the good and the bad about teaching. There’s a lot that keeps you from teaching and you better know all the angles.” – **Mara Richards**



Barbara Bayless

James Griffith Intermediate, Choctaw-Nicomoma Park. 3rd Grade Reading Specialist

On discipline – “I think the kids have to be very clear on your expectations. Once you create that relationship, not only with the kids but the parents, it is smooth sailing. It’s not hard.”

Barbara Bayless reads with (from left) Kylie Hart, Reagan Pluto and Haylee Whitson.

We've become a nation of passive consumers of education

By Heath Merchen
Associate General Counsel

When I speak to teachers and support employees across the state, most want to know how to deal with the increasing demands and liabilities confronting education employees in the face of dwindling funding and public support.

The answer isn't an easy one – but to get there, I believe we first have to understand the history behind the current views not just of our education system, but its funding and our economy. And the relevant history isn't just local; it's global.

From Your Counsel

Prior to the 19th century, France and Spain dominated the world's economies. They produced, explored and created, until a fragile tipping point where their people shifted focus from investing in new creations to indulging in their creations. Production, exploration and investment dwindled, opening a void that another nation soon stepped in to fill. Nineteenth century Britain, a previously poor and hungry nation, filled that space by sparking the industrial revolution.

Creating, building, expanding ... the English owned the century as France and Spain slid backwards into the realm of consuming what Britain produced. For a time, the sun never set on the British Empire; raw materials from all ends of the globe were sent to Britain to be remade into what other nations would purchase. Their wealth and power grew until, near the end of the century, that same tipping point came and the Victorian Era ensued – indulgent, passive consumption overtook production.

Britain's economic impact dwindled as across the sea, the Stars and Stripes of our own nation rose to prominence. The 20th century was all American; we produced, manufactured, created and marketed our wares across the globe; not simply trading goods but setting cultural standards the world sought to follow. We sought knowledge, investigated and uncovered mysteries of

science that impacted the future of the entire planet, investing in creation and education.

The cycle for our own nation, however, is now proving no different. We cannot lay claim to the 21st century. We have become a nation of consumers ... devaluing creation, manufacturing and production and instead our economic debates center on how to keep our nation afloat by increasing our internal consumption, i.e. "consumer spending."

This move from pursuit to passivity is most evident at a very local level – the schoolhouse. I'm not referring to teachers, principals, superintendents or school boards. Instead I'm talking about American parents and students who have become passive consumers of education rather than active pursuers.



Heath Merchen



Teachers today have more training, more knowledge and more instructional tools and methods available than at any time in our history.

Teaching quality has not deteriorated. Parenting quality has.

More specifically, parents want to consume, but do not want to invest – a truth that pervades not simply our

school system, but our entire economy.

Understanding this fact doesn't require a great deal of research; simply look at your own community and school. Do you notice that the children of families who have immigrated from other nations like China, India, Korea, and Taiwan (all leading global producers) who attend the same public schools as American students, somehow thrive? Why? Because their parents and their culture view schooling as an opportunity rather than an entitlement.

It is that child's job to glean all information available from their teacher. Conversely, we want our children to passively receive what the teacher delivers; if they don't, we blame the school. Our "reform" efforts attempt to remake our schools into a type of knowledge force-feeding machine.

Following the same cycle of the cultures that have come before, parents have become passive rather than productive. Instead of motivating our children to learn as much as they can from a source of information and learning more advanced than that of any other nation, we idly sit back and expect to receive. Rather than investing in education, we want to passively consume it at the lowest possible cost through virtual programs, overcrowded classes and limited offerings that cut out arts, music and athletics in favor of standards and tests. Of course, none of these ever changing standards and expectations are accompanied by additional investment.



Welcome, Jaquita

Jaquita Farley has joined the OEA Center for Legal and Corporate Services as a legal secretary.

OEA Board looks for reasonable testing solutions

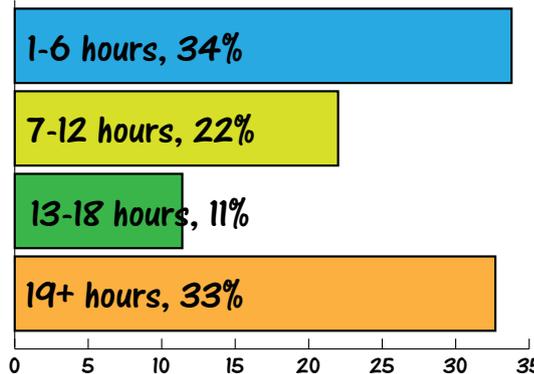
Members of the OEA Board of Directors want to know what you think high-stakes testing should look like.

While all teachers believe student accountability is a tent pole of education, most believe that high-stakes testing is out of control. Students will not be promoted to the fourth grade if they can't pass the reading test, teenagers can't get their drivers' licenses if they don't pass the eighth grade reading test, and students can't graduate high school if they don't pass four of seven End of Instruction tests.

Factor in that 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation will soon be based on student assessment and a school's A-F report card reflects student progress and everyone is held accountable for how students fare on one test on one day.

According to the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institute, U.S. Schools spend \$1.7 billion

Number of hours spent weekly on test prep, according to OEA members surveyed.



annually on standardized tests.

At various meetings during October, Board members are giving a short presentation which includes some research on what people think about testing, who is pushing the testing agenda, and some interesting facts put together by Jenks Middle School Principal Rob Miller.

Miller dissected his school's testing responsibilities for 2013-14 and found

- An expected 53-77% increase in testing for 2013-14.
- An estimated 6.5 hours of testing for each student.
- 12,000 test sessions.
- All classes will be disrupted, especially computer classes.
- 250 students pulled from class each day.

At the end of the presentation, the audience will be asked to tell one of their testing stories and then outline what they think testing should look like.

"The responses we get from these testing presentations will help us develop legislation that will hopefully change our current testing system to something more reasonable," said OEA President Linda Hampton.

If you'd like to take part in a meeting on testing, contact your zone director or a staff member of your OEA geographic zone. Contact information can be found at okea.org.

A major shift has occurred both at the parental level and at the highest echelons of government – American education is now seen by all as an entitlement rather than an opportunity.

We want more from the system, but our culture invests less and less each year. Poor behavior, lack of motivation and lack of parental involvement is not simply tolerated, but expected, and we hold our school system responsible for failures in the home over which it has no control.

Class sizes rise, funding drops and rather than measuring success by the achievements of those who do take advantage of the opportunities available in our schools, we judge the entire system by the scores of the lowest performers.

“American education is now seen by all as an entitlement rather than an opportunity.”

Real change happens from the bottom up, requiring a shift in attitude and approach at the individual and local level. I very much believe that we can, as a country, reverse the cycle not

only in our approach to education, but for our economy. I also believe that any such change must start with a shift in attitudes towards education before our economy will change. That attitude requires that we, in our local communities, hold parents and students accountable and stop blaming their failures on the school employees who serve them.

It also requires an end to the cycle of blaming, reforming and degrading a school system that, historically, offers more opportunity than that of any other nation; at least to those who strive to take advantage of the opportunities. We can either begin to support and invest in education and creation, or we can continue our slide into consumerism, repeating the history of those nations that have come before.

Storm shelter petition seeking signatures

Take Shelter Oklahoma is working to get a measure to fund storm shelters in schools on the ballot for the 2014 elections. The organization has until mid-December to gather over 150,000 signatures.

If you would like to help in this effort, or need more information, contact takeshelteroklahoma@gmail.com or call 405/470-7925. The organization will mail you an official petition form on which you can gather signatures of registered voters. Whether passing around a form to your colleagues at work or taking it to your child's ball game, any effort is greatly appreciated.



Law-related Education

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Teaching, not performing, is most gratifying

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string quartets for weddings and parties.

But just performing isn't fulfilling enough for Markes.

"I love the performing because of the instant gratification – I play, they clap. That's a great feeling. I don't care how many times I've played the same song, (the applause) always feels nice," he said. "What I like about teaching is the really hard work that goes into it. Not to say that performing isn't hard work – I have to bust my chops (to play well). What I find (gratifying) about teaching is that we get to grow together. I'm still growing big time. (I love) to watch the progress (of students) and then the process and the rewards."

Markes teaches AP Music Theory and three string orchestras, grouped by ability – symphony orchestra, string orchestra and chamber orchestra. While none of his students have gone on to be professional musicians, he's proud that some became teachers or doctors.

"I don't intend to make musicians. If we have a few, obviously that's wonderful – that I inspired that," he said. "What I like is a lot of kids keep playing in col-

lege because they liked what they did in high school. They don't major in music, they just play in the orchestra. At a cost to them – they have to pay to be in the orchestra – but they want to because it's



Photo by Doug Folks.

a part of them."

For a long time, Markes knew he wanted to be a teacher. As a senior in high school, he took a teacher cadet class taught at Enid High School by his father, David Markes. The lessons learned in that class really "hit home" that teaching is what he wanted to do in life.

"It sounds so brainless, but it didn't occur to me that I could teach music," he

said. "I had an orchestra teacher, but it didn't seem like something I wanted to do. I had a band teacher, didn't seem like something I was going to go on and do. And then I realized, 'Hey, I ... could... teach music. I thought I'd probably teach math because that was very fascinating to me and came easy to me.'"

As a 12-year veteran of the classroom, Markes believes young people need orchestra, art, drama, debate and the other arts because they help reinforce the learning concepts of core classes.

"We are reinforcing what they are doing, especially reading skills. We're not reading English every day, but we are using those parts of the brain that are hearing and speaking language and coordinating ideas together and we use several of the same words every day," he said.

As the State Teacher of the Year, Markes will push for more parental and community involvement in schools, which he sees as vital to the success of public education. And because the lessons learned in orchestra, choir, drama and the other "co-curricular" subjects tie in so well with core courses, he will be encouraging legislators to maintain funding for arts in public education.

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (Required by 39 USC 3685)

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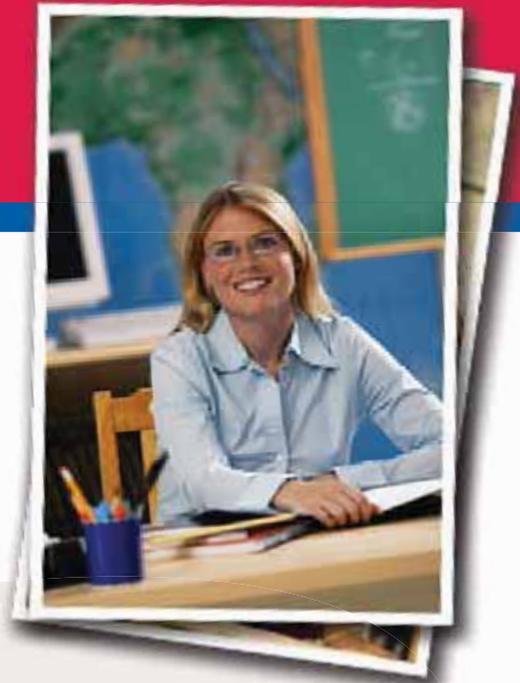
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