

The  
Education

# FOCUS

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association • August/September 2014



**OEA**  
*had my  
back!*

**OEA is *always* there for you**

- In the classroom
- At the Capitol
- When you face your worst nightmare

**NEA elects historic slate of officers**

**Special tear-out contact list ... help is just  
a phone call away**

# Putting education first

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Mid-Del's Kelly Fry capped a year-long exploration of global education with a trip to China sponsored by the NEA Foundation. Read what insights he gained from the adventure.

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## 9 Where to find help

Help from the OEA is just a phone call away. Tear this page of contact information out and keep it handy.

### Also....

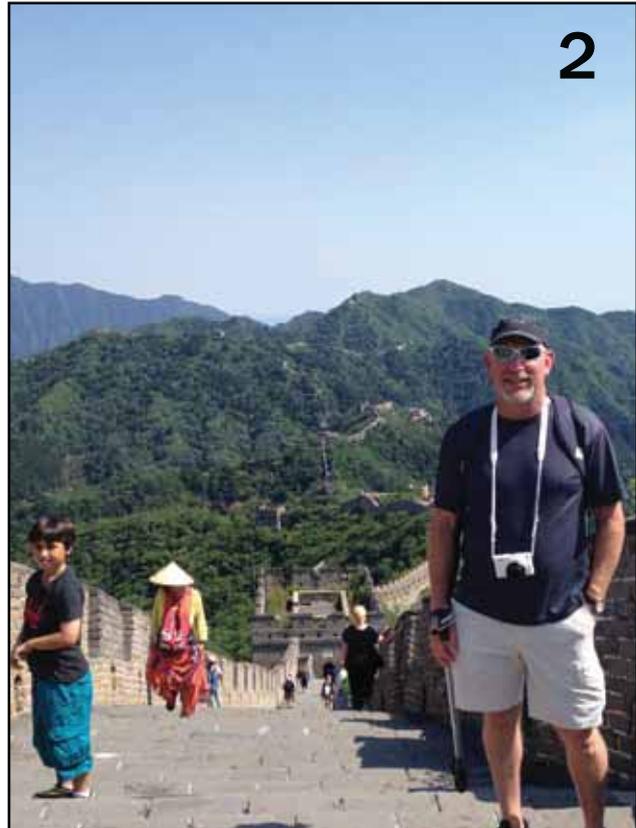
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## The Education Focus

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The Education Focus is a production of the Oklahoma Education Association's Communications Center.

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800/522-8091 or 405/528-7785

Northeast and Tulsa Metro Teams  
10820 E. 45th, Suite. 110, Tulsa, OK, 74146  
800/331-5143 or 918/665-2282

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and Student.Oklahoma.Education.Association  
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**OEA**  
Oklahoma Education Association  
putting education first.

# Working together, we can make a big difference

By Linda Hampton  
OEA President

As I read the preview of this edition of *The Education Focus* and its theme of OEA having the “backs of our members,” I reflected about what has been happening in public education and to our profession.

For the past few years we have had to fight tremendous foes to protect each other, our students, the education profession and our schools. Those who don't share our love for what we do realize there's money to be made off of public schools and Oklahoma's children. They appear to think if they can make public education look as though it's failing, then it will be easy to convince the public that private, for-profit “reforms” are the answer. It's an answer that will make our opponents richer, and, sadly, it will be done on the backs of our students and schools.

There's an old saying that goes, “Don't circle your wagons and then shoot inward.” It appears this is exactly what the opponents of public education want us to do. Get parents to blame teachers, teachers to blame parents, schools boards to blame administrators, administrators to blame schools boards – the finger pointing just seems to go round and round.

However, this year, like newborn kittens, our eyes were opened. We have realized we need to stop pointing fingers at each other and start to “have each other's backs.” After all, teachers, support professionals, administrators, parents and school board members all want the same thing – great public schools for all of Oklahoma's children.

We stopped listening to the rhetoric of the reformers and listened to our own hearts telling us all the wonderful things that are right about public education. We looked at ways to improve rather than

label and punish. We realized we need to have open conversations about public education and organize around defeating those who want to destroy public schools. The good news is that it's working. Rather than divide us, our enemies have united us.

Parents, educators and citizens have said that enough is enough. The education of Oklahoma's children is not for sale, and neither are our schools or our profession. The override of the Governor's veto of HB 2625, the bill which would have required more than 7,000 third graders to be retained because they failed the end-of-the-year reading test, was a beginning.

Our tele-town hall meetings resulted in our pensions being left unharmed this year. The resounding defeat of Supt. Janet Costello Barresi in the primary shows what we can do when we unite. These events happened because we circled our wagons and faced the enemy. As public educators, support professionals,



*President Linda Hampton*

administrators, parents and community members we now have our focus in the direction it should be – maintaining and improving our public schools.

We will continue to have each other's backs. To have someone's back assures them that you are watching out for them. I am proud to say that as OEA members we do that daily for our peers and our students. By having your back, OEA is making sure you are safe because we know you are busy looking ahead – planning the future of Oklahoma one student at a time.

Thanks for all you do!

## *Former Focus editor rejoins OEA staff*

Bill Guy, OEA's new organizing/communications specialist assigned to the OKC Metro team, says he feels like he's got a role in a *Back to the Future* remake. Between 1991 and 1997, he worked for OEA, editing *The Education Focus*, coordinating OEA's first website and assisting with communications services to members in both the OKC Metro and Southeast regions.

A native Okie with experience as an English teacher in both Holdenville and El Reno, he served as El Reno Education Association president in 1986 and chaired OEA's Legal Services Committee before coming to work for OEA.

Between 1997 and his recent return to OEA staff work, he worked as editor of publications and communications specialist for both the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the Tennessee Education Association. Most recently, he was a communications consultant/organizer with the California Teachers Association, based in San Diego.

Bill and his wife Rita planned to some day retire and come home to Oklahoma, but he wasn't ready to quit working just yet. “It's said if you follow your passion, you'll find your purpose. Mine is supporting public education through work with association members. It's good to be home,” Guy said.



*Bill Guy*

# Chinese, American teachers face the same problems

Story and Photos by Kelly Fry  
Del Crest Middle School

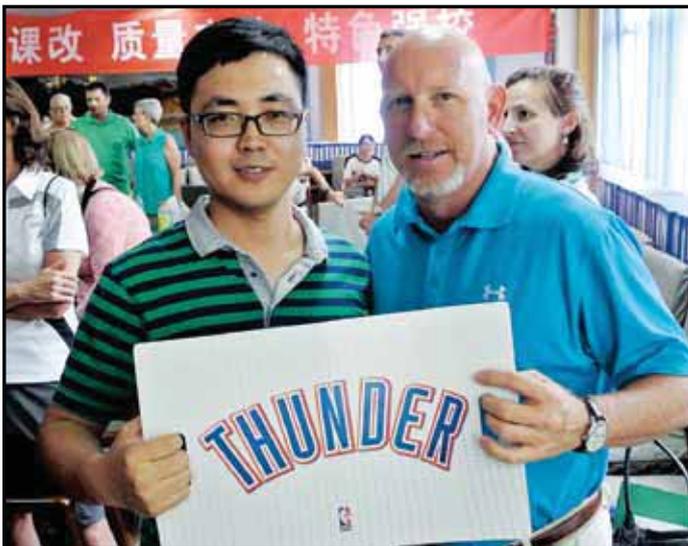
*Editor's Note: Kelly Fry, a pre-engineering teacher at Mid-Del's Del Crest Middle School, was the OEA's 2013 nominee for the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence, more commonly referred to as the NFIE Award, the capstone honor sponsored by California Casualty and administered by the NEA Foundation. In June, he capped a year-long exploration of global education with a trip to China with other NFIE nominees. Following are highlights from his trip.*

Over the past year, I have embarked on a learning journey that has enriched my life and changed how I think about teaching. As OEA's nominee for the NEA Foundation's Award for Teaching Excellence, I was invited to become a Global Learning Fellow. I joined 30 amazing award-winning educators in a multi-faceted professional development opportunity to build our global competency skills, or the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance.

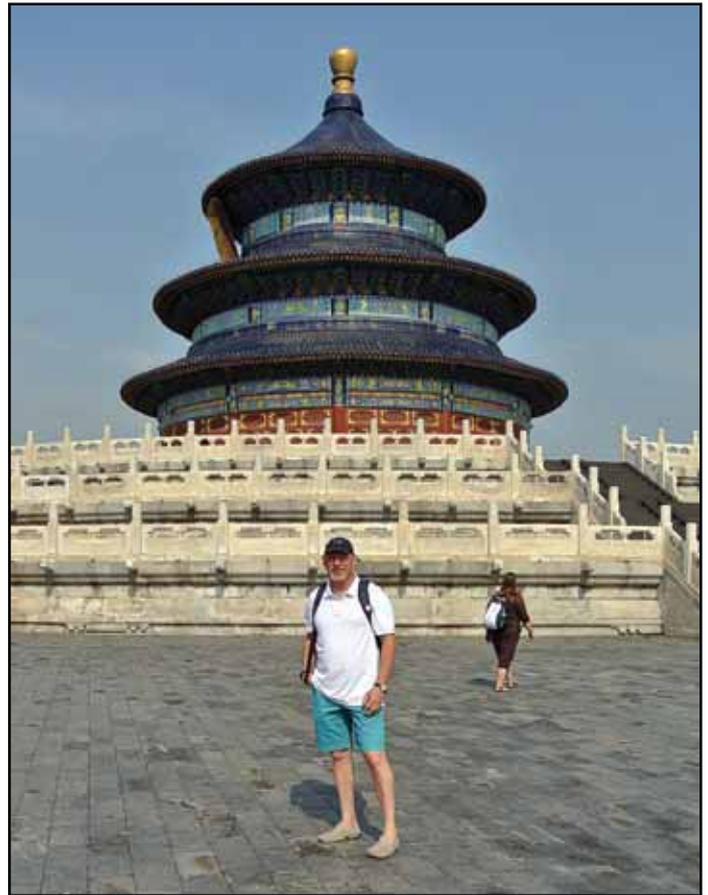
The fellowship expands on the NEA Foundation's mission to advance student achievement by investing in public education that will prepare all students to learn and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Culminating a year of webinars, online learning, extensive self-reflection, and a two-day workshop, was the eight-day cultural and educational field study in Beijing and Xi'an, China.

The highlights of the trip were our visits to the prestigious Beijing School of Vocational Education, 10th through 12th



*Kelly Fry, pictured with one of the Chinese teachers he met this summer, found out that the Oklahoma City Thunder are almost as popular in China as they are here.*



*Kelly Fry in front of Great Prayer Hall in the Temple of Heaven park in Beijing.*

grades, and the Xi'an Foreign Language School, 1st through 6th grades. What struck me most was, while our education systems are different, many classroom issues transcend language and culture.

Chinese teachers face budget issues and disciplinary challenges, just as we do. However, discipline is less an issue due to rigorous admission policies and extreme competitiveness. Once admitted, students work hard to maintain their class position. They are evaluated throughout the year rather than on a series of high stakes tests.

Another major difference is the length of the school day, from 7:30 a.m. until 5 or 5:30 p.m. Most students also have two

*See "Global education" on Page 11*

## NFIE grant apps due Oct. 15

In addition to sponsoring the Award for Teaching Excellence, the NEA Foundation offers a wide variety of programs all designed to help teachers help their students achieve more. Among those efforts are Student Achievement Grants and Learning & Leadership Grants. Practicing K-12 public school teachers, education support professionals and higher education faculty and staff at public colleges and universities may apply for the grants online. Application deadlines are February 1, June 1, and October 15.

For information about how to apply, the application and an instructional video, visit The NEA Foundation's web site at [www.neafoundation.org](http://www.neafoundation.org).



# get connected



## Shares, Likes, Comments!

**FACEBOOK:** *Oklahoma Education Association*

**OEA, 7/30/14:** I believe that any legislator who supports the idea that ALL students should pass four of seven end-of-instruction (EOI) tests in order to earn an Oklahoma high school diploma should agree to take these same assessments and have his or her scores published in the local newspaper. But that's just me!

**Why June Matters, 6/24/14:** Oklahoma has spoken! Our citizens demand a change in leadership in the State Department of Education! No matter who wins in November, we're confident that teachers will have a real voice in education matters!



## Top Tweets!

**TWITTER:** *@okea*

**OKEA, 7/30/14:** 35 Money-Saving DIYs For Teachers On A Budget <http://www.buzzfeed.com/peggy/money-saving-diys-for-the-classroom> ... via @IAM486 @buzzfeed

**Elise Robillard, @liber8minds, 6/29/14:** (from the Oklahoma Caucus meeting at the NEA RA in Denver): Lily Eskelsen-Garcia 'we can't exaggerate how damaging this testing mania is!' #NCUEA2014 @OklaEd @okea @okeducation [pic.twitter.com/t2pStNke0v](http://pic.twitter.com/t2pStNke0v)

**OKEA, 6/24/14:** Oklahoma has spoken! New leadership is mandated in the State Department of Education. #changeiscoming



## Simply Said. ... With Linda!

**OEA President Linda Hampton's Blog**

**6/25/14: Waking Sleeping Giants:** The people spoke loudly and clearly in yesterday's election. Current State Superintendent of Public Instruction Janet Barresi was defeated. What a huge victory for public education, Oklahoma's children, teachers, parents, and education support professionals! via <http://okea.org/oea-blog>

## 2,500 members have found the treasure

Nearly 2,500 members have registered for the Members Only section of the OEA website, which is full of exclusive information. You'll find promo codes to OEA-only discounts, such as Six Flags and Orlando attractions, legislative updates and important OEA documents, such as the constitution and bylaws. You'll need your OEA membership number to register the first time. Call us at 800.522.8091 if you need help.



## Works4Me Newsletter

Weekly tips from the real experts — teachers like you! — delivered to your inbox. Register at [www.nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html](http://www.nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html)

**You'll receive tips like this one:**  
"On the first day of school (last year I held a funeral with my class. The children made a list of all the things they could not do. I collected the lists, grabbed a shovel and a pine tree seedling. I told the kids we were having a funeral. We all walked outside and dug a hole to bury the 'Can't Lists' and to plant the new seedling in the same hole. The purpose was to learn to never say 'can't' again."



## Can I get free stuff? Uh, yeah!

Check out [freakyfreddies.com](http://freakyfreddies.com) for a list of links to sites offering free material to teachers. You'll find links to things like free books for your classroom, biology posters, free bright smile kits from Colgate, and much more. [www.freakyfreddies.com/teacher.html](http://www.freakyfreddies.com/teacher.html)



Have a project that you need materials for? Post your needs on [DonorsChoose.org](http://DonorsChoose.org), an online charity that makes it easy for anyone to help students in need. Visitors to the site can donate any amount to your project and help you make it a reality.

# Exonerated!

## OEA helps Verdigris teacher beat her worst nightmare

By Beth Cohenour

As an elementary art teacher in Verdigris Schools, most of my days are busy, messy, creative and a little bit hectic. While sometimes tiring and frustrating, it is never boring. Finding new and exciting ways to inspire and challenge young children to express their creativity has always been my passion. I also love working with the other teachers in my building, and I have always viewed myself as a professional who constantly strives for excellence. My colleagues have honored me twice by selecting me as our Teacher of the Year.

As a 20-year career teacher, I have learned to anticipate little speed bumps in the classroom and can usually handle whatever is thrown my way; but what happened to me last fall was not something I could have predicted. Wednesday, October 9, 2013, began in typical fashion. Little did I know that a benign classroom procedure would set events in motion that would forever change my life.

One of my afternoon classes was particularly challenging. Many students in this group of third graders had issues that our faculty worked to address, such as a lack of self-discipline, bullying, lying and physical aggression. There were constant conflicts on the playground, in the restrooms and the cafeteria, and while traveling through the hallways. I knew that our principal had dealt with several of the students and their parents in her office on various occasions. A local policeman had even been asked to meet with some of them about their bullying behavior.

On October 9, this particular class was in the last stages of an art project that was to be delivered to a local Veteran's Center for fall decorations. The project involved a lot of materials and supplies so I reminded the students that it was

important that they be able to use their time wisely and then clean up in a timely manner. As on some previous days, several students had trouble following the classroom rules and procedures during the time allotted for the art project. I spoke privately to several of them about their behaviors and even moved a couple of them away from their friends.

When clean-up time was called, quite a few students ignored my instructions, and continued their activities. Even though the room was not up to its usual standard, I began the line-up procedure in order to get this class back to their homeroom. Our line-up procedure includes having the students stand quietly, facing forward, with hands to themselves. Teachers in our building use this same procedure with their classes as a safe and orderly way to move through the hallways.

On this day, the class was especially inattentive and had a hard time following these rules. I used several attention-getting signals, both verbal and visual,

and while some students obeyed, others were still turned around talking with friends. In particular, a couple of boys in the back of the line continued to engage in horseplay.

Since my next class was already waiting in the hallway with their teacher, I felt that I needed to expedite the process. I began moving down the line toward the back so I could get the boys' attention without raising my voice any more than necessary. I was moving through a narrow space between the children and a row of tables. If I found students out of line and turned away from me, I put my hand on their shoulders to guide them back in line, allowing me to pass by them. I was finally able to get everyone's attention and with the students in an orderly line, at last I was able to walk them back to their homeroom. I returned to the art room and taught the rest of my classes for the remainder of the day.

Imagine my surprise when my principal came to my room near the end of the day to ask if anything unusual had hap-



Photo by Doug Folks.

*Beth Cohenour had the unfortunate experience of false accusations and a trial, but OEA was with her every step of the way, all the way to a not guilty verdict.*

pened during the third grade class; specifically, she asked if I had put my hands on any of them and if anyone had fallen down. She explained that a few students had been to her office to complain that they had been treated roughly during the line-up process. She also stated that she was familiar with the behaviors of many of those students. I acknowledged that they were rowdy and didn't immediately line up. I described to her how I walked down the line, guiding students into the line as I passed. Certainly, I assured her that no one fell down or was injured.

I didn't think any more about it until the next morning when my principal again came to my classroom to tell me that some parents had come to her to say they had filed complaints against me with the police. She had also heard that some comments were made by these parents on Facebook and the media had been notified. I was completely surprised because I knew that nothing out of the ordinary had happened in my classroom. I could think of nothing that would warrant such a response from the parents involved. I had been firm and fair in holding them to the standards of behavior expected at our school. Near the end of the day, my superintendent came by my room to say that the police wanted me to give them a statement at the police station. He was adamant that I should leave school early to do this.

When I arrived at the local station, I was completely taken aback to learn that the interviewing officer wanted me to sign a Miranda Waiver, even though I was not being charged at the time. At this point I was feeling shocked and confused and felt pressured to make a decision about whether to tell my story immediately, or call someone for legal advice. I just couldn't think of what steps to take. I was very nervous never having been in a police station, much less, in a situation like this. I chose to give an interview to the police because I had already documented the incident at school and couldn't see anything wrong with describing events again. I told my story, and was completely honest about touching students as a way to guide them. I didn't know this would be interpreted by the officer as assault and battery.

After the interview, which I only learned later was recorded, I went home and called OEA to request advice. By now, I had begun to realize the serious-

## *I think I need OEA's help!*

No one expects to face an issue that could cost them a teaching job (or a school support job), but as Beth Cohenour's story illustrates, things can go south before you know it. If you find yourself in serious trouble, stay calm and follow these guidelines:

1. Call your OEA Advocacy Specialist immediately.
2. Do not sign anything under pressure. Politely refuse and indicate that you need time to think.
3. Do not discuss the matter with anyone but Association representatives. All discussions with OEA Advocacy Specialists and staff attorneys are held in strictest confidence.
4. DO NOT RESIGN. If your resignation is accepted, you may forfeit your rights under the law. A resignation may also be used in a civil or criminal action as evidence of admission of guilt.
5. Keep copies of all written documents. Any agreements or proposals reached with the school district should be put in writing. Keep copies of all evaluations received and other documents related to the problem, including postmarked envelopes.

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*See Page 9 for a complete list of OEA staff, ready to help and just a phone call away.*

ness of the allegations. I have been a member of OEA throughout my career, but never dreamed that I would need them in this kind of situation.

Later that evening, my superintendent called to say that, per the school's lawyer's recommendation, I would be placed on paid administrative leave until the

**“ The process of being arrested was humiliating, to say the least, but my OEA lawyers were with me every step of the way. ”**

matter was resolved. Several news stations carried the story that evening. I had no idea at that time that this was only the beginning of a nightmare from which I still have not fully awakened.

The next morning, I was contacted by my area OEA advocate. We set up a meeting to discuss the events and began to form a plan. After that, I was contacted by the OEA legal department, and shortly thereafter by the law firm that would represent me if criminal charges were filed.

Now a period of waiting and uncertainty began. Because our work is with

children and due to the confidentiality clauses in place to protect them, I was unable to discuss details of my experience with my teacher friends who had always been my support group. Based on the school's attorney's recommendation, they were similarly forbidden to discuss any information related to this pending case. The feeling of isolation was beyond depressing. While my colleagues did their best to encourage me through thoughtful notes, gifts, cards and letters, I sorely missed the human contact and realized how much I relied on daily interactions with my colleagues and the sense of community that we had fostered over the years.

On November 6, 2013, I was arrested and charged with misdemeanor assault and battery on nine students. Only then did I learn that three parents had made the original complaints to the police and as a result of interviews with other children in the class, six more charges were filed. I learned that all it takes for charges to be filed is for a child to say that they were roughly touched in some way. No physical proof is necessary.

**See “Cohenour hopes” on Page 11**

# OEA helps members develop a professional teaching practice

By Kim Littrell, NBCT, M.Ed.  
Teaching and Learning Specialist

Admit it: The two most dreaded words in our profession are often “professional development,” and the hours spent sitting in trainings can be tedious at best or a complete waste of precious time at worst.



Photo by Doug Folks.

Choctaw-Nicoma Park's Barbara Bayless reads to Janelle Lynch and Michael Johnson.

The OEA Teaching and Learning Center offers PD that actually helps you develop your teaching skills and ability to think deeply about your practice while providing immediately implementable strategies. We work with members, local associations and district personnel to tailor sessions to meet specific needs and requests, as well as hosting conferences and webinars free to OEA members.

Oklahoma students are a diverse and dynamic population; we recognize the need for content-rich, research-based workshops to address the achievement gap. Our CARE Strategies and English Language Learners offerings allow teachers to explore cultural competence and gain instructional scaffolding strategies.

We also provide an in-depth look at Marzano's nine well-validated strategies and investigate Ruby Payne's work on the effects of poverty on cognition – impacts that cannot be ignored in Oklahoma.

“True Colors” and “Perceptual Learning Styles” aid teachers in reframing their approaches to students, colleagues, and collaboration through enhanced understanding of what makes each of us uniquely individual (and uniquely talented).

The OEA Targeted Skills Sessions cadre consists of 30 National Board Certified Teachers who have created trainings in six essential areas to improve instruction (regardless of standards and grade level): Writing, Literacy, and Numeracy across the Curriculum, Leveraging Technology for Learning, The Highly Engaging Classroom, and Project-Based Learning Design,

which all emphasize take-away skills.

Our OEA staff and cadre trainers also assist districts with TLE Tulsa Model system implementation, focusing on teacher documentation to receive the best evaluation possible.

Perhaps our best known offering is the I Can Do It! Classroom Management workshop, nationally recognized as a highly effective, holistic approach to managing the learning environment through building routines and relationships.

We update our “Bullying Prevention” offerings yearly to reflect new statistics and often unfortunate trends in social media and online bullying. Perhaps not coincidentally, requests for our fun and informative “Relaxation for Stress and Time Management” have steadily increased the last few years!

Finally, who doesn't need an intentional recharge these days? OEA's Community Builders challenge and refresh your thinking (and your heart) through breathtaking film clips and thought-provoking discussions. Titles include “Celebrate! Change your Lens, Change your Life;” “Celebrate What's Right with the World;” “For the Love of It;” “Your Summit Awaits;” and more.

What sets OEA PD apart from typical PD? It's designed BY and FOR teachers and is presented with compassion, know-how, and panache. Contact our Teaching and Learning Center today...we've got your back AND your professional learning opportunities!

## GPS Network offers dynamic collaboration

Many times the best professional development is sharing ideas with like-minded professionals. The NEA's Great Public Schools (GPS) Network provides just such a networking opportunity for teachers, parents, school support professionals and community members. The free site, open to everyone, is a place to share ideas and resources to improve student success.

The GPS Network provides for:

- Collaborating on professional issues
- Searching for resources to enhance lessons plans and share ideas
- Reading educational blogs and up-to-date educational news
- Sharing opinions through Today's Poll
- Exploring practical tools provided by NEA and other partners
- Joining events of interest via the GPS Network, i.e., webinars, podcasts, etc.

There are number of established communities already sharing information, or you can start your own today!

Join the GPS Network at [www.gpsnetwork.org](http://www.gpsnetwork.org).

# Legislative work is year-round job

By Ivy Riggs  
Legislative & Political Organizing  
Specialist

Although the legislative session is only four months long, effectively advocating for public education is a year-long process. There are many activities outside of the February-May time frame that are necessary to ensure the success of the OEA's Legislative and Political Organizing Center (LPO).

Meeting with legislators during the interim is essential to cultivating important relationships that will impact votes and decisions later in the year. Monitoring interim studies lets us know and be prepared for what ideas and potential legislation is in store in the upcoming session.

Getting involved in campaigns on behalf of our contributors to the OEA Fund for Children and Public Education helps to ensure we work to elect the best candidates for public education.

Your LPO Center attends Teacher Retirement System and State Board of Education meetings to guarantee we get in front of issues as they arise. Working with our members in a variety of ways to enable them to lobby effectively is also very important to make certain we are building positive relationships with legislators. Two such events are the Tulsa

Metro/Northeast Legislative Conference in January and GLEE Week (Giving Legislators an Educational Experience), during which we encourage local associations to invite legislators into their classrooms to gain first-hand experience on the day-to-day operations of a school. We also conduct local association lobby trainings to prepare members to be the most effective advocates they can be.

During the legislative session, many challenges present themselves as well. Staying on top of education committee agendas, keeping members informed about upcoming issues and votes, hosting Lobby Days at the Capitol with local associations, attending Education Coalition meetings with like-minded education groups working together for a common goal, visiting local association and zone meetings to keep members informed, are a just a few things the LPO Center does.



Rep. Scott Inman talks with Del City High School students during GLEE Week, January 2013.

This work would not be possible without the participation of members like you. Actions like the largest education rally at the Capitol in history, the veto override of the 3rd grade reading retention requirements or voting out a sitting incumbent of the majority party from the office of State Superintendent would never happen if we were to sit back and just hope for the best.

Being politically active is not only the best way to defend the profession, but is also vital to ensure a strong and vibrant democratic process.

## Public education is the real winner after Barresi loss

What many would have considered the unthinkable before the June 24 primary election actually happened. Janet Barresi, the incumbent for State Superintendent of Public Education and a member of the majority party in Oklahoma government, lost her re-election bid in the Republican primary.

Barresi finished third in the primary, winning just 21 percent of the vote and finishing third behind Brian Kelly, who did not run any advertisements or file any fund-raising amounts with the Ethics Commission (presumably because he didn't raise any money). Of the 430,765 total votes cast for the position in both parties, Barresi garnered just 55,015 votes, less than 13 percent.

In November, former State Board of Education member Joy Hofmeister will face the winner of the Democratic runoff between John Cox and Freda Deskin.

While the Oklahoma Education Association did not recommend a candidate from either party prior to the primary, the Association was a loud, outspoken critic of Barresi. OEA con-

ducted a poll of Oklahomans last fall, asking them how they would grade the state superintendent on her job in office. Thousands of respondents gave her an "F" in every category.

After the primary, Barresi "blamed" OEA for her loss. "From day one the education establishment and the (teachers) union told me they were going to get me out of office. Obviously, they were successful," Janet Barresi said in an Associated Press story.

While we gladly take some of credit for her failed bid for another term, it was Barresi's own agenda for more high-stakes testing, failures by testing companies she and the State Board contracted with and a near complete unwillingness to work with teachers and administrators on education issues both simple and complex that spelled her doom.

"Regardless of who wins the general election in November, we are optimistic about the future of public education in Okla-

**See "All educators" on Page 11**

# OEA membership includes the best legal counsel available

By Richard Wilkinson  
OEA General Counsel

With the new membership year rapidly approaching, now is a good time to review the myriad of legal services and benefits available to OEA members, simply by joining OEA and becoming a member.

First and foremost, OEA members receive free legal advice and representation when facing disciplinary action and other employment related disputes. There are no deductibles, no cost to members and no referrals of cases to inexperienced counsel or attorneys without education law experience. Instead, OEA employs three full-time attorneys who have decades of experience litigating education issues and devote their full attention to providing legal services to the OEA and her members. OEA also utilizes a small network of outside counsel equally experienced in handling the legal issues facing education employees in today's environment.

Unlike the benefits provided by other organizations, the legal benefits offered by OEA for job protection don't

**“No other organization, plan or benefit provides the quality and quantity of legal protection and services an OEA member receives as a benefit of membership.”**

have a dollar limit. OEA has expended hundreds of thousands of dollars in litigating employment related issues for our members on numerous individual cases – with the member only paying their annual dues and nothing more. We also litigate issues that have state-wide

impact for all education professionals, from protecting due process rights of all education employees to ensuring that your rights are protected in the event of a reduction in force. The list is long, but OEA lawyers have litigated many member rights cases of first impression in state and federal courts over the last several decades.

Second, OEA members receive an incredibly valuable set of benefits for legal services not related to their employment. Through the Personal Legal Services Program (PLSP), a member can receive, for example, a will, power of attorney, uncontested divorce, representation of misdemeanor charges and in-state child support enforcement – all at no charge to the member. The value of any one of these single legal services far exceeds your annual dues.

Third, for personal legal matters not covered by the PLSP program, the NEA Attorney Referral Program provides a member with legal advice and representation on matters involving real estate, estate planning, guardianship proceedings, adoptions, traffic violations and much more at a discounted rate of 30 percent off the participating attorney's normal fees, plus two, free 30-minute consultations per membership year.

Finally, we also provide personal liability insurance coverage for members. That coverage applies when a member is sued for on-the-job conduct and also provides for legal defense of any crimi-



Richard Wilkinson

nal matters that arise during the scope of your educational employment activities. These programs are over and above the general legal services described in the preceding paragraphs and our coverage exceeds the quality of coverage offered by any competing organization.

The coverage offered by OEA is set forth in coverage documents that are available

for anyone to review – and before believing the promises of any other organization, ask for a copy of their coverage agreement. If a document isn't forthcoming – don't believe what you don't receive. If a document is available, any OEA staff member will be happy to review it with you and do a line-by-line comparison of what OEA offers.

In summary, there is no other organization, plan or benefit that provides the quality and quantity of legal protection and services an OEA member receives as a benefit of his or her membership. If you need to access any of the legal services available, you can contact the OEA Center for Legal and Corporate Services at 800/522.8091 or 405/528-7785 for additional information.

**OEA Legal Services have you covered.**

# Help is just a phone call away

## OEA Headquarters

Oklahoma City Metro, Northwest, Southeast  
and Southwest Teams  
323 E. Madison, OKC, OK 73105

*email addresses are the employee's first initial last name @okea.org (e.g. jdoe@okea.org)*

## Tulsa Regional Office

Northeast and Tulsa Metro Teams  
10820 E. 45th St., Suite 110, Tulsa, OK 74146

### Elected Officers

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

Linda Hampton, President  
Alicia Priest, Vice President  
Maureen Peters, Administrative Assistant

### Management Team

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

Lela Odom, Executive Director  
Rheta Kennedy, Administrative Assistant  
David Williams, Associate Executive Director (Field Services/  
Organizing)  
Amanda Ewing, Associate Executive Director (Legislative &  
Political Organizing and Communications)

### Oklahoma City Metro Team

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

Chancen Flick, Legislative & Political Organizing  
Bill Guy, Organizing/Communications  
Bonnie Hammock, Teaching & Learning  
Jay Owens, Advocacy  
Martha Wissler, Advocacy

### Southwest Team

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

Sheri Childress, Advocacy  
Chancen Flick, Legislative & Political Organizing  
Bruce Treadaway, Organizing

### Southeast Team

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

Jerry Johnson, Organizing  
Ivy Riggs, Legislative & Political Organizing  
Cal Ware, Advocacy

### Northwest Team

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

Chancen Flick, Legislative & Political Organizing  
Mike McIlwee, Teaching & Learning  
Mary Pratz, Advocacy  
Patti Serio, Organizing

### Northeast Team

800/331-5143, 918/665-2282

Melissa Knox, Advocacy  
Kim Littrell, Teaching & Learning  
Ivy Riggs, Legislative & Political Organizing  
Jeff Savage, Organizing

### Tulsa Metro Team

800/331-5143, 918/665-2282

Marty Bull, Organizing  
Linda Hendrix, Advocacy (for TCTA, 918/749-2544)  
Ivy Riggs, Legislative & Political Organizing  
Susan Stowe, Advocacy

### Communications

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

Doug Folks, Communications Specialist  
Bill Guy, Communications Specialist  
Social Media Organizer (TBA)

### Student OEA

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

Brittney Branstetter, Student Member Organizing

### Legal and Corporate Services

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

Richard Wilkinson, General Counsel  
Heath W. Merchen, Associate General Counsel  
John Mahoney, Associate General Counsel  
Melanie Engh, Administrative Assistant  
Jaquita Farley, Legal Assistant

### Business and Finance

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

James Gilkerson, Comptroller  
Teresa Davis, Membership Consultant  
Brenda Snider, Membership Consultant  
Kevin Winstead, Accounting Specialist

### Center and Team Assistants

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

Lisa Cobb, Legislative & Political Organizing  
Kim Holley, Northwest and Southeast Teams  
Mary Lou Koskie, OKC Metro Team/Receptionist  
Lilia Ocampo, Organizing Center Assistant  
Sheryl Piccinino, Communications and Teaching & Learning  
Assistant (beginning Aug. 25)  
Mary Robison, Southwest Team Assistant/Receptionist  
Tina Townsend, Tulsa Metro & Northeast Teams Assistant  
800/331-5143, 918/665-2282

### Technology

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785

John Stapleton, Network Administrator  
Debbie Moore, Computer Tech Assistant

# NEA elects historic slate of officers

*Highlights from the NEA's 93rd Representative Assembly, held in Denver early this summer...*

Delegates elected a historic slate of new officers to lead the nation's largest education association, representing nearly 3 million educators. NEA's new officers include a former state teacher of the year and elementary school teacher from North Salt Lake, Utah; a physical science teacher from Harrisburg, Pa.; and an elementary school music teacher from Louisa County, Va.

Lily Eskelsen García, a former Utah Teacher of the Year who started her 20-year career in education as a lunch lady before becoming an elementary teacher who worked with homeless children, was elected to president of the NEA. Eskelsen García previously served two three-year terms as NEA vice president. An outspoken advocate for preserving and promoting public education for every student, she has been a vocal critic of high stakes testing and other policies that detract from student learning and exacerbate inequity in our education system.

Rebecca S. "Becky" Pringle, a middle school physical science teacher from Harrisburg, Pa., was elected NEA vice president. Pringle, now one of the highest-ranking African-American female leaders in the labor movement, has more than 30 years of classroom experience and has held leadership positions

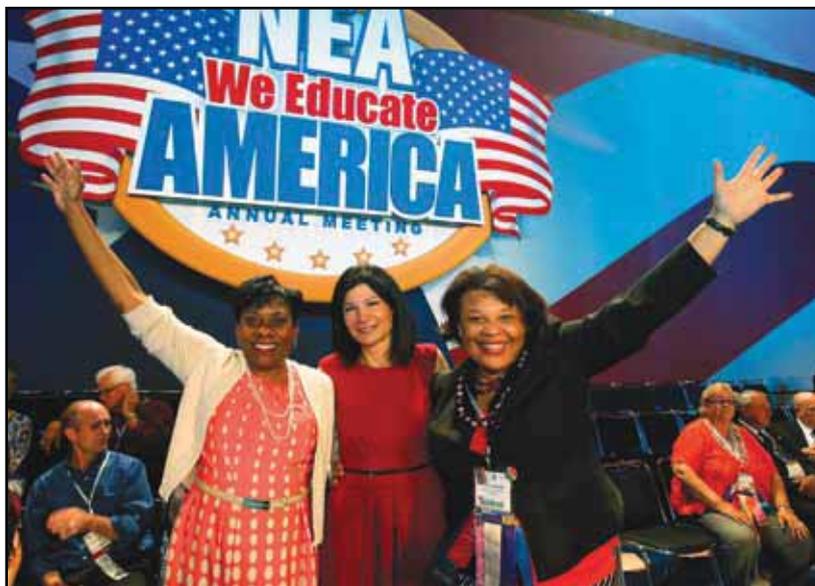


Photo provided by NEA Communications.

*NEA's new officers (from left) Vice President Becky Pringle, President Lily Eskelsen García and Secretary-Treasurer Princess Moss.*

at the national, state and local levels within the association.

Rounding out the top three NEA leadership positions and making NEA the first major union to be led by three women of color, Princess Moss was elected secretary-treasurer. Moss has more than 21 years of classroom experience and has held leadership positions at the national, state and local levels within the association.

about 30 percent of the school year preparing for and taking standardized tests. NEA's nearly 9,000 delegates approved the use of NEA resources to launch a national campaign to end the high stakes use of standardized tests, to sharply reduce the amount of student and instructional time consumed by tests, and to implement more effective forms of assessment and accountability.

To see more on the campaign, visit [www.nea.org/grants/33354.htm](http://www.nea.org/grants/33354.htm).

## Campaigning against "toxic testing"

The NEA will launch a national campaign to put the focus of assessments and accountability back on ensuring equity and supporting student learning and end the "test blame and punish" system that has dominated public education in the last decade. The average American student and teacher now spend

## A Call for Arne's Resignation

Delegates at the Denver RA approved a new business item calling for the resignation of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Earlier this summer, Duncan was highly supportive of a California judge's ruling to eliminate tenure in that state. In his ruling, the judge said such laws are particularly harmful to low-income students who are burdened with bad teachers who are hard to fire thanks to tenure.

Duncan has also pushed for more charter schools and is a proponent of student test scores counting toward teacher evaluations.

Find more coverage of the Denver RA at [www.nea.org/grants/1357.htm](http://www.nea.org/grants/1357.htm).



Photo by Kelly Fry.

*President Linda Hampton, with members of the Oklahoma delegation standing with her, nominates Mustang's Greg Johnson for NEA Secretary-Treasurer during the Denver RA.*

# Cohenour hopes her story helps others

*Continued from Page 5*

The process of being arrested was humiliating, to say the least, but my OEA lawyers were with me every step of the way. They helped me make arrangement for a bond, which meant I didn't have to spend any time in the county jail. After the arrest, there came months of pretrial hearings and trial date postponements. They guided me through motions, plea offers and other legal protocol. Finally, in mid-June, we went through a grueling, week-long jury trial. Even though the charges of assault and battery were misdemeanors, each of the nine counts carried a possible sentence of one year in the county jail and a fine of \$2,000 each.

In a state of shock and disbelief about these events, I was comforted by the sense that OEA "had my back." I felt so thankful and reassured to be part of an organization that could handle anything that might result from these accusations. Throughout the many legal delays and other frustrating twists and turns in the judicial system, not to mention the embarrassment of the ordeal, I learned to trust and appreciate the attorneys who were appointed to represent me.

My OEA attorneys supported me when I insisted that I

## Global education ignored in U.S.

*Continued from Page 2*

to three hours of homework each night.

The vocational system is almost identical to ours, except that they begin in the 10th grade and may spend their senior year as a paid intern in an approved workplace. I believe we should explore this possibility for our Career Tech system.

Unfortunately, global education is often ignored in Oklahoma. As the business, financial, and manufacturing industries continue to make the world more flat, our students must be prepared to interact, work and compete with people from other cultures and lifestyles.

Will I completely change what I teach? Of course not. However, I now see the importance of integrating global aspects into each unit and lesson I present.

## All educators were ready for change

*Continued from Page 7*

homa," said President Linda Hampton after the primary results were announced. "Each remaining candidate has expressed a willingness to seek the input of educators – the experts on public education – regarding decisions affecting public education."

Educators from all political parties were ready for a change.

"I am pleased that my fellow Republican voters spoke loud and clear in the primary. The failed policies and leadership of the current state superintendent created a toxic environment for educators, students, parents and patrons over the past three and half years," said Chuck Pack, a math teacher at Tahlequah High School and vice president of Tahlequah EA. "From the inappropriate use of high stakes tests to questionable budget/spending policies, Oklahomans agreed that a change was necessary. The concept of governing at the consent of the governed was lost in the pious view that public education has failed."

Oklahoma Education Association

would not accept a plea bargain; I was not guilty of anything. I wanted a verdict of "NOT GUILTY." Eventually, that is exactly what I received; it took the jury less than one hour to deliberate and return with their decision, "NOT GUILTY" on all charges. I could not have asked for better representation and felt overjoyed with the results.

During this lengthy process, I worried about various things, such as my contract renewal, the deadline for renewing my teaching certificate, meeting with administration to explain all of the delays, as well as my personal and professional reputation. Throughout this entire process, my OEA advisors were always accessible. I am very grateful to my OEA team for standing behind me with their financial, legal and moral support.

I hope my story will help all public school teachers realize how vulnerable we are to the whims of disgruntled parents and the exaggerated claims of students craving attention. How quickly a classroom procedural incident can go from business as usual to a 6 o'clock news story, arrest, humiliation, isolation and a life changing experience for a teacher.

Even though I have been legally exonerated, some damages are permanent. My finances have been adversely affected as well as my reputation, thanks, in part, to the Internet and social media. However, I feel extremely fortunate to have had unfailing support from family, friends, colleagues, and the Oklahoma Education Association.

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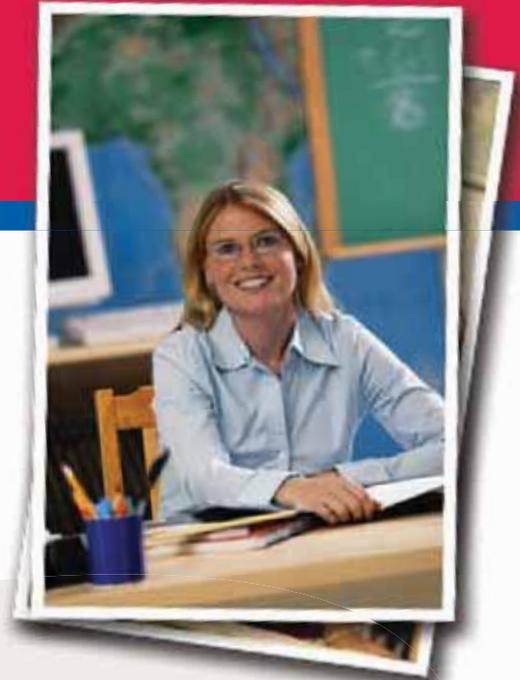
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