

THE EDUCATION FOCUS

FOR THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE OKLAHOMA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

October/November 2011



"We either spend our tax dollars on public education or we spend it on building more prisons. That's how I see it."

Jerome Murdock, parent

**STAND UP
FOR PUBLIC
EDUCATION**

Taking back public education

Pages 2 & 3 OEA's Stand Up For Public Education campaign is designed to change the conversation about education. Members, students and school patrons are encouraged to share public education success stories and make sure everyone knows the great things that are happening in our classrooms.



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Join the conversation with OEA!



On Facebook –

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

On Twitter –

- twitter.com/okea

Need help? Call us.

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

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

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

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

The Education Focus

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Join today!

Membership in the OEA provides security, symbolizes professionalism and brings with it a wealth of benefits.

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



It's time we share our stories

By Linda Hampton
OEA President

As a new school year starts, we all look forward to the many “new beginnings” – new students, new opportunities and challenges and, for many, new work sites. It’s an exciting time, but it’s also a time to remember why we chose this profession. We care deeply about children and their future. We see potential and promise in every child.

It’s also time to develop a new attitude about what we do. For some time now, our profession has been demonized and vilified by certain groups whose aim is to destroy public education. Anti-public education bullies with “deep pockets” are trying to devalue your professional sense of worth. The good news is that this is not the opinion of the majority. A recent study showed that over 76 percent of the respondents “have a very favorable view of teachers.”

Since education employees do not have huge financial resources, we have to do what we do best – get our message out personally through our friends, family, fellow church members and anyone who will listen. We have to stand up for public education. We have to be part of the conversation, and we have to interact with parents, community leaders and policymakers. But first, and most importantly, we have to see our own worth.

I was reminded recently of the uniqueness of teaching and working in a public school by my husband Larry. We were shopping at a local store and I was stopped by two former students – one simply wanted to say hello and the other wanted to tell me what was going on in his life.

Later, while crossing the street, I

heard a “Hi, Mrs. Hampton” yelled from a passing car. These are commonplace events for teachers and support professionals. It’s what Larry said next that made me think of how proud I am of our profession. He said, “You know, that’s always happening to you and the folks you work with. It’s certainly not something that happens to those of us in other professions. Other professions don’t get that reaction from the public.”

It was an “aha” moment for me. We are one of the few professions which gets this feedback. Sometimes it’s from a student – past or present – and sometimes it’s from a parent or grandparent. It’s not something we bought or influenced with “deep pockets;” it’s appreciation for what we do.

There’s an interesting quote from Will Rogers which says, “What constitutes a life well spent? Love and admiration from your fellow man is all that anyone can ask.”

As a public school employee, you have earned that love and admiration



President Linda Hampton

because you make a difference. You open up doors to opportunity that would otherwise be closed. You nurture and allow students to be the best they can be. You make a difference one person at a time.

Now, you have the opportunity to stand up for the very institution – public education – that makes all this possible. I hope you’ll join me and share your success stories at the Stand Up For Public Education website and Facebook page as well as with your friends and family.

Thanks for all you do!

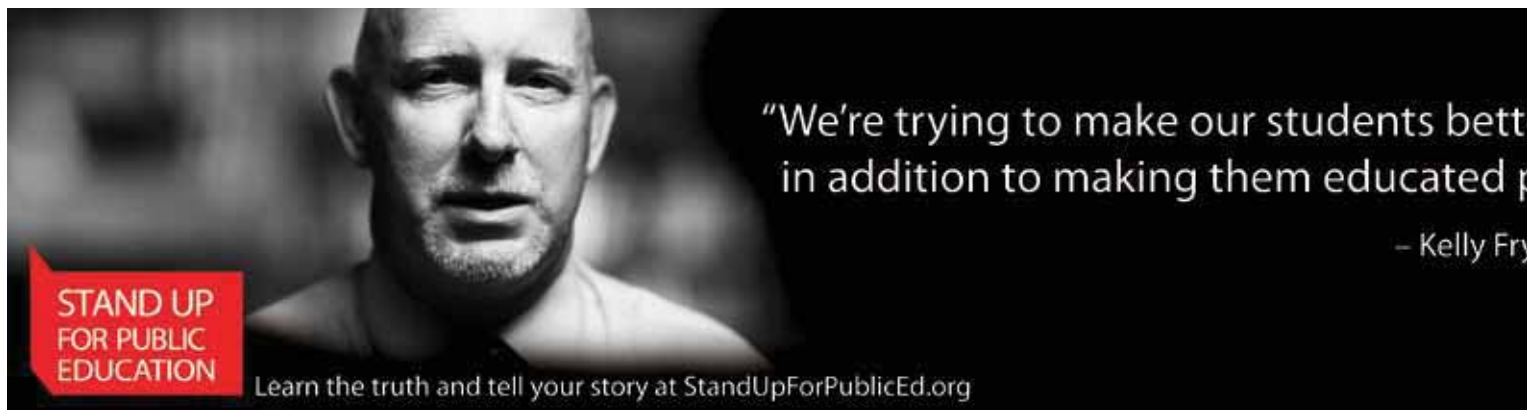
NEA Foundation to match donations

The NEA Foundation has partnered with DonorsChoose.org and is providing matching funds for teacher project requests for classroom materials and other learning needs.

It’s simple.

- Find out how to apply for this NEA members-only opportunity at www.neafoundation.org/newopportunities.
- Post one project request for up to \$500 total for classroom materials.
- Supporters of public education browse requests and make donations.
- The NEA Foundation matches the money raised for the first 400 projects, up to \$250 per project request.
- Your project is funded, you receive your materials, and your students soar.

For more details, visit www.neafoundation.org or contact Jeff Howard at jhoward@nea.org.



Changing the conversation

Campaign highlights success stories from the classroom

By Doug Folks

A small yet very vocal group of people are fueling the anti-public education discussion in the media.

Funny thing is, it's not working. Recent polling shows that teacher approval is at 76 percent, higher now than it's been since March 2002.

America is with us when we talk about how we have our students' best interests at the heart of all we do. People agree with us when we say good public schools are the foundation for a strong community and a vibrant economy.

Unfortunately, there are legislators and media in our state who want to perpetuate the opposite. Under funding education as a whole or eliminating funding for proven, vital programs such as Literacy First and National Board Certification, are tearing away at public education.

It's time we take back the conversation and Stand Up for Public Education.

The Oklahoma Education Association has launched a year-long campaign to change the conversation, share our success stories and make sure everyone knows the great things that are happening in our classrooms. Ranging from television commercials and billboards to Internet advertising and social media, the Stand Up For Public Education campaign seeks to involve everyone in the message.

"Our teachers and support professionals have wonderful stories to share. This campaign will provide a vehicle to share our successes with people beyond the walls of our school houses," said Linda Hampton, OEA president.

The Campaign

The campaign kicked off with three rotating television commercials featuring two OEA members and a father of children who attended Oklahoma City area public schools. First grade teacher Amy Braun, a finalist for state Teacher of the Year; middle school technology teacher Kelly Fry; and school patron Jerome Murdock are the first storytellers in what will be a series of ads featuring OEA members, students and parents.

The commercials are set to run in two-week rotations with higher concentration during the weeks of Sept. 5 (campaign kickoff), Nov. 7 (American Education Week), Jan. 30 (start of the legislative session) and April 30, to coincide with Teacher Appreciation Week and a public rally. The spots will also appear on the campaign's website and YouTube channel.

Other pieces of the campaign will feature images and quotes gleaned

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er people,
people."
y, teacher



SPONSORED BY OEA



from the interviews conducted for the television commercials. In addition to the TV ads, which will reach 97 percent of the state, the campaign will include:

- Digital billboards in Oklahoma City and Tulsa that will be seen a combined 5.88 million times.

- Banner ads on the front pages of the *Oklahoman* and the *Tulsa World* will appear on November 16, Feb. 1 and May 2. The ads will reach 600,000 people each time they run.

- Stand Up For Public Education's TV spots and banner ads will appear on television programs streamed on hulu.com, generating 456,000 impressions.

- Banner ads will pop up on websites popular with Oklahomans.

- A Stand Up For Public Education Rally on Saturday, May 5, on the south steps of the Capitol will serve as the culmination of the campaign.

Getting involved

In addition, the campaign has a website and accounts on Facebook (facebook.com/StandUpForPublicEducation), YouTube (youtube.com/StandUpOK), and Twitter (@Stand_Up_OK).

"The website serves as a meeting place for everyone interested and involved in the campaign," Hampton said.

StandUpForPublicEd.org includes sections where visitors can post a thank you to a teacher who inspired them, find links to positive news articles on education, watch the TV commercials and sign a pledge supporting public education and local schools.

Teachers, students and parents are encouraged to "like" the Facebook page and share their stories and videos with other fans of the campaign.

"While the campaign is hitting the

mass media from several angles, we want local associations to spread the word in their communities," Hampton said. "Teachers and support employees aren't always willing to brag on themselves, but this campaign gives them a unique opportunity to talk about the great things happening in our schools.

"Nothing spreads a message better than person-to-person communication."

Hampton said local associations can arrange to show the TV commercials at PTA and civic club meet-

"Our teachers and support professionals have wonderful stories to share. This campaign will provide a vehicle to share our successes with people beyond the walls of our school houses."

OEA President Linda Hampton

ings; run copies of the ads in the local newspapers, or ask local businesses to post "Stand Up For Public Education" on their marquees during American Education Week.

"The possibilities are endless. The more creative the better," she said.

For more information or guidance on how to get involved, call a member of your regional team.

"The only way to change the system is by working together to find a common goal."

— Lena Khader, Oklahoma student

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Attendees dine during North American Night at the World Congress. This event was held at an amusement park in Cape Town, South Africa.

Making global contacts highlights trip to World Congress

Sharing ideas with colleagues in other districts is always beneficial, but Tulsa's David Gould really expanded his contact list over the summer.

Gould was part of a National Education Association (NEA) contingent that attended the World Congress of Education International (EI) in Cape Town, South Africa. EI is a global union federation of organizations representing more than 30 million education workers through 402 member organizations in 173 countries and territories. The World Congress, held every four years, is the supreme governing body of EI, similar to the Oklahoma Education Association's Delegate Assembly or the NEA Representative Assembly.

The NEA delegation included 50 delegates and another 79 observers. Gould, who teaches history at Tulsa's Hale Junior High, attended as an observer. Other Okies who attended were Mustang's Greg Johnson, a member of the NEA Executive Committee, and his wife Diane, a teacher in Mustang.

The Congress provides an opportunity for representatives of all EI affiliates to meet and strengthen the bonds of solidarity between teachers and education workers throughout the world. Delegates considered the major contemporary issues affecting their organizations, the

international teacher trade union movement, and the ongoing struggle to achieve quality public education for all.

Following are some of Gould's observations of the Congress.

Education Focus: What was the thrust of the meeting?

David Gould: "The theme for the 6th World Congress was Building the Future through Quality Education. We had conversations about increasing the qualifications on becoming a teacher. Some countries around the world don't have qualifications on becoming a teacher. Across the world we see shortages of qualified math and science teachers."

EF: What did you learn about education outside of America?

DG: "Many of the ideas people (here) have about education are being exported to other countries. In the U.K., charter schools are gaining in popularity as is testing, testing, testing. In Australia, Teach for America has expanded a program called Teach for Australia."

EF: What kind of contacts did you make at the conference?

DG: "I met many teachers from countries in North Africa and the Middle East, including people from Iran and Afghanistan who are risking their lives simply for organizing teachers. The Iranian teacher union president has been to jail multiple times simply for organizing members. I hope to stay in contact with him and, if grant monies come available, to work with teachers in some of these countries in the future."

See "Education funding" on Page 10



Some of the children who performed during the World Congress of International Education.

Embracing social media

Teachers, local associations find a powerful tool in social media

By Ashley Knuckles

To tweet or not to tweet? In a world where people are sending out 200 million tweets per day – undoubtedly discussing education and great ways to use technology in the classroom – the answer is an obvious “yes!”

Since technology changes faster than Oklahoma’s weather, local associations are quickly finding social media to be an easy-to-use, efficient platform to communicate with members. And teachers are finding ways to utilize technology in places that students are already engaged.

Jessica Thompson, high school



Okemah’s Jessica Thompson

science teacher and member of Okemah ACT, finds the integration of social media and education to be exciting and effective in teaching.

Thompson uses a

Twitter account (@PantherSci205) to remind students of homework assignments, engage them in intellectual conversations from home and answer questions.

“It’s a way they are already used to interacting,” she said. “They can ask questions on the school computer and I can reply on the SMART



Photos on this page by Doug Folks.

Jessica Thompson shows students the latest Twitter feed @PantherSci205. Reading with her are, from left, juniors Cedrick Carter, Libbie Rutland and Levi Fullbright.

Board. It’s even helped some of my shier students to participate more in classroom conversations.”

Thompson uses the Twitter feed for sparking classroom discussion. She follows accounts like National Geographic and The Discovery Channel, sometimes discussing interesting posts of those organizations during the school day.

Thompson said she finds Twitter’s platform safer than some other sites, like Facebook, because of the simplicity of the messages.

“They can’t get into much trouble with 140 characters,” she said. “I haven’t had any issues with it.”

Thompson also uses Twitter to help substitute teachers in her class. She can respond to student questions through Twitter, leaving the feed up on the SMART Board so that everyone can see the answers.

“It’s a way to make sure they always know what’s going on,” she said. “They say, ‘man, that’s really cool!’”

Thompson is currently pursuing a master’s in education technology at East Central University.

Besides more popular platforms like Twitter and Facebook, there are hundreds of social media sites. Many have features that would be great to incorporate into your curriculum.

There are those who are not yet comfortable with bringing social media into the classroom, but are using it as a vehicle to drive their professions forward.

Jeff Jarvis, author of “What Would Google Do” and social media thought leader, said that social media is a great way to let people know what you’re passionate about, and dispel any myths that may exist. He says one must engage.

“They’re talking about you,” he said. “You can’t not participate.”

Peggy Bryant, president of the Mid-Del Association of Classroom Teachers, finds the local’s Facebook page to be an indispensable tool in organizing her local.

“It’s helped me to do my job,” she said. “Our communication is primarily through the building reps. Sometimes you get a busy building rep and not ev-

See “Mid-Del” on Page 10

A solution to the inclusion delusion

A multi-age classroom could be the answer to our special education issues

*By Heath Merchen
Associate General Counsel*

Teachers across the state are facing increasing frustrations with the present inclusion model used in the special education arena. Though most have classes of 20-25 students, the bulk of their time is spent dealing with two or three mainstreamed students who at best are disruptive and, at worst, exhibit extreme and sometimes violent behavior.

From your counsel

Teachers are left with the impossible job of preventing these students from hurting themselves or others while trying to teach a complete lesson, prepare for state tests and maintain a physically safe environment. Complaints to administrators may be met with sympathy, but most principals and superintendents are just as overwhelmed and perplexed by the issue.

At the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA), the calls we receive regarding this concern have increased dramatically and teachers are losing hope, believing there is no viable solution; so, we're offering one (along with the assistance necessary to implement it). Though many districts may not take our offer or approach seriously, the problem has grown too large to simply ignore.

Problems with the current approach

The most used model in Oklahoma schools is the "pull out/push in" system, but the way it is implemented currently hurts more than it helps. In some cases, a special education teacher or paraprofessional will spend time in the classroom, attempting to de-escalate behavior issues and giving some individual instruction, or for more extreme cases, temporarily remove a student from the room.

Realistically, however, the students who are excessively disruptive still impede class progress while the attending para or special education teacher tries to de-escalate the situation. The easily distracted students can't focus and the advanced students are simply bored since what little time remains in the classroom is used to teach to the middle or low performing level because it's presumed the advanced students will do fine on the state tests.

When alone in the class, the teacher's goal becomes simply getting the disruptive student quiet so the lesson can continue rather than directly assisting that student. Even in those instances where a student is eventually "pulled out" to a different area, the place they are taken usually lacks structure, has no regular education students, and the student is simply given some generic worksheet or task that has no direct relationship to what is happening in the classroom.

Finally, the special education

teacher ends up being treated like a glorified secretary and quick fix disciplinarian, scheduling meetings, doing paperwork, documenting, then hurriedly running from classroom to classroom, spending tiny bits of time just trying to calm students down and never having enough time to make a substantive impact.



Heath Merchen

There is a solution

Everyone is looking for a new approach that, without additional funding or staff, will make it all work. Most of those models, however, are just the same thing repackaged and in the end the classroom teacher is just expected to cope.

In reality, there is a solution. But it isn't quick and it isn't easy.

The multi-age central classroom setting

The IDEA's standard of "least restrictive environment" means that special education students should, whenever possible, be educated in the same setting as their regular education peers. That does not mean the student must stay at a particular location or have a certain teacher. "Placement is not bricks and mortar," placement is a program. So to make a program both functional and compliant, it must include both regular and

special education students and those students should be progressing in the same areas as their classmates.

Enter the centralized, multi-age classroom – a concept that dates back to one room schoolhouses. There is, however, a twist. This multi-age classroom is designed for students of all grades who are not benefitting from what is currently happening in the classroom and it serves both regular and special education students, students in need of remediation, and students in need of advanced or more challenging work.

To really function, this class needs an estimated student to staff ratio of 1-to-5 (a special education teacher, a regular education teacher, a gifted teacher, and a secretary along with paraeducators and volunteers), understanding that some students will take significant one-on-one attention while others will function in a small group.

When students are not fully benefiting from standard classroom instruction because it is below their abilities (gifted), is above their abilities (remediation needed), or they are disruptive, the teacher has the ability to draft a short note and a staff member will take the child to the multi-age setting. In that setting, the staff on hand will directly attend to the student and help them work through whatever problems or other assignments the teacher noted.

The ultimate goal is to return them to the classroom IF it will benefit them. For some students, the multi-age classroom will prove more beneficial in the long term (for example, an eighth grade student is performing at a 4th grade level and is continually behind, or say a 7th grade student is performing college level work and is continually bored). Additionally, the multi-age classroom is not a “quick stop” de-escalation room, but a place where students receive substantive instruction and return to the classroom only when truly ready.

Since the students are likely to be relatively consistent, (the brightest

students, those who consistently struggle, and those who have behavior issues), the staff in the classroom should be all fully versed in the students’ strengths and weaknesses, their IEP, RTI, or Gifted Plan (if any) and the staff should

pay attention to which instructors/paras are most effective and least effective with each student, adjusting as necessary.

It also will be relatively easy to determine how many students you will have in the room as regular education staff members can normally readily identify the number of students in their class who are advanced, continually disruptive, or in need of other remediation. Those staff members will need to meet with the classroom teachers before and after school to coordinate lessons, discuss student issues and formulate an ongoing strategy.

Skeptical? It’s understandable – there is a nonstop flow of new solutions from the most renowned academic minds, none of which ever seem to address the real problems, and all of which come with a price tag and consulting fee.

The advice in this column is free (the costs are in setting up the program) and is based solely on experience and observation of what is actually happening in classrooms across the state. It addresses not only the need to give specialized instruction to special education students, but also the need to challenge advanced students – and use their abilities to assist their lower performing peers.

It can work, if it’s done right. However, there are some rules that must be followed, and the district must be



willing to both fund it and back it. There can be no halfway or cheating.

The rules

1. The room is not detention or for isolation. It is a part of each student’s instructional plan.

2. All staff must all be well trained in the class’s function, how it works, how students are served, and the internal processes necessary to make it function. Administrators need to understand the basics of special education law, special education practice and must fully support this process even over a parent’s objections.

3. The multi-age staff must be proactive. If there is a lull, they need to be going out to the classrooms to check on and assist the most high needs or advanced students.

4. The district must actively seek and recruit volunteers for the program. Retired teachers, students and parents are essential for this to work.

5. The district must sell the approach to parents rather than simply dictate.

6. Even if the parent isn’t sold, the district must be willing to fight to defend the program. Too many districts run scared at the first hint of litigation.

7. Multi-age staff and regular education staff have to coordinate continually, (this means before- and after-school meetings to go over each student’s progress).

See “Rules” on Page 11

HSAs offer triple tax advantage

Education employees have new options in their health care choices

With all the demands placed on education employees, you should be aware of an important new benefit that could save you money when you choose your health care plan during the annual fall enrollment.

Legislation was passed a few months ago allowing teachers to make pre-tax contributions to a Health Savings Account (HSA) through payroll deduction. Signing up for an HSA would result in a tax advantage.

American Fidelity, a long-term partner of the Oklahoma Education Association, has won a state contract to help education employees establish HSAs. You must have an HSA-qualified High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) in order to contribute to an HSA, such as OSSEGIB's HealthChoice Low plan. Also, you cannot be putting money into a Cafeteria 125.

Below is a list of benefits of an HSA. Consider the advantages it can provide you.

1. Invest in yourself

- HSA contributions are payroll deducted pre-tax.
- There is no "use it or lose it" clause. Balances roll over from year to year.
- Contribution dollars are invested in interest-bearing accounts.

2. Flexibility

- HSA dollars can pay qualified medical expenses, as defined by the IRS, for you, your spouse and tax dependent(s) whether or not they are on your health plan.
- In addition to qualified medical expenses, HSA dollars can be used to pay for:
 - o Long Term Care coverage (subject to IRS limits),
 - o Health plan coverage while receiving unemployment,
 - o COBRA continuation coverage, and
 - o Medicare premiums, if age 65-plus (but not Medicare supplement).
- You decide how much to put into your HSA, what medical expenses to pay from the account, whether to invest and which investments to make.
 - If you decide not to reimburse yourself for an eligible expense, keep the receipts. There is no time limit as to when you can reimburse yourself.
 - You take part in your health care and provider decisions while choosing the best way to spend your hard-earned dollars.
 - Use funds to pay for current medical expenses or save money for future needs.

3. Portability

- No matter where you go, your account will follow.
- Even if you change jobs, change medical coverage, become unemployed, move to another state, or change

See "New options" on Page 11

Insurance premiums will not increase for educators

School employees received some great news in mid-August when the Oklahoma State and School Employees Group Insurance Board (OSSEGIB) announced that premiums would hold steady in the new year.

On July 22, OSSEGIB announced preliminary rates that were 4.98 percent higher than last year. But after conversations with representatives from the Oklahoma Education Association, the Board decided to use its reserve funds to cover the nearly five percent increase.

The decision was not unlike throwing a safety ring to school districts, many of which are drowning in a sea of budget cuts

"OSSEGIB understands that pushing the cost of insurance increases onto public education employees is not the way to solve budget problems. Our teachers are ranked 49th in the nation in teacher pay and school funding took

the largest hit in last year's legislative budget cuts. We appreciate the board reaching into the reserve fund to cover the increase," said Linda Hampton, OEA president.

Because the board is using reserve funds to cover the increase, the primary and child coverage insurance premium will remain the same while the spouse insurance premium will decrease by 2.15 percent.

The board also announced an increase in deductibles for tobacco users and all non-tobacco users must complete a Tobacco Free Attestation form. Those unwilling to complete the form or agree to its terms will see their annual deductible increase 50 percent, from \$500 to \$750.

The attestation forms should be provided by school districts' benefits offices, or you can download a form from the OSSEGIB website, www.ok.gov/sib.

OEA members invite legislators back to school

By Doug Folks

Rep. Donnie Condit is going back to school. During American Education Week, he will spend time as a bus monitor, teach a math class, serve lunch, help clean up the cafeteria, answer phones, and help in the pre-kindergarten classrooms.

And he'll do all that in one day.

Makes you tired just thinking about, doesn't it?

Condit's one-day marathon in McAlester Public Schools (MPS) will be part of G.L.E.E. Week, Giving Legislators an Educational Experience week. The Oklahoma Education Association created the event to give legislators an opportunity to experience the daily successes and challenges of our schools.

"We relish the opportunity to have our legislators spend a day with us. Our greatest resource is creating a greater awareness of the importance of public education," said Brenda Calahan, president of the McAlester ACT and OEA zone director of Southeast C.



Rep. Donnie Condit

Condit probably won't see anything during his back-to-school visit that he hasn't seen before. That's because he retired from MPS in 2010 after 30 years in education. Condit is setting an example with his participation in G.L.E.E. Week and hopes his colleagues at the capitol do the same.

"If legislators will spend some time in our schools, I strongly believe they will come away appreciative of the job that the people involved in our public education system are doing and deserve our support," Condit said.

OEA President Linda Hampton said G.L.E.E. Week is an opportunity for local associations to give legislators great insight into what happens during an average school day.

"This event provides legislators a chance to gain some first-hand experience. During the session, they have to make some important decisions on education issues and funding, so G.L.E.E. Week can serve as a fact-finding mission for their work next spring," Hampton said.

Condit says funding is the No. 1 problem facing public education.



"In the budget for fiscal year 2012, public education accounted for \$167.4 million of the total \$218 million in budget cuts," he said. "Another way to look at it is public schools, colleges and universities – which together account for 52 percent of all state appropriations – sustained three-fourths of the cuts."

Planning for G.L.E.E. Week is easy. Visit www.glee-week.org and download a step-by-step kit which includes sample materials like invitations and press releases, and a checklist of things to do in preparation of the event.

Daniela Newville and Katie Hawk, OEA legislative and political organizing UniServ specialists, can help locals identify and contact legislators as well as help locals plan events around G.L.E.E. Week.

For more information, contact Newville (dnewville@okea.org), Hawk (khawk@okea.org) or Danielle Durant, OEA legislative and political organizing assistant, at 800/522-8091 or ddurant@okea.org.

TLE Commission seeks feedback

The Teacher & Leader Effectiveness (TLE) Commission is requesting public comment on its first set of preliminary recommendations to the State Board of Education (SBE) for a statewide evaluation system for teachers and administrators.

Final recommendations of the Commission will be submitted to the SBE prior to Dec. 15, based on feedback received from a wide representation of stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, students, parents, community members and policymakers.

The State Department of Education is offering webinars and video conferences that provide more information about the TLE models. They are accepting feedback via an online survey, email or written letter. Visit okea.org to learn more, including a look at the proposed systems, and to provide your feedback.

Mid-Del using Facebook over email

Continued from Page 5

everyone gets the information they need.

“With social media you can send out your message to everyone.”

Bryant also uses social media to keep up with the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA) and education news.

“One benefit of reading OEA’s Facebook page is receiving the up-to-date information that the staff posts when they attend meetings,” she said. “Members get the news firsthand and immediately instead of waiting until a meeting is over or when we have to read what happened

in a monthly publication.”

She posts education articles and “feel good” stories about success in public education on the Mid-Del ACT’s Facebook page. She likes the ability to share interesting stories and participate in meaningful conversation with her colleagues.

“I’d much rather do that than email anymore,” she said.

As current members start to retire, Bryant thinks social media will help to spark the interest of younger educators.

“Maybe this is a way to reach young leaders, so they can see that we’re out there, and we’re making a difference.”

Education funding is a world-wide problem

Continued from Page 4

EF: Any real “aha” moments you didn’t expect?

DG: “On the first day of the Congress I remember walking in and looking around thinking, ‘Wow; teachers from nearly every country in the world, from different cultures and different backgrounds.’ I could feel the solidarity in the sense that we are all in this together working with students.”

EF: Is education funding as much of a problem in foreign countries as it is here?

DG: “Adequate funding for education is not just a challenge here in Oklahoma, but a trend that is occurring across the world. For example, at one time, the Netherlands was spending almost 6 percent of its GDP (gross domestic product) on education. Over the past couple of years, they have started to reduce the amount of money they are spending on education.

The global financial meltdown has made the Education for All goal harder to reach by 2015. Currently more than 60 million kids do not have access to a primary school.



Law-related Education

www.okbar.org/public/lre

Lawyers in the Classroom

www.okbar.org/public/lre/programs

Representative Democracy in America

www.representativedemocracy.org

We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution

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Continued from Page 8

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4. Tax savings

- The three-tiered tax savings is hard to beat:
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some issues you need to weigh before switching from a lower deductible plan (\$500 with HealthChoice High) to a higher deductible plan (\$1,500 with HealthChoice Low), and an HSA may not be an option for everyone. For example, younger, healthier people may find an HSA to be a real savings.

Remember, you have to make this choice during the October enrollment period. We encourage you to meet with your American Fidelity representative during your section 125 enrollment, contact OSEEGIB, or go to the website at www.afhsa.com.

Rules of the program must be followed

Continued from Page 7

8. Regular classroom teachers can't abuse the process; i.e. they have to work to accommodate the students in the classroom rather than just sending them off at the first hint of trouble.

9. Special education teachers can't be treated as glorified secretaries – and this is a big one. Somehow school districts have turned a special education position into a type of administrative assistant who spends her time scheduling conferences, proofreading, acting as a meeting

scribe and preparing document drafts. Building secretaries need to handle these tasks under the direction of the teacher. The district must keep special education instructors focused on direct student interaction and instruction.

We can assist OEA members who want to further explore the systematic changes described in this article. You can contact me at hmerchen@okea.org and we can explore the viability of change in your district and suggested methods for initiating these changes.

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By Eleanor "Snookie" Krumbiegel
NEA Member Benefits

It's so tempting. A check comes in the mail with your credit card statement. Sign it, and presto! The bank will deposit \$\$\$ into your account.

"Convenience checks" are not a good deal, according Consumer Action's Ruth Susswein. By cashing one, you are agreeing to a loan with exorbitant interest rates and no grace period. The interest starts accumulating immediately.

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