

*The
Education*

FOCUS

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association • February 2015



Stand Up Against High-Stakes Testing

*Legislative Session
Opens with Optimism*

Testing Summit Recommendations

RAA Poster Honors Reading with the Troops

Special Greetings from State Supt. Hofmeister

Putting education first

4-5 Standing Up Against High-Stakes Testing

A look at recommendations from the Testing Summit and a first look at OEA's dynamic new documentary on the testing culture.



6 Legislative Opportunities Await in 2015

Bills to improve education funding and fix A-F give us reason to be optimistic about this legislative session.

7 How to Increase Funding In Spite of a \$300 Million Shortfall

State revenue collections are up, but the Legislature opens with a funding hole to fill first.



Also....

- Pg 2 – Reading with the Troops
– RAA Poster Contest Returns
- Pg 3 – Get Connected
- Pg 8 – A letter to OEA members from
State Supt. Joy Hofmeister
- Pg 9 – Documentation = Protection
for TLE
- Pg 10 – Filing Opens for OEA Elections

The Education Focus

Volume 32, No. 3

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

Linda S. Hampton, President
Alicia Priest, Vice President
David DuVall, Executive Director
Amanda Ewing, Associate Executive Director
Doug Folks, Editor
Bill Guy, Communications
Lauren Burkholder, Social Media Organizing
Sheryl Piccinino, Center Assistant

Need help? Contact your regional team.

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

Join the conversation.

okea.org
Facebook – Oklahoma.Education.Association
and Student.Oklahoma.Education.Association
twitter.com/okea (@okea)
pinterest.com/oeaedupins

The Education Focus (ISSN 1542-1678)

is published seven times annually:
October/November, December/January,
February, March, April/May, June/July and
August/September, for \$5
by the Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E.
Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105.
Periodicals postage paid at Okla. City, OK, and
additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes
to The Education Focus, PO Box 18485,
Oklahoma City, OK 73154.

OEA
Oklahoma Education Association
putting education first

It's our turn to play offense

By Linda Hampton
OEA President

Going into the legislation session is always a little like the first week of school. We begin with high aspirations. There will be new names and faces as well as individuals we have worked with before. We hope we'll be quick to gain friends and slow to acquire enemies.

We have, however, learned a great deal about what to expect from our experiences during previous legislative sessions. We have had to call on you to make phone calls, write letters and emails, and make trips to the Capitol. Each time you have responded to our "Call for Action" because you know you are doing the right thing for the right reason – our students. In fact, you responded in mass when 30,000 caring and committed individuals rallied at the Capitol for public education last year.

The opponents of public education have had us playing defense for the past couple of sessions, but now it's our turn to go on the offense. We won't be satisfied this session with just beating back the bad legislation. Our students need us to enact positive changes, too. The days of being able to divide and conquer public education's allies are over.

This year, the public's eyes have been opened to those who are trying to eliminate or privatize public education. The Oklahoma PTA and the Education Coalition are calling for a statewide rally to support public education on March 30. What a powerful message to detractors when they see parents and teachers standing shoulder to shoulder in support of our students and public education!

By playing offense we are strengthening our commitment to the success of every child in Oklahoma. We, as educators, know what it takes to ensure that success.

First, Oklahoma cannot continue to be number one in the nation in cuts to public school spending. Past legislatures have dug a hole in funding for public ed-

ucation, and it's time to replace what has been taken. Beyond just filling that hole, however, we need to think proactively about what Oklahoma schools are going to need in the future.

Furthermore, it is time to replace high-stakes testing with common-sense testing. Students are so much more than a single test score. They deserve an education that inspires their curiosity, imagination and desire to learn. They should never be labeled as failures based on one test given on one day.

Additionally, we know the most important factor in the classroom for a child's success is the teacher. It is going to take a deliberate, multi-year approach to increasing salaries to make it possible to retain and recruit the best teachers. Seven years is far too long for teachers to have waited for a salary increase.

Equally important is the realization that our support professionals play a vital role in the education of a child. They feed the students, get them to school safely,



President Linda Hampton

clean the buildings and so much more. They cannot be asked to continue to work for compensation that places many of them barely above the poverty level.

As I look to the beginning of the legislative session, I realize it's not really about where we are today, it's about our vision of where we want to be tomorrow. I also realize we will very likely be issuing more calls for action to you. It's great to know you'll respond positively because that's simply who you are – professional education employees who care deeply about Oklahoma's students.

Thanks for all you do and for all you will do.

We're going back!
Save the Date! • March 30, 2015
**Rallying for better education funding
and common sense testing**

**LAST IN THE
REGION IS NOT
OK** for \$ Spent
per child in Oklahoma

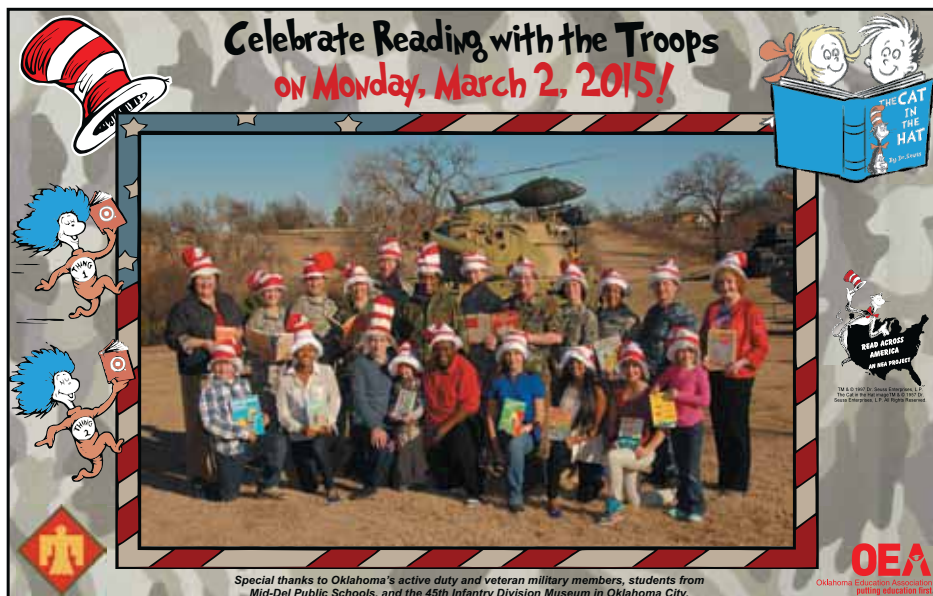
Reading with the Troops for RAA

“Reading with the Troops” is the theme for the Oklahoma Education Association’s 2015 Read Across America celebration, March 2-6. OEA is proud to partner with several of Oklahoma’s military service men and women to create this year’s poster. In addition, children from Mid-Del Public Schools joined the military members, OEA President Linda Hampton and Vice President Alicia Priest for the photo.

OEA staff is providing local associations with copies of the poster, seen here.

Oklahoma active duty and retired military members who participated in this year’s poster include Captain Benjamin Nicholls, Staff Sergeant Joshua Jones, Sergeant First Class Melissa Ritter, Sergeant Lacesha Adams, Specialist Suzie Sutton, First Lieutenant Michael Horn, Naval Aircrewman Carl Couch, Master Sergeant Robert Turner, Tech Sergeant David Hines and Petty Officer Third Class Teresa Ward.

The 45th Infantry Division Museum in Oklahoma City partnered with OEA this year by providing their grounds as the backdrop for the poster.



The NEA Cat-a-Van will be visiting Oklahoma once again this year, kicking off the week-long reading event in Tulsa on March 2. More information about which schools the Cat-a-Van will visit will be announced soon.

In keeping with our Reading with the Troops theme, we encourage you to

- Invite local military personnel – active duty, National Guard or retired – to read with your students.

- Join the online conversation by using “#readacrossamerica” and posting your photos.

- Send us photos of your celebration via email to Lauren Burkholder at lburkholder@okea.org – we might be able to use them in our annual RAA video for Delegate Assembly.

- Check out the National Education Association Read Across America web page for more ideas (nea.org/readacross).

Favorite books inspire students for poster contest

Reading a great book sparks our imagination, drawing pictures in our minds. We want Oklahoma students to share those visions of great literature by entering the 2015 Read Across America Poster Contest, drawing or painting a picture inspired by a favorite book. Entries for the contest are due by Monday, March 16.

Prizes will be awarded in four categories – kindergarten through 2nd grades, 3rd-5th grades, 6th-8th grades, and 9th-12th grades. First place in each division will receive a \$75 VISA gift card, second place winners win a \$50 VISA gift card, and honorable mention winners will receive a certificate.

Winners from each category will be featured in the April-May issue of the *Education Focus* and on our website, okea.org.



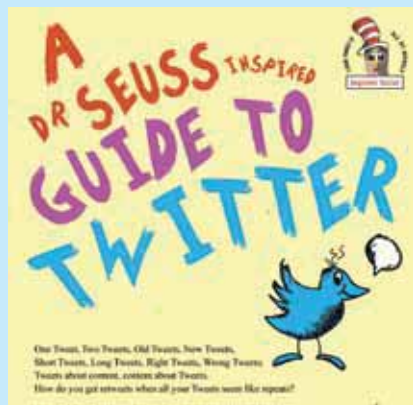
Lean Filart's 2014 winning drawing of Alice in Wonderland.

Read Across America Poster Contest Rules:

- All students of OEA members are eligible to enter the contest.
- Pictures will be judged on creativity, use of color and content.
- Entries must be submitted on white, unlined 8 ½ x 11 paper. DO NOT FOLD.
- On the back of each entry, list the book that inspired the drawing, student’s name, age, grade, name of school and teacher, and a school phone number.
- All entries will become the property of the OEA and must meet all contest rules to be eligible for prizes.
- All entries must be received by Monday, March 16, 2015. Mail them to OEA Focus on Reading, PO Box 18485, Okla. City, OK 73154; or hand-deliver or overnight entries to OEA Headquarters at 323 E. Madison, Okla. City, OK, 73105.
- Late entries or entries from non-OEA members will not be judged.

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

Online Seuss Resources



Hootsuite's infographic is an homage to the good doctor. Written in the style of a Dr. Seuss story, it's full of great advice for making Twitter work for you. <http://bit.ly/1d1TkbZ>

@ DrSeuss_Quote

Quotes from your favorite Dr. Seuss books, like this one –
And he did hear a sound rising over the snow. It started in low. Then it started to grow... #DrSeuss



Suessville.com is a comprehensive website for all things Seuss, including games and activities, videos and classroom resources.



get connected

Happy Valentine's Day from OEA!



Oklahoma Education Association

Most popular post: 1/26 – Hofmeister proposes a pay raise for Oklahoma teachers via www.news9.com

327 Likes - 144 Shares - 24 Comments



Trending in Oklahoma Education

#OKTestSummit – Thank you for making this summit meeting one of our most talked about and engaging days on social media!

#OKHigh5 – Continue to use this hashtag to communicate with the Oklahoma State Dept. of Education with your thoughts on Superintendent Hofmeister's teacher pay raise proposal.



Simply Said ... with Linda

"Finding Fact in the Figures: When you look at all of the data, it shows 75% of Oklahoma students are reading adequately or above. Additionally, out of that 25% scoring below basic, some are Ds, not failures. That's far different than the 70% the article would have you believe are failing. So, yes, numbers don't lie, but you should certainly use all the data rather than labeling students as failures to try to convince folks that public education shouldn't be adequately funded."

Read more at okea.org/oea-blog.



Lauren S. Burkholder
OEA Social Media & Media Relations
lburkholder@okea.org



Standing up against high-stakes testing

When it comes to strengthening the education profession, the top concern for OEA members remains finding solutions to the toxic testing culture suffocating public education. Nearly two years ago, OEA board members conducted listening sessions with members throughout the state. Testing was at the top of their list of

concerns for the profession. The association's efforts to challenge the label-and-punish testing culture have been strong and varied. From working on legislative fixes to convening a first-of-its-kind summit on testing to a dynamic new documentary, the association has attacked the problem of toxic testing on all sides.

Testing Summit seeks legislative consensus

In response to increasing concerns from parents and teachers that Oklahoma is over-testing its K-12 students, the Oklahoma Education Association hosted the "High Stakes Testing Summit: Building Legislative Consensus." Attendees

representing teachers, administrators, parents, students, community groups, the Osage and Cherokee Nations, and legislators spent time in December and January dissecting a wide-range of testing-related topics. Following are recommendations that came from the summit:



Stephanie Hyder, Director of Executive Search Services - Legislative and Board Services for OSSBA, makes a point during a discussion on federal and state testing requirements.

Federal and State Regulations Recommendations

- Cease the use of assessments for high-stakes determinations affecting students, teachers, schools and teacher preparation programs.
- Eliminate non-federally mandated tests.
- Align assessments to college entrance expectations; eliminate End-of-Instruction exams and replace them with the ACT.
- Institute a moratorium on profit-driven testing until Oklahoma has developed and fully implemented new state standards AND has developed the accompanying assessments.
- Use a valid, reliable, useful assessment system to assist all schools and build educator capacity.
- Adopt transparent assessments,

including the ability for review of tests after completion to reinforce learning and to evaluate the quality of norm-referenced tests.

Special Education Recommendations

- IEP students should never be subjected to high-stakes testing. The student's IEP team should be the only entity to determine the appropriate, multi-path approach to state assessment for each IEP student.
- The definition of "graduation cohort" must be changed to better assist IEP students and districts with graduation requirements.

Reading Sufficiency Act Recommendations

For the Legislature

- Make the "Student Reading Proficiency Team" permanent.
- Fully fund RSA requirements to include those requirements for students receiving remediation beyond third grade.

For the State Department of Education

- Ensure that the third grade reading assessment measures grade-level reading skills.

Powerful voices highlight testing documentary

Third grader Owen Dalton appears on screen in black and white, a tight shot of his face emphasizing not only his somber expression but the seriousness of the topic.

"We work hard every single day, and it's all leading up to one test. One test," he says, driving home the point of how critical the third grade reading test is to his future. "I think it puts too much pressure on us."

In less than 30 seconds, Owen sets the tone for OEA's film documentary on our ridiculous testing culture. The 27-minute video includes interviews with people from all walks of life, interspersed with facts about Oklahoma testing. The story clearly outlines the challenges and consequences of high-stakes testing, and calls on the viewer to take action to end toxic testing.

In addition to Owen, a third grader in Norman, the video features a high school senior from Yukon and a middle school



Third grader Owen Dalton talks about the pressure he and his classmates face in preparing for the reading test.

ELL student from Jenks talking about their testing experiences. Jenks Middle School principal Rob Miller and Tulsa third grade teacher Jennifer Thornton share dramatic testing experiences from their careers. State Reps. Katie Henke and Scott Inman discuss the need for more common sense when it comes to testing and Christy Bynum Funck, a parent of a student with special needs, tells her story.

The documentary will serve as the centerpiece of the Common Sense Testing Tour for President Linda Hampton and Vice President Alicia Priest. OEA staff will work with local associations, school administrations and parent groups to schedule community meetings on testing. Hampton and Priest will lead the meetings, showing the video and generating support for legislative changes to the state's testing plan.

Contact a member of your regional team to schedule a Common Sense Testing Tour in your district.

- Provide graduate-level tuition discounts or other incentives to increase the number of certified Reading Specialists in Oklahoma.
- Encourage class-size reduction at all grade levels to positively impact student literacy.

For the Oklahoma Education Coalition

- Educate local districts about mid-year promotion policy.
- Pursue initiatives that educate Oklahomans about the importance of early literacy and support adult literacy.
- Promote the availability and accessibility of reading materials to Oklahoma families beginning at birth.

A-F School Report Card Recommendations

The Oklahoma Center for Education Policy at OU and the Center for Educational Research and Evaluation at OSU recommendations:

- 1) A new approach to measuring meaningful learning should be:

- **Balanced:** Consisting of summative and formative assessments that are externally and locally created; include norm-referenced, criterion-referenced and self-referenced assessments and items.

- **Integrated:** Ongoing, purposeful assessments in varied formats.

- **An assessment of higher-order cognitive skills:** Comprised of high-fidelity assessments of critical abilities and based on internationally benchmarked standards; test items should be instructionally sensitive, educationally valuable and readily available; assessments must be valid, reliable and fair.

- 2) Accountability should be a reciprocal system at the school, district, state and national levels and include:

- Policies, funding standards and resource allocation (with accompanying processes, capacity and resources detailed).

- School effectiveness measures such as effective leadership, aligned curriculum, structures and process for professional growth and student social, emotional and health needs.

Summit attendees' recommendations:

- Utilize already existing student and district data in an online, customizable format to help parents make critical education decisions.
- Replace the current A-F system with a locally determined and controlled school improvement plan which is designed, implemented and assessed by the district and reported to the community and state on a yearly basis.

TLE Quantitative Measures recommendations

- Delay the quantitative portion of the TLE Evaluation System for a minimum of two years; if a delay is not implemented, replace VAM with SLOs for all teachers.
- Explore various quantitative models which utilize strong, peer-reviewed and academically research-based methods which emphasize reflection and can be implemented over time.
- Give districts the control to determine the percentage of tests scores that will be used for evaluation purposes.

Legislative opportunities await in 2015

When the 2015 session of the 55th Oklahoma Legislature convened on February 2, the landscape of both houses had shifted to an even more conservative makeup than ever before. Thanks to gains made during November's election, Republicans now outnumber Democrats 72-29 in the House, and 40-7 in the Senate.

What might be a surprise, though, is what appears to be a renewed energy in the Legislature to address some of education's biggest issues in a positive way. Leadership in both houses has recognized the need for better education funding and teacher pay raises as well as

addressing the over-testing of students and the use of those test results in teacher evaluations and school grades.

"We sense a real opportunity to make positive changes for education this year," said OEA President Linda Hampton. "There seems to be a real desire by legislators to find new money for education and to inject some common sense into our out-of-control testing culture."

Going on offense

While OEA lobbyists have spent most of their time fighting bad legislation over the last few years, the team will have several positive bills to push for

this session. OEA's top priorities this legislative session are to push for common-sense testing changes and an increase in salaries for both certified staff and support professionals.

- Numerous bills have been filed to increase teacher and support professional pay.

- Testing is sure to be a hot item during the 55th Legislature. Leading the pack are bills to make permanent the changes to the Reading Sufficiency Act from the previous session. A law passed last year (and the subsequent veto override) to allow a team of parents, educators and administrators to retain or promote third graders, was good only for 2013-14 and 2014-15.

- For students with special needs, there are

bills that would allow their IEP team to make all testing decisions as they deem them meaningful and appropriate.

- There is a strong push to modify graduation requirements for high school students, especially to replace the End-of-Instruction assessments with the ACT and to remove the high-stakes aspect that requires EOI passage to gain a diploma.

- Regarding the TLE, legislation has been proposed to either postpone or eliminate the quantitative half of the evaluation. OEA is pushing bills to prohibit the use of test scores and Value Added Measures. We are also asking for the State Department of Education to use any delay granted by the legislature to ensure that any program adopted is both thoughtful and guaranteed to be accurate.

- While there are many bills addressing the A-F Report Card System, most of them include a moratorium while the new leadership at the State Department develops a better, more equitable system.

- OEA will also be supporting bills to reinstate funding for the full National Board Certified Teacher application process, plus a bill that would provide a \$500 classroom supply stipend for all teachers.

Still a need to play defense

When it comes to bad legislation, OEA will be fighting a renewed effort to create voucher programs. There are two bills to allow parents who make 2.5 times the federal poverty rate or less to take the state aid assigned to their children and use it for private school tuition or homeschool costs. There is absolutely no accountability in these measures on how the money can be spent.

Several legislators are pushing for the expansion of charter schools statewide. Most of these bills do not give local districts any input or control. Parent Trigger legislation is also making a return. The bills would allow 51 percent of parents in a school to sign a petition to convert their school site into a charter or fire half the staff and administration.

Other bad legislation OEA will be closely monitoring includes education deregulation, elimination of payroll deduction of association dues and collective bargaining changes. There have been some shell bills filed concerning pension "reform," but at this point we do not know the intention of the authors.



How to increase funding in spite of a \$300 million shortfall

By Amanda Ewing
Chief Lobbyist

“You can’t get blood from a turnip,” the old saying goes. One could interpret this to mean that if the money for a pay raise isn’t in the budget, there’s nothing we can do about it. But what does the state’s \$300 million shortfall actually mean?

Believe it or not, state revenue collections are actually up compared to this time last year. The problem, however, is that last year the legislature spent all the state revenue they had available, and then they scoured state agency accounts known as revolving funds to find an additional \$400 million to appropriate. That \$400 million was the result of many years of accumulation; it doesn’t just replenish each year in time to spend it again – so we call it “one-time funding.”

That leads us to this year, where we have more money to spend, but still not enough to equal last year’s budget when you

include all that one-time funding. Fortunately, in Gov. Fallin’s State of the State Address on February 2, she stated that there is more than enough money still left in various agencies’ revolving funds to make up the \$300 million shortfall. But those revolving funds won’t last forever. They likely won’t last beyond next year.

Eventually, unless we find recurring sources of money to put in place of one-time funding, we’ll get to a point where we just can’t fill that budget hole. Furthermore, we in public education aren’t just asking for the same appropriation that Common Education received last year. We need more, and we need it now. After seven long years, it’s time teachers and support employees receive a statewide raise. Since cutting expenditures further simply isn’t realistic, we have to find more revenue.

This session, our legislature has a myriad of options to increase public education funding, including:

See “Legislature” on Page 11

Knowledge is power!

The OEA works diligently to ensure you have the latest information on what’s happening at the Capitol. Here’s how you can stay informed throughout the session.

- **Legislative Updates** are sent to home email addresses every Friday afternoon, and Alerts are sent as needed. If you aren’t receiving the Updates/Alerts, email your name, school district and home email to Brenda Snider at bsnider@okea.org. She’ll update our membership database so you begin receiving these emails. Updates and Alerts are also posted in the Members Only section of our website.

- **Text alerts** to your smart phone are sent only when immediate contact with your legislators is needed to encourage a vote for or against a bill. If you are not already part of the texting program, email your name, school district and phone number, including area code, to Lisa Cobb, at lcobb@okea.org. In your email, ask Lisa to “Include me in the OEA Texting Program.” According to FCC rules, we must have your written permission to text you.

- **Top 4 @ 4** is a new weekly benefit from the OEA Legislative and Political Organizing Center. Chief Lobbyist Amanda Ewing will conduct a 10-minute webinar every Wednesday to update you on the week’s four most pressing topics. To take part in the briefing, check your email for a link to participate at 4 p.m. every Wednesday. Space is limited to the first 500 to sign in login to each webinar.

- **Facebook and Twitter** – During the session, we post frequent updates from the Capitol and, at times, live tweet during education committee meetings or floor debates. Follow us at facebook.com/Oklahoma.Education.Association and on Twitter, @okea.



Become a Rapid Responder and join an organized statewide network of public education supporters to spread our message far and wide!

As an OEA Rapid Responder, you will

- Write letters to the editor of your local paper.
- Be available for media interviews
- Visit with legislators at the Capitol and at home.
- Share OEA’s message on social media.
- Talk to parents and your community about education issues.

The OEA Communications staff will be there to help you every step of the way! To learn more, contact:

Lauren Burkholder
OEA Communications
lburkholder@okea.org
800.522.8091 or 405.528.7785

A special message from State Supt. Joy Hofmeister

Greetings!

When I was asked to write a letter for this edition of *The Education Focus*, I was thrilled. One of the most important things we can do right now, and one I am working toward every day, is to ensure that the State Department of Education will always be there to help and support teachers.

We are already on the path to achieve some big goals for the sake of our schoolchildren. To achieve these goals, we need your insights and your voices. No one knows more about how to lead students to success than you.

The impact of a teacher is immense, but not easily quantified. What you produce cannot be bottled, boxed or placed in a bin, yet your influence is reflected all around us each day.

It's bewildering, then, that our teachers – handed the awesome responsibility of educating future generations – too often find themselves treated as incidental.

One of the chief reasons I ran for the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction was my frustration with what appeared to be disregard for our profession. I believe the State Department of Education has a simple but critical obligation to our teachers. We need to give educators the support, resources and autonomy to practice their profession.



State Supt. Joy Hofmeister

Oklahoma is fortunate to benefit from the incredible work our teachers do helping to prepare our young people for productive, fulfilling lives. As state schools superintendent, I will be a tireless champion for excellence in education. I will fight to ensure that our profession is treated with respect and compensated fairly.

It is long past time for our state to solve the teacher shortage. Our teachers are demoralized. In Oklahoma we are losing teachers to other states and other industries. We must develop and implement a comprehensive plan to attract and retain top talent in our profession.

That means raising teacher pay and reducing unnecessary mandates. That means ensuring teacher evaluations are fair and accurate. That means reducing the dizzying array of standardized testing that takes time away from rich instruction.

These goals are hardly out of reach, but will require a serious commitment to invest in our state's education. I am so grateful for the hard work and dedication of Oklahoma teachers, and I look forward to working with you now and for years to come!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joy Hofmeister". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Joy Hofmeister
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Documentation = Protection

4 things all teachers should track to cover themselves prior to being evaluated

By Heath Merchen
Associate General Counsel

Regardless of your view on the Oklahoma Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Evaluation System (TLE), there are some gaping cracks in the system ready to pull even the most capable teacher down to the “INEFFECTIVE” depths. To help quality teachers avoid this trap, or at the very least assist them in preparing to correct evaluation inaccuracies, we’ve compiled a list of four things every teacher should track.

1 – Advanced Students

Track the number of students in your class exempted from state testing because they are advanced. While many believe having the most advanced and gifted students in a classroom helps raise the teacher’s TLE score, the opposite is very possible. Specifically, many advanced students are exempt from taking state tests because they are considered proficient, but the TLE does not take those students into account.

Hence, the only students in a teacher’s class whose tests will “count” are the poorest performers. Each year, keep track of how many students in your class are exempt from state testing, and work with your advocate to show that your score should be recalculated to take into account students who would have tested as proficient but were exempt.

2 – Administrator Comments

Document comments from administrators (building and central office) setting arbitrary evaluation ceilings. We have heard numerous stories across the

state from members whose principals shared that the central office directed that no teacher in the building was to receive greater than a (fill in the blank) score on their rating, because the building was failing overall.

Any such mandate is a direct violation of the TLE standards and it is important that any teacher overhearing such a comment documents what was said, who said it, when it was said and the identities of others in the room when the statement was made. If you believe your TLE score was arbitrarily lowered due to this type of mandate, the most important evidence will be documentation of those statements and multiple witnesses who can confirm the account.

3 – “High Needs” Students

Track unbalanced assignment of high needs students or students with behavior problems. Many teachers who are proficient at handling high needs students or discipline problems find themselves assigned a disproportionately high number of those students in comparison to other teachers of the same subject or grade level. It is inevitable that such a practice negatively impacts that teacher’s TLE score because there simply isn’t as much time available to meet the needs of other students in the class.

Track the number of high needs and discipline problem students assigned to your class in comparison to those of other teachers, understanding that no class assignment roster can be perfectly balanced. Even better, work with your building level administrator and fellow teachers to ensure that each class is appropriately balanced.



Heath Merchen

4 – Testing Accommodation Denials

For your students with special needs, document any denial of testing accommodations and/or alternative assessment qualification. The State Department of Education’s approach to testing accommodations and determining who may take the alternative assessment has been extraordinarily restrictive, arbitrary and fails to take into account the individual needs and unique concerns of special education students. If you believe a necessary accommodation has been denied,

document your objection thoroughly. Similarly, if you believe a student should take the alternative assessment, but was forced to take the standard assessment, objectively document your concerns. Failure to accommodate and failure to allow alternative assessments when needed not only hurt the teacher’s TLE score, but do irreparable damage to the student’s progress and morale.

If you are facing any of these issues and are unsure of how to proceed, contact your OEA Regional UniServ Advocacy Specialist for assistance.

“We have heard numerous stories across the state from members whose principals shared that the central office directed that no teacher in the building was to receive greater than a (fill in the blank) score on their rating, because the building was failing overall.”

Filing opens for OEA Board seats, at-large delegates

Filing is open through February 20 for the open Board of Director positions as well as delegate at-large positions to the OEA Delegate Assembly and the NEA Representative Assembly.

Online elections for these positions as well as for OEA Vice President will be held in March. The polling site will be accessible from the home page of OEA's website, okea.org.

The OEA Board of Directors is designed to represent members at the grassroots level. Each zone is made up of at least 1,000 Association members who elect their representative on the board. The newly elected Zone Directors will take office on July 7.

At-large delegates to the Delegate Assembly and NEA RA will serve at this year's meetings. The OEA annual meeting is April 24-25 at the Reed Conference Center in Midwest City and the RA is set for July 1-6 in Orlando.

Filing forms are available at okea.org, OEA Headquarters in Oklahoma City or at the OEA regional office in Tulsa. For more information on elections, contact Maureen Peters at 800/522-8091, 405/528-7785 or mpeters@okea.org.

OEA Zone Director Positions

All nine open OEA Board positions are for three-year terms that expire in 2018. These board members will serve as NEA Delegates in 2016 and 2017.

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

Northeast C, representing Cherokee and Muskogee Counties.

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

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

Tulsa Metro A, representing Tulsa CTA.

Tulsa Metro E, representing Berryhill, Bixby, Broken Arrow, Jenks CTA and Jenks ESP.

OKC Metro A, representing Crooked Oak, Harrah, Mid-America Bible College, Moore, Oklahoma Christian and Oklahoma City Community College.

OKC Metro C, representing Edmond, ESE-OKC, OEA-OKC and University of Central Oklahoma.

OEA Board of Directors/Administrator-at-Large.

Statewide Openings

OEA Delegate Assembly Positions:

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

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

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

(Should the Bylaws requirement in this election category be met by local associations, no OEA Ethnic Minority Delegates at Large will be seated.)

NEA Representative Assembly Positions:

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

Regional Positions Open

Category I Delegate-at-Large

2015 NEA Representative Assembly

Northeast Region (1 opening).

Northwest Region (1 opening).

Oklahoma City Metro Region (1 opening).

(No Category I elections in the Southeast, Southwest or Tulsa Metro Regions.)

Have you elected your local representatives to the Delegate Assembly yet? Credential forms are now available at okea.org/elections.

*2015 Delegate Assembly
April 24-25
Reed Conference Center
Midwest City*



Benefiting You. Benefiting Students.

Make the Most of your Membership.

When it comes to professional evaluations, your association has your back. That's why your association guarantees evaluations are fair and the process is transparent. Plus, as a member, you can even take part in creating evaluation systems.



Cox Charities accepting grant applications

April 1 is the deadline for applications for the Cox Charities' Innovation in Education program, which will award grants of up to \$10,000.

Grants will be awarded to fund classroom, school-wide or larger collaborative educational programs that encourage and promote students' innovation and imagination in public and private schools (grades PreK-12). Educators can apply for individual classroom grants ranging from \$1,000-\$5,000. Grant requests ranging from \$5,000-\$10,000 must promote student learning through a school-wide or collaborative teaching program. These programs may incorporate multiple classrooms or grades, course disciplines or engage other schools.

Cox Charities is funded by the generosity of more than 1,700 Oklahoma Cox employees. Since its inception, nearly \$5

million dollars have been pledged to support nonprofit organizations, students and schools. Through the Innovation in Education program, more than \$675,000 has been invested in 225 schools in the Tulsa and Oklahoma City metro areas.

An online application process has been developed for all grant proposals for 2015. All requests for Innovation in Education grants must be submitted through this online process by April 1, 2015. Applications submitted by e-mail will not be considered.

To submit an Innovation in Education application online, visit www.CoxCharitiesTulsa.com or www.CoxCharitiesOklahomaCity.com. For more information, contact Elizabeth King at 918/286-4546 or Elizabeth.King@cox.com.

Legislature has ability to overcome shortfall

Continued from Page 7

- Modernize our sales tax. Right now, we only tax goods; services are exempt. If we are taxed when we purchase laundry detergent or a lawn mower, we should tax dry cleaning or lawn services, too. We could also tax online purchases like many other states do, helping local businesses that often lose out to online sales for that reason.

- Curb unnecessary tax breaks for corporations when the incentives haven't been proven to create jobs or stimulate our economy.

- Adopt combined corporate reporting. Some corporations avoid paying taxes on money they make in Oklahoma by shipping their profit to sites in other states with lower taxes. This also puts local businesses at a disadvantage, as they pay taxes here on the money they make here. A majority of states have already adopted this type of reporting.

- Avoid further income tax cuts. This is a no-brainer – Oklahomans already pay among the lowest state and local tax rates in the nation.

- Utilize \$134 million from the overflowing Rainy Day Fund, which would require a declaration of an emergency by the governor and a two-thirds vote of the legislature.

Another way one could understand the saying, "You can't get blood from a turnip," is that you can only get from someone what they are willing or able to give. The Legislature is able to provide public education with additional funding this year. Are they willing?

Most of your dues are tax deductible

Members who itemize deductions and meet the two percent requirement for additional miscellaneous deductions are able to deduct most of their membership dues.

Following is a chart of how much can be deducted (all but the 7.6 percent attributed to lobbying) for your OEA/NEA due. Members should also check with their local associations for the amount of non-deductible local dues spent on lobbying.

For additional help, contact your tax professional.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Full-time active certified | \$438.97 |
| Halftime active certified | \$230.99 |
| Full-time active support | \$238.95 |
| Halftime active support | \$131.22 |
| Substitute | \$142.99 |
| Reserve certified | \$207.99 |
| Reserve support | \$107.99 |
| Student member | \$24.24 |
| Retired-Lifetime member | \$250.00 |

get your
FREE APP

1. Download the app from the iTunes App Store or Google Play*.
2. Register using:

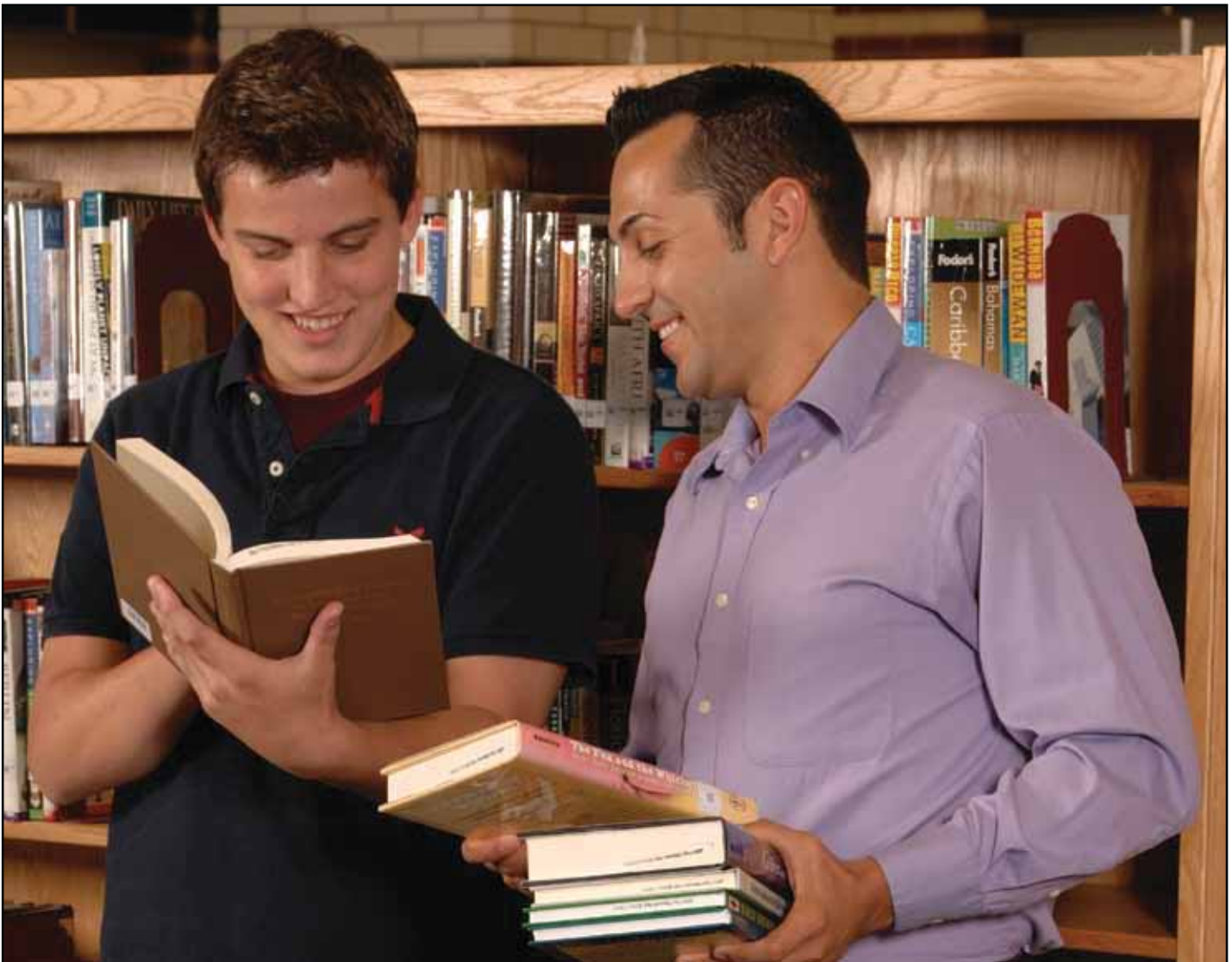
Registration Code
101952- Your OEA membership ID

With the OEA MyDeals app, you get:

- Show-your-phone discounts at 100,000+ places
- GPS searching and mapping
- National chains and local favorites
- Track your savings

*Currently available for the iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch and Android.

OEA
ACCESS



We wrote the book on savings

Having all your insurance with Horace Mann doesn't just add up to convenience; it can add up to savings.
*Ask your Horace Mann agent about savings on **auto insurance** and **home insurance** if you have more than one type of insurance (including annuities) with us.*

To learn more contact your local agent or visit horacemann.com



Auto | Home | Life | Annuity

American Fidelity Assurance Company

*Providing Quality Products
and Services to the*



OKLAHOMA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



Helping to secure OEA Members' Financial Security Since 1960
American Fidelity Assurance Company is committed to the education community. We are proud to offer the following products and services to Oklahoma Education Association members:

- Cancer Insurance^{*,+}
- Life Insurance^{*,**}
- Disability Income Insurance^{*}
- Accident Only Insurance^{*,+}
- Tax-Deferred Annuities^{**}
- Section 125 Plans



**American Fidelity
Assurance Company**

A member of the American Fidelity Group®

Kacey Boothe

Western Oklahoma Manager
Lawton Branch Office
1 SW 11th Street, Suite #195
Lawton, OK 73501
1-800-288-1239 • 580-248-0011

Kacey Boothe

Western Oklahoma Manager
Oklahoma City Branch Office
7510 Broadway Ext. Suite 202
Oklahoma City, OK 73116
1-800-933-1853 • 405-416-8810

Wayne Ryan

Eastern Oklahoma Manager
Tulsa Branch Office
4606 South Garnett Rd. #110
Tulsa, OK 74146
1-800-365-2782 • 918-622-6994

**These products may contain limitations, exclusions and waiting periods.*

***Not eligible under Section 125.*

+This product is inappropriate for people who are eligible for Medicaid coverage.

All products may not be available in all states.



Oklahoma Education Association
putting education first™

Periodical
Post Paid at
Okla. City, OK

When it comes to car buying,
never overpay.

The NEA Auto Buying Program offers Guaranteed Savings* and a no-hassle car buying experience. Members have saved an average of \$3,221 off MSRP.*

Guaranteed Savings: Once you select the car and options you're interested in, you can get your Guaranteed Savings Certificate before even visiting a dealer.

Pre-Owned Vehicles: Take advantage of exclusive benefits, pre-screening, a rigorous safety inspection and additional dealer bonuses. Many vehicles also come with a free CARFAX report.

Exceptional Service: Our network of Program Certified Dealers is dedicated to providing NEA Members with a friendly, no hassle car buying experience.



Get a great deal on your next car today!

www.neamb.com/buyacar

nea Member Benefits
a partnership with **TRUECar.**

NEA, NEA Member Benefits and the NEA Member Benefits logo are registered service marks of NEA's Member Benefits Corporation. Guaranteed savings not available in all states. See site for details. *Between 8/1/14 and 8/31/14, the average estimated savings off MSRP provided by TrueCar Certified Dealers to users of TrueCar powered websites was \$3,221, including applicable vehicle specific manufacturer exceptions. See site for details.

40340215