

**The
Education**

FOCUS

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association • August/September 2015

*Inspiration
for a great year*

OEA members share...

**Why OEA membership
is vital**

**5 things I wish I had
known on my first day**

Get creative to re-energize

Putting education first

4-5 Deep thoughts

OEA's President Alicia Priest and Vice President Katherine Bishop sit down for a question-and-answer session on public education and their plans for 2015-16.

6-7 You can't afford NOT to join

Members from around the state share why they joined the association and why you should, too.

8 Are we having fun yet?

Teaching and Learning Specialist Kim Littrell shares tips on how to manage your stress.

9 5 things I wish I'd known

Four young teachers talk about things they wish someone had told them before stepping into a classroom for the first time.

Also....

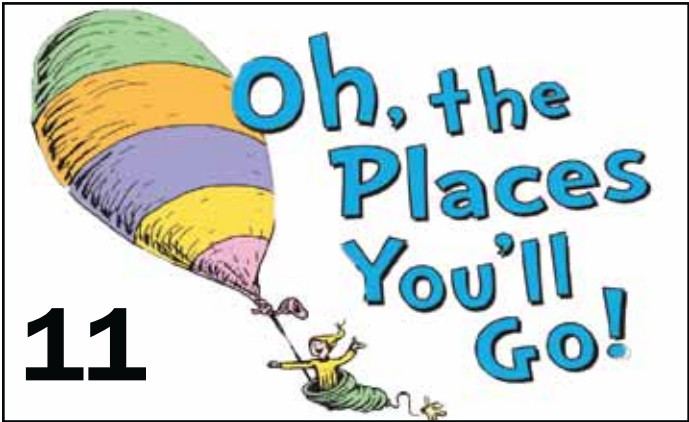
Pg 2 – A legal checklist for all teachers

Pg 3 – Get Connected

Pg 10 – Get creative, stay fresh

Page 11 – New RAA poster contest announced

Page 12 – Help is just a phone call away



Finding inspiration

By Alicia Priest
President

What inspires you? I was recently asked this question and the answer came quickly – it's that spark in a child's eye when they get it, when my own child comes home and plays math games for hours, just for fun. When I go into schools and see dedicated teachers and support professionals making sure that our students have the best public education possible. You, the members of the OEA, YOU inspire me! What you do in the lives of students is inspirational.

Jane Goodall said, "What you do makes a difference and YOU have to decide what kind of a difference you'll make."

I have been thinking (or obsessing, if you ask my husband and daughter) about the difference that I want to make for our members. In doing so, I've researched what a difference OEA members have made during our 125 years: a guaranteed pension through the Teacher Retirement System, state-paid health insurance, the minimum salary schedule, quality professional development, mentorships for early career teachers, advocacy, challenges and wins on behalf of our members, and the list goes on.

The purpose of the OEA hasn't changed over her years of existence. Likewise, my goals haven't changed from the time I started teaching 22 years ago. I want to inspire others – whether it be students in the classroom embracing a new language or culture or our members rising to the challenges of doing more with less, jumping through the hoops of new standards, new evaluation requirements or whatever might come of the rewrite and reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. I want to inspire members to rise to whatever professional challenge their work presents.

You are growing tomorrow's artists, entrepreneurs and leaders. In addition, you volunteer your time in your church, your community, calling and writing your legislators, working on committees and attending or presenting professional development. Your dedication to your profession and to the 680,000-plus students in Oklahoma's public schools inspires me.

My goal as your president is to build on the foundation that my predecessors laid. Together, we will grow to keep the OEA the most trusted and respected professional education organization in the state. We have some challenges but, together, we will accomplish great things. We MUST meet these challenges for the future – the children of Oklahoma depend on us. We are the gatekeepers of strong public schools.

As you begin another school year, have you decided what kind of difference you'll make this year? Where will you find inspiration? Tell Vice President Katherine Bishop and me what inspires you during our Tweet and Greet, at 5:30 p.m., August 27. Be sure to use the hashtag #OKEAinspire.

Alicia



"I want to inspire others – whether it be students in the classroom embracing a new language or culture, or our members rising to the challenges of doing more with less, jumping through the hoops of new standards, new evaluation requirements or whatever might come of the rewrite and reauthorization of No Child Left Behind."

The Education **Focus**

Volume 32, No. 7

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

Alicia Priest, President
Katherine Bishop, Vice President
David DuVall, Executive Director
Amanda Ewing, Associate Executive Director
Doug Folks, Editor
Bill Guy, Communications
Lauren Burkholder, Social Media Organizing
Lisa Cobb, 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.

A legal checklist for all teachers

By Heath Merchen
Associate General Counsel

In beginning the new school year, there are a number of basic issues every teacher should address that can save a world of headache down the road. Rather than seeking our assistance to make up for what you've forgotten at year's end, it's much easier to take a few moments to address the following basics when the year begins:

1. Make sure you have a copy of your contract and that you've read it. Many teachers don't realize they are on a temporary contract until they are at the end of the year; others don't realize that the pay they were offered is different than what is specified in their contract. Check now.

2. Check your certification. If your certification lapses, you are immediately out of a job and without a paycheck. Make sure your certification is up to date and that you have complied with all certification requirements.

3. Be sure you have all degrees and college credits on file with your school district and that all are reflected on your contract and pay schedule. Do the math to ensure your first pay-

check adds up to what you believe you should be receiving based on your education and experience.

4. Delete any and all students from your Facebook account (hopefully you don't have any as friends), go through any personal electronic device that you may take to school (including phones, laptops, iPads) and delete any personal or confidential information that you would not want disclosed to the district or a third party. If you have the electronic device at the school site, there is a good chance the district can access what is on it.

5. Read your district's employee handbook and the student handbook as well. Familiarize yourself with the basics of what is required of you and what you can require from students.

If in reviewing the above issues you come across problems that you don't know how to resolve, contact your OEA Advocacy UniServ Specialist. OEA advocates have experience in remedying problems in all of the above areas – but the sooner you let them know about the issue, the better.



Heath Merchen

Oklahoma delegation makes an impact on Orlando RA



Oklahoma was a visible, active part of the NEA's Representative Assembly in Orlando in early July. From introducing new business items to participating in various debates, the 62-member OEA delegation made an impact on the 94th RA.

Edmond's Chelsea Foo, seen above on the giant screen introducing and speaking to New Business Item #25, which stated, "NEA, using existing means of communication, will call on state affiliates to lobby their state legislatures to oppose high stakes tests' arbitrary cut scores." Unanimously supported by the Oklahoma delegation, the NBI was passed by the full assembly.



Photos by Amanda Ewing.

It was the final RA for outgoing OEA President Linda Hampton and the last RA as a member of the NEA Executive Committee for Greg Johnson, who next year will be back in the classroom as a choir teacher at Enid High School.

Above, Enid's Megan Stewart (left) and Ponca City's Amy Scott, Northeast Zone B director, are dressed and ready for the 4th of July at the RA.

Visit ra.nea.org/ to read more about the RA, including NBI's #10 and #24, which were introduced by Moore's Elise Robillard and passed by the assembly.



get
connected



Lauren S. Burkholder
Social Media Specialist
lburkholder@okea.org

OEA Back to School

FOR TIPS, TOOLS AND DISCOUNTS FOR THE UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR, VISIT WWW.NEA.ORG/TOOLS/BACK-TO-SCHOOL-GUIDE OR WWW.NEAMB.COM. BOTH SITES HAVE GREAT INFO ON:

- CLASSROOM SET UP
- PREPPING FOR THE FIRST WEEK
- CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
- WORKING WITH PARENTS

AS WELL AS:

- UPDATING YOUR BACK TO SCHOOL WARDROBE
- DEALS JUST FOR TEACHERS AT YOUR FAVORITE STORES
- STRATEGIES TO STAY HEALTHY AND EAT WELL WHEN YOU'RE ON A TIGHT SCHEDULE AND BUDGET
- ENTER TO WIN A \$1,000 VISA GIFT CARD FOR A SHOPPING SPREE OR AN IPAD MINI 3!

#TWEETANDGREET

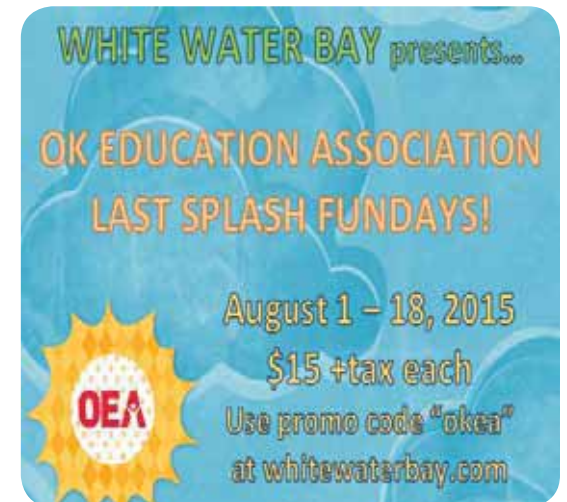
Join your new President Alicia Priest and Vice President Katherine Bishop on Twitter!

When: Thursday, August 27 @ 5:30 p.m.

Where: Phone, tablet, laptop, desktop, etc.

Why: Get to know your elected leaders

How: Follow @OKEA, @APriestOEA and @KBishopOEA, submit questions using their handles and the hashtag #OKEAinspire



Summer is almost over, but there are still great discounts to take advantage of before school is back in session.

Visit the Members Only section of OKEA.org to find money saving deals on good and services throughout the year, including discounts at more than 75,000 businesses through Access.



Download the free OEA App! You will find convenient links to member benefits, an event calendar and even a create-your-own member ID card! Available for iPhone and Android.



FOLLOW OEA on Facebook and Twitter for daily news, professional tips, classroom ideas and more. Connect with other members, share ideas and ask questions to get the most out of your membership.



Oklahoma.Education.Association



@OKEA

A passion for public education

Priest confident as she steps into office

Interview by Doug Folks

Everyone keeps telling Alicia Priest that things will be different for her as president. But so far, moving offices seems to be the biggest change for the former OEA vice president.

She attributes the easy transition to former president Linda Hampton, who created a good foundation of leadership in Alicia by giving her responsibilities that took advantage of her strengths.

Alicia takes over as OEA's 97th president after serving the last four years as vice president. She brings not only experience to the office, but a passion for public education and the hard-working professionals who do "the most important work in the world."

Just a few days after taking office, Alicia sat down with *The Education Focus* to discuss the state of Oklahoma public education and the OEA.

Education Focus: What are the top issues facing public education right now?

Alicia Priest: "Funding is a pressing issue. We can't continue to have flat budgets, which we know is an actual cut because we keep enrolling more students. We can't keep expecting our teachers to do more with less and stand in the gap."

"Over-testing and inappropriate use of testing is a key issue. When we talk with our members, testing is always one of their biggest concerns."

"And then treating education employees as professionals is important. Morale is a critical issue that we need to work on. Every day we wake up and get to make a decision about what our attitude is going to be. As educators, we let others dictate what goes on in schools and we've got to take that back."

EF: What are some things OEA can do to help address our issues of lack of funding, over-testing and low teacher morale?

AP: "First, we have to understand that the OEA is not Alicia Priest or Katherine Bishop or a building near 23rd and Lincoln in Oklahoma City. OEA is only as strong



OEA President Alicia Priest reads with Yukon students (clockwise from lower left) Evann Boyd, Chloe Cromwell, Alicia's daughter Kenna Priest, Audrey Boyd and Hayden Cromwell.

as our membership is willing to put forth their voices, time and effort in making the association strong. That makes our state stronger, because we're about the kids. We need members who are actively engaged.

"As for improving morale, I'll be their strong voice out in the public. I'm a passionate person, so when push comes to shove, I'm going to be standing up in someone's face, if necessary, to let them know how our teachers deserve better, how our students deserve better."

EF: You were appointed to the state's TLE Commission as vice president and you're going to stay on as OEA's representative. What is the status of the Commission and its work right now?

AP: "State Superintendent Joy Hofmeister's philosophy is totally different from her predecessor. She really wants to do things right. With the passage of the reauthorization of ESEA, now called the Every Child Achieves Act, the waivers may go away and that would free us up, but we still have that same type of legislation in our state law. Everything that the TLE Commission has done is in flux right now because of the major philosophical difference (between Hofmeister and the previous administration). In my opinion that's good. Joy wants to get it right. She wants to build this bridge with

our educators and make sure our evaluation system is useful and not a label and punish type of thing. I have a lot of hope for our TLE."

EF: During your time on the TLE Commission, you've been the lone, vocal critic of VAM (value added measures). Are you starting to see more people coming around to your side of the argument?

AP: "Yes. When I used to talk at Commission meetings about how value added measures were inappropriate – besides getting yelled at by Supt. Barresi – there were others who would dismiss the idea. But in sharing credible research – research that's not created and paid for by the companies that are going to benefit from implementing value added, people are changing their minds. The more scholarly research that shows VAM is totally inappropriate, which it is, the more people have backed off and want to revisit the idea of VAM, including some of the major players at the state legislature."

EF: When you talk to other NEA state affiliate leaders from around the country, how does Oklahoma compare?

AP: "We have a lot of the same issues. Funding, testing and morale are issues in every state. But I'd put our teachers up against any in the nation, any day and we would come out on top."

Well prepared

Bishop comes into office with a solid foundation of leadership skills

Interview by Doug Folks

While Katherine Bishop has attended several National Education Association Representative Assemblies, her view of this year's national meeting in Orlando was an entirely new experience.

When the gavel fell to adjourn the RA on July 7, Katherine became vice president of the Oklahoma Education Association. She had been elected in March, but as she stepped into the role officially, the reality hit hard.

"It's scary knowing you represent so many teachers, support professionals and children and causes we believe in," said Katherine, who is married to former OEA President Roy Bishop. "I've seen the load our officers take on. It is an enormous amount of responsibility."

Katherine is not new to association leadership, having served on all levels. For example, she co-chaired the Exceptional Needs Standards Committee for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, chaired OEA's Instructional and Professional Development Committee and was spokesperson for the Putnam City ACT bargaining team.

Throw in 22 years as a special education teacher and another year as a curriculum coach, all in Putnam City Schools, and she's well prepared for OEA's No. 2 office.

Education Focus: The step you've taken from teacher to vice president of Oklahoma's largest education association is bigger than any other career step for a teacher. What experiences have prepared you for the office?

Katherine Bishop: "I think that being in the classroom and seeing what everybody goes through day in and day out, and understanding the issues that they deal with, has helped me prepare. You don't do this in a silo, you have to be able to work collaboratively with others. I learned those skills not only working with students but with others in my building. The leadership skills I learned from

working with my cadre members and on committees gave me a foundation of how to move forward."

EF: Do you have a goal for yourself in your first year as vice president?

KB: "I want to be around the state, engaging with our members, because I want to tell their stories. I want teachers and support professionals to know that we are taking their stories and advocating for them. I think the naysayers think we don't know what's happening in education ... that we just take the NEA agenda and move it forward. We need to make sure legislators know what's going on in our classrooms, and I can be one of those people who shares our members' stories."

EF: What are the top issues for public education right now?

KB: "Lack of funding, excessive high-stakes testing – both nationally and statewide – and lack of respect for our profession. We can't continue to let people advance the (false) narrative that we have failing schools and failing teachers."

EF: What is the top issue for the OEA?

KB: "We have to do a better job of engaging with our members and future members. We need to reach out to all of our teachers and support professionals

across the state, sit down and find out what their issues are and listen to them. When we have those conversations we build trust, just like we do with our students. Those conversations will allow us to go across the street to the capitol and say, 'This is what is really happening in our schools.' We need to make sure we are visible to Oklahoma's teachers."

EF: What will you miss the most about teaching?

KB: "The kids. Leaving the students was one of the hardest decisions I had to make when I decided to run for vice president. They are one of the reasons I decided to go for my National Board Certification. After a couple of years in the profession, you start thinking about going for your master's. But (the degree path) I looked at meant I would have to leave the classroom, whether it was as a counselor or an administrator. I love being in the classroom. Even when I transitioned last year to be an instructional coach, I made sure I was in those classrooms, around those kids, because that's what gives me energy."

EF: What advice can you give to new teachers?

KB: "Pull your energy from your kids. Let them give you energy. Find the good in them. And when the day is done, it's done. If you didn't let it all go at the end of the day, you'd go home feeling very defeated. If you have a good day, you say to yourself, 'That worked really well. How'd I do that? How can I make it better tomorrow?' And if it was a bad day, you think, 'Well, that didn't work. Let's do better tomorrow.'"



Katherine Bishop (second from right) puts her feet up with Putnam City West High School students (l-r) Ally Martin, Payton Bradley and Jordan White.



“While I am working at my job, there are entities trying to undermine my profession, making things more difficult for me and my students. OEA is a well-oiled machine that protects my profession while I’m busy doing my job as a teacher.”

Bonnie Riley
Tulsa CTA



“Over the last six years, we’ve seen 21 allegations of teacher misconduct, with only one proven. Those with OEA protection are glad they had it! OEA advocates for us at the state level and in our districts, positively impacting our pay, working conditions and job protections.”

Mike Walcutt
Muskogee EA President



“School employees sometimes don’t realize that with more numbers, there’s more leverage. Without such unity, administrators and school boards can come in and change everything on a whim. OEA provides the means to unite collectively for positive results.”

Paula Freel
Duncan ESP President

You can’t afford NOT to join!

“People sometimes tell me they can’t afford to join OEA,” said Freddie Shiplett, McLoud Education Support Professionals (ESP) President, “but I respond that they can’t afford to NOT join!” Shiplett is a prime example of how OEA membership can more than pay for itself, saving \$600 by switching to a policy discount available only to members.

“My association is also important because membership gives me a sense of security, knowing that OEA has my back on any job-related issues. And it isn’t just employment issues. OEA’s Personal Legal Services Program benefits include free legal work for personal needs such as creating a simple will, a living will or simple power of attorney. OEA is the only professional educators’ association with such a program.”

Shiplett’s comments are echoed by those of Muskogee EA President, Mike Walcutt. “I’ve seen many educators have job-related issues with administrators, parents and students. In fact, in the last six years alone, 21 allegations of teacher misconduct have occurred in our district, but only one was proven. OEA members among them are glad they had the kind of legal representation available only to association members.”

Other OEA members, including Ardmore’s Patti Green, Muldrow’s Mandy Ramey and Ponca City’s Anna Scott, find great value in the advocacy and political action made possible by the strength of the state’s largest and most historic professional association.

“We can’t be apathetic in the face of relentless attacks on public education from legislators, special interest groups and profit-driven corporations. Unless we come together to increase membership and unity among educators, it’s only going to get worse,” said Green.

Ramey, who represents educators in her area on the OEA’s Board of Directors, agrees. “It is vital for educators not only to know what is going on politically, but to also have avenues to advo-

“Knowing that OEA has my back on anything related to my job is a great sense of security. Free legal services for personal issues is also a big plus. I saved \$600 a year with an OEA-endorsed insurance policy. You can’t afford to NOT be a member!”

Freddie Shiplett
McLoud ESP President



Story and photos by Bill Guy



cate for our profession. OEA is the best hope for us to help preserve public education.”

Scott, who serves as Ponca City ACT’s president, is proud to be part of an association that represents a body of professionals working for the same goals of protecting public education and providing opportunities for personal professional growth. “I can confidently teach and my students can thrive by knowing that OEA members combine to stand on the front lines, watching all aspects of education and providing protection for our profession.”

If you are content to have little or no input into your compensation, benefits and working conditions; if you prefer to passively let the legislature and Big Business dictate what, how and when you work and are evaluated for that work; if you are unconcerned by your professional liability and legal standing in relation to your students or school administrators; and if you are making enough that you don’t have to bother about saving money through discounted services and products; then you may not need to join OEA. Otherwise, you can’t afford NOT to join!



“My OEA membership gives me great peace of mind. I know that if I need help with evaluations or some legal aspect, personal help is only a phone call away. Saving through OEA discounts is also nice.”

Mary Lassiter
Pioneer-Pleasant Vale EA

“We can’t be apathetic in the face of relentless attacks on public education. Unless we come together, it’s going to get worse. Some battles are local. I wouldn’t think of teaching without the protection of membership.”

Patti Green
Ardmore EA



“Collective bargaining is essential to staying in this job; without it, I hate to think where we’d be. There is definitely strength in numbers. The more members there are the more powerful we become in terms of positively affecting our profession.”

Misty Mossa
Tulsa CTA



“OEA represents a body of professionals working for the same goals. Everyone should be a member of their professional organization. OEA membership empowers me to become a strong professional in my field and definitely helps me hone my skills.”

Anna Scott
Ponca City ACT President



“I don’t know how anyone could look at the detrimental education legislation and policies enacted in Oklahoma and not realize that it is vital for educators not only to know what is going on politically, but also have avenues to advocate for our profession. OEA is the best hope for us to preserve public education.”

Mandy Ramey
Muldrow CTA



Are we having fun yet?

How to manage your stress and not let it manage you

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

Most of us already know how to reduce stress: Exercise. Eat right. Take frequent breaks. Sleep. Accept what you can and let go of what you can't control. Pray. Meditate.

If these strategies were easy to implement, we'd all be more relaxed, much healthier and far less stressed. But the truth is, when you care deeply about teaching and kids, everything that gets in the way of doing your job well becomes an additional stressor and a source of anxiety (and gets piled on top of long hours and innumerable responsibilities). Because educators are increasingly frustrated with the constant intrusions of testing, evaluation and other reform demands, chronic stress is becoming the new normal. Superficial coping strategies may work in the short term, but to stay in this profession, sometimes we need a philosophical shift in our thinking and proactive strategies that change the structure of our work.

Renowned brain researcher Eric Jensen defines chronic stress as "high stress sustained over time" (*Teaching with Poverty in Mind*, 2009, p. 23), and he chronicles the cumulative effects of chronic stress on school behavior and performance as:

- Causes more than 50 percent of absences
- Impairs attention, concentration, cognition, creativity and memory
- Lessens judgment and social skills
- Reduces motivation, determination and effort
- Increases rates of depression

Sound familiar? The impacts of chronic stress on children are also experienced by educators, and the classroom and curricular shifts recommended for at-risk kids can help you reclaim your classroom (and your feelings about teaching).

Here are few things you can do to make

sure you manage the stress before it manages you (with thanks again to Mr. Jensen):

Go slow to go fast: Spend the first few weeks getting to know your students and practicing routines. Play socialization games and utilize team building exercises so that you can intensely observe your students' behavior and reactions. Avoid deep



content until you feel you've made progress creating a classroom community.

Reduce institutional (and prison-like) structures: Replace bells with songs, utilize natural light rather than fluorescent, make soft seating available, decorate with live plants and art, play quiet and relaxing music.

Use cooperative structures rather than top-down, authoritarian approaches (give kids input on classroom expectations and choices of rewards or punishment whenever possible).

Blow off steam by making celebrations, role-plays and physical activities a common aspect of your curriculum.

Experiment with the kinesthetic arts (drama, charades, etc.), creative projects and hands-on activities; incorporate movement and high-energy breaks throughout the day.

Learn and introduce conflict resolution skills for handling stressful situa-

tions (such as step-by-step methods where you begin by taking a deep breath and counting to 10).

Introduce the concept of "restitution." If students disrupt class, they must do something to make it right.

Teach social skills for better social interactions (when and how to listen, how to greet and shake hands, how to sincerely say "thank you" to someone) and practice them with students and colleagues.

Learn and utilize stress reduction techniques such as yoga, dancing, singing and/or guided meditation in your classroom.

Learn about and create project-based or inquiry curriculum that encourages kids to take charge of their own learning.

Focus on the learning and demonstration of student skills, not tests!

Ask compelling questions (open-ended and not rhetorical) and use call-backs, hand signals and unfinished sentences to gauge understanding and maintain energy.

LAUGH! Use short videos, silly jokes and impromptu classroom moments to have FUN with your students.

Cultivate hope. At the end of every day, reflect on successes and challenges, but write this on a post-it note and stick it on your door or computer: "Tomorrow is a BRAND NEW DAY!"

Cultivate relationships with positive colleagues and distance yourself from negativity.

Become engaged in protecting your profession. Speak up for kids and for yourself by channeling your frustration into action via association participation.

Teaching is a tough and often thankless job, but it has its moments of joy and satisfaction, too. We hope you experience MANY of those this year, and we thank you for your membership!

For information on OEA's new TLC Cadre: Brain-friendly Teaching, Learning and Curriculum professional development offerings, please contact the Teaching and Learning Center at 800.522.8091.

Great advice

Members share 5 things they wish they had known as a first-year teacher

Rachel King-Brown, English III, Transitional English Yukon High School

1. Introduce yourself to as many people in your building as you can. The more people you know, the more help, support and encouragement you will receive. As a first year teacher, it is very easy to become isolated, especially if you don't know anyone other than your classroom neighbors. Get out and build relationships!

2. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. I tried to make every handout myself, and I tried to make everything I did completely original. I could have just as easily used things from my colleagues or a number of online resources and saved myself A LOT of time. You can have original ideas using existing documents and resources.

3. Find a balance between your school life and personal life. During my first year teaching, there were times when I arrived at school when it was dark outside, and I did not leave until it was dark again. Don't do that! Find a stopping point, and do what has to be done right now. If you have to, take it one day at a time. If you work too much, you will feel "burned out" much faster.

4. Stay away from negative people. Just like any other profession, you will come across some people who are excessively negative about their job. Stay away from these people. Sometimes we all need to vent, but being around people who complain all the time can be toxic.

5. Stay informed on educational issues. Plenty of people and politicians are on a mission to destroy public education. Stay informed of people and legislation that can directly impact your job. Pay attention to your legislators' voting records, and make sure to tell them of your approval or dissatisfaction. Your association is the biggest resource you can use to stay informed.

Alicia Blair, Special Ed Carl Albert Middle School, Mid-Del

1. Don't go out and spend a ton of money on classroom stuff. Ask retiring teachers or your association to help you collect things.
2. Don't hang around negative coworkers. It will affect you more than you realize.
3. There will be a new program to learn every year, sometimes more. Do not to panic over learning each one right away.
4. Start every parent communication with the things you love about that child.
5. You will not get it all right your first year and that is OK!

Lauren Truett Key, 5th Grade Jones Elementary, Tulsa



1. No matter how long you plan your lessons, they rarely go as planned.
2. You are not your students' friend.
3. If you teach upper elementary grades – make sure you know your stuff! (*Especially math!*)
4. Don't be afraid to stand up for yourself to those veteran teachers who look down on you because you do things differently.
5. Not everything has to be perfect.

John Glasco, Biology II, Earth Science Hartshorne High School

1. Today's students connect easily with technology; the more technology you incorporate the easier it will be to engage them.

2. The Internet is a teacher's best friend. If you have a problem, chances are good someone else already has a solution.

3. Your teaching style is an evolution. Some things will work, some things won't. This takes time to develop, so hang in there. It's normal to not have all the answers on day one, but it gets easier as you go.

4. Get to know each of your students, even just one thing about them. Many students are unreachable until they find out how much you care.

5. Most people have no idea how much work outside the classroom goes into teaching. Make a deal with yourself to take the weekends off to spend with family. That stack of papers can wait until Monday.



Get creative to re-energize

By Doug Folks

Every aspect of Debra Deskin's classroom is built to enhance the learning experience. From the tables her students sit at in small groups, to the bulletin boards, the club-footed bathtub in the reading area and even the area around her desk, they're all designed around project-based learning.

And she changes it all frequently.

"Most of my classrooms have had a bulletin board that I switch out every week or two," said Debra, who will teach 2nd grade at Orvis Risner Elementary in Edmond this year. "Things that were done the first week of school, I don't want to see still up at spring break. I want to see things that are showing what my students are learning; the growth, the progress."

Debra is continually looking for new ideas. Thanks to the Internet, she admits it's easier now than when she first started teaching 12 years ago. She finds lots of ideas on Pinterest and TeachersPayTeachers.com and comes up with her own ideas, as well. She has even sold almost a dozen lessons to Mailbox magazine.

All the change can get expensive, but Debra has found some shortcuts. She buys fabric in basic colors instead of using colored butcher paper for her bulletin boards. The cloth sheets last several years and can be packed away until she's ready for a particular color.

While Debra buys quite a bit of her supplies, she's not shy about asking local companies to donate materials for her projects. For instance, she found the Cotton Co-op in Bricktown near downtown Oklahoma City was happy to donate raw cotton for an Ag in the Classroom lessons.

She also writes grants to help pay for supplies. Her most recent grant from the Oklahoma Educators Credit Union paid for lab coats for her students to wear during science activities. In addition, she found someone to embroider titles like "Mad Scientist" onto the coats.

Debra believes that frequently changing the look of her classroom keeps her students engaged and continually renews her own energy.

"I move my classroom around to fit what's going on with the curriculum," she said. "If I'm not having fun with it, I don't feel like I'm being effective."



Photos provided.



"If I'm not having fun with it, I don't feel like I'm being effective," says Edmond's Debra Deskin, blowing bubbles with Sarah Bolner (at top). Debra changes a bulletin board of student work every week or two, moves her students to different tables throughout the year and changes the look of her classroom to keep herself and her students engaged and refreshed to learn.



Read Across America 2016 Poster Contest

While the date of celebration will remain the same,

There are a few new rules to play the game.

A theme will be presented to the masses,

Submissions will be collected from all Oklahoma classes!

Prizes will be given to a few,

So show us all the creativity there is in you!

What YOU Need TO KNOW:

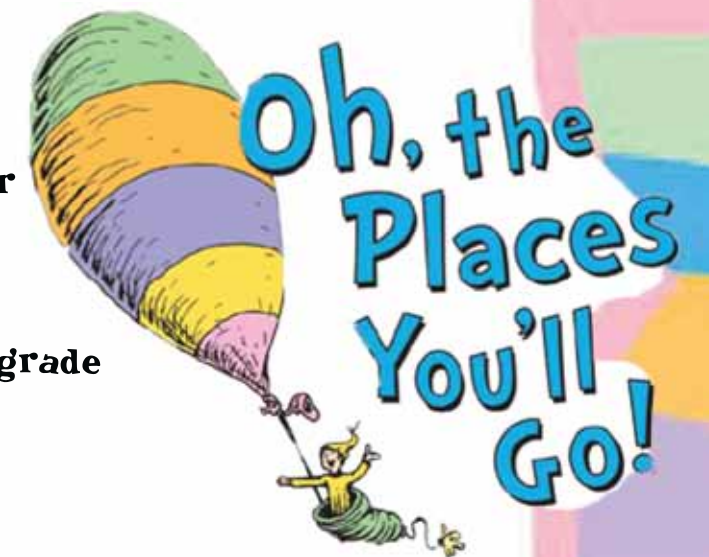
Theme: Oh, the Places You'll Go!
Draw a picture (8.5" x 11") of your favorite place to visit or where you would like to travel!

Age Groups: Kindergarten - 2nd grade

3rd - 5th grade

6th - 8th grade

9th - 12th grade



Winners: Each age group will have 1st, 2nd & 3rd place winners.

A "Best of Show" will be chosen to appear on OEA's 2016 Read Across America poster.

Deadline: 5 p.m., October 30
Winners Announced: November 20

Send submissions to: OEA Headquarters
323 E. Madison
OKC, OK 73105

TM & © 1997 Dr. Seuss Enterprises, L.P.
The Cat in the Hat image™ & © 1957 Dr. Seuss Enterprises, L.P. All Rights Reserved

Visit okea.org/member-resources/read-across-america for more information

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)

Elected Officers

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785
Alicia Priest, President
Katherine Bishop, Vice President
Maureen Peters, Administrative Assistant

Management Team

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785
David DuVall, 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 Regional Office

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

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
Lauren Burkholder, Communications Specialist
Doug Folks, Communications Specialist
Bill Guy, Communications Specialist

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, Communications and Legislative &
Political Organizing
Kim Holley, Southeast Team
Lilia Ocampo, Organizing Center, Northwest Team,
Student OEA and Receptionist
Mary Robison, Southwest Team and Receptionist
Tina Townsend, Tulsa Metro and Northeast Teams
800/331-5143, 918/665-2282

Technology

800/522-8091, 405/528-7785
John Stapleton, Network Administrator
Debbie Moore, Computer Tech Assistant

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™

Periodicals

We'll help open the door on your way back to school.

Whether it's classroom tips from fellow educators, advice on how to stay healthy and fit, or achieving a balanced school and family life, NEA Member Benefits is here to help you succeed. And with exclusive member-only discounts, you can stretch your back-to-school budget into year-round savings.



Get ready for a great school year at neamb.com/backtoschool

nea Member Benefits



FINANCE



INSURANCE



DISCOUNTS



TRAVEL



PROFESSIONAL

NEA, NEA Member Benefits and the NEA Member Benefits logo are registered service marks of NEA's Member Benefits Corporation.

CO390815