

*The
Education*

Focus

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association • April/May 2016

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be heard**

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The Education Focus

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OEA
Oklahoma Education Association
putting education first.

We're on a treasure hunt to improve public education

By Alicia Priest
OEA President

One of Rob Miller's recent blogs included a letter written by a kindergarten teacher who had taken his students on a treasure hunt. He reflected on the many "treasures" that happened along the way to where "X" marked the spot. In the end, Mr. Tom Huff's message was, "The treasure is not what you have in your hands in the end. The treasure is along the way... Treasure hunting with a bunch of kids is kind of asking for a headache, but so is getting out of bed every morning."

Friends, we are in the midst of a treasure hunt, the treasure is buried deep, and there will be headaches along the way. It will take all of us working together this summer to unearth it! What an adventure we will have and what rewards will be discovered! And the headaches, well, they make medicine for that.

As you probably figured out, I'm talking about elections. Now, before you stop reading because you're "not political," I'd

ask that you humor me and read on because everything about public education is political. The reforms, the elected school board, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the standards, your salary and benefits, the textbooks that are approved for your use – ALL politically driven decisions. Gone are the days when we can shut our classroom, bus or cafeteria doors and simply do our jobs. We must get involved in order to make a difference for our students and our livelihood.

There are 61 new pro-public education candidates who have filed to run for office plus some incumbents who have consistently voted in support of our local schools (contact our Legislative and Political Organizing Center to see how your legislator fared on our issues). We must dig in this summer and work to get them through the primary process making their names known beyond our circles. They need us to walk with them, get literature together, make calls or volunteer in whatever capacity that we can!

You can also donate to OEA's Fund



President Alicia Priest

for Children and Public Education (none of our dues dollars goes to support political candidates). While these activities may put us off the map in terms of comfort, personal growth and satisfaction in getting a truly public education friendly legislature is part of the treasure!

As Captain Jack Sparrow said, "Not all treasure is silver and gold, mate." We may not win every election, but the treasure of building power, developing relationships and friendships, growing, reflecting and making a difference makes the hunt all the more pleasurable. Let's roll up our sleeves and start our adventure on the hunt for treasure!

TCTA, UAW partnership benefits teachers

Unless it's some Internet scam, it's extremely rare that someone calls out of the blue and says they have \$6,000 they want to give you.

But that was case when Tulsa CTA president Patti Ferguson-Palmer picked up the phone earlier this year. The United Aerospace Workers (UAW) Local 952 had raised \$6,200 at a golf tournament. They wanted the proceeds to go to Tulsa classrooms, but were having trouble finding the right avenue.

After a little conversation, a partnership was formed between the two union locals that has already benefited more than a dozen Tulsa classrooms. Even more teachers will benefit soon and into the future.

TCTA helped Local 952 identify TCTA members with projects in need of funding through DonorsChoose.org. UAW President David Brewer said they concentrated on fully funding projects, donating between \$150 to more than \$1,000 to fund 14 different requests.

Members of Local 952 work for Spirit AeroSystems in Tulsa, building airplane wing components under a contract for Boeing. Their company matches charitable donations, so Local 952 and TCTA have another \$6,200 to give out. Even better, the two groups



Tulsa CTA members Melissa Bryan (left) and Stephanie Jones (right) were on hand at a recent TCTA Delegates meeting to personally thank UAW Local 952 President David Brewer (second from left) and Acting Vice President Scott Callis for funding their projects listed on DonorsChoose.org

Delegates tackle 54 NBIs

By Doug Folks

For two full days in late April, the Downtown Oklahoma City Sheraton hotel was host to the busiest Delegate Assembly in recent memory. In addition to the traditional speeches, an open hearing on a proposed budget and consideration of legislative goals, delegates considered 54 new business items (NBIs), revised resolutions and a proposed amendment to the OEA Constitution.

University of Oklahoma President David Boren energized the crowd with an impassioned presentation on the need to pass State Question 779, the penny sale tax initiative that guarantees at least a \$5,000 teacher pay raise. In addition, delegates heard from award winners Dr. Rick Cobb, OEA Friend of Education; Rep. Scott Inman, Outstanding Legislator; Tahlequah's Jason Proctor, NFIE Award for Excellence nominee; and Tulsa's John Waldron, winner of the Claude A. Dyer Memorial Award.

The biggest job for the delegates was considering, debating and voting on 54 NBIs. Several NBIs were "bundled," or grouped together, and referred to OEA committees for consideration, but most of the action items received discussion and a vote.

"This is what democracy looks like. It's messy, it takes time, but it makes us a better association for going through it," said President Alicia Priest just before she adjourned the meeting.

Following are descriptions of a few

NBIs passed by the assembly. You can find descriptions and the results of all NBIs in the Members Only section of the website, okea.org.

NBI #1 – I move that the OEA organize and empower its members by building their knowledge base around the key issues of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Possible organizing activities could include: member surveys, Town Hall forums, paraeducators' voice for equitable and adequate resources, materials to support educator-parent conversations, identification of leaders for local implementation teams and sample language for bargaining and non-bargaining locals.

NBI #2 (With NBI #11) – I move that OEA, through existing publications, share current information and research about hearing health with members to raise awareness about noise decibels in the classroom and ways to make classrooms and schools more hearing friendly.

NBI #3 – I move that the OEA develop and publish a School Board Appreciation Toolkit on the OEA website.

NBI #4 – I move that the OEA help put together an assessment landscape of state and federally mandated tests so that locals can use this as a starting off point for reducing tests in their own districts.

NBI #9 – I move that the OEA develop



Nowata CTA's Cristel Miller (left) and Angelia Franke review material during the 2016 Delegate Assembly.

and maintain a legislative report card that we publish for our members indicating how each legislator has voted on key OEA identified issues.

NBI #11 (With NBI #2) – I move that OEA through existing publications, share current information and research about how to recognize symptoms of hearing loss in students.

NBI #17 – I move that the OEA offer the NEA's Degrees Not Debt training at least once each semester.

NBI #23 – I move that the OEA publicize through its weekly email legislative update, each week between now and the end of the 2016 OK legislative session, the desperate need to act now to stop the impending disaster due to proposed Medicaid cuts in Oklahoma and the website MakeOKbetter.org, the MakeOKbetter Facebook page and the Twitter feed [@makeOKbetter](https://twitter.com/makeOKbetter).

NBI #28 – I move that the OEA using resources from the NEA, provide education and training on the national walk-in movement and how it can be used to organize members for power.

NBI #52 – I move that OEA encourage and support local associations as they reach out to current education majors in the colleges closest to them in an effort to mentor and recruit our future members.



Photo by Doug Folks

OU President David Boren entertains delegates during his presentation on SQ 779, including OEA President Alicia Priest and Executive Director David DuVall. All of the delegates were decked out in red YES for 779 T-shirts supporting the initiative.



get
connected



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School's Out For Summer!



NEA Member Benefits is one of the many great perks included in your OEA membership. From travel, to shopping, and even education-related services, you have access to hundreds of local and national discounts.

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OEA has partnered with ACCESS Development to offer discounts you can use right from your smartphone. Visit the App Store or Google Play to download the free "MY DEALS" app to start saving!



WHICH COMES FIRST, THE BOOK OR THE MOVIE? THIS SUMMER, YOU GET TO CHOOSE!

Searching for a fun summer reading event? Join the **Scholastic Summer Read Challenge!** Going on now through September 9, Scholastic has something fun for kids, parents and educators. **ACCESS** is also offering a summer full of movie deals! Visit your nearest Redbox where you'll enjoy "Rent One DVD, Get the Second One Free," or visit Family Video with a free \$1 movie rental when you rent any new release!



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Dr. Rick Cobb

Friend of Education

Most school superintendents shy away from being outspoken of the legislature and politicians. It's easy to understand why – they don't want to bring negative attention to their district. As the author of the blog *OKEducationTruths*, Mid-Del Superintendent Dr. Rick Cobb breaks with tradition.

Using facts and figures that only an education insider would have, *OKEducationTruths* is helping change the conversation. The blog has become part of a new voice from those in the education trenches, taking on the so-called “reformers” of education.

Cobb published the *OKEducationTruths* anonymously for a couple of years before stepping into the spotlight and acknowledging he was the author. His announcement amazed many that the writer is a superintendent of one of the state's largest school districts.

“Dr. Cobb's willingness to put his personal and professional reputation on the line for public schools is very brave. He is an inspiration to all of us to step up and define public education for ourselves and not let our critics decide who we are,” said OEA President Alicia Priest.

He was the man behind the grassroots effort of #GiveItBackOK, which encouraged people to donate their tax cuts back to public schools, helping bring attention to how little the tax cut did for the average person but how harmful it was to our students.

Debora Dickinson

Education Support Professional Award

From the smile on Debora Dickinson's face, you'd never know just how busy her life is. One might think she wouldn't have time to stop long enough to grin.

Not only is she the cafeteria manager at Southmoore High School where she leads a staff that feeds 1,500 students a day, she is also president of the Education Support Professionals of Moore (ESPM).

A long-time leader for ESPM, she has served as a building rep, a member of the executive committee, vice president, negotiations spokesperson and now president of the OEA's largest ESP local. She collaborates with the certified local in her district, The Education Association of Moore, and lobbies state legislators for better education funding.

As ESPM president, she has established monthly meetings with the district's superintendent to keep lines of communication open. Her leadership is a huge reason why ESPM has seen a 40 percent growth in membership.

A master chef known for her outstanding operational management skills and in-

novations in the kitchen, no one becomes a cafeteria manager in Moore Public Schools without spending time learning from Debora. She has streamlined the process of establishing weekly menus and worked with nutritional experts to provide the best meals possible for students and employees.

Along with receiving OEA's ESP Award, Dickinson will be Oklahoma's nominee for the National Education Association's ESP of the Year award, which will be presented in early 2017.

The ESP Award is presented to an individual support member whose activities reflect the contributions of the educational support professional to public education. Dickinson is the third consecutive ESPM member to win the award, following Wilma Bunting in 2014 and Calvin Hackler in 2015.



Jason Proctor

NFIE Award for Teaching Excellence

Jason Proctor came to the teaching profession a bit unexpectedly. A pre-pharmacy major at Ferris State in Big Rapids, Mich., he became involved as a volunteer cross-country coach at the local high school. His real motivation at the time was to just have some running partners, but his volunteer role served as inspiration to become a teacher. So, he changed his major and graduated with a degree in chemistry education and a minor in mathematics.

He and his wife, Alissa, found their way to Tahlequah where they planned to stay a year while she completed an optometry residency at Northeastern State University. But she eventually accepted the position full-time, and Jason's career as an educator quickly reached great heights.

A National Board Certified Teacher, Jason was named 2015 Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year. He has taught several levels of math at Tahlequah High School as well as Pre-AP Geometry, Pre-AP Algebra 2, AP Calculus and this year started the school's first Intro to Engineering Design class. He also coaches

track and cross country.

In the classroom, Jason works to make mathematics approachable for all students. His goal is to make complex math simple for his students.

Before being named State Teacher of the Year, Jason admitted he stayed focused on his classroom. But being an

OEA member helped him, "...find my voice as an advocate for the teaching profession" while serving as TOY.

Jason is OEA's nominee for the 2017 NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence. The award program, sponsored by the National Education Association and the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education, is designed to recognize, reward and promote excellence in teaching and advocacy for the profession.



Photo by Doug Folks

Tahlequah's Jason Proctor, math and engineering teacher and track coach, OEA nominee for the NFIE Award for Teaching Excellence.



Photo by Travis Caperton, Legislative Service Bureau.

Scott Inman

Outstanding Legislator Award

Rep. Scott Inman (D, Del City) is always the first person at the State Capitol to step up for public education.

He has authored bills that aim to improve our schools as well as the working conditions and pay and benefits of all education employees. When an anti-public education bill comes up on the floor – whether it's vouchers or deregulation or some other so-called "reform" – this man is a vocal, yet always eloquent, voice of reason. He will not let a bad bill pass without comment, without making sure every legislator understands how his or her vote will affect education.

Inman has an open door policy at his office in the State Capitol, and willingly talks with any educator, whether they are constituents of his or not.

Minority Leader of the State House of Representatives, Inman represents the Midwest City-Del City area. It's where he grew up and attended school – and he regularly visits classrooms in his legislative district.

OEA established the Outstanding Legislator Award in 2002. Inman is only the fourth legislator to receive the award and the first since 2005. Other winners were Sen. Kenneth Corn (D, Howe) twice, Rep. Jim Wilson (D, Tahlequah) and Rep. Terry Harrison (D, McAlester).

Brandon Wilmarth and Moore Public Schools

Tuskahoma Brown Miller Award

Between funding shortfalls and blaming teachers for just about everything wrong with education, public education and the teaching profession in general have felt under attack for the last few years. Between no raises since 2008, sensationalized stories in the media and the legislation introduced by certain legislators, it's no wonder Oklahoma has a teacher shortage.

But over the last few months, there has been a groundswell among individuals and groups to improve the perception of teachers and to improve education funding.

While school districts are often extremely busy institutions, focused on how best to serve their students, finding creative ways to tell their stories and improve teacher morale is important. Unfortunately, most districts don't have the resources or the resolve to make it happen.

Under the guidance of Moore Supt. Robert Romines and with the expertise of Technology Integration Specialist Brandon Wilmarth, the district produced an incredible video entitled, "Breaking the Silence." Moore teachers and administrators were filmed telling their stories of how they approach their work, demon-

strating their dedication to the lives of their students.

"Breaking the Silence" hit a nerve, and quickly went viral. Newspapers and television stations did stories on the video. Other groups tried to imitate the video, but few matched the emotion created by Moore. So far, the video has been shared hundreds of times and the YouTube version has been

viewed more than 170,000 times.

The Tuskahoma Brown Miller Award, one of OEA's Human and Civil Rights Awards, is presented to a business or group which has contributed significantly to the improvement of education.

Find "Breaking the Silence" at <http://bit.ly/1RtdOym>.



Photo by Doug Folks

Moore Supt. Robert Romines and Technology Integration Specialist Brandon Wilmarth.



Photo by Doug Folks

TCTA's team of President Patti Ferguson-Palmer (center), VP Shawna Mott-Wright (right) and OEA Advocacy Specialist Linda Hendrix.

Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association

Advocate for Academic Freedom Award

Anytime a new mandate is handed down, educators hope that the people most affected by that mandate have had a voice at the table. When Oklahoma's Teacher/Leader Effectiveness evaluation system became a reality, the result could have been one of the most onerous mandates in our history.

Fortunately for every teacher statewide, the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association had the opportunity and took full advantage of sharing its voice at the table. Today, the Tulsa Model TLE is used by more than 500 districts statewide. TCTA has had a huge impact in its development and in the changes that have been made to fine-tune the system.

TCTA negotiated the TLE and all related forms as part of its master agreement with Tulsa Public Schools when state law required only that the procedure be bargained. As a result, all teachers where the Tulsa model is used enjoy some protection in the evaluation process because TPS can't change the model without doing so through its bargaining process with TCTA.

OEA's Advocate for Academic Freedom Award is presented to a person or organization whose contribution to the safeguarding of academic freedom has had a significant impact on the public schools in Oklahoma and in the nation. In the case of Oklahoma's TLE process, TCTA's work has benefited and protected certified employees across the state.

Jeanne Owens

Professional Excellence Award, Teachers Teaching Teachers

When Oklahoma began moving to new academic standards, Jeanne Owens thought it gave teachers a fresh chance to look at their craft through a lens of teaching students to think.

After many hours of research on how people think and process, Jeanne developed a series of professional development workshops entitled, “Visible Thinking: Deepening Knowledge through Core Thinking Routines.”

The Visible Thinking sessions begin with the question, “Within our classroom, how do we create the disposition for students to think for learning and for life?” From there, participants,

- Explore how brains process information and gain understanding in order to relate that same process to building students’ understanding, increase engagement and increase student thinking;
- Experience activities that make participants think;

- Practice thinking routines that can easily transfer to the classroom;

- Examine how thinking routines deepen student learning;

- Develop a plan to incorporate thinking routines in the classroom;

- Determine how to foster a culture of thinking; and

- Practice techniques for documenting student thinking so that both students and teachers are better able to understand and develop it.

Visible Thinking began as a six-hour, one-day professional development training, but has since been adapted into a three-hour session. More than 160 teachers and administrators have attended her session, impacting all 14 Muskogee campuses. She has also presented the training to a standing-room only crowd at Okla-



Photo by Doug Folks

Muskogee High School teacher trainer Jeanne Owens (right) and English Department Chair Sarah Dennis.

homa Technology Association’s Encyclopedia Conference in Oklahoma City.

Jeanne is a teacher trainer at Muskogee High School and a National Board Certified Teacher with more than 30 years of experience in public education.

Krystal Medina

Instructional Excellence Award – Teachers Teaching Students

Krystal Medina’s 8th grade science unit, “Matter and Its Reactions,” teaches her students about the world around them and how it is controlled by something far smaller than they can ever imagine.

The purpose of the unit is to get students to understand the structure and properties of matter, how chemical reactions occur and how matter is conserved. Along the way, they discover:

- The breaking apart of molecules and how they are put back together;
- The process of new molecules being formed due to the rearrangement of atoms;
- That physical properties of objects can be described using shape, size and mass, and that they can be measured;
- That substances react chemically with other substances to form new substances with different characteristics; and
- Matter is conserved; it can only be changed into a new form.

By the end of the unit, students should be able to explain how atoms of molecules

and substances vibrate more or less, depending upon the amount of energy entering into the system. Also, students are expected to differentiate between physical characteristics and chemical characteristics, and the differences between physical and chemical changes.

Prior to the unit, students take a pre-test to determine what they already know and what needs to be reviewed before starting. Activities, which include lab work, are designed to meet Oklahoma Academic Standards and PASS objectives.

Students are assessed over the material throughout the unit, including weekly standard checks to gauge the level of ma-

terial retained and a unit final for a cumulative overview of how well the material was portrayed.

Krystal is a first-year teacher at Clinton Middle School in Tulsa and a member of Tulsa CTA.



Photo by Doug Folks

Krystal Medina with Clinton MS science students (from left) Evelyn Alvarez, Cheyenne Hill and Hayden Watson.

Linda Ogle

Collective Bargaining Award – Individual

As chief negotiator for McCloud ACT, Linda Ogle knows her stuff. She puts in countless hours of research and communications before, during and after bargaining to ensure her colleagues work under the best negotiated agreement possible.

In addition to her preparation of language, she works hard to develop and maintain positive relationships with the local school board and administration.

Last summer, the McCloud administration wanted to make changes to the TLE timeline, but Linda made sure they understood how state law outlined the evaluation process and why it needed to be followed to protect teachers.

When the administration wanted to lengthen the work day without paying teachers more, she presented several options that worked for both the administration and for teachers. She has played a vital role at the table to ensure teachers keep a 30-minute duty free lunch and 45 consecutive minutes of planning each day.

Because of her tireless efforts for educators in McCloud and members of McCloud ACT, Linda is highly respected and appreciated by her colleagues as well as those on the other side of the bargaining table.

In his letter of recommendation for Linda's nomination for this award, James Branscum, vice president of the McCloud Board of Education, said, "...I respect and appreciate her desire to see needed improvements for students and teachers in these negotiations as well as her ability to maintain a positive and amicable working relationship with school leaders and board members. To me, this approach results in a true 'win-win' relationship even in times of difficult funding and a less-than-promising future for financial improvement from state sources."



Photo by Doug Folks

Mustang Education Association

Collective Bargaining Award – Group

The Mustang Education Association's bargaining team had a goal last year of securing a step raise for its teachers as well as cleaning up or clarifying language concerning evaluations, protecting teachers' right to representation, protecting planning time and ensuring that teachers are supported when dealing with disruptive students.

After negotiating with the local board, the MEA team presented what it felt was the best agreement possible that ensured teachers receiving a step increase, protected a 30-minute duty free lunch and gained the right for teachers to be paid if they take on an additional class during their plan time.

Mustang teachers voted not to ratify the agreement, unhappy that their right to representation had been eliminated. The administration, upset with the vote, refused to go back to the table and pushed MEA into re-voting for the package, threatening to take the step away if they went to impasse.

MEA held strong, refusing to vote again on the agreement without further negotiations. When the controversy caught the attention of the local media, the administration relented and went back to the table.



Photo by Doug Folks

MEA Bargaining Team, clockwise from top right, Carnie Cullen, Mark Webb, Cathy Sabo, Sharolyn Davis, Nathan Burch and Tanya Bernhard.

Even though the negotiations were more contentious than the first round, MEA prevailed, keeping the step increase and regaining the right to representation. The two sides also agreed to a compromise on pay for leave upon separation from the district and added new language on documentation of sick leave.

John Waldron

Claude A. Dyer Memorial Award



Photo by Doug Folks

John Waldron is an outspoken advocate of public education both inside and outside of the classroom. He is the kind of teacher students can't wait to have and parents want for their children.

A social studies teacher at Tulsa's Booker T. Washington High School, John spends hours outside of the school day helping students. On many Sundays, you can find him at a local coffee shop tutoring kids.

Outside of the classroom, John is a go-to guy when an education bill needs to be lobbied. His local legislators know him and he communicates with them regularly.

A former Tulsa Teacher of the Year and chair of the OEA Legislative Committee, John is frequently interviewed by local media on education topics and writes op-ed articles for Tulsa newspapers. When Tulsa has been involved in education rallies, John has organized buses, students, teachers, parents and community members to make the event successful.

John describes himself as a teacher, not a politician, but he is taking his advocacy to the next level by running for the State Senate seat in District 39.

"I fear we have a 'dust bowl of the mind' looming on the horizon," he says on his John Waldron for State Senate Facebook page. "Cuts to education mean we are depriving our children of the opportunities they deserve ... We are already feeling the effects – our teachers are leaving or retiring, young people are moving away and we are at the bottom of too many social indicators."

The Claude A. Dyer Memorial Award is presented to an Oklahoma educator who has worked to bring about legislative action for equitable salaries and desirable working conditions, and has rendered leadership and direction in efforts to protect and advance the civil and human rights and responsibilities of educators.

Shawna Mott-Wright

Political Activist Award

It's often said that every decision made for public education is a political decision. From the local school board, which is elected by a district's patrons and hires and fires the superintendent, to state representatives and senators, the governor, members of Congress, all the way to the White House, public education is molded by politicians.

No one understands the ramifications of that system better than Shawna Mott-Wright, winner of the 2016 OEA Political Activist Award. She is not only an outspoken supporter of public education with our elected officials, she is also an active participant in the process.

She stays in constant contact with the majority of the Tulsa area legislators, even when they aren't in session. She coordinates interview teams for candidates, leads legislative trainings and encourages others to get involved.

Shawna has been a campaign manager for a political race that covered two counties and routinely participates in phone banking and door knocking for pro-public education candidates.

A former drama teacher in Tulsa and now vice president of Tulsa CTA, she sits on the OEA Fund for Children and Public Education Steering Committee and is a member of the OEA Board of Directors, representing Tulsa Metro Zone B.

In short, Shawna not only talks the talk, she walks the walk.



Photo by Doug Folks

With ESSA, all voices will be heard

By Dr. Deborah Schovanec
OEA Zone Director, OKC Metro C

Now that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has replaced No Child Left Behind, state departments of education are planning how to implement the federal requirements.

Not long after President Obama signed ESSA into law, the Oklahoma Education Association formed an ESSA Advisory Panel comprised of teachers, support professionals and OEA staff, and co-chaired by Vice President Katherine Bishop and Mid-Del ACT President Lori Burris. In late March, OEA was awarded a grant to attend the NEA ESSA Leadership and Organizing Conference at the Montgomery Institute in Rockville, Md.

The OEA team included VP Bishop; Toni Herriman, a high school math teacher at Collinsville High School; Mattie Smith-Broom, special education paraeducator at Sapulpa High School; Dr. Robyn Miller, deputy state superintendent; Mike McIlwee, OEA Northwest Teaching and Learning specialist; and myself, a special education consultant in Edmond Public Schools and a member of the OEA Board of Directors (Oklahoma City Metro Zone C).

Throughout the four-day conference, teams from across the United States were to develop an action plan with a theory of change indicating the most significant component within their states. The OEA team considered many issues, but agreed that we must first have teacher empowerment. We must have collaboration between the State Department of Education, educators, ESPs, our communities, our parents and our local district leaders.

The theory of change we developed was, "We are organizing the 19 members of the ESSA Advisory Panel that believes educators need and desire a heard voice. Educators will be empowered by building knowledge around key issues of ESSA. Our goal of implementation shall be with the collaboration of the State Education Agencies (SEA) and the Local Education Agencies (LEA) to become a unified decision-making body by August 1, 2016."



(From left) NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia with OEA's team at the NEA ESSA Leadership and Organizing Conference, Mike McIlwee, Mattie Smith-Broom, Dr. Deborah Schovanec, Toni Herriman, Dr. Robyn Miller and VP Katherine Bishop.

ESSA emphasizes the need for ALL voices to be heard for the betterment of student success, quality educators and quality schools. It is not a dictatorship, as was NCLB. Under the new guidelines, the SDE and Oklahoma school districts have the opportunity to minimize the amount of testing to ensure testing is purposeful with data to drive our decision-making, not as a mandatory test for the sake of testing.

The new federal regulations create many positive changes in our education system. The NEA's ESSA web page (nea.org/ESSAbegins), has a plethora of information with the opportunity to receive updates.

The OEA ESSA Advisory Panel asks that you become part of this exciting time in our education history and join us on our mission to let our voices be heard for the betterment of our children's education. Now is our opportunity to be heard as a united force!

If you have any questions or would like to be involved, please contact Katherine Bishop at kbishop@okea.org, or at 800/522-8091.

Henryetta's Stacy Bullard joins OEA Organizing Center

Stacy Bullard recently joined the Oklahoma Education Association staff as an Organizing UniServ Specialist for the Southeast Regional Team.

A former president of the Henryetta Education Association, Stacy spent more than 11 years as a 7th grade math, careers and robotics teacher at Henryetta Middle School where she also served as the STEM coordinator. She holds three education degrees: an associate's in elementary education from Tulsa Community College, a bachelor's in elementary education from Northeastern State University and a master's in educational leadership from Southern Nazarene University.

Stacy served on the Henryetta EA negotiations team, on the OEA's Instructional and Professional Development (IPD) Committee and on Supt. Joy Hofmeister's Teacher Advisory Committee. She holds certifications in elementary education, intermediate mathematics, middle level English/language arts and is a Ruby Payne Lifetime Trainer.

During the summer of 2014, Stacy participated in the OEA Organizing Summer Project, coordinated by Tim McCluskey, NEA Western Region Staff Organizer, and Kris King, lead organizer for VOICE.

Stacy and her husband David have two children, Shelby, 16, and Tanner, 14.



Stacy Bullard

Make certification renewal a priority

By Heath Merchen
Associate General Counsel

It is that time of year again; time to worry about those pesky housekeeping matters that, if left unattended, can cost you your job.

At the top of that list is the renewal of your teaching certificate. Standard teaching certificates are valid for a five year period and expire on June 30 of the fifth year. You are required to have a valid teaching certificate on file with a school district and you can check with your school administration to determine the expiration date of your teaching certificate if you don't already know or have a copy of your certificate.

Why is this important? First, your contract of employment has a standard term that requires you to be fully certificated at all times during your employment with a school district. Second, it is unlawful for a school district to enter into a contract for a teaching position with a person who does not have a valid teaching certificate. Third, it is unlawful for a school district board of education to approve a warrant for a teacher salary payable to a person who does not possess a valid teaching certificate. Finally, you risk being terminated from your job if you at any time have a lapse in your teaching certificate while you are performing teaching duties for a school district.

The process for renewal is simple. You can go to the Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) website any time after January 1 of the year in which your certificate is set to expire and complete the renewal process online. You simply answer the questions on the application and make arrangements to pay the \$50 processing fee and your application will be processed.

If you prefer, you can download and complete the application form, and send the form via mail to the SDE with your \$50 processing fee and your certificate will be renewed.

You must make application for the renewal of your certificate before the expiration of the certificate or you run the risk of not having a valid certificate before school starts for the ensuing fall semester. According to the administrative rules adopted by the SDE, renewed standard certificates will become effective July 1 following receipt of the application provided the application is made prior to the expiration of the certificate.

If the application for renewal is made after the certificate has expired, the renewed certificate will be dated the first day of the month in which the application and all supporting documents are received by the SDE.

State law requires that all certificate holders be in compliance with Oklahoma state income tax laws before a teaching certificate can be renewed. The SDE is required to submit to the Oklahoma Tax Commission (OTC) a list of individuals

who are applying for a certificate renewal and the OTC will notify any person who appears to be in noncompliance.

The OTC will work with individuals who have tax-related issues; however, in the event an educator's certificate cannot be renewed due to failure to comply with Oklahoma's tax laws, the renewed certificate will be dated the date the SDE receives notice from the OTC that the educator has come into compliance. In other words, your certificate will not be back dated if you have tax problems and you will need to have those issues resolved before a valid renewal is issued.

If you start the new school year with an expired certificate, the school district may (but is not required to) place you on a substitute contract for the period that you don't have a valid certificate and pay you the appropriate rate of pay for that position during that period. Upon the renewal of your certificate, the school district then has discretion as to whether to pay you any retroactive teacher salary for the period of time that you were on a substitute contract because of the failure to timely renew your certificate.

The consequences can be harsh, so don't delay and start the renewal process early to avoid any problems with the renewal or with starting the school year without proper certification.

If you have more questions regarding this issue or need help with this process, you can contact your Regional Advocacy UniServ Specialist for assistance.



Save the Date!

2016 Indian Education Summit
June 14-16, 2016
Reed Conference Center - Sheraton Midwest City Hotel
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On behalf of the American Indian Institute and the South Central Comprehensive Center at the University of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma State Department of Education, it is our privilege to announce the 2016 Indian Education Summit. We would be honored by your presence as we come together to celebrate and encourage "Indian Education for All." Our presenters and speakers will share resources, information, strategies and successful programs as well as provide opportunities for further networking and collaboration. See you this summer!

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EDUCATION

South Central Comprehensive Center

The poster features a vertical strip of traditional Native American beadwork on the left. On the right, there are two photographs: the top one shows a woman in a purple shirt standing next to an American flag, and the bottom one shows a group of four people (three men and one woman) standing together. Logos for Aii, Education, and the South Central Comprehensive Center are at the bottom.

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Periodicals

A photograph of a family—a woman, a man, and a young child—walking together on a paved path in a park. The woman is on the left, wearing a blue cardigan over a brown top and jeans. The man is in the center, wearing a dark brown button-down shirt and jeans. The child is on the right, wearing a striped shirt and jeans, and is pointing towards the camera. The background shows trees and a park bench, with a soft, warm light suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

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