

The CEA Voice

Rhonda Johnson, President

www.ceaohio.org

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Dr. Harris needs to *stay* tough on discipline

CEA wants its members and the Columbus school community to know that teachers are NOT soft on discipline. However, it may have appeared to some as if our superintendent and board members were headed in that direction.

During the Feb. 20 board of education meeting, Dr. Harris said that she was not opposed to removing the words *zero tolerance* from her reasonable interpretation of Executive Limitation 11–Student Discipline. Harris was responding to questions from the school board about the phrase.

Board members proposed that the phrase *zero tolerance* be removed but wanted to understand her position first. Dr. Harris responded that *zero tolerance* implies an across-the-board way of handling discipline problems, regardless of circumstances.

The superintendent stated, “A district policy should be subjective in that whatever the infraction is, the discipline that is exacted should be appropriate to that infraction... but (also) appropriate to that child.”

Harris said that students who are misbehaving would be dealt with fairly, firmly and directly. But students are not all alike. “Having been a former teacher and former building principal, I don’t think that makes sense.” She said you need consistency, but you have to give teachers and administrators leeway.

Dr. Harris’ remarks were captured on video and broadcast on television. CEA does not think the community’s perception of her remarks will be favorable, especially with recent publicity about discipline problems throughout our schools, and reporters (and parents) edging for a plan to deal with an increase in incidents.

While CEA believes that our superintendent intends to be firm, and truly wants to give educators room to decide appropriate disciplinary measures, we also believe Dr. Harris should find opportunities to state and demonstrate this philosophy to the public.

The possibility that her words will be misinterpreted is great. The truth is there are some gaps between the way our central administration handles many serious infractions and the way our principals handle them.

Often, expulsions set in motion at a school building are overturned at the district’s hearing office after parents complain. As a result, the student who committed the infraction is immediately returned to the classroom.

“We cannot afford the perception that the central office is soft on discipline,” said CEA President Rhonda Johnson. “Dr. Harris and the Board of Education need to make sure that the public understands we are not tolerant of bad behavior of students, and we will do everything possible to keep our kids safe.”

Support UNCF

The campaign for the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) begins on Mar. 12 and runs through the end of month. The UNCF program started more than 60 years ago. It is the nation’s largest, oldest and most comprehensive minority higher education assistance organization.



UNCF provides operating funds and technology enhancement for the 39 member historically black colleges and universities. In addition, UNCF provides scholarship support to more than 65,000 students at nearly 900 colleges and universities.

Statistics point out that nearly 60 percent of these students are the first in their families to go to college, and 62 percent of their families have annual incomes of less than \$25,000. Anyone can see that this effort merits our support.

Many former Columbus students have benefited from UNCF support over the years. Join in this year and support the United Negro College Fund. Your Faculty Representative will be receiving campaign materials.

Tutoring program approved

The Ohio Department of Education has notified the CEA Foundation that its application to provide supplemental education services under NCLB has been approved.

The foundation’s governing board will meet to approve an oversight team that will manage the program.

The CEA Foundation has pledged to use only *highly qualified teachers* as tutors. We hope the foundation will be able to offer tutoring services at the school sites identified through NCLB.

One important step would be a commitment and a letter of understanding between CEA and the administration. We believe that there are powerful arguments for such an agreement.

The CEA Foundation hopes to announce soon a process to select the first five schools where students will receive tutoring and to solicit teachers to deliver these services. Training will be provided. Keep reading *The CEA Voice* for more details.

Education gets a financial boost

Congress recently agreed to provide funding to keep the federal government running for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2007. President Bush signed the resolution into law.

The former Congress (the 109th) had failed to take action on this funding resolution and dumped it into the laps of newly-elected senators and representatives. However, it ended up being good news for education.

The new resolution provides solid increases in domestic priorities with nearly a \$5 billion increase in funds for

health and human services. More than \$2 billion in additional funds will go to education.

This is in direct contrast to a \$550 million cut in education that had been proposed by President Bush. It appears that our newly elected Congress is making good on its campaign promise to increase funding for education.

Teachers' Dream Grant

The Teachers' Dream Grant is available again this year. Application information was sent to staff in early February. This grant provides an opportunity for teachers to apply for individual school-based grants from \$500 to \$5,000 focusing on academic enrichment, increasing student achievement, closing the achievement gap, improving school/community relations and improving classroom learning climate.

This grant is an excellent opportunity for teachers to acquire resources to support innovative projects. The application is to be submitted by Apr. 2. For further information, see the CPS website or contact the Development Office at 365-8733.

Save your data

A lot of important work goes into our computers. It can be lost in a second. Always remember to backup reports, lesson plans and other vital information to the school server or to an external storage device such as a CD or flash drive.

Anything that is saved only to a computer's hard drive will be lost if the computer is reimaged. Reimages are not always scheduled events. If a computer crashes due to a virus or a broken part, the computer is reimaged.

If you need help understanding how to save data, please contact the Help Desk at 8425 for instructions.

Reach Out and Read book drive has begun

The Columbus Education Association's *Reach Out Read* campaign kicked off on Friday, Mar. 2. Members can continue to donate new books until Mar. 9. Faculty representatives in each building have been given labels to be placed on the inside cover of each book. There should also be a designated location to drop your books in your building.

We encourage everyone to participate in this worthwhile campaign. If you have any questions or need additional labels, please contact Tracey Johnson at 253-4731.

Around Ohio

Cincinnati—The message is more cuts for Cincinnati Public Schools. Recent budget changes eliminated all long-term substitute teachers and a program for poor children. Plans to build or restore 22 schools were put on hold. The district's interim treasurer presented a five-year plan to cut expenses by an additional 8–9 percent.

Cincinnati—A recent study pointed out the decline of arts involvement by students. Schools are dropping arts programs, field trips to museums, plays and concerts. Cincinnati arts organizations and museums report a drop in student attendance of more than 30 percent.

Cleveland—The new CEO of the Cleveland Municipal Schools, Eugene Sanders, has announced a comprehensive program to move the system forward. He wants to make Cleveland the nation's premier school system. Sanders is challenging other educators to be positive and responsive.

Dayton—Residents of this Ohio 8 school district will vote on a \$30 million emergency operating levy in May. The levy will ask for an increase of 15.7–16.2 mills of property tax. A recent round of cuts eliminated some high school math and science teachers and special education staff.

Youngstown—The school district's experiment with gender-exclusive elementary schools will come to an end in 2009. This program started in 2005 and has had some positive impact. Research shows that boys and girls do learn differently. However, the district is in financial difficulty; and cuts have been mandated by the state.

Ohio 8 to hold 2007 fall summit

The Ohio 8 Coalition is preparing for its second education summit later this year. It will be held Oct. 11–12 at the Hyatt Regency Columbus and the Columbus Convention Center. The coalition is a group of superintendents and union presidents from the state's eight largest urban school districts: Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown. Rhonda Johnson represents CEA in this coalition.

This year's theme, *Investing in Our Children*, will feature Ruby Payne, author of *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. The summit is a great opportunity to learn about teaching strategies, learn what's happening at the Ohio Statehouse and find out more about the major challenges and accomplishments of urban school districts.

The coalition convened in 2001, backed by the Cleveland, George Gund, Martha Holden Jennings and KnowledgeWorks foundations. The Joyce Foundation in Chicago provided additional support. The Ohio 8's main principle is that a high-performance public education system is essential to the civic and economic health of Ohio's cities.

The coalition has become a powerful and effective group, making its voice heard in the Ohio Legislature, advocating for best practices and sharing the good news about urban schools. To learn more about this dynamic group of Ohio leaders, visit www.ohio8.org.

Special notes

- The **CEA GLBT Caucus** gives notice of the first ever **GLBT census** sponsored by the Legacy Fund of the Columbus Foundation, Abercrombie & Fitch, United Way of Central Ohio, CATF and Stonewall Columbus. Surf to: www.glbtcensus.com and **click on complete registration now** by Apr. 15. If you prefer not to respond online, call 227-2765. All submissions are confidential and anonymous. For additional information or questions, contact **Karen Andermills at millandering@wowway.com**.
- Campaigning for CEA leadership positions ends Mar. 5.** Voting for candidates will take place March 6–19. Please see your FR to participate in the elections process. Votes will be **tabulated** on Mar. 20.
- You can purchase **Blue Jackets** tickets on a first-come, first-served basis for the following games: **Wednesday, Mar. 7, Los Angeles (4); Tuesday, Mar. 20, Chicago (4); Sunday, Mar. 25, St. Louis (4); and Thursday, Mar. 29, Anaheim (4).** Call CEA at 253-4731 for current ticket availability.



Request for CEA Scholarship Application Form

Name of member making request: _____

Send application to (CPS address): _____

A completed scholarship application, along with a transcript and two letters of reference, must be returned to the CEA office by 5 p.m. on Friday, May 4, 2007.

