

The CEA Voice

Rhonda Johnson, President

www.ceaohio.org

Volume XXXVII, No. 31

Columbus Education Association

April 16, 2007

Friend of public education

Gov. Ted Strickland has made it very clear that he is a strong friend of Ohio's public schools. Recently, he had a meeting with the leaders of the Ohio 8. The teacher union presidents and superintendents came away with a very positive impression and these observations:

- The Governor is thoroughly committed to the role of public education in Ohio.
- His reaction to vouchers is "visceral." They are "undemocratic."
- Gov. Strickland's call for a moratorium on charter schools is very important to him. He feels the way they operate in Ohio is not defensible.
- He is committed to establishing a commission to hold charter schools accountable both fiscally and academically.
- The governor thoroughly embraces the *Achieve Report*.

This final item is one we should take note of for the future. The *Achieve Report* calls on us to "create a world-class education system in Ohio." The report is filled with exciting ideas that we can support. It would produce major changes at all grade levels. *Achieve* is filled with optimism and that in itself is a major change coming from the leadership of our state.

Gov. Strickland asked for help from our Ohio 8 leaders in a number of other areas. He called on the Ohio 8 to provide needed expertise on educational issues. First, on the list was providing detailed information on the impact of charter school on our districts. He needs our support in developing the long-term goals for education in Ohio. It is great to have a friend of public education in the governor's office.

Remember, this is your right

The court has ruled that during an investigatory interview, management must inform the union member of the subject of the interrogation. You are entitled to CEA representation.

The CEA representative must be allowed to speak with the employee privately before the interview; and during questioning, the representative is permitted to interrupt to clarify a question or object to the interviewer's tactics.

However, the representative may not tell the employee what to say. He/she may merely advise him/her on how to answer a question. After the interview is over, the representative is allowed to add information to support the employee's case.



We also suggest representation any time the purpose of the meeting is for disciplinary action, reprimand, infraction of a work rule or board policy, questions concerning request or use of any leave, allegations of abuse or parental, student or community complaints.

CEA will be sending you a wallet-sized card that you can carry with you. It is entitled *Weingarten Rights* and contains text from the 1975 U.S. Supreme Court Decision that clarifies your rights as a union member. If you need any help understanding these rights, please call us at the CEA office. We will be happy to brief you.

Planning time is also your right

There have been questions regarding planning and preparation time, team meetings and use of the new math/science (formerly reading safety net) specialists for elementary schools.

A brochure prepared by the CPS curriculum department describes the district's new approach using math/science specialists to reduce class size. It explains that specialists will facilitate weekly grade-level professional learning team meetings around math instruction.

But this brochure does not show when professional learning team meetings could take place—unless it is during teacher planning time before the start of the school day.

CEA would like to clarify the section of the *Master Agreement* that addresses planning time for elementary school teachers.

According to Section 302.02, all teachers at the elementary level are guaranteed an average of 45 minutes per day for planning and preparation. This is unassigned time.

Such teachers also are guaranteed a daily 10–15 minute break, either mid-morning or mid-afternoon, free of pupil supervision and other assigned duties. Furthermore, planning-team meetings should not be scheduled before the school day begins.

For those who haven't heard about the plan, here are the details:

The plan is for small groups of students to visit math and science specialists in turn for 90 minutes each while the remaining students continue instruction with the regular classroom teacher. The specialists will serve as points of contact between the math/science curriculum departments and each building.

Meanwhile, teachers are supposed to collaborate and share curricular information and monitor student progress. Part of this process involves meeting regularly with math/science specialists.



At the same time, classroom teachers will receive training on the district's new reading materials, allowing deeper concentration by all in this area.

So far, the administration has not determined whether the proposed schedule will actually work or will even fit the elementary school day. CEA is not convinced that this is the most effective way to facilitate learning or to use Title I dollars. We will update you on the administration's plan as they make the information available to us. If you feel your time is being hijacked, contact CEA.

Survey is important

At the last Legislative Assembly, CEA President Rhonda Johnson expressed to the FRs the importance of completing the *Ohio Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey*. This survey will assist us in learning ways to improve our teaching conditions and, thereby, providing better learning environments for our students.

Only 19.1 percent of our teachers have completed the survey. In order for us to get the data back from the survey, we must have a minimum of 40 percent completion rate. President Johnson will personally buy pizza for one staff at each level (ES, MS and HS) that has the highest percentage and at least 75 percent completion rate.

To complete the survey, go to www.ohiotlc.org. You will be asked to enter an access code. The codes should already be in your buildings. Ask your building administrator for the codes. If your building has not received the codes, call 866-926-3065. Please complete the survey as soon as possible. The site closes on Apr. 20.

Unions aligned for NCLB overhaul

It appears that the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has joined forces with NEA to urge changes to *No Child Left Behind*, which faces reauthorization this year.

The stance is significant. AFT has traditionally endorsed standards-based accountability. A story in *Education Week* on Mar. 21 pointed out that it isn't clear what the national organization's full position will be. But Edward J. McElroy, AFT president, told *Education Week* that the current system "misidentifies as failing thousands of schools that are making real progress...It's devastating and demoralizing."

NEA's stance is that accountability should be measured in a variety of ways, including test scores and other methods, such as student portfolios and grades. In 2005, NEA sued the federal government contending that NCLB violated its own stipulations by forcing states and local districts to pay for its implementation.

Some lawmakers agree that the law needs an overhaul. *Education Week* reported that more than 50 Republicans formed an alliance to introduce bills removing the law's accountability measures and the annual statewide student assessment requirement.

Other groups have joined the effort, including Fairtest, the American Association of School Administrators, National School Boards Association, Coalition of Essential Schools and the National PTA.

Sign up for Ohio school reform

The race is on to get 402,000 signatures on petitions by Aug. 8 to put a proposed constitutional amendment on the Nov. 6 ballot.

It's a big job, and OEA, the largest organization in a consortium of 12 education organizations, is working to get this job done.

OEA leaders and staff have set out a battle plan for an

intensive campaign to gather hundreds of thousands of signatures on amendment petitions. "If each OEA member signs a petition, then gathers just four more signatures, the association can put the drive over the top," said OEA President Allen. "We must get this proposed amendment on the November ballot," he said. "It provides all Ohioans with access to better public education, and it gives us a chance to finally fix our broken system of school funding."

Sign a petition! Circulate a petition! Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Call CEA at 253-4731 for more information.

If you want to volunteer by e-mail, send your name, phone number and local association affiliation to govtsrv@ohea.org and someone from OEA Governmental Services will contact you.

Detailed information about *Getting It Right for Ohio's Future*, the constitutional amendment and the petition drive are available in the political action section of OEA's website at www.ohea.org or at www.rightforohio.org.

Special Legislative Assembly on April 19

A special meeting of the CEA Legislative Assembly will be held on Thursday, April 19, at 4:30 p.m. at the Arts Impact Middle School (AIMS) cafeteria on the campus of the Ft. Hayes Metropolitan Education Center.

The agenda will include a proposal to remove "continuous service in the position" for determining the senior faculty representative within units. (See page 45 of the *CEA Handbook, Columbus Education Association Bylaws of the Legislative Assembly*, Section 13-2. Definition of Senior Faculty Representatives).

Additionally, members were named to a Crisis Committee at the Mar. 22 meeting of the Board of Governors to address concerns from the various forums. They will be seeking your input for next steps.

Reward effective leadership

The CPS development office is receiving nominations for the Ingram Award for Outstanding Principals. This award, including a \$1,500 professional development grant, will go to five CPS principals. Employees, parents, students and friends of CPS may make nominations.

The award was established by the Edward W. Ingram Foundation to recognize outstanding leadership and a commitment to quality. Nominees are judged on academic achievement, leadership, staff development, parent and staff involvement, resource management and interpersonal communications.

A seven-member committee, including teachers appointed by the CEA President, will review the nominations. Forms are available in school facilities. The deadline is May 11.

Special notes

- ❑ The **30th Annual CEA Retirement & Awards Banquet** will take place on **Friday, May 18**, at the **Hyatt Regency Columbus**. The information for the Retirement & Awards Banquet will be in the buildings soon. If you know someone who is retiring and did not receive a personal invitation to the banquet from CEA, please have them call Judy Nelson at 253-4731.
- ❑ Friends of **Patricia Bosh, Carolyn Kennedy** and **Cathy North** would like to invite you to an **Open House Retirement Celebration, May 30 from 3-5 p.m.** at Northgate Center, Room G. *RSVP* Lois Carson 365-5296.