

The CEA Voice

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Middle and elementary teachers speak out

The biggest challenge that teachers in middle and elementary schools face is the district's change in the daily schedule.

An electronic survey of teachers conducted by CEA last March revealed that the schedule change has meant less collaborative team planning time, more discipline issues, greater student and teacher stress and more student failure.

Elementary classrooms are more crowded, and teachers have less time to teach in an engaging, creative way, since they are too busy giving tests.

Here are some particulars of the survey:

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- ☑ Ninety-three percent of FRs responded that students are arriving at their buildings before 7:45 a.m., some as early as 7 a.m. Yet only half of FRs indicated that these students were being properly supervised.
- ☑ Common planning time is being used for everything except planning. Teachers are being pulled into an alphabet soup of meetings during this time including for IAT, SAIL and IEPs, in addition to team and content area meetings.
- ☑ Three quarters of teachers surveyed said parent-teacher conferences were being scheduled for them without advance notice. Some of these meetings have disrupted teaching time.
- ☑ There are fewer tutoring opportunities this year, and those presented usually are over a teacher's lunch break.
- ☑ Academic teams are less effective than last year. The major reason is that the eight-period day has hurt their ability to coordinate student assignments. One of the results is too much homework, since assignments are being made without group consultation.
- ☑ Sixth-grade students are overwhelmed and more are failing this year.

The eight-period day causes other problems:

- ☑ Because of scheduling priorities, several math teachers report being more than two months behind in the curriculum.
- ☑ Special education teachers reported that more students are being kept in resource rooms because class sizes have grown. This could constitute a potential violation of students' IEPs.
- ☑ ESL teachers noted that their students were being assigned to foreign language classes—something for which most are not prepared.

Student class schedules:

- ☑ Eighth-graders now take health, physical education and computer for high school credit. As a result, these courses are not available for sixth- and seventh-graders who may want to take them.
- ☑ Physical education classes are packed, and so are the school gyms. At multiple schools, students are forced to sit in the cafeteria or auditorium if bad weather moves recess inside.

- ☑ Health textbooks are written for 10th-graders, a reading level too high for many eighth-graders; and the books contain some age-inappropriate material.

Discipline is also a problem. Students are tardy. And when they misbehave, there are fewer options for dealing with them.

- ☑ Without the PEAK program, other options are being tried, including after-school detention, Saturday school and a timeout room. But most of the teachers surveyed said these strategies aren't working.
- ☑ Half of the teachers responded that their 190s were not being dealt with in a timely manner.

Staff assaults, threats and other building safety concerns have increased.

- ☑ Four of every five FRs surveyed indicated one or more teachers in their buildings has been assaulted by a student this year.
- ☑ They noted that middle school administrators are the best in the district at handling assaults on teachers properly, but middle school students still receive expulsions at a lower rate than high school students.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- ☑ Students are entering their buildings before 8:30 a.m., and about half are unsupervised.
- ☑ Class sizes have increased. Some teachers don't have a room at all, and sharing isn't providing enough separation between groups.
- ☑ Teachers must give practice tests and state tests, as well as quarterly, weekly and monthly assessments. Teachers are spending too much time teaching to the tests, giving tests and grading tests.
- ☑ The Columbus Information Management System (CiMS) isn't accessible to everyone. And the specifications are so strict that teachers spend time redoing the reports if they aren't perfect.
- ☑ Students are tired. They don't fully participate in or have the opportunity to enjoy specials like art, music and physical education. This isn't a healthy situation.

As for discipline:

- ☑ Three-quarters of teachers surveyed said principals were responding in a timely manner to 190s. But more than half of those surveyed said their principals were responding ineffectively to daily discipline issues.
- ☑ Since students may not report to PEAK during core instruction, there are few options. So disruptive students remain in the classroom.
- ☑ Many problems result from a lack of administrative support at the district level. Executives in the central office are not supporting principals' decisions.

Your association has voiced the concerns expressed by middle school and elementary school teachers to the administration. CEA will continue to speak out against poorly thought-out decisions and policies that make it more difficult for students to learn and for our professionals to do their jobs. To read the expanded version of this article, go to CEA's Website at <http://www.ceaohio.org>.

Spring Fling at the Aladdin Shrine Center

The Columbus Education Association

invites you to the

Spring Fling and Rally for Public Education

Friday, May 25, 2007

at the

Aladdin Shrine Center

3850 Stelzer Road

3:30–7:30 p.m.

The rally in support of Governor Strickland’s budget, as introduced, will be from 4:30–5 p.m.
Be present to advocate for the Governor’s budget and for public education.

Urban homestead zone vouchers target “Big Eight” public schools

Urge your State Representative to oppose House Bill 26 (R-Wolpert): Urban Homestead Zone Vouchers.

In an effort to increase the population in Ohio’s urban centers, House Bill 26 seeks to expand voucher eligibility in the “Big Eight” urban school districts (Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown). The bill authorizes cities with declining populations to create “urban homestead zones.” If such a zone is in a “Big Eight” city and a resident and/or preceding owner spends at least \$120,000 on residential improvements/construction, the resident’s children will be eligible for vouchers.

Take action to support public schools!
Go to <http://ga1.org/campaign/BIGEIGHTVOUCHERS> and urge your state representative to oppose House Bill 26!

Returning from medical leave? Take note...

Need to take some extended medical leave? Our negotiated agreement provides some very specific procedures.

One of the most important aspects is the need to see the school board’s physician for clearance and to submit the “intent-to-return to work” documents at least three days in advance of your return. Many association members have attempted to come back to the classroom without doing so or after submitting the paperwork late.

When seeing the board’s doctor, please note: Your permission paperwork must state that you can return with “no restrictions.” Also employees may not return to their duties any sooner than the date of return specified.

The board physician’s hours, location and contact information are provided in the leave packet.

If you have taken leave to care for a family member, a physician release is not required. But you still must submit advance paperwork stating your intended return date.

For clarification, please see Chapter 700 of the *Master Agreement*. Or call the CPS Human Resources Department at 365-8307. We at the CEA office also are glad to help you understand these provisions.

West HS staff goes above and beyond

Teachers today shoulder many responsibilities. We must, at all times, be educators, but we also assume the roles of parents, mentors, healthcare providers, arbitrators, protectors and friends. We accept these responsibilities, knowing that all of these roles come under the title of being a teacher.

This became apparent at West HS, Thursday evening, Apr. 26. During the annual Cultural Night, several outsiders, whose intentions were to disrupt the program and create a disturbance, rushed the stage and a near melee

ensued in the back parking lot. Along with principal Arnold Holmes, Officer Brent Snyder and Safety and Security Officer Willie Campbell, four West HS teachers attempted to disperse the crowd until sufficient police could be summoned. These four teachers instinctively protected West HS’s family, students, parents and teachers alike.

CEA would like to commend these teachers who went above and beyond the call of duty. Ben Scott, Jeff Branson, Bob Bartels and Paul Whitehill proved that night they are truly *educators*, in every sense of the word.

Special notes

- ❑ **Celebrate Columbus Education Association Solidarity Week, May 21–25, 2007. Watch for materials and details in your building.**
- ❑ **CEA is currently seeking to fill the part-time position of Legislative Coordinator (LC).** A successful applicant for this position should demonstrate experience in working with political issues related to public education and public education employees. The applicant should be a member of CEA with the ability to motivate and work with people. The LC is responsible for informing leaders and members about political issues that relate to public education and employees, working with the CEA president and LEAP liaisons to increase member political activity and involvement. The LC will develop relationships with legislators to keep them informed of CEA member positions on legislative issues. In addition, the LC will work with OEA and NEA political action personnel to relay information from the state and national level to local leaders and members. The LC will also work to increase member participation in raising contributions to the Teachers for Better Schools (TBS) Fund. A stipend for the position will be determined annually by the CEA Board of Governors. The LC selected will not be released from the classroom. **Interested applicants should submit résumés to: Joyce Willeke, CEA Legislative Coordinator, CEA Office. The deadline for submission is Friday, May 25. Applicants will be contacted to set up selective interviews.**
- ❑ **Help celebrate the retirements of Jeff Corbin, Faye Davidson and Mary Carter-Roberts** on May 25 at 6 p.m. at the **Berwick Party House**. For more information call Elizabeth Sanders at 861-0061 or Linda Duerk at 351-9242.
- ❑ **Linda Williams and Ida Sewell** are retiring after **35 years** with CPS. They have decided to celebrate this accomplishment where they have spent so much time, Beery MS. Mark your calendars for **June 6** from **5–8:30 p.m.** at **Beery MS**. Call Wanda to *RSVP* at 237-3937 no later than May 25.
- ❑ The Social Committee of **Leawood ES** is hosting a dinner in honor of retirees **Millie Calig, Marilyn Clowson and Bill Young**. If you would like to join them on Friday, June 1, at 6:30 p.m. at **Berwick Manor**, *RSVP* to Cindy “CJ” Jamison at cijay4@yahoo.com.
- ❑ **A farewell open house** is planned at **Medary ES** on **May 16 from 4:15–6:30 p.m.** All former administrators and staff members are invited to help remember Medary forever. On **May 17 from 1:30–3:30 p.m., Medary ES will celebrate 114 years of education with a history day program**. It includes student work and performances, re-enactors and preservation society information officially designating Medary as a historic building.
- ❑ **Lucille Harris-Duncan** will be having an **open house** on **Thursday, May 24**, at **Northtowne ES** from **4:30–7 p.m.** A gala affair will be at Berwick Party House, **Saturday, June 2**, from **2–4 p.m.** For ticket information for the Berwick celebration call Laura or Mary at 365-5488.
- ❑ **Summer professional development workshops for K–12 teachers:**
1.) Seeking Freedom, Ohio’s Underground Railroad–Tuesday, July 10–Friday, July 14, 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. A non-credit workshop fee of \$275 includes four days of study, bus tour, lodging and tour fees. Two graduate credits are available for an additional fee. Contact Cathy Nelson at: cnelson@columbus.k12.oh.us for more information.
2.) Integrating Standards-based Dance into K–8 Instruction–Monday, July 23–Friday, July 27, 8:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m.; and **3.) Accelerated Motion: Towards a New Dance Literacy**–Monday, July 23–Friday, July 27, 12:45 p.m.–3:45 p.m. The non-credit workshop fee of \$275. One graduate credit is available for an additional fee. Contact Loren Bucek at: lebucek@aol.com for more information. **The deadline to register for these workshops is June 10.**
- ❑ Join CEA-R on a **day trip to Dayton** on Thursday, June 21. See the **Paul Lawrence Dunbar House and the Marilyn Monroe Exhibition** at the Dayton Art Museum. Lunch at the Masonic Temple is included in the \$74 cost. The deadline for registering is Friday, May 18. To register, visit the CEA-R Website at www.cea-retired.com, or mail in the form from the **CEA-R summer/fall brochure**.
- ❑ **MidState Educators Credit Union** announces the third-annual **Educators Golfing for Scholarships** event, **Monday, June 18**, at Riviera Golf Club. **Cost is \$80** per golfer. Proceeds benefit the MidState Educators Scholarship Foundation, which funds five \$2,000 scholarships each spring to graduating high school seniors. Contact the credit union at 221-9376.