

The CEA Voice

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High school FR meeting focuses on seven-period day

Faculty representatives from 14 high schools assembled to share their concerns with the CEA leadership. After taking an electronic survey, discussions among the representatives quickly turned to the problems created by the seven-period day.

The concerns expressed by the faculty representatives are the same ones your Association presented weekly to the central office during the first month of school. Your union has taken a proactive approach to solving problems and making adaptive changes. Unfortunately, we have been met by an administration that shows little interest in true collaboration. Even the simple, technical challenges are not being fixed.

Limited student supervision—14 FRs reported that students arrive much earlier than the start of their day. Only one FR indicated their students are being supervised during this time by administrators or safety/security personnel. One FR stated her concern about the need for increased security during inclement weather.

Common planning time inadequate—While students wander the schools unsupervised, teachers struggle to make the most of the common planning period. “We’re supposed to have been given this common planning time so that we can meet with teachers in our building,” said one FR. “I can go a month without seeing some of my colleagues that I need to see on a daily basis.”

Two-thirds of the high school representatives stated administrators were putting excessive pressure on teachers to use their planning time for professional learning communities. An even greater percentage said their department chairs bore the brunt of this undue administrative pressure.

Impromptu parent conferences—A majority of the FRs indicated parent conferences are being scheduled without advance notice or consent. “I welcome parental involvement, but sometimes the only way I know I’ve got a parent conference is a quick announcement on the PA right before it’s supposed to begin,” said one FR. “I’m not prepared for the conference, nor am I able to get my other tasks accomplished before my day begins.”

Teacher lunch periods—Some teachers have found that lunchtime has become more stressful and doesn’t allow teachers time to regroup. Seven of the FRs said that some teachers’ lunch periods are scheduled during the first or last period of the day. “I start at 7:15 and teach four periods straight,” said one FR. “I don’t eat lunch until after 1:30.”

Increased class sizes—The elimination of one period has caused study halls to all but disappear. Class sizes for electives and academic core courses have increased from last year. Thirteen of the 14 FRs agreed that without the option to schedule students into a study hall, some elective courses have become dumping grounds. At-risk courses included foreign language, art, music, yearbook and theater.

Student tutoring opportunities diminished—Without study halls and conference periods during the student day, opportunities to tutor students have decreased, said 75 percent of FRs. Some teachers offer tutoring during their lunchtime, but the half-hour student lunch cuts down on the available time to tutor. Predictably, students skipping the academic assist period to extend their lunch has become an issue in some schools.

Discipline alternatives reduced—The removal of PEAK has limited discipline options for administrators and teachers. Only a third of the FRs present indicated their staffs had attempted to create discipline alternatives to mitigate the absence of PEAK. “We are tolerating things this year that would have earned an automatic suspension last year,” said one teacher.

Decreased enrollment, increased violence—The district’s enrollment has decreased 9 percent since the 2001–02 school year, ending last school year with 5,432 fewer students. During that time period, reports of student fighting and violence have increased during the five years.

Teacher assaults escalating—Eleven of the 14 FRs indicated that at least one teacher has been assaulted in their school. In several high schools, five or more teachers have been assaulted this school year. In more than half of the schools, teachers are not filing charges or incident reports, further complicating the disciplinary situation.

The majority of FRs agreed that building administrators are handling teacher assaults properly. Responses seem to indicate a lack of support at the central office level. One faculty representative commented “Expelled students are being returned, even with assaults on teachers...[we blame] the district, not our administrators for a lack of support on discipline.”

Next steps—The information, issues and viewpoints expressed during the meeting will assist the CEA Officers and Board of Governors as they draft an action plan to grapple with the hulking deficiencies created for our students as a direct result of the seven-period day. Hopefully, Dr. Harris remembers that this was to be a pilot year and considers collaborating with teachers before scheduling decisions are made for the next school year.

CEA governor will be missed

The Board of Governors has lost one of its members. It is with great sadness the CEA announces the death of Linda Studier. She died unexpectedly on Saturday, Jan. 27, at Riverside Hospital. Linda had been a member of the Board of Governors for almost a decade. She was the District 1 Governor. She had also served two terms on the OEA Board of Directors and had been involved in a wide range of Association activities.

Linda most recently taught at Winterset ES. Besides her classroom activities, she founded the Camera Club for students at the school. She also taught at Georgian Heights ES and Cranbrook ES during her career in Columbus. Linda had been with our district since 1988 and was in her 33rd year of teaching.

Linda Studier will be missed, and her absence from leadership of CEA will leave a void. She is survived by her husband, Robert, of Henderson, Nev.; a step-daughter, Heather (Don) Hensley of Ill.; and two grandchildren, Catilin and Cole; five sisters, Guy Nell (Johnny) Johnston of Tenn., Glenda (Les) Andrew of Wash., Patty Corlew, of Ala., Sandy (Jim) Medd of Tenn. and Maggie (David) Henderson of Kan.; sister-in-law, Patty (Jack) Huckels of Ia.; many nieces, nephews, cousins, friends and colleagues.



Hayden to run for STRS seat

Taiya Hayden, a kindergarten teacher at Deshler ES, is running for a four-year term on the board of the State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio. Hayden was appointed last year to complete Mike Billarakis' unexpired term and now must run to retain her seat.

Tai has been an active member of the Association for a number of years. She has served as Senior Faculty Representative, Elementary Governor-at-Large, District 4 Governor, Capital District Vice President, member of the OEA Board of Directors and numerous CPS and CEA committees.

She needs petitions with at least 500 signatures returned to the CEA office by Feb. 5 to secure her place in the election. Petitions are available from CEA, OEA and from your faculty representatives.

Let's support Tai in her efforts to protect our retirement system.

Congratulations NBCTs

Great schools begin with great teachers. CEA would like to congratulate the district's new National Board Certified Teachers:

Tracie Helmbrecht, Hilltonia MS—English Language Arts/Early Adolescence

Charlotte Price, South HS—Exceptional Needs

Specialist/Early Childhood through Young Adulthood

Staci Rouse, Johnson Park MS—Exceptional Needs

Specialist/Early Childhood through Young Adulthood

Carrie Shivers, Westgate ES—Physical Education/Early and Middle Childhood

Olympia Williams, Fairmoor ES—Generalist/Early Childhood

This exceptional group of educators brings our district's total to 105. Due to the incomparable support of the process available to candidates, Columbus has more National Board Certified Teachers than any other district in the state.

Research is consistently positive about the impact of National Board Certification on improvements to teacher practice, professional development and areas of school improvement that are critical to raising student achievement.

The hard work of these new and of all of our district's NBCTs is another way teachers are making a difference in the lives of our students.

GRAD closing up shop, but some elements will remain

Many of you have heard the news: Houston-based Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) is ending its relationship with the Columbus Public Schools.

A study by Battelle for Kids, commissioned by GRAD, shows that progress has been slow with the program.

Katina Fullen, Columbus GRAD director, wrote to district leaders: "The GRAD Columbus board reached this decision after a rigorous evaluation showed that GRAD was not facilitating the desired rate of academic progress in its students."

The Columbus program, begun in 1999, is part of an older national effort to improve school climate and assist with academics, so that more students graduate and are prepared for college. Students who graduate receive merit-based scholarships worth up to \$4,000 toward tuition. Almost 200 Columbus students have earned the scholarships.

Columbus had implemented GRAD at the 15 schools that comprise the Linden-McKinley HS and Marion-Franklin HS feeder patterns. GRAD provided resources in math and reading and trained staff to change their disciplinary methods and create a more positive and effective school culture.

Schools are linked with community social services. Parent volunteers have joined the effort, becoming mentors for other parents.

But the Battelle report reinforced findings from an earlier study by MDRC, a New York-based nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization. The report gave a mixed review of GRAD Columbus effectiveness.

Much of the news was positive. It showed Linden-McKinley HS was promoting more students from grade nine to grade 10, a major indicator of high school success. More of its students are graduating and more are attending college. Test scores at both Linden-McKinley HS and Marion-Franklin HS were on the rise.

But students entered the system with significant deficits, and they were not making progress fast enough to meet GRAD's goals. The MRDC report noted that the program wasn't being consistently implemented, and that elements of it were being added slowly over a few years, instead of simultaneously.

But elements of GRAD have been of great value to educators and students. At least one of the aspects that will remain in place is the use of student advocates who help refer families to community services. But a task force is studying all the elements.

Fullen wrote, "We remain committed to these students and committed to supporting this school district."

Meanwhile, the 15 schools that are part of GRAD will continue to receive services this school year. Students now in seventh grade still will be eligible for college scholarships if they graduate from one of the two GRAD high schools.

Correction in CEA election information

The Voice provided incorrect information about CEA spring elections in its January issues. Here is the correct information:

Members who are interested in official leadership positions may declare their candidacy for open seats now through Feb. 16. The following positions are open: Board of Governors in Districts 2, 7, 9 and 10; and delegates and alternates to the 2007–2008 OEA and 2007 NEA Representative Assemblies.

Campaigning for these positions will take place from Feb. 20–Mar. 5. Members will vote for candidates March 6–19. The CEA Elections Committee will tabulate the votes on Mar. 20. Declaration forms are available from the CEA.

We apologize for the error.

Special notes

- ❑ **Income tax time:** Members who qualify may be able to deduct their Association dues. The amounts are: **Pay Plan A (21 pays)–\$718.98; Pay Plan B (26 pays)–\$717.93;** changed from Pay Plan A to B–\$668.94; changed from Pay Plan B to A–\$767.97; Half-time Plan A–\$405.92; Half-time Plan B–\$405.53. **Dues spent on lobbying efforts are not deductible on your federal tax return. The amount for this past year was \$30.45. For your convenience, the above amounts already reflect the deduction of this figure.**
- ❑ Application forms for **spring quarter fee waivers now are in all buildings.** The completed fee waiver application is due back to Northgate by **Friday, Feb. 9, at 5 p.m.** If you are a **Priority I** or a **Priority II** status, please be sure to **include the proper documentation** with your completed application. Without this important documentation, your priority status will change.
- ❑ **COSI** has a fun and exciting program for pre-service and new science teachers. It's an **overnight experience Feb. 23 and 24** featuring experts who can give you great tips for your classroom. **Graduate credit is available.** This year, the program has an added component: A session led by the Ohio Department of Education on preparing your students to answer short-response questions on the Ohio Achievement Test. For more information, visit www.cosi.org/educators/professional-development or contact Mary Ann Wojton at COSI at (614) 629-3148. The **registration deadline is Feb. 9.**
- ❑ The **Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (OCTELA)** seeks interested teachers to get involved with its exciting and informative programs. This is the 50th year of OCTELA and a perfect time to join. The next event is Friday, March 23, featuring poet Nikki Giovanni and other great speakers. Visit www.octela.org or call Mallikah Sharp at (614) 309-9097 or (614) 365-5359 for more information.