

The CEA Voice

Rhonda Johnson, President

www.ceaohio.org

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Plan might have prevented embarrassment

Your Association has been trying to be positive, but it's not always easy.

The most recent embarrassment surrounds the transportation of students by drivers with records of moving violations, DUIs, drug convictions and other documented offenses.



A great deal of attention, both locally and nationally, has been directed for failure of private bus companies to conduct thorough background checks on their drivers. Bus drivers with bad driving records should not be employed to transport students. Sadly, the leadership of our school system appeared to be blindsided by the entire situation.

The teachers union can stand proudly. CEA has always been an advocate of quality in training, instruction and credentials. We believe these standards need to be applied across the board so there is never a need for excuses.

On three separate occasions, CEA has offered a proposal to our school board and the administration for transporting our students. CEA's proposal reduces transportation for busing of high schools students by having them ride COTA. We arranged meetings with all parties involved to work out the details.

This was not a difficult sell. In fact, those who met with us had few problems with the millions of dollars that would have been saved for the district. It was a real win-win. The district saves money, the students get a free bus pass and COTA develops a new generation of riders.

The plan should not eliminate employment for any CPS employee. Instead, CPS could terminate sub-contracts and our own employees could take over the routes.

So why aren't we implementing this plan? It's because our administrative leaders said no. They do not believe that high school students will attend school unless they are provided with transportation on a school bus. The reasons are not clear to us. Many CPS high school students already use COTA to get to school or provide their own transportation. And most major cities do not transport high school students on school buses.

With this latest scandal, maybe it is time to reconsider. There is no doubt that with this plan our students will be safer because public entities will be responsible for making sure that bus drivers are appropriately licensed and certified. We believe that after the recent publicity, this is a step in a positive direction.

We invite administration to join us and keep our students' and the school system's welfare at the forefront of their concerns.

Seeking *schoolhouse* values

Since we live in Ohio, we may not have noticed that Los Angeles has an exciting new mayor. He has been granted a great deal of control over the school district by the California State Legislature.

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has a strong background in public education. He served as an organizer for the local teachers union. You may appreciate his perspective.

The Los Angeles Unified School District serves 700,000 students. The mayor has called for a major renewal of all aspects of this massive system. His plan is simple, but in many ways exciting.

The framework is built around the idea of the old-fashioned schoolhouse. Villaraigosa calls it a unique American institution, a place where young people learn and play. It is also a place for town hall meetings, gatherings and picnics.

It is time to restore the schoolhouse to its positive place in every area of town. (If we treated our school buildings that way, there may be no need to close school buildings because new uses could be found.)

Villaraigosa's plan is based on six pillars:

- 1 high expectations
- 2 safe, small, clean schools
- 3 empowered leadership (local)
- 4 powerful individualized teaching of a rigorous curriculum
- 5 family and community involvement
- 6 more money to local schools

Mayor Villaraigosa's plan sounds good to us. Of course, there must be firm accountability and demonstrated progress. The schoolhouse, after all, is simply a place with four walls. We can be the foundation to make it a positive place, a place where tomorrow can be found.

The schoolhouse could be a place where *no child is left behind* and the community feels a part of it. Maybe the mayor can make a difference for the Los Angeles community. Let's all hope that he is successful.

Layoffs can occur

CEA President Rhonda Johnson wants to set the record straight.

It's true she told *The Columbus Dispatch* for its Feb. 8 edition that the stakes regarding possible layoffs have changed. The school board recently announced that it wouldn't have to trim the budget as extensively as previously thought because the Ohio school voucher program hasn't taken hold as widely in Columbus as they had anticipated. *Dispatch* reporter Bill Bush reported this in his story.

Bush quoted Johnson out of context as saying the district isn't laying off *any* teachers next year. That statement simply cannot be made at this time.

Our president wants you to know it's always possible that layoffs may occur. Every year, administrators evaluate class sizes and program demand. Some teachers may be laid off due to a reduction of programs in specific areas of certification—for example, if family and consumer science is being trimmed next year due to program changes—and the teacher is not certified in any other area.

So, while no one should panic, Johnson says, "I don't want people to think there will be absolutely no layoffs. The majority of us probably won't see anything. But we really don't know everything yet."

Johnson has been talking with Superintendent Harris and is asking that any layoffs being planned be announced as soon as possible.

CPS/OSU Outreach Courses

The CPS/OSU Outreach Courses are available for pre-registration until Sunday, Feb. 25, and are listed below:

- Becoming a Reflective Teacher Through Preparing for National Boards: Part I
- Becoming a Reflective Teacher Through Preparing for National Boards: Part II
- Differentiated Education: Maximizing the Learning of ALL Students
- Educators and the Arts: The Performing Arts
- Engaging Students Through Educational Technologies
- ESL: Field Experience in Second Language Teaching (EDUT&L 887)
- ESL: Pedagogical Grammar of English (EDUT&L 925.46)
- G&T: Gifted Underachieving Students (EDUPAES 824)
- Institute on Middle Eastern Cultures, Part I
- Lake Erie Science for Teachers
- Science Content for the OGT and Beyond
- Social Studies: Making Real World Connections via Technology
- TECH-ing with Literacy
- The Culture Relevant Pedagogy and Urban Middle Schools
- The Impact of Brain Research on Teaching, Learning, and Diversity
- Trends and Issues in Teaching Reading (EDUT&L 828)

For more information and to register, surf to www.columbus.k12.oh.us/osu or call Greg Mild at 365-5039.

National School Counseling Week

Did you know that February 5–9 was National School Counseling Week? During an average day, CPS school counselors:

- ✍ provide individual counseling sessions for five students
- ✍ hold two small group counseling sessions
- ✍ visit two classrooms for guidance sessions
- ✍ speak with three parents
- ✍ consult with seven staff members
- ✍ contact two community agencies or colleges
- ✍ meet informally with 10 students

Everyday school counselors work to provide academic, personal and career counseling for all students. Their experience and training make them a critical support in the total education program by working with students, staff, families, community agencies and colleges.

We have 51 high school counselors, 26 middle school counselors and 36 elementary school counselors. CEA thanks our school counselors for the services they provide our students each day.

Special notes

- ❑ **Campaigning for CEA leadership positions will take place from Feb. 20–Mar. 5.** Please check out your colleagues' campaign materials they have sent to your building/unit. Voting for candidates will take place March 6–19. The CEA Elections Committee will **tabulate** the votes on Mar. 20.
- ❑ The second **PAS research support meeting** will take place on **Wednesday, Feb. 21, 4:30–6 p.m.**, in Room D at Northgate. Meet with other PAS participants, ask questions and share implementation ideas. Sample summary reports and short-cycle assessment data charts will be available for review. This session is not required but strongly recommended for new participants. For more information, call 365-8861.
- ❑ **Blue Jackets tickets available!** You can purchase tickets on a first-come, first-served basis for the following game: **Thursday, Feb. 22, Edmonton (4).** Call CEA at 253-4731 for additional ticket availability.
- ❑ In December, Rep. Scott Oelslager (R-Canton) introduced **H.B. 707 to create a dedicated revenue stream for STRS health care benefits.** The bill is supported by OEA and our partner organizations in the **Health Care Advocates for STRS.** This proposal calls for increasing both employee and employer contributions by 2.5 percent of payroll to create ongoing revenue for funding health care benefits for current and future STRS retirees. These increases would be phased in over a five-year period, in 0.5 percent increments. H.B. 707 did not receive a hearing but will be reintroduced in the 127th General Assembly.
- ❑ It is time to start preparing applications for **CEA scholarships.** This program, which has been in place for more than 23 years, is designed to provide scholarships to the children of Columbus teachers. The fund is financed with interest earned from Association bank accounts. Two scholarships are available, the **\$1,500 Christa McAuliffe Scholarship** awarded to an individual pursuing a degree in education and the **\$1,000 CEA General Scholarship.** Both scholarships are renewable for up to four years but at a reduced level from the first-year award. The committee has established Friday, May 4, as a final date to submit an application. Teachers may request an application form by completing the tear-off sheet below and returning it to the CEA office via school mail. An application form will be sent on receipt of this request. This scholarship program is not to be confused with the CEA Members Scholarship Foundation, which started in 1993 and experienced its eighth disbursement earlier this school year.

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.

