

The CEA Voice

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Unions are NOT the problem

Teachers unions are a favorite scapegoat for the failures of public education. Critics are always citing obstacles to the conditions for change and blaming the teaching associations.

And, as former New Jersey school district superintendent Larry Leverett wrote for *Edutopia*, a magazine published by the George Lucas Educational Foundation, it's easy to be drawn into this thinking.

The truth, writes Leverett, is that there are few studies that objectively evaluate the relationships between unions and student performance. Yet the evidence exists to show that unions have tremendously affected how educators work together to meet challenges.

Leverett writes that it is often union leaders who are willing to take risks "as partners to improve teaching and learning for the students for whom we share the responsibility for their success."

He offers some of the things he has learned along the way:

- *Don't vilify unions.* They exist to protect and advocate for their members. Well-organized and professional leaders are important resources.
- *Invest in capacity building.* Capitalize on the strengths of union leaders and management. And if help is needed to resolve conflict, then get it. It will be worth the effort.
- *Focus on interests, not positions.* This method leads to alternatives and solutions.
- *Cultivate integrity and reliability.* Both sides need to practice these qualities. Overcoming long histories as adversaries can be rough, but old habits can be broken.
- *Engage support staff and community leaders.* Present your message differently for different audiences. Don't assume everyone's needs are being met all the time.

We can think of dozens of reasons why you should value your local association. Here are a few:

- Your association determines your working conditions and salary, negotiating on your behalf.
- Your local promotes excellence for members.
- Association leaders are there to help you throughout the year.
- Your association is there to make sure your concerns are heard by the administration.
- Your association monitors implementation of and compliance with federal and state legislation.
- Your local association provides conferences and workshops to address professional issues.
- Your association provides comprehensive legal assistance in employment-related areas.
- Local association members can participate in annuity programs and receive discount rates on travel and car rentals.

The union has CLOUT. Get involved. The winners may initially seem to be us. But in the long run, the winners really are the students.

CEA Awards & Retirement Banquet

Three decades have gone by since CEA held its first event to honor retirees and teachers who have made a special difference in the Association and in students' lives.

The 31st Annual CEA Retirement & Awards Banquet is on Friday, May 18, at the Hyatt Regency Columbus. Everyone is invited to attend this special evening. In addition to retirees, presentations will be made to the CEA Friend of Education, the Outstanding Faculty Representative in each CEA district and the Outstanding CEA Member. Scholarships will be awarded to some very talented students whose parents are members of CEA.

All retirees and senior faculty representatives are invited to attend at no charge. The cost for others attending is \$25. To make a reservation call the CEA office at 253-4731. Watch for information that will reach your building shortly.

If you know someone who is retiring and did not receive a personal invitation to the banquet, please have that person call CEA Administrative Assistant Judy Nelson

Report from the OEA Representative Assembly

You will notice a slight one-time increase in the dues you pay to Ohio Education Association. At the assembly held April 27, delegates approved a one-time \$25 dues increase for the 2007-08 school year. It will support the public education school funding constitutional amendment slated for the November 2007 election.

Delegates also elected Patricia Frost-Brooks as OEA President. Frost-Brooks ran unopposed. She currently is serving her second three-year term as OEA Vice President and will begin her new term Sept. 1. Frost-Brooks worked as a middle school teacher for the East Cleveland City Schools before being elected.

South-Western City Schools teacher William (Bill) Leibensperger was elected OEA Vice President. Leibensperger, a member of the National Education Association Board of Directors, served as the OEA Secretary-Treasurer from 2000-06.

The Representative Assembly also honored the late Tom Mooney, former president of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT), as the 2007 OEA Friend of Education. Mooney died suddenly last December after serving as the OFT president since 2000.

At the OEA Awards Dinner, the CEA Minority Involvement Program Committee received the Doris L. Allen Award for its work in the area of human relations and social justice.



Pat Frost-Brooks



Bill Leibensperger

Merit pay is the buzz once again

The Cleveland *Plain Dealer* reported earlier last month that a national study is advocating teacher performance pay and proposing a system to award it.

The question is an interesting one that once again is creeping onto the public radar, especially in light of predicted teacher shortages across the country.

The study, by the North Carolina-based Center for Teaching Quality, followed 18 master teachers for a year, including CEA member Carole Moyer, and is recommending scrapping the old salary step system and replacing it with a system that rates teachers according to their effectiveness: novice, professional and expert.

It also recommends further rewarding teachers whose students in low-performing schools make significant gains.

Not everyone thinks it's a good idea. Teachers unions, including the NEA, believe that such pay systems potentially create inequities and competition. In Texas last month, lawmakers in that state's House of Representatives voted to halt the state's performance pay program and instead put the money into teacher raises.

Columbus began participating in a performance-pay effort, the federally funded TAP program, last year. Teachers at a handful of schools are eligible for as much as \$2,000 annually if their students meet improvement benchmarks.

CEA was in favor of this approach. The program is proving to be a great way for teachers to learn more while on the job and to move up the salary ladder as they progress in a meaningful way.

CEA President Rhonda Johnson recently told the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching: "There are things happening at TAP schools that should be happening at all schools. Teacher incentives and evaluations are provided in a fair manner, based on teaching skills and academic gains."

We can all agree that more and better resources for teachers are needed. *The Boston Globe* last month editorialized that attracting good teachers for the future is going to be a team effort. Better training, higher salaries, more professional development and enhanced mentoring support will be the tools that will win the match.

Discipline: England vs. Ohio

A new teachers' rights law is set to take effect shortly in England, giving educators the right to restrain and discipline unruly students—even outside school—according to an Apr. 2 report from the BBC.

The story, posted on the Internet, says, "The law sets out teachers' rights to break up fights and to confiscate items like mobile phones if misused. The changes are intended to put an end to what teachers' unions call the 'You can't tell me what to do' culture."

The law is intended to help police cyber-bullying as well, the story says.

The story also says that in England, teachers already had the right to intervene and restrain pupils, but this one spells out physical restraint, removal of students and detention as accepted responses to unruliness.

In Ohio, we also have rules governing discipline situations. Ohio Revised Code 3319.41(G) explains:

Persons employed or engaged as teachers, principals, or administrators in a school, whether public or private, and nonlicensed school employees and school bus drivers may, within the scope of their employment, use and apply such amount of force and restraint as is reasonable and necessary to quell a disturbance threatening physical injury to others, to obtain possession of

weapons or other dangerous objects upon the person or within the control of the pupil, for the purpose of self-defense, or for the protection of persons or property.

Ohio teachers are not permitted to use physical force as a disciplinary measure.

Call CEA any time you have questions about discipline and the law that governs reasonable restraint.

Celebrate National School Nurse Day

May 9 is the annual day when we honor our school nurses. National School Nurse Day was established in 1977 to foster a better understanding of the role of school nurses in the educational setting.

CPS has more than 100 school nurses. They are registered nurses who hold bachelor's degrees and complete additional coursework to be licensed by the Ohio Department of Education. Many hold higher education degrees. Last year our nurses evaluated 115,739 ill students and 60,018 injured students, as well as making more than 17,000 vision, dental and immunization referrals.

Not only do school nurses help children safely manage a large variety of health problems, but assist our school administrators and staff. School nurses were visited by building staff 11,374 times during the year to have their health-related questions answered or have their blood pressure checked. Nurses also participated in more than 1,400 educational activities, such as teaching or planning health programming. Join us in thanking them for all they do for our students, staff and school district.

Special notes

- ❑ **Hilltonia MS** is hosting a retirement happy hour for **Joanne Miller** and **Debbie Snavley**, which will be held at the **Varsity Club** on Thursday, June 7, from 4–7 p.m. The cost is \$20 per person. Make checks payable to Linda Baker at Hilltonia MS.
- ❑ Come join everyone at the **retirement party** for **Jan Stone**, Saturday, June 2, at 7 p.m. at the **Columbus Mannerchor**, 966 S. High St. The cost is \$6 for adults (cash bar) and \$3 for children. Call Pat Gibson at **Southwood @ Reeb ES** at 365-5533. *RSVP* by May 21.
- ❑ **Terry Logan-Mottinger (Fair Ave. ES)** recently was honored by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts with selection to the **VSA arts' Community of Practice Project**. The project focuses on collaborative professional exchange among teachers as they integrate their subject material with the arts. To learn more about the program, visit www.vsarts.org.
- ❑ **Cathy Nelson** was selected for the **National Endowment for the Humanities**-funded workshop, **Race and Place: African Americans in Washington, D.C., from 1800–1954**. She will travel to George Washington University in July and visit museums, explore the city and learn about African-American history. From July 10–14, join Cathy for a PD workshop, *Seeking Freedom, Ohio's Underground Railroad*, includes a two-day, one-night bus tour through southern Ohio and northern Kentucky to learn about Ohio's role during the Underground Railroad. For registration information, contact cnelson@columbus.k12.oh.us
- ❑ A **retirement party** for **Catherine Wheeler (Alum Crest HS)** is being planned for June 7 from 3–7 p.m. at her home in Whitehall. To *RSVP*, contact Daryl Curry at dcurry10@columbus.rr.com.
- ❑ **Shannon Haberman, Kathy Ebersbach** and **Gary Burns** are having a **retirement party** on May 24, from 6–9 p.m. at **La Scala Italian Bistro**, 4199 W. Dublin-Granville Rd. The cost is \$25 per person. Please *RSVP* by sending your check to Christina Day at **Southwood @ Reeb ES** by May 11.
- ❑ **Youth Advocate Services (YAS)** has provided foster care and family support services for needy and troubled children in the Columbus area for almost 30 years. The **mission of YAS is to support children, youth and families** to realize their potential hopes and dreams. YAS is **currently seeking nurturing families** to provide foster care for our youth in need of a temporary home. If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a foster parent, please visit our website at www.youthadvocateservices.org or contact Dorcas Porter at (614) 258-9927.