Better Schools

Celebrating 40 Years at CCOSA!!!
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CCOSA Director’s View

BY STEVEN CRAWFORD
CCOSA Executive Director

It is hard to believe that I am concluding seven years as the Executive Director of CCOSA. It is with mixed emotions that I begin this transition by working part-time next year, co-directing with Ryan Owens. My home is ninety miles from OKC and I am not getting any younger. It is time for me to spend more time with my children, grandchildren and more importantly my wife Paula. In the 2015-16 school year, Ryan Owens and I will share the executive director duties as CCOSA Co-Directors. I will be transitioning into a half time presence in OKC next year and retiring completely by June 30, 2016. I have thoroughly enjoyed the past seven years at CCOSA and believe it is a strong and viable organization poised to do great things for Oklahoma public schools, administrators, students and families. I am convinced that Mr. Owens will be an outstanding executive director and take CCOSA to new levels of significance and effectiveness. We are currently working through the process of hiring a full time director for OASA and your continued support and membership is very essential to our success.

Thanks to everyone who supported the “Rally” at the capitol on March 30th. Many of you went inside the capitol, walked the halls and visited with representatives and senators. It was a great day and I believe your presence made it successful. We are still tracking bills on RSA, TLE, EOI Testing, school board elections, charter schools, etc. and reporting on them every Tuesday morning at 9:00 A.M. during the legislative briefing. Our work on these bills will not be concluded until the very end of the session. Please let us know if you are working on or need information on a bill. We plan to alert you for assistance on bills as we move forward and want you to know how important you are to the legislative process.

I would also like to congratulate my good friend Lloyd Snow on being named the 2015 Oklahoma Medal for Excellence winner in Elementary/Secondary Administration. This prestigious award will be presented on May 16, 2015 as the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence hosts its 29th Academic Awards Banquet and Ceremony at 6 p.m. Saturday, May 16, at the Renaissance Tulsa Convention Center. Lloyd is an outstanding choice for this award and CCOSA is very proud to support his recognition for this remarkable achievement.

I look forward to hearing from you regarding any issues you see on the horizon. Please feel free to contact me any time at 405-524-1191 or 405-301-5535 (cell). Thank you again for your membership and support.

CONGRATULATIONS!

LLOYD SNOW
Oklahoma Medal for Excellence
Elementary/Secondary Administration

“ The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind in others the conviction and will to carry on.” Walter Lippman
NEW CCOSA Membership Database and Website (Coming Soon!!!)

With the help of Levant Technologies, CCOSA is in the process of developing a new membership database and website with online registration capability. All of our systems will be interconnected allowing us to offer even more benefits to our CCOSA members. The Levant staff is working diligently in collaboration with the CCOSA staff to meet our mid-summer launch date.

Levant Technologies, LLC was established in 2003 by Tarek Dina as a Norman-based custom website design and development firm, serving the entire OKC Metro area. Today, Levant Tech has eight full-time employees plus five additional part-time sub-contractors as support staff. Levant currently has over 450+ website clients across the United States, as well as a growing market of Mobile Websites and iPhone/Android Apps for Smartphones, Android Tablets, and iPads.

In May, all members will receive a blank membership form through the mail. This is a new form that explains all of the membership benefits/options available through CCOSA. It is our hope that you will take the time to fill out your form with your most current contact information. As of July, we are hoping to launch our new website, move to the new database system and have online membership registration available that connects with our new database system. We realize this is an ambitious goal and appreciate your patience as we work through the many challenges that come with a project of this magnitude. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Gracie Branch, branch@ccosa.org.
Barlow knows that grant writing goes far beyond putting words on a page.

Roland Smith
Superintendent
Lane Public Schools
On The Hill/Federal Relations:
Reauthorization of ESEA

BY DAVID PENNINGTON, ED.D.
President AASA
Superintendent, Ponca City Public Schools

As I write this column, the Senate recently passed a bipartisan bill to reauthorize ESEA. This is the first important step in making changes to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and putting an end to the current practice of allowing administration to write federal education policy through the waiver process. Unless this is your first time to read Better Schools, you know the reauthorizing of ESEA has been a long-time goal of, not only AASA, but every national education organization including NASP and NAESP.

NCLB is very unpopular today; however, this has not always been the case. It is hard to describe the overwhelming level of support NCLB enjoyed. The bill passed Congress with large majorities in both houses and strong support from both parties. In addition to congressional support, the law was also backed by every education advocacy organization in the nation except one, and that one was AASA.

When President George W. Bush signed the NCLB Act into law on January 2002, he outlined four broad principles for the legislation: stress accountability, trust parents, trust local people, and spend more money. In his speech, archived at http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov, Mr. Bush said schools “had to teach the basics and teach them well,” that “we trust parents to make the right choices for children,” that “we have got to trust local folks on how to achieve standards,” and “we are going to spend more money, more resources, but they’ll be directed at methods that work.”

I don’t think any of us today would argue with anything President Bush said that day. However, the rhetoric of NCLB and what the law actually did were dramatically different. In a letter dated November 8, 2001, Bruce Hunter (Associate Executive Director for AASA) notified Representative John Boehner, who at that time was the Chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, that AASA would not support the final conference report on HR1 (NCLB). In the letter, Hunter articulated the many reasons AASA would not support the bill. Here are a few of them:

✓ “Both the House and Senate versions of the bill wrest control over both evaluation of schools and accountability or professionals from the states and federalize those crucial educational policies.”
✓ “Asking teachers and principals to do more but not providing the funds needed to attract more qualified teachers and improved materials is simply wrong.”
✓ “The leap to federalize the evaluation of schools and accountability for educators and establish teacher qualification requirements in schools that receive no federal funds is unwise and unwarranted.”

(You can read the full letter at http://aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Acivity/files/AASAoppositionLetter110801.pdf)

Bruce Hunter’s words turned out to be prophetic. Since NCLB became law, AASA has been relentless in its efforts to push reauthorization of NCLB and restore the control of public education to the states and local boards of education. We are not alone. Today, AASA’s belief that NCLB is flawed federal policy is shared by a majority of teachers, administrators, school board members, top researchers, and state legislators.

The action recently taken by the Senate is an important first step. The next crucial step is to get the House of Representatives to pass their version of reauthorization so we can get the bill to conference committee and get a bill to the President. This past week, AASA identified 45 republican members of the House of Representatives who did not support an earlier effort of the House to pass their version of Reauthorization HR 5. One of the Representatives listed was Oklahoma Representative James Bridenstine (Tulsa).

I urge every CCOSA member to contact Representative Bridenstine’s office (202-225-2211) and encourage him to support HR 5 by moving the process forward to get the bill to conference and to the President’s desk this year. The Representative’s education staff member is Chris Ingraham; his email address is christopher.ingraham@mail.house.gov.
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CONGRATULATIONS to OAESP Administrator of the Year and National Distinguished Principal Donna Boles! Donna is the principal at Perkins-Tryon Intermediate School where she also served as a teacher for twenty-two years. Described as passionate and dedicated by her staff, Donna is known for always placing students first. She tutors students every day after school in order to provide the academic and emotional support critical to their success in school. In addition, she holds Saturday school sessions each weekend for those in need of extra support. Donna also works closely with community organizations such as 4Kids & Community and Partners in Education to attain much needed resources for her school. Donna will be honored this fall by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and VIRCO at a special ceremony in Washington D.C.

Congratulations also go out to Ashley Hearn, principal at Bailey Larkin ES in Owasso who was named the Principal of Excellence and Dr. Sheron House, principal at Will Rogers ES in Edmond, named the James R. Burnett Distinguished Principal. A special thank you to the following OAESP board members who served on this year’s selection committee: Shane Holman, OAESP President-Elect; Kas Nelson, NAESP State Representative/Federal Relations Officer; Julie Bloss, OAESP Board Member and former NDP; and Holly McKinney, OAESP Board Member and 2015-2016 President-Elect.

Please join us on Friday, June 12 for our OAESP Awards’ Breakfast/Meeting at the CCOSA Summer Conference. All OAESP members are invited (free of charge) as we honor our retiring members and administrators of the year. If you plan on retiring this year, please remember to contact the CCOSA office so that we can order your retirement watch. Also, don’t forget as you make your summer plans, to put the NAESP Annual Conference: Better Practices for Better Schools, on your calendar. This premiere event will be held June 30-July 2 in Long Beach, California. You will gain the knowledge and insights you need to drive your student’s success from the brightest minds in education so register now!

HAVE A WONDERFUL AND RELAXING SUMMER!

OASSP Spring Executive Committee Meeting was held April 7th in conjunction with Principal’s Day at the Capitol. Beginning with Legislative Briefing at 9:00am at the CCOSA Office members were informed and prepared for a visit with their representatives at the State Capitol. Lunch was provided by Edgenuity followed by the quarterly business meeting. Thank you to Dr. Lisa Griffin-Bliss, Dr. Susan Powell and Mr. Steve Schiever for arranging the “lunch and learn.”

OASSP will host their Annual Golf Tournament at John Conrad Golf Course, Midwest City with a Shotgun Start at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, June 8, 2015. A $10.00 registration fee is required and the rest of the day is FREE (including tee times, golf cart, lunch, beverage cart, and prizes). This is a great opportunity to unwind and network with colleagues.

At the 2015 CCOSA Summer Conference June 10-11, at Embassy Suites-Norman, OASSP will host a breakfast/meeting to honor retiring members and award winners. Please contact our office if you will be retiring this year, so we can order your retirement watch. All OASSP members are invited to participate in the breakfast from 8:30-10:00 am. Friday, June 11, in University A. Mr. Bob Cariker, Cariker School Services, Inc. will once again be providing door prizes!!!

For those who are planning for 2015-2016, be sure to include OASSP’s Fall Conference, October 28, 2015 at The Tower Hotel in Oklahoma City, on your calendar and in your budget. Featuring keynote speaker, George Couros, a Principal of Innovative Teaching and Learning. Mr. Couros’s focus is to help organizations create optimal learning environments for innovation within schools. Like last year, we will also be hosting an EdCamp format during the afternoon. This process received the highest evaluations we have received in years. Come join us with your leadership team and enjoy this professional development event devoted exclusively to the needs of middle level and high school administrators and teachers.

NASSP/OASSP will be hosting the first Oklahoma Assistant Principal Leadership Institute Wednesday, July 29, 2015. Don’t miss this exciting opportunity with keynote speaker Ms. Janice Case and an Oklahoma panel of past and present Assistant Principals of the Year sharing their insight and experience.

NASSP Ignite’16 will be in Orlando, FL February 25-27, 2016. It will recharge your batteries while enriching your knowledge and leadership skills. Don’t miss this opportunity to advance yourself as you advance your school. It’s a no-regrets investment in the future of your students and your school.
OMLEX board members hit a home run with their February conference “Swing for the Fences” at the Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center in Tulsa. With over 260 educators in attendance, speakers Jack Berckemeyer and Kim Campbell hit their keynotes out of the ballpark!! A huge thank you to conference planner Jason Galloway and all of the OMLEX board members who helped with the conference preparations. Next year the conference will return to the Renaissance Hotel in Tulsa, but on a new week! Be sure and mark your calendars for Thursday, February 18 and Friday, February 19!

This year for the first time, OMLEX members voted electronically for the position of President-Elect. Cordell Ehrich, principal at Cimarron MS and Kenny Ward, principal at Bridge Creek MS were the two candidates on the ballot this year. Election results will be announced soon! We also have several positions available on the OMLEX Board. Please contact Gracie Branch (branch@ccosa.org), OMLEX Executive Director, if you would be interested in being considered for a board position for next year. Also, please plan to attend the OMLEX Social on Thursday, June 11 at the CCOSA Summer Conference and network with your OMLEX colleagues...more details will be following.

At the CCOSA Summer Conference on June 11, ODSS will be presenting a strand designed for special education directors – although others are certainly welcome to attend! The presenters will include staff members from Professional Consulting Group (PCG), the company that will be running the state’s automated special education data system as of July 1, and the Special Education Services section of SDE. Andrea Kunkel will also present a session highlighting the impact of new Oklahoma laws and guidance from the U.S. Department of Education on school responsibilities for students with disabilities.

We’re pleased to announce that Texas education attorney José Martin will present sessions at the ODSS Fall Conference on the afternoon of October 29 and the morning of October 30. His topics include Rti and Child Find under the IDEA, learning disabilities evaluation issues from a legal perspective, and addressing dyslexia and reading issues post-passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act. Now that the state has identified new and increased five-year reading proficiency targets for Oklahoma third graders, these topics are more important than ever.

ODSS/CCOSA will be operating the First-Year Special Education Directors Project, in conjunction with SDE-SES, again during the 2015-16 school year. If your district will have a first-year director or if you will be a first-year director, please contact laura@ccosa.org or kunkel@ccosa.org or call Laura or Andrea at (918) 828-4004. There is no charge to any first-year director to participate. In fact, you’ll receive a $50 stipend for each of the four in-person training sessions you attend.

The ODSS nominating committee is in the process of determining the proposed slate of officers and other Executive Committee members for 2015-16. We can announce that President-Elect Kay Sandschaper will be ascending to the presidency, and current President Sherri Coats will be moving to the much-less-exhausting Past President’s position. We appreciate the hard work and commitment of all ODSS officers and Executive Committee members. Without them, we couldn’t have a proactive group that gets things done!

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Elsewhere in this issue, you’ll find ODSS President-Elect Kay Sandschaper’s Perspectives article, entitled Common Misconceptions about Special Education. Kay, the Executive Director of Special Services for Tulsa Public Schools, reserved the following two misconceptions for this column: first, that once a student is on an IEP, the child cannot be disciplined, and second, that a student on an IEP is entitled to anything the parent wishes. Of course, neither of these is true, but it’s really not difficult to understand why some may say and even believe them.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (Act), students with disabilities may be treated like nondisabled students for purposes of “disciplinary removal” for at least ten (10) school days over the course of a school year. (The term “disciplinary removal” refers to out-of-school suspension, removal from school for behavior without a suspension, in-school suspension (under some circumstances), suspension from school transportation (under some circumstances) and any other removal for purposes of discipline that prevents the student from accessing the services in the setting identified in his or her IEP or Section 504 Plan.) Once a school imposes disciplinary removal that crosses that threshold, the student is entitled to additional procedural protections before the school actually implements the removal.

One of the primary procedural protections to which the student is entitled is the IEP or 504 team’s conduct of a manifestation determination – an assessment process by which the team determines whether the student’s misconduct is or is not a manifestation of his or her disability. If the team determines that the misconduct is not a manifestation, the school may implement the disciplinary removal. If the team determines that the misconduct is a manifestation, then the student is to return to the educational setting identified in the current IEP, unless the parent and school agree otherwise. If the parent does not agree, the district can seek an order of removal from a hearing officer or a court by proving that the student would pose a danger to self or others if at school. If the student committed one of a short list of “very bad”
offenses, then the school may unilaterally remove the student from school to an interim alternative educational setting for up to 45 school days even if the “very bad” misconduct is a manifestation of his or her disability. In all circumstances – without exception – a student with an IEP is entitled to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education during a disciplinary removal.

So, districts can impose and implement the disciplinary removal of students with disabilities. However, when misconduct is determined to be a manifestation of a student’s disability, the district is in a tough situation. Absent a “very bad” offense, it can perhaps remove the student from the school setting, but must have either have the parent’s agreement or an administrative or judicial order to do it. If the parent disagrees, the district must either file a due process hearing complaint or a judicial complaint to seek an order of removal, proving that the student is dangerous at school. That’s an uphill and potentially costly process. So, although there IS a process, it may seem to some so unrealistic as to constitute NO process.

The same perception likely applies to those who see the district’s position as impossible when a parent requests or demands services or accommodations that school personnel believe inappropriate or unnecessary. In those situations in which compromise between parent and school team members proves elusive, the team’s administrative representative makes the decision. The administrative representative may REFUSE the parent’s request or demand and provide him or her with a Written Notice to Parents form that explains the school’s refusal, the reasons for it, the data upon which the decision is based and any options considered and determined inappropriate. The parent may file a formal complaint to the State Department of Education or the Office for Civil Rights or a Due Process Hearing Complaint to challenge the team’s decision.

Just as in the discipline summary above, there is a process in the law for differences of opinion. The school, through its administrative representative on the team, can certainly refuse a parent’s request or demand. However, the stakes may seem too high to chance a parent’s potentially costly challenge to a team decision, so the school goes along.

This summary probably doesn’t make you feel better about district options under the law. However, you have an often-overlooked resource you can turn to in these situations: mediation through the Special Education Resolution Center (SERC). If both the parent and district agree to mediation, SERC will make a well-trained and experienced mediator available to you without cost, at your location, to assist with these tough discussions. SERC’s mediation system has a very high rate of resolving situations considered by the parties to be unresolvable. For further information, contact SERC’s Program Manager, Jo Anne Pool Blades, at jo.pool@okstate.edu or (888) 267-0028.
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What Teachers Need

BY DR. ALAN BAKER
OASSP President-Elect
Principal, Cleveland High School, Cleveland Public Schools

Usually the purpose of this section of the Better Schools magazine is health and wellness for the school administrator. As the school leader's job continues to grow, it is imperative that we look for ways to rejuvenate ourselves both mentally and physically. Meggan Wilson, OAESP President did a great job outlining ways to balance work and health in the February issue of Better Schools. So with that thought, I would like to address this issue from a different perspective.

I want to say a few words about the importance school leaders need to place on helping our teachers do their jobs and maintain a healthy balance in their lives. Nationwide, almost half of all teachers leave the profession in the first five years. This is a trend we are certainly seeing in Oklahoma also, as we have a current teacher shortage of almost 1500 teachers. At a time when teacher morale and respect of the profession is at an all-time low, it is important to focus on methods to improve the health and mental well-being of teachers.

Most educators enter the profession because they want to help students. They want to be a part of watching their students grow and develop. They love to see that look in their students’ eyes when they get it, when true learning occurs. However, each year teachers’ duties increase. Teachers are having increasing difficulty finding the time to simply teach and engage students in authentic learning due to the following factors: the addition of state testing, the necessity to benchmark test, the implementation of formative assessments and analyzing data. As a building administrator, it is our duty to buffer as much as we can for our teachers and help them build their competence, relatedness and autonomy. Here are a few ways to work these concepts into our everyday actions to accomplish this goal.

Teachers need the opportunity to attend supportive, research based professional development. As we continue to implement more legislative mandates coupled with the requirements of the TLE, our teachers have more expectations placed on them than ever before. Too often, however, we do not provide the resources and training necessary to help them continue to grow and be successful.

Teachers need the opportunity to form community with their peers. Book studies, staff meals, “fun” evening activities or cookouts are all ways for your staff to spend some quality time together and wind down. Although teachers are very busy, you would be surprised by how many of your staff will take the time to gather periodically for an evening with their peers.

Teachers need to be allowed to teach. They need to be provided the autonomy to reach their students by using their strengths. Pacing guides, curriculum maps and standards are all essential, but teachers need to be allowed to show their personality. Too much mandated structure may stifle the creativity and individuality that each of your teachers bring to their classrooms.

Each of these examples will increase the duties on your plate, but we all know how important morale is to a building. If your teachers feel healthy, respected and appreciated, have the opportunity to grow professionally, and believe that you genuinely care about them; they will feel good about their job. Happy motivated teachers lead to a successful building. You just might find that this lowers some of your stress and improves your health as well!
CCOSA Conference at a Glance

BY DR. VICKIE WILLIAMS
Executive Director, OASSP

JUNE 5, 2015 FRIDAY
9:00am OASA Pete Rhames Golf Tournament - Broadmoore Golf Course

JUNE 6, 2015 MONDAY
9:00am OASSP Golf Tournament - John Conrad Golf Course, Midwest City
Sponsored by Achieve 3000, Jostens, Life Touch, & Sadlier

JUNE 9, 2015 TUESDAY
7:00pm Vendor Set-Up
5:00-9:00pm CCOSA Executive Committee Meeting – Benvenuti’s in Norman

JUNE 10, 2015 WEDNESDAY USSA Pre-Conference Workshop
7:00-8:30am Pictures (CCOSA staff and board members for all associations)
7:30-8:15am SNU Graduates Breakfast
8:00am Registration and Exhibit Hall open (both open all day)
8:30-9:30am Opening Ceremonies
9:30-10:00am Coffee Break-Exhibit Hall-Sponsored by Boynton Williams & Associates
10:00-11:00am Second General Session
11:05-11:50am Breakout Session I
11:50am-12:30pm Lunch
12:30-1:00pm USSA Business Meeting/Exhibit Hall Open
1:00-1:45pm Third General Session
1:50-2:35pm Breakout Sessions II
3:00-3:45pm Breakout Session III
6:15pm OASA Awards Banquet
Sponsored by American Fidelity, Scholastic, Horizon & McGraw Hill
OASA Lifetime Achievement Awards, Retiring Members & District Administrators of the Year
Pre-Registration Pick-up Following OASA Awards Banquet for 30 minutes

JUNE 11, 2015 THURSDAY Summer Conference Begins
7:00-7:45am Morning Prayer & Reflection for Administrators by Mr. Derald Glover
7:30am Registration and Exhibit Hall open (both open all day)
8:00-9:00am Breakfast Meeting
8:00-9:00am Breakout Session I
8:00-9:00am Exhibit Hall Coffee Break
9:15am FIRST GENERAL SESSION:
Recognition of CCOSA Administrators of the Year
Sponsored by American Fidelity, OSA, OSA, Scholastic, & Renaissance
10:15am Keynote Address by Diane Ravitch, "Reign of Error"
11:30am LUNCH ON YOUR OWN
ODSS Awards Luncheon Sponsored by Scholastic Honoring the Director of the Year, Walraven award winner & Prickett scholarship recipient
1:00-2:00pm Breakout Session II
Distinguished Lecturer:
2:00-2:30pm Exclusive Exhibit Hall Viewing
2:30pm Exhibit Hall Closes
2:30-3:30pm Breakout Session III
Distinguished Lecturer:
3:45pm ODSS Blathering and Dinner
4:30pm OMLEA/OAESP Executive Board Social

JUNE 12, 2015 FRIDAY
8:30-10:00am OASA Business/Breakfast Meeting, Door Prizes by Cariker School Services,
(Sponsored by MIND Research Institute)
8:30-10:00am OASSP Awards, Business & Breakfast Meeting, Door Prizes by Cariker School Services
8:30-10:00am ODSS Business/ Breakfast Meeting
8:30-10:00am OAESP Awards, Business/ & Breakfast Meeting
9:45-10:15am SECOND GENERAL SESSION:
Recognition of CCOSA Scholarship Winners
Sponsored by OSA, OSAG, Red Sky Constructors, Horizon, & MGM Benefits
10:15-11:00am Keynote Address by Diane Ravitch, "Reign of Error"
(Sponsored by Renaissance Learning)
11:00-11:20am Federal Legislative Update: Presented by Noelle Ellerson - OASA Associate
Executive Director, Policy & Advocacy, “What is Happening in Washington?”
11:20-12:00pm Keynote Address by Joy Hofmeister, Oklahoma Superintendent of Instruction
2:00pm Conference Concludes

JOIN CCOSA IN CELEBRATING 40 YEARS AT THE 2015 SUMMER CONFERENCE!

We invite you to connect with us in Norman at Embassy Suites the second week of June for CCOSA’s 2015 Summer Conference, the premier opportunity for administrators who want to ensure that professional learning drives improved results for teachers and students. Join us and get recharged, refocused, and ready to implement positive change in your school or district.

This year’s keynote speaker is Diane Ravitch, Professor of Education at New York University and a historian of education. From 1991 to 1993, she was Assistant Secretary of Education and Counselor to Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander in the administration of President George H.W. Bush. This will be a very special opportunity for all of us to learn about debates on education in the American School system over the last several decades. In her recent book, Reign of Error, she examined today’s American school system and argues against those who claim it is broken and beyond repair; an impassioned but reasoned call to stop the privatization movement that is draining students and funding from our public schools.

Diane Ravitch will help us all in looking at the issues that affect education today. The importance of curriculum… the importance of a well-rounded education… the importance of making sure that every child gets the best.

Register today at https://www.regonline.com/2015SummerConf

DIANE RAVITCH
Keynote Speaker
Where does time go? It seems as though it was only yesterday that Oklahomans witnessed the transition of administrations at the OKSDE and the start of another legislative session.

This session has been particularly tough due to the budget shortfall and the crushing amount of legislation, most of which potentially impacted public schools. Many topics have been considered this year, from the fate of the watermelon as the state vegetable to the banning of A.P. U.S. History (we stopped that bill!). This session has been one for the books!

While this legislative session has found our association involved in conversations once deemed taboo, the result of our advocacy has been respect for local control and a heightened awareness about the chronic underfunding of public schools. We have worked to increase accountability requirements for public charter schools while providing locally elected school boards with the authority to decide whether charters are appropriate in the communities they represent.

Informing our advocacy efforts with an actual measure of voter opposition to vouchers allowed CCOSA and other groups to stop efforts to promote vouchers. As an association, we will always remain true to our fundamental belief that public dollars should be used to fund public institutions. Defeating voucher legislation and halting talks about forced consolidation efforts are part of our bedrock foundation and were a major focus of our work at the Capitol. All throughout this session, educators were able to protect our important role in the conversation about the changing landscape of public education due to smart advocacy that stayed in line with our guiding principles.

There are only a few weeks remaining in this legislative session and we still have so much to accomplish. Those issues include the need to address the teacher shortage, delaying the quantitative component of TLE, adopting a new assessment system that measures college and career readiness, and protecting the voice of parents in RSA. Against the backdrop of needed regulatory relief, we face a staggering self-imposed budget shortfall that jeopardizes the important work of our schools and other core functions of government.

The OKPTA Brighter Futures Rally is now a distant memory for many elected officials; and with many groups struggling to survive the state’s $611 million budget shortfall, it is imperative that the voices of educators continue to be heard loud and clear. Our singular focus should be the importance of the state’s investment in a high quality public education system that has the flexibility necessary to meet the needs of all students.

Let’s put some facts out that will stand in the way of the “truth” about education funding in Oklahoma:

• This year the legislature appropriated $160,716,000.00 less for the formula than in 2009.

• There are 35,936.00 more students today than in 2010.

• It would take $379,983,458.40 to pay for all new weighted students (117,956 WADM increase since 2009) and restore per pupil funding to 2009 levels.

• Oklahoma teachers have the third lowest pay in the nation – making $12,255.00 less than the national average teacher salary.

• Last year, out of $6.4 billion in expenditures for common education, only $229 million (3.58%) was spent on administrative costs.

• Over the past two fiscal years, Oklahoma schools have been forced to use $167.7 million (almost 25%) of their emergency reserve funds to make their budgets work.

Our challenges are real and the stakes are terribly high. For five years we have operated under a moratorium on the most important mandates of HB 1017. A devastating teacher shortage continues to leave far too many students without a highly qualified and permanent classroom teacher. Burgeoning class sizes make individualized student instruction nearly impossible. Demands for better outcomes are always on the rise, resources and support for success often prove elusive, and we continue to do all we can with what little we have been given. To realize our long-term objective we must help our elected officials understand the reality we face.

We may be battle weary, but we must continue to push for those budget and policy proposals that allow Oklahoma’s public school students to become our state’s top priority. Our student success rates are remarkable given our state’s current level of investment in public education. Despite our challenges, educators continue to make school a special place for every child. Let’s have a strong finish this legislative session and continue to pressure our elected officials to do all in their power to provide educators and parents the resources necessary to cultivate Better Schools!
Common misconceptions about special education

BY KAY SANDSCHAPER
ODSS President-Elect
Executive Director of Special Services, Tulsa Public Schools

When surveying my colleagues about the most common misconceptions in Special Education, a few themes emerged consistently. The first concerns funding, while others relate to teachers, student discipline and parent requests for services and supports.

School districts are raking in funds for students with disabilities. In fact, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has not been fully funded since its inception as Public Law 94-142 - the Education for All Handicapped Children Act - in 1975. While Congress is authorized to contribute up to 40% of the average per pupil expenditure to support special education services, the actual federal contribution is closer to 14.5%. According to the New America Foundation’s Federal Education Budget Project (4/25/2014), “the population of students served under IDEA has grown at nearly twice the rate of the general education population. During the twenty-five year period between 1980 and 2005, the IDEA population increased by 37 percent, while the general education population grew by only 20 percent. Moreover, students served under IDEA today account for about 13 percent of the total education population, up from about 10 percent in the 1980s.” A growing special education population, along with federal underfunding and state cuts certainly does not have districts “raking in funds.”

There is an abundance of highly qualified applicants that districts have chosen not to hire. Boy, do I wish that was true!! In fact, the shortage of qualified teachers in Oklahoma exists both in special education and general education. The Oklahoma Educator Workforce Shortage Task Force Initial Report from January 2014, reported that, “Oklahoma’s urban school districts are not alone in the educator workforce shortage they face. School districts across the state have found it difficult to hire and retain effective teachers, even in traditionally easy-to-staff positions and geographic locations.” This is certainly not news to anyone reading this. Special Education positions are often not easy to staff. Between low pay, mountains of paperwork, and everyday challenges of curriculum and behavior, recruiting and retaining special education teachers can be difficult. Fortunately, Oklahoma HB 1233, enacted in 2013, provides a non-traditional method for individuals to obtain special education teacher certification (mild-moderate or severe-profound). The process begins with 120 hours of intensive special education training known as “Boot Camp.” A no-cost Boot Camp will be offered by the OSDE-SES in the Tulsa and Oklahoma City areas this Spring. Certain universities also have Boot Camp offerings. Keep your fingers crossed that we get many good candidates!!!

Another perception out there is that once a student is on an IEP, the child cannot be disciplined and is entitled to anything the parent wishes. For more on this topic, see the Special Education Update by Andrea Kunkel on page 10 in this issue.
Reasonable Assurance – Send & Save!

BY JESSICA SHERRILL
Director of OPSUCA

It’s about that time of year again! Time to send a reasonable assurance letter to your employees who you intend to have back for the 2015-2016 school year. This simple practice can save your school district thousands of dollars in unemployment costs! Yes, you read correctly! Thousands! A sample reasonable assurance letter is attached.

In 2015, a single Claimant could receive up to $490 per week. Over the course of your summer break (approximately 11 weeks), that could add up to $5,390. If you are rehiring that employee, there is no reason to pay this expensive claim.

Every summer, a large number of unemployment claims come sweeping in to the OESC and then to OPSUCA by school employees who are not working in the summer and mistakenly think they should be paid unemployment during summer break. Below are steps to avoid paying unnecessary unemployment.

How to Avoid Unnecessary Unemployment Costs this Summer:

For the best case scenario and to avoid paying any unemployment costs, plan to make hiring decisions sooner rather than later. Ideally, you can go ahead now and provide written reasonable assurance to all due process protected employees before the end of this school year. This can be a memo in their mailboxes, a letter mailed to their homes, or an attachment to their next paychecks. It must be in writing and not just provided verbally.

It’s important to know that the reasonable assurance letter does not bind the board. It serves instead to express to your school employees that there is an intention to have s/he return for the next school year. Any unemployment claim filed by such an employee will be denied, which means you pay nothing! If the administration or board goes another way on that, there is a remedy in law that would allow unemployment benefits accordingly. In other words, there is no penalty or negative consequence for giving reasonable assurance then having to withdraw it later.

In conclusion, although there are legal hiring deadlines for teachers and support, that does not protect your school against an unemployment claim. If you decide to hire after summer starts, then be sure to notify the employee in writing immediately that s/he has been rehired for next year.

OPSUCA suggests you send reasonable assurance letters to your substitutes, other temporary workers, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, custodial/mechanical staff, paraprofessionals and teacher’s aides, temporary teachers you intend to rehire, and anyone else you anticipate might file for unemployment.

The OPSUCA team is available to answer your questions and is happy to help you determine steps your school district can take now to save from paying unemployment later. We will continue to send out information on reasonable assurance and provide tips through the summer, because our main priority is to save you money and make unemployment uncomplicated.

OPSUCA is a self-insurance trust for member public schools’ unemployment compensation expenses. It is sponsored by OSSBA and CCOSA and is administered from the OSSBA offices in Oklahoma City. Currently, 342 schools, technology centers, and cooperatives are members of OPSUCA.
Another school year has come and gone. I have no doubt that educators are looking forward to the summer months ahead. While June and July are still busy months for most school administrators, there always seems to be more time to relax and recharge our batteries during this time. It is also a good time to get acquainted with new reading material. One book that I have read and enjoyed recently is Deliberate Optimism: Reclaiming the Joy in Education by Debbie Silver, Jack Berckmeyer and Judith Baenen.

If you are looking for a book to help sharpen your skills on RTI, formative versus summative assessments, or effective data analysis, then this is probably not the book for you. While it is important for educational leaders to be knowledgeable about areas such as these, it is also imperative that we continue to develop our ability to promote positive attitudes within ourselves and the educators that we have influence upon. We are currently working in an era that is particularly critical of our educational system. That criticism is felt by educators and over time it has eroded the happiness within many of them. This trend will continue unless the leaders in our profession can learn to create environments of optimism.

The authors of Deliberate Optimism are among the best educational speakers in the country. OMLEA has worked with Jack Berckmeyer for several years. Most recently, he served as our keynote presenter at the 2015 OMLEA conference. Jack and his co-authors have identified real strategies that will help educators accentuate their optimistic behaviors, thus creating happier adults and students alike. Anyone who has ever seen Jack or Debbie present knows that they are two of the funniest people around. Lucky for us, they have transferred that humor into their book. This makes for a very easy and enjoyable read. Deliberate Optimism is a must read for administrators. It is also a great book for teachers to get their hands on and it will be a wonderful option for your next book study. These strategies do not require hours of planning to implement and I believe that all educators will appreciate the information that they take from this interesting read.
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Meet Our Expanded Oklahoma Team:

Donna Bigbee
dbbigbee@earthlink.net
405.503.8228

Kathleen Messenbaugh
jkm95@cox.net
405.615.3020

Beth Daniels
bdaniels@booksourcing.com
800.444.0435, ext. 278

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OAESP James Burnett
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2015 OAESP Principal of Excellence
Dr. Sheron House
Will Rogers ES
Edmond PS

PERKINS-TRYON
2016 OASSP High School Principal of the Year!
Jeremy Jackson
Warner HS
Warner PS

2016 OASSP Middle School Principal of the Year!
Dana Renner
Central MS
Edmond PS

2015 OASSP Assistant Principal of the Year!
Emily Steele
Edmond Memorial HS
Edmond PS

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DISTRICT #1  Doug Melton, Guymon
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DISTRICT #3  Bill Settter, Watonga
DISTRICT #4  Ned Williams, Pawnee
DISTRICT #5  Clark Ogilvie, Owasso
DISTRICT #6  Don Raleigh, Pryor
DISTRICT #7  Robert Romines, Moore
DISTRICT #8  Jeanene Barnett, Bristow
DISTRICT #9  Tom Wilsie, Tecumseh
DISTRICT #10  Jeff Holmes, Coweta
DISTRICT #11  Scott Farmer, Sallisaw
DISTRICT #12  Jeff Daugherty, Merritt
DISTRICT #13  Randy Batt, Cache
DISTRICT #14  Keith Weldon, Calumet
DISTRICT #15  Jimmie Dedmon, Walters
DISTRICT #16  Zack Powell, Wayne
DISTRICT #17  Cliff Johnson, Latta
DISTRICT #18  Bill SanMillan, Stuart
DISTRICT #19  Ted Brewer, Haworth
DISTRICT #20  Doug Major, Meridian CTC

OASA DISTRICT ASST. SUPT/CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

DISTRICT #1  Dixie Purdy, Guymon
DISTRICT #2  Tom Fisher, Woodward
DISTRICT #3  Karl White, Enid
DISTRICT #4  Karie Kellert, Cleveland
DISTRICT #5  Trish Williams, Tulsa
DISTRICT #6  Randy Darr, Miami
DISTRICT #7  Bret Towne, Edmond
DISTRICT #8  Curtis Shelton, Bristow
DISTRICT #9  Ronda Townsend, Seminole
DISTRICT #10  Max Myers, Coweta
DISTRICT #11  Anita Lightcap, Tahlequah
DISTRICT #12  Cindy Buckmaster, Elk City
DISTRICT #13  Cindy White, Tipton
DISTRICT #14  Geromy Schrick, Mustang
DISTRICT #15  Merry Stone, Duncan
DISTRICT #16  Gayle Castle, Blanchard
DISTRICT #17  Bill Nelson, Byng
DISTRICT #18  Rachel Pugh, Wister
DISTRICT #19  Linda Coffman, Valliant
DISTRICT #20  Bruce Campbell, Francis

Tuttle CTC
TLE Update

BY DR. MARY MERITT
CCOSA TLE Liaison

In the fall of 2014, The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) invited the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) to come to Oklahoma and interview a cross-section of educators in focus groups to determine the success of the training and the implementation of the reform efforts. (See the full report, “Oklahoma Teacher and Leader Evaluation Systems” Focus Group Findings, November 2014” on the Oklahoma State Department of Education website.) Andy Baxter, representing SREB, summarized the findings for the TLE Commission. The Tulsa Model is finding acceptance and support across the state. His presentation included information to the Commission that the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)/Student Outcome Objectives (SOOs) are not grounded in research. As a result, the Commission recommended to the Oklahoma State Board that SLOs/SOOs developed in Oklahoma districts be delayed and not reported in 2014-2015.

As the SREB results indicate, the school district personnel utilizing the Tulsa Model have indicated an acceptance that the qualitative portion of TLE is an improvement over the old evaluation system. In 2014-2015, as of April, 1699 administrators were recertified within their two year time frame to verify their competence in implementing the Tulsa Model. In addition, 283 administrators and leaders completed the 3 day New Administrator Training. Administrators and leaders who failed the new administrator testing on process and/or calibration were provided additional one-on-one training as well as additional training materials. As a result, all administrators and leaders were successful in certifying.

The schedule for summer and fall trainings is complete. Please see the information on this page for the summer training dates and go to www.ccosa.org for more information on the fall dates. The coming year will provide time for decisions to be made regarding professional development and any additional components of the TLE Model for the rest of the state. It is anticipated that administrators, teachers, and leaders will collaborate and refine the model. In fact, it appears that time will allow for “additional insight into how TLE can become a beneficial and trusted system for improving teaching and learning.” (SREB, November 2013, p. 4)
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