



Thoughts from the Chair

Dear Members:

It's February, and we still have weeks of winter, namely March and April, here in Colorado. Okay, maybe it's not usually that bad, but if this season's state legislature warrants any consideration, it is! The following numbers from Great Ed ought to shock you out of your winter doldrums:

"Here's a comparison of the 2008, 2009, and 2010 Quality Counts data (note that because of the lag in available data, the new statistics are based on 2007 expenditures -- that is, *before* the current recession):

Per pupil funding, adjusted for regional cost differences:

2008: 38th nationally

2009: 40th

2010: 42nd

Per pupil spending (adjusted for regional cost differences) compared to U.S. Average:

2008: \$1,034 below the national average

2009: \$1,449 below the national average

2010: \$1,919 below the national average

Rank in teacher pay parity (i.e., how teacher salaries compare to salaries in comparable professions)

2008: 43rd

2010: 50th

That's the context for the current legislative session -- where **cuts of at least an average \$440 per pupil** are virtually certain for the coming school year." (*Race to the Bottom*, 14 Jan. 2010)

So that's the scenario, folks. We knew that when Amendment 23 runs out in 2011, we'd be in worse shape, and now it's the worst with a bad economy.

What can we do? Well, I remember being at the Amendment 23 rallies in Denver as I'm sure some of you were. We acted collectively to help shore up public education in Colorado. That time has come again. The legislature started the season with 15 pages' worth of bills targeting education, ranging from PERA to teacher effectiveness. We as members need to be paying attention.

If you want a first-hand experience at the state capitol under the leadership and umbrella of CEA, then I invite you to join me at Village Inn in Monument (off Hwy. 105) at 6:30 a.m. on Monday, March 15. We'll have breakfast (on me), then car pool to Denver for a chat with CEA and some of our legislators.

Please RSVP with Maryann at 635-5694 or e-mail at mbarrett@nea.org so I know to expect you. See you over a strawberry short stack!

Liz Koop
PPEA President

Join us for Lobby Day at the Capitol

Monday, March 15

Meet at the Monument Village Inn at 6:30 a.m. for breakfast then car pool to Denver for an opportunity to talk with our legislators

RSVPs to mbarrett@nea.org

VIEW FROM THE PEAK

Nonrenewal vs. Resignation: What Every Probationary Teacher Should Know

(C.R.S. 22-63-203)

- The statutory deadline for written notification to a probationary teacher of the Board of Education's decision not to renew his/her contract is June 1. Absent such written notification, a probationary teacher is deemed to be reemployed for the following school year.
- Teachers who might be or have been nonrenewed should request letters of recommendation from supportive administrators and colleagues as soon as possible. Do not wait for official notice of nonrenewal to take this step.
- Teachers have a right to know the reason(s) for their nonrenewal. If such reason(s) are not provided in the notice of nonrenewal, the teacher should make a written request to the superintendent that the reasons be provided in writing. The principal or other recommending administrator should also be asked for the reasons for the recommendation.
- There is no legal basis for challenging a nonrenewal unless there is evidence the nonrenewal is based on unlawful discrimination (race, sex, age ethnic origin, religion, or handicap) or constitutional violation (freedom of speech, religion, or association).
- A teacher may be given the option or even pressured to resign rather than be nonrenewed. However, in accepting this option, the teacher may be forfeiting a right to receive unemployment compensation.
- Every teacher who is nonrenewed should file with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (1-800-388-5515) for unemployment benefits. This should be done the last workday of the school year. Any teacher whose benefits claim is denied should immediately contact PPEA. The time limit to appeal such a denial is fifteen (15) days.
- Nonrenewed teachers' school district insurance coverage automatically continues through the end of the contract year. They have the right to continue their coverage for at least 18 months after the end of the contract year at their own expense.

China, Iran and your School Building

By Allyn Kratz,
Executive Director

The other day, as I drove back to the office from a meeting in one of the Pikes Peak area schools, I heard a news report on the radio about how China was restricting communications of their citizens by blocking access to Google and by hacking into Google servers. The story continued to detail how Google is also being kicked out of Iran. In the commentary part of the story, one reporter stated, "We should not be surprised by these actions, all tyrants attempt to limit communications between the citizens, attempt to keep people from exchanging ideas, and attempt to keep them from sharing their information."

My mind immediately jumped to the school I had just visited and then on to many other schools in the Pikes Peak area.

The management style de jour

of the schools in this area appears to be very similar to that of the above referenced tyrants. Principals are writing up employees for talking with each other or even parents and the public. What are they afraid of?

Tyrants are afraid of the people around them and the people who work for them. Strict control of all aspects of their turf is essential, because if one allows people to think for themselves, allows creativity, and allows people to dream, control might be lost. Instead, intimidation, harassment and bullying are the norm. Problems are to be controlled and squashed. People who bring forth problems are viewed with suspicion.

In a democratic society the belief system is based on the concept that the citizens or employees or the volunteers in a country, school or organization have minds that function and people are capable of creating many and varied solutions to events that occur. Problems are viewed as op-

portunities. People who bring forth problems are viewed as interested in creating a change that has a chance of success.

One of the primary purposes of our educational system is to educate the young populous in the democratic system so that they are prepared to take their place in this society when they reach that age.

The education system that I envision for our democratic society would be one in which the administrator in charge would not be operating in fear of his/her colleagues and staff members but would embrace their diversity, creativity, and their energy. In my education system, the administrator would create an environment where the exchange of ideas is encouraged, experimentation is celebrated, and failure is thought of as a learning opportunity.

Are you being evaluated properly?

By Mike Stahl, Executive Director

Spring will be here soon (or that's what I keep telling myself)! For educators that certainly means several things; CSAPs (joy), weather changes and the resulting behavior changes, snow days (maybe), preparation for graduations/onset of senioritis, dealing with the loss of colleagues to non-renewals and retirement, and so many other things, but maybe most importantly, your summative evaluation. Even some veteran teachers are not aware of the law on evaluation in Colorado. Most of our new members are lost concerning what the evaluation process should look like. Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS) have an entire section devoted to teacher evaluation (22-9-101 through 109). Be sure to check your school board policy on evaluation in Section G (Personnel) regarding evaluation of personnel.

Here's what the law says about evaluation. Each district must have a written evaluation system for teachers, principals and administrators. In developing the system, the local school board shall consult with administrators, principals, and teachers employed within the district, parents, and the school district licensed personnel performance evaluation council. So you may be asking yourself "What the heck is the licensed personnel performance evaluation council?" Every district must have one that is composed of a teacher, one central administrator, one principal, one resident from the district without a child attending school in that district, and one resident with a child attending school in the district. Their purpose is to conduct a continuous evaluation of the evaluation system and to consult with the school board as to the fairness, effectiveness, credibility and professional quality of the system. This council is responsible for developing written standards for evaluation which clearly specify satisfactory performance and the criteria to be used to determine whether the performance of certified personnel meet such standards. The board must consult the council before any amendments are made to the district's evaluation plan.

Do you know who is on your evaluation council? The members should be listed as part of the evaluation tool in your district. The composition of the council is public information and you should be contacting members of the council if you have ideas or concerns regarding the evaluation tool in your district.

What are the purposes of evaluation? The law states that the purposes of evaluation are to serve as the basis for the improvement of instruction, enhance the implementation of curriculum, serve as a measure of professional growth and development, serve as a measure of satisfactory performance or as documentation of unsatisfactory performance.

Probationary teachers must be observed a minimum of two times per year with one evaluation produced. Non-probationary teachers must be observed a minimum of once per year with an evaluation produced at least every three years. The frequency and duration of observations should be identified in your evaluation system. If you are being given "drive-bys," make sure you are getting copies of those observations and responding in writing if you do not agree with the feedback given. These types of observations serve better as tools of supervision and building the familiarity of the principal with your teaching methods than to serve as a tool of evaluation. However, in some districts, these are used to evaluate and can be subjective snapshots.

What can be included as part of the evaluation report? Direct observation (not recorded electronically) must be part of the evaluation and include the date(s) of observation. It should identify specific strengths and weaknesses. Data sources used should be identified. The evaluation of a teacher may include any peer, parent, or student input obtained from standardized surveys. Random or solicited comments from students are not necessarily appropriate. You must be evaluated by an individual who is licensed and trained. Your evaluation report must be signed by your evaluator and the evaluator's supervisor, as well as you. The law clearly states that the signature of the teacher does not necessarily indicate agreement.

If you do not agree with the evaluation you have been given, you may attach a rebuttal to the evaluation so that it is placed in your personnel file.

If you feel that the evaluation law or policy in your district has been violated, you have the right to file a grievance to resolve the issue.

It is interesting to note that according to Colorado Revised Statutes, each principal's evaluation shall include input from the teachers employed in the principal's school and may include input from the students enrolled in the school and their parents. Each school district shall specify the manner in which input from teachers and from students and parents, if any, is collected but shall ensure that the information collected remains anonymous and confidential.

Have you provided input into your principal's evaluation this year, or any year?

On the matter of your evaluation, we encourage you to write a response to any and all evaluations to add to the record of your teaching professionalism. Don't permit your voice to be silenced and don't permit one person's opinion, and it is an opinion, be the only documentation of your teaching performance.

Rinne Memorial Scholarship for Certified Members

Scholarship Application

Guidelines

The Rinne Memorial Scholarship is dedicated to the memory of Roland Rinne, a history teacher at Falcon High School, and his wife, Penny. Roland was an outstanding teacher who believed that all students can learn. He had a special commitment to community service, involving himself in leadership roles in organizations that supported education, and he was deeply involved in his faith. Penny was an administrative assistant at PPEA. This scholarship was created to honor their memory and philosophies.

The scholarship is awarded annually to one certified PPEA member in an amount determined by the Pikes Peak Education Association Executive Board.

The intended use of this scholarship is for the continuing education of the recipient.

Applicants will be required to meet the criteria below to be considered for this scholarship.

Application Process:

(NOTE: Applicant must be a current *certified* member of the Pikes Peak Education Association in good standing.)

Here's how to apply:

Send the PPEA Executive Board three (3) letters of recommendation as follows:

- two letters from teaching colleagues confirming and describing applicant's qualities, abilities and strengths; and
- one letter from the applicant discussing and validating the

scholarship need and/or desire and describe his/her involvement and/or history with the Association.

The letters of recommendation should be sent to the office of the Pikes Peak Education Association to the attention of the PPEA Executive Committee, 2520 North Tejon Street, #200, Colorado Springs, CO 80907. Questions should be directed to Maryann Barrett at mbarrett@nea.org or by calling 635-5694.

Letters must be received by no later than May 1, 2010 to be considered.

Please send all three letters in one packet.

2010 Ethnic Minority Scholarship

The Ethnic Minority Advisory Council of the Colorado Education Association (CEA) is offering four \$1,000 scholarships to ethnic minority high school seniors whose parents or guardians are CEA members. The scholarships will assist students in pursuing college degrees in the 2010-11 academic year.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for the scholarship, the applicant must:

1. Be a dependent child of an Active, Retired, or deceased CEA member;
2. Be a graduating high school senior in Spring 2010;
3. Be a member of one of the following ethnic minority groups: American Indian/Alaska Native; Asian; Black; Hispanic; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; or Multi-Ethnic;
4. Plan to pursue a college degree at an accredited higher education institution and have been accepted by this institution;
5. Submit confirmation of acceptance from the higher education institution;
6. Include two (2) letters of recommendation:

a) One from his or her high school regarding professional or student academic performance and ethnicity (written within the last year) and

b) One personal reference from a non-family individual who is familiar with the applicant's aspirations, education goals, ethnicity, personal responsibility and integrity, social and civic contributions, and personal achievements (also written within the last year).

Selected Applicants will be issued one-time \$1,000 checks upon receipt of documentation, such as receipts for their tuition and fees, books, etc.

Application Deadline

The completed application must be postmarked no later than March 31, 2010.

Successful applicants will be notified by May 10, 2010.

****Contact PPEA at 635-5694 for an application.****

Local News

U ROCK THE MEMBERSHIP

is the slogan being used this year by Cañon City Education Association's newly organized Membership Task Force (MTF). This group of people has taken on the challenge of increasing membership in the local. The MTF members include Dwayne Walter, Melanie Smith, Michelle Taylor, Tina Olguin, Ben Brunson, and is led by VP Kristyn Econome and President Kelsey Moore.

The group has become quite active very quickly. So far this year, the MTF has organized two social events, with more scheduled for the spring. Our first event in October was a Teacher Advisory Meeting with our Superintendent. Members were encouraged to ask questions about the district and about the Master Agreement. The second

social event was held at Pizza Madness. The best part was that, out of 35-40 people attending, about one-fourth of these were non-members. They had a chance to mingle with members and discover how fun we are!

In November, Kelsey Moore, Kristyn Econome, Callie Preston and Anita Fitzjarrald spent an entire day visiting each school in the district. They made face-to-face contact with virtually every teacher in the district, members and non-members alike, and listened to their concerns and shared information about the Association. Everyone was exhausted by the end of the day, but all declared it a worthwhile endeavor.

We've had great support in our membership campaign. Liz Koop, PPEA President, came to an AR meeting in the fall and presented us

with the membership notebook that PPEA has put together. Dolly Handel, chair of the Membership Arm of PPEA also paid a visit and shared her wisdom about gaining new members. Finally, Kathy Bridges-McMahon drove down from Denver in December to meet with the MTF to share her perspective of how we might work on increasing membership. She also provided information on how to access funds from CEA for continuing the membership drive.

The MTF is currently offering a \$50 bonus to anyone who signs up a new member. Plans are in the works for a big membership push during the early enrollment period that runs from April 1 until June 1.

Submitted by Cathy Royce, Canon City EA

Furloughs and Pay Cuts are happening *submitted by Susan Ours, Widefield Education Assn.*

- Talk to a state worker. Furloughs are happening, so are pay cuts. Here is information provided according to an article from the Wall St. Journal.
- Hawaii schools are closed every other Friday and will continue for 17 Fridays into the next school year. State government is also shut down in Hawaii on these same Fridays.
- Georgia and Florida are using furloughs on work days in response to state funding cuts.
- California has cut 20,000 teachers and is considering cutting another 24,000.
- Teachers in New Mexico are expecting a 1.5% pay cut.

Where does Colorado rank?

- 40th in per pupil funding adjusted for cost of living. (Ed Weekly/Quality counts 2009)
- 38th in student/teacher ratios. (Ed Weekly/Quality counts 2008)
- 43rd in teacher salaries as a percent of pay in comparable professions.
 - (Ed Weekly/Quality counts 2008)
- 40th in technology in our schools. (Ed Weekly/Quality Counts 2008)
- 42nd in achievement gap between free/reduced lunch eligible and non eligible according
 - to NAEP testing in 4th grade.
- 46th in achievement gap between free/reduced lunch eligible and non eligible according
 - to NAEP testing in 4th grade.

Turning Schools into Registry of Motor Vehicles

By [Daniel Willingham](#)

February 4, 2010

IN AN effort to improve public schools, President Obama wants to hold individual teachers accountable for student test scores; indeed, states that prohibit the practice are ineligible for the “Race to the Top” funds.

To a cognitive scientist, this is a strange line to draw in the sand. We do not have good tools to measure teachers, and when you hold people accountable with poor measures, things don’t just fail to improve. They get worse.

The reason is simple: Accountability changes workers’ focus from “do a good job” to “do a job that looks good according to the measure.”

One approach to classroom accountability is to measure children’s learning and let the teacher do whatever they think is best. You simply administer a test in the fall and one in the spring and find the difference. That’s intuitive, but there are a number of conceptual and technical problems.

Obviously, teachers have little incentive to teach any topic that is not tested, or indeed, anything that will not be tested *that year*; why lay groundwork for improving *next* year’s scores? If you thought No Child Left Behind led to an overemphasis on testing, wait for the test-prep frenzy that follows linking salaries to test scores.

Another problem: not everything is in the teacher’s hands. Rowdy kids are harder to teach than well-behaved kids. And it’s easier to teach your class if your principal (and parents) are helpful and supportive. Several studies have shown that teacher evaluations based on test scores are unstable. About 25 percent of teachers pegged as terrific or terrible get the opposite designation the next year.

The logic underlying this approach is suspect. It assumes that teachers know what to do but just aren’t doing it or that they will figure out what to do once the pressure is on. It’s the equivalent of the frustrated parent shouting “I don’t care how you do it - just bring home better math grades!” No Child Left Behind should have taught us that improving student achievement doesn’t happen simply by mandating it.

So what if you do tell teachers how to improve? A second approach limits accountability to how teachers do their job. You observe teachers in the classroom and see whether they are using what are known to be good teaching practices. The problem is that people then become slavishly devoted to the rules, because it is to the rules that they are accountable. Call it RMV Syndrome.

I once waited in a long line at the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles only to be told that I needed an additional form. I saw the form about two feet from the clerk, but he insisted I wait in a different line for that form. Maddening for me, but perfectly sensible from his point of view. Why should he break the rules and risk punishment, just to save me a wait in line?

Social scientists have a technical term for this type of behavior. It’s called “covering your butt.” This type of accountability only works if the list of required behaviors is so intelligently constructed that in covering their butts people end up doing a good job. It can also work when the supervisor is knowledgeable and flexible; the RMV clerk might have known that his supervisor would understand that giving me the form was technically breaking a rule, but contributing to the larger goal of effective service.

There are ways of making accountability work. The two key elements are evaluations that take place over long periods of time, to increase stability, and evaluations that are conducted by people who are knowledgeable and are known by teachers to be knowledgeable. Unfortunately, neither element is part of the Obama administration’s plans.

Advocates of teacher accountability often acknowledge these problems, yet insist it’s better than nothing. Not true. A poor system could make teaching worse and a failed attempt will allow opponents to dismiss accountability as a failed policy. Accountability *is* a good idea, but we have to get the measures right.

Daniel Willingham is a psychology professor at the University of Virginia and author of “Why Don’t Students Like School?” ■

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Association Dues and Your Income Tax

For All Tax Years: Association members can deduct the total of your unified dues (Local-UniServ-CEA-NEA) as a miscellaneous itemized deduction on your federal income taxes, but not as a charitable contribution. Dues are one sum for January-August plus a different sum for September-December because the calendar year overlaps two Association membership years. Use your paycheck stub to determine the deduction amounts for your annual income tax filing.

For Tax Year 2009: NEA helped Association members get continued tax relief in Congress by securing an extension of the deduction for instructional materials and classroom supplies which was set to expire. Teachers and paraeducators can deduct up to \$250 for out-of-pocket classroom expenses as the "educator expense deduction" if you worked at least 900 hours in 2009. Your qualified expenses are subtracted when figuring your adjusted gross income. You must file IRS Form 1040 to take the deduction (claim the \$250 on line 23); it cannot be claimed on Form 1040A. For more information, go to the [IRS Tax Topic #458, Educator Expense Deduction](#).

BE INFORMED!!!

For the most up-to-date information from the legislature, join the NEW CEA Capitol Connection blog at <http://www.ceacapconn.wordpress.com>

Restorative Justice Reawakens Hope for the Future

By Laura-Lee Barron, Woodland Park EA

Pete Lee and Jeannette Holtham spoke to PPEA on Jan. 21, 2010, supporting the restorative justice discipline model for schools and communities. Pete Lee, a candidate for House District 18 – the seat presently held by term limited Mike Merrifield – believes that society must reduce the high school dropout rate to, in turn, reduce the teen pregnancy and crime rates and improve the economic climate of the future. The restorative justice movement focuses on offenders hearing and learning of the impact of their crimes. In addition, the offender, victim, community members, and facilitator talk together in hopes of creating a feeling of empathy and understanding in the offender and forgiveness in the victim. Offenders are encouraged to write letters of apology and obtain appropriate and fitting consequences to the criminal actions.

Juvenile offenders receive the opportunity to make amends and give back to their schools and communities rather than being simply removed from school. Fostering a feeling of understanding and a commitment to working together improves the offender's chance of returning to school and becoming a successful contributing member of society, thus, reducing the rate of recidivism.

Holtham, the founder and president of the Youth Transformation Center in Colorado Springs, explains the discipline model and belief in her book *Taking Restorative Justice to Schools: A Doorway to Discipline*. Holtham uses case studies in Denver Public Schools and Philadelphia high schools to support her stance. Both Denver and Philadelphia saw a significant reduction in expulsions and suspensions after implementing the restorative justice program.

Holtham and Lee agree that restorative justice can help to meet Governor Ritter's goal of reducing the dropout rate in Colorado by 50% in the next ten years. Training will be offered for facilitators on Feb. 27 in Colorado Springs and for students on Feb. 6. For more information, contact Holtham at www.youthtransformationcenter.org.

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