



THE ADVOCATE

Volume 9 No. 4

A Communication for Members of the Aurora Education Association

January, 2010

Locals Across Metro Coordinate for Bargaining

We are working together – across the Denver Metro area through our Metro Regional Bargaining Council – to ensure that all our members are on the same page as we face not only a difficult legislative session, but challenging bargaining as well. No local association is an island – all of us are stronger than any of us alone.

School districts are already planning for “cuts” and, in many districts, school boards and administrators are making decisions about the budget before they really know the full financial picture from the Legislature. We believe it’s important for Association members to (1) understand what districts are saying and (2) NOT believe everything the district says or take everything at face value. In the next few weeks, we will send you a series of informational emails that explain what districts are saying and what their “solutions” could mean to school employees. Today we are addressing “furlough days,” a popular budget shortfall “fix” in many places across the U.S.

FURLOUGH DAYS: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

If you’re in the Armed Forces, a “furlough” is a vacation or period of absence from your assignment with pay. If you’re a public school employee, it’s a temporary layoff from your job WITHOUT pay.

We generally oppose the use of furlough days as a means of balancing budgets because it means you lose a day’s pay for every day you are on “furlough,” and thus you lose not only a day of your monthly salary for every furlough day, but you lose overall compensation for that month, that year, and your entire career.

1. We would not agree to furlough days without a careful, thorough examination of the district’s budget to determine if furloughing employees were absolutely necessary. First, we would examine all expenditures not directly related to student instruction and all other options for solving the budget problem – because furloughing employees not only reduces their compensation. It reduces the time available for the principal activity of schools: student instruction and achievement!
2. We would not let the district impose furlough days on us. If furlough days were to occur, they would be the result of bargaining; be in writing and ratified by our members as any other part of our Master Agreement; be detailed, limited, and specific; and be enforceable through the grievance procedure.
3. We believe it’s important that each of us understands all the consequences of furlough days. If you lose pay because you are furloughed, you lose that money for all time; and because your career earnings are affected, your retirement is affected.

AEA Board & AR's Respond to Race to the Top MOU

At their January 4th meeting, the AEA Board Directors took a unanimous position not to sign the Race to the Top MOU. The AEA AR Council affirmed that position with a unanimous vote at the January 19th meeting. AEA is not abandoning our responsibility to be involved in the work of education reform as it relates to APS teachers and students, however. Indeed we are committed to the goal of a great public school for every student, and to the work necessary to realize that goal. Below you will find the letter we provided to Superintendent Barry and the Board regarding the R2T MOU and our proposal to move the work of linking student performance and teacher evaluation forward.

January 12, 2010

After much discussion and consideration we want to inform you that the AEA Officers and the AEA Board of Directors has voted not to sign the Race to the Top application with Aurora Public Schools. This was a difficult decision because we know that this issue is both significant and multi dimensional.

We want to inform you that the AEA Officers and the AEA Board of Directors has voted to not sign the Race to the Top application with Aurora Public Schools. This was a difficult decision because we know that this issue is both significant and multi dimensional.

While there are several concerns we have with the R2T process our primary issue with signing on at this time is that our membership is not in sync with the basic thrust of Race to the Top, i.e. the use of student growth measures as a significant driver of decisions related to a teacher's evaluation, compensation and retention. Participation in the process would require the Association to engage in implementation of programs recommended by the State's plan even though our membership does not endorse that this is the correct course that we should take at this time.

Having taken this position, AEA does recognize the scope and legitimacy of the debate that is occurring regarding the use of student growth measures in various personnel decisions. We know that research and experimentation is occurring far and wide on this issue and that ultimately this work may change the accepted understanding about what constitutes teacher effectiveness. However, to acknowledge and participate in the discussion is not the same as accepting the premises contained in Race to the Top as legitimate and proceeding towards implementation. This is the source of our difficulties in signing the MOU.

Given this backdrop we want to assure the District that we are ready to engage in dialogue related to the use of student growth measures in teacher evaluation. We know that the District will proceed with activities regarding R2T and we are already participating in the evaluation committee that is reviewing and restructuring our present evaluation system. We are willing to take up the challenge of incorporating student growth measures in evaluation but we believe teachers should be the predominant drivers in designing this new system.

To this end we would suggest a Memorandum of Understanding be created incorporating the following:

- Create a subcommittee of teachers including those presently serving on the Teacher Evaluation Committee whose charge it is to design a method to incorporate student growth measures into evaluation.
- District administrative support would serve as consultants to this group providing the latest research and data for the group to engage this task.
- This group would make recommendations within a specified time frame to both the Teacher Evaluation Committee and the bargaining teams of the District and Association.
- The recommendations would first be reviewed by the Teacher Evaluation Committee for consensus and then brought to the bargaining teams for negotiations of language incorporating the recommendations into the Master Agreement.

We believe this process will provide the best opportunity for AEA and the District to work collaboratively on this issue while still recognizing the serious concerns that the issue creates. It may also allow us to create a local evaluation model before a specific model may be mandated by the State. We look forward to your thoughts on our suggestions.

AEA Election for NEA RA Delegates—January 20-29

The Association will conduct an election for delegates to the 2010 NEA Representative Assembly beginning on January 20th and running through January 29th. Seven at-large delegates will be elected, who along with the AEA Officers will represent members at the NEA RA in New Orleans from July 1-6.

Members will vote by electronic ballot, and building AR's have all the necessary information to help AEA members participate in this election. Only AEA members are eligible to vote.

To cast your vote, visit the AEA website at www.auroraea.org, click on the Elections page link at the top left of the home page. On the Elections page, be sure to scroll down the page to view the pictures and statements of the members running for NEA RA delegates. Then click on the Electronic Ballot link at the top of the page to begin the ballot process.

It's quick, it's easy and it's **GREEN!** See your building AR if you need help getting to the ballot.

WE NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU!!!!

AEA is collecting member input on the Race to the Top grant, which promotes linking student performance to your evaluation. We also want to know what you think of the Bonus pay plan that is proposed in VISTA 2015.

A link to the survey is located on the last page of the NEA RA delegate ballot, or you can go directly to the survey using this link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PLY66PJ>.

Please take a few minutes to respond and tell us what you think. **WE NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

Is It Time to Renew Your License?

Yes, it's been five years, and it's time to renew your teaching license again. It seems the rules are being more rigidly enforced every year. We have heard concerns from members, from APS Human Resources and the CEA Legal Department. Here are some things you should keep in mind:

1. Make sure you are tracking your license's expiration date. At the bottom of each month's pay stub, the district shows the expiration date of your license. Pay attention and make sure you are getting the required number of credits well before the license renewal period.
2. Download your renewal packet from the CDE website http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_licenseaps.htm at least 6 months before your license expires.
3. Order your official transcripts early enough so that they can arrive in plenty of time to renew your license. Make sure that all the dates and credit hours are legible and occurred during the time of your current license.
4. You must pay fees online. CDE is no longer accepting personal checks.
5. Carefully complete the packet. Follow the completion checklist on page 1. Be sure to get the parts of the application that must be notarized. Your bank, or the credit union may be able to help with this.
6. Fingerprinting is taking at least four months to process. Get this done early.
7. Be honest about any court records even though you may believe it has been expunged. CEA reports that they are having to defend at least one teacher a week regarding prior legal issues—even ones that have not shown up in prior renewals. Members with questions on this point should call the AEA office.
8. Double check that everything is signed and completed correctly, and then, make a copy of everything to retain for your own records.
9. If possible, hand deliver your application to CDE so that you can get a dated receipt. If you cannot hand deliver it, use FedEx. If you choose to use the US Postal Service, make sure to mail your application at least 5 months and 29 days ahead of the expiration date. Do not use overnight US mail.
10. When you receive an envelope from CDE, open it immediately and check the contents. Rejections are being sent in envelopes that look the same as approvals. Do not automatically assume that your license has been renewed.



Aurora Education Association/Special Education Caucus

Topics in Special Education

January 25, February 1, and February 8, 2010

4:30-7:00

ESC 4, Conference Room C

Phun with Phonemes

Building Blocks of Literacy—The Foundations

Presented by Lynn Kuhn

In a series of three workshops, learn how to incorporate explicit, systematic and practical instructional concepts within your phonemic awareness and phonics lessons. These concepts are at the universal, targeted and intensive levels using materials you already have in your classroom.

Lynn Kuhn is a Colorado, national and international consultant who draws on more than 30 years of experience in the language–literacy field as a teacher, reading specialist, speech-language therapist, special education and TOSA mentor.

Register through Avatar on the APS Professional Learning Web Site

<http://www.aps.k12.co.us/instruct/pl/avatar.html>

.5 Adams State Credit will be available

for those attending all three sessions for \$27.50

Snacks will be provided

No fee for AEA members - \$10 per session for non-members

Register now!

Please RSVP to Vicki Reinhard at vlreinhard@aps.k12.co.us by

January 24, 2009