



# THE ADVOCATE

A Communication for Members of the Aurora Education Association

Volume 7 No. 5

March, 2009

## 2009 NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BEGUN

Members of the AEA and APS negotiations team met yesterday to begin negotiations for 2009. Negotiations Procedures are defined in Article 3 of the AEA-APS Master Agreement. The entire master agreement is renegotiated every three years by contractual agreement. Since last year was a “full contract” year, this year is deemed a “reopener” negotiation, and will be limited to changes in the Compensation article, Appendices A, B and C, medical insurance and two Articles or new items specified by each side. Items carried over from last year include a discussion on leave provisions, K-8 plan time and a report from the Teacher Evaluation Taskforce.

AEA selects members of their negotiations team as does the Board’s team. This year the AEA team members are: Laurie Foster, Brenna Isaacs, Amy Nichols, Frank O’Hara, Vicki Reinhard, Patrick Sandt, Milton Stillwell, and Cathy Wildman. The APS team members include: Kari Allen, Brian Donovan, Tony Van Gytenbeek, Cassie Parra, James Scott, William Stuart, Damon Smith, and Rod Weeks.

Five dates have been scheduled for the teams to meet during this round of negotiations. They include: March 9, 16, and April 9, 16, and 20th. Teams will meet alternately between the Admin building and the AEA office, beginning with yesterday’s meeting which was held at the APS Admin building.

The AEA negotiations team has been meeting since January to prepare for negotiations, have issued a survey to members, reviewed and categorized the results of that survey and finalized the interests we will take to the table. Following each round of negotiations AEA members will receive a negotiations update, either by email, or in hardcopy. Updates will also be posted on the AEA website at [www.auroraea.org](http://www.auroraea.org).

The process used in negotiating the AEA-APS Master Agreement is called “facilitated interest-based negotiations.” This means that we have a facilitator (not a member of either team) who facilitates the process, takes notes and sends them out, ensures that tentative agreements are verified and helps to keep us on track. This year the facilitator is Sue Clark, a former district employee, and someone who has served as our facilitator in negotiations in the past. Sue will facilitate our work until we begin to deal with compensation issues.

Our next communication will highlight the interests AEA brought to the table and those coming from the district. Actual negotiations on these interests will begin on March 16th. AEA AR’s will receive an update on March 17th and we will encourage them to hold meetings in their respective buildings to convey that information.

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## TELL Colorado: Colorado Teachers Can Share Perceptions of Their Teaching Conditions, Shape Education Policy

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Next month Colorado K-12 teachers will finally have the opportunity to complete a long awaited survey that will give important information to educators and policy makers at the district and state levels.

We have been working for several years to get funding for this survey because we know how important it is to listen to and understand teachers' perceptions of their teaching conditions – and how these conditions affect students' learning conditions. Based on other states' experiences, we believe the results from this new initiative will help shape education policy, improve student instruction, and work toward school improvement in every district.

**HB 08-1384**, passed by the Legislature last year, authorized the biennial survey and appropriated \$100,000 to run it. NEA contributed \$25,000 to help print and mail survey notices to teachers and host a help desk. The New Teacher Center will oversee the survey ([newteachercenter.org](http://newteachercenter.org)) and help us make it successful, as the center has done in North Carolina, Maine, Kansas, Alabama, West Virginia, Massachusetts, and Illinois. Vermont, Maryland, and Colorado are the latest states to begin this work.

Our TELL Colorado Initiative will empower educators, administrators, and policy makers at all levels to develop these conditions through the collection and analysis of data focused on educators' perceptions of their school environment. We will be able to improve student learning, teacher motivation and retention, and the equitable distribution of resources.

CEA, CDE, CASE, CASB, and the League of Charter Schools are the TELL Colorado Initiative partners. Other organizations are supporting the initiative.

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**WHAT? TELL Colorado** (Teaching, Empowering, Learning and Leading) **Initiative.**

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**WHEN? April 13 (launch date)** to the second week of May (survey will be open four weeks).

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**WHO?** All school-based K-12 licensed teachers and specialists (librarians/media specialists, special ed teachers, school psychologists, social workers, speech therapists, etc.); mentor teachers; long-term (permanent) substitute teachers; principals and assistant principals, and charter school teachers -- Everyone who takes the survey must be a district, BOCES, or charter school employee and be included in the "school head count".

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**WHERE?** Online on the TELL Colorado web site at [tellcolorado.org](http://tellcolorado.org) (under development).

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**WHY?** To help ensure that all students can learn, teachers need to work in schools designed for their success. Positive teaching conditions – where educators are supported and empowered – are essential to creating schools where teachers want to work and students can learn. Our TELL Colorado Initiative will empower educators, administrators, and policy makers at all levels to develop these conditions through the collection and analysis of data focused on educators' perceptions of their school environment. We will be able to improve student learning, teacher motivation and retention, and the equitable distribution of resources.

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## TELL Colorado: Colorado Teachers Can Share Perceptions of Teaching Conditions

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**HOW?** CEA Association Representatives will randomly distribute letters to each teacher (one letter per teacher, with a unique access code on each letter). In schools where we have no AR's, the principal will distribute the letters.

**WHAT ELSE?** The survey will likely take 20-25 minutes to complete. It will be posted online prior to launch so teachers can preview it. It has seven sections: Time; Facilities & Resources; Community Engagement; School Leadership; Professional Development; Student Learning.

Teachers in years 1-3 and Mentor Teachers may answer additional questions.

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### RESPONSE RATES MATTER!

A school must have a 50% or greater response rate based on its head count to get a report for its school.

A Help Desk will be available starting April 13 with a toll free number and email access.

Teachers can use a live response rate tracker on the web site to see how their schools are doing. **It's confidential....Your voice matters.**

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### MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON!

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#### Do Schools Kill Creativity?

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Sir Ken Robinson thinks so, and you might be interested in viewing his video, [http://www.ted.com/index.php/speakers/sir\\_ken\\_robinson.html](http://www.ted.com/index.php/speakers/sir_ken_robinson.html) to understand why he does. Who is Sir Ken Robinson you might ask? He is a British author and creativity expert, who believes that creativity is as important as literacy and that we should treat it with as much significance. He goes on to



propose that children are being "educated out of their creative capacities" in our public schools. A featured speaker at the 2006 TED

(Technology, Entertainment Design) conference, and the 2009 Celebration of Teaching and Learning conference, he makes an entertaining case for an education system that nurtures creativity in order to tap the extraordinary talents that all children are born with. You'll enjoy this video!

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#### Check Out the NEA Academy

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The NEA Academy is the National Education

Association's Web site devoted to meeting the professional needs of teachers and education support professionals. All professional development courses offered through the NEA Academy are carefully screened against a set of quality standards developed by NEA members in consultation with the National Staff Development Council. Only the best courses of the highest quality make it through the screening process. Courses developed by the NEA are offered to members without cost. Courses developed by outside vendors are offered at the best rates obtainable. You can get specific details about each course as well as pricing and credit information when you visit the online Course Catalog. The NEA Academy can be found at: <http://www.nea.org/tools/597.htm>.

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## What to Do if You are Recommended for Nonrenewal

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March is here, we are rerunning this article on nonrenewal because we are already getting numerous calls from teachers who are being told they are recommended for nonrenewal for next year.

We hope the following information will be useful.

Frequently teachers have an idea this recommendation is coming, but sometimes they are caught completely unaware. Either way, the shock of hearing that one will not have a job next year is generally terrifying. We expect in this economy the news will be doubly stressful. Below are some recommendations that may help teachers who find themselves in this situation.

**First**, decide if you will allow the nonrenewal recommendation to move forward to the APS Board of Education for formal action. If so, the recommendation of nonrenewal then becomes a matter of public record, and you will need to declare that you were nonrenewed on any future job applications. However, teachers who are formally nonrenewed can apply for and generally get unemployment.

**If** you choose to resign you may be able to indicate that you chose to leave APS employment voluntarily, but it may be difficult or impossible to get unemployment insurance.

**Some** teachers decide to challenge the nonrenewal and request a hearing with the APS Board of Education. Call AEA if you decide

to take this course of action. We can help you with information that might be useful in addressing the Board.

**If** you choose to resign, write a resignation letter simply stating that you are resigning from your position effective the end of the school year. You will need to send your resignation to your principal and the Human Resources. You can do this by email.

**When** you turn in your resignation letter ask your administrator to remove the nonrenewal statement from your evaluation. Your evaluation will not be sent to a future employer by APS, but you should do this anyway, and the request should be honored.

**Request** that your principal write a letter of recommendation if you want one. They might be willing to write a general letter stating that you worked at the building, when you worked there and some of the work you engaged in. They may even be willing to focus on your strengths.

**Ask** your colleagues for a letter of recommendation, particularly if you worked well with them.

**Update** your resume, submit your application to other districts for both sub jobs and fulltime positions, and plan to attend the job fairs held in the metro area.

**Remember**.....nonrenewal does not have to be a death sentence to your career.....many teachers who are non-renewed have gotten jobs in other districts.

AEA is happy to answer questions or offer assistance. Call us at 303-696-6265, or email your questions to [aeapres6265@aol.com](mailto:aeapres6265@aol.com).

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## From the Master Agreement—Article 12 Educational Advances

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Article 12, Educational Advances, outlines the conditions under which educational coursework can be applied to the salary schedule for teachers.

\*Horizontal advancement on the salary schedule is allowed for the completion of 15 semester credits of college course work for each group in the salary schedule from the bachelor's to doctorate degree.

The following exceptions are important to be aware of:

\*Courses not authorized for relicensure credit in Colorado cannot be used for educational advances.

\*Credits must have been completed after the teacher's most recent and highest degree was conferred.

Teacher's must secure verification that courses submitted for educational advancement meet the criteria of Article 12.

\*Credits must be earned from either a four-

year or two-year degree-granting accredited institution located in the US, or from a four-year degree-granting foreign college or university approved by the ministry of education within that country.

\*Course work or a degree must be submitted on the official transcript of the accredited institution.

\*It is the responsibility of teachers requesting horizontal advancement on the salary schedule to secure all necessary transcripts and verifications and deliver them to human resources in a timely manner.

\*Horizontal advances for course completion, or advanced degrees will become effective on the first day of the month following the month the transcript or degree conferring transcript is submitted to the HR office.

\*For more specifics on Educational Advances see the AEA-APS Master Agreement, pages 16-17.

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### AEA ELA Caucus

Rosana Trujillo, Chair

Denise Alcalá

Linda Bay

Manley Daniel

Lee Ann Gott

Jaika Klein

Maria Romero

Judy Stephenson

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Aurora Education Association  
Pavilion Tower I  
2851 S. Parker Rd. #1000  
Aurora, CO 80014  
Phone: 303-696-6265  
Fax: 303-696-0104  
E-mail: aeapres6265@aol.com  
Web: www.auroraea.org

*The Aurora Education Association is the exclusive representative for all teachers full and part-time hired on contract in APS in matters involving collective negotiations with respect to wages, hours and other conditions of employment.*

*The mission of the Aurora Education Association is to empower licensed educators to advocate for students and themselves in order to provide quality education, professional excellence and economic security.*

*Our vision is to be an exemplary organization working together as powerful professionals. Through solidarity we are a collaborative and proactive Association. We are unified by our strengths and commitment to advocacy for children and to empower our members.*

*AEA is an affiliate of the Colorado Education Association and the National Education Association.*





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## Amendment 54 Violates First and Fourteenth Amendments.....Is Unconstitutional

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Attorneys filed a lawsuit January 28 challenging Amendment 54 which the voters narrowly approved last November. The lawsuit, filed in Denver District Court, argues that Amendment 54 violates both the Colorado and U.S. Constitutions and should be declared void by the courts.

\* Amendment 54 unfairly silences the political voices of teachers and education support professionals, firefighters, police officers, and nurses by prohibiting them from giving political contributions simply because they are parties to collective bargaining agreements with various government bodies. The lawsuit seeks declaratory and injunctive relief and lists seven claims against Amendment 54:

\* Amendment 54 unconstitutionally limits contributions to ballot issue campaigns even though comparable limits have been invalidated by the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals.

\* Amendment 54 violates the plaintiffs' First Amendment right to free speech by eliminating their ability to make any contributions to political parties and candidates.

\* Amendment 54 violates the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment which grants equal protection under the law by treating labor organizations' political committees differently than any political committees formed by other government contractors (which can continue to participate politically under Amendment 54 in whatever way they choose.)

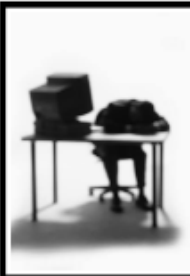
\* Amendment 54's title did not clearly express that all collective bargaining agreements, regardless of amount, are subject to the prohibitions on political expression. The title stated that only contracts over \$100,000 were affected, and the Department of Personnel and Administration has now ruled that the Amendment applies to labor organizations without regard to this threshold.

\* Amendment 54 did not meet the single subject requirement. The prohibition that would apply to labor organizations' political committees is a separate subject of the Amendment, was not disclosed to voters, and is therefore void under the Colorado Constitution.

\* Amendment 54 contained a variety of other subjects, such as limiting the authority of home-rule municipalities to regulate their own campaign finance matters; but the ballot title did not clearly express those other subjects and the amendment is thus invalid.

\* The Colorado Department of Personnel and Administration's interpretation of the \$100,000 threshold is contrary to what the initiative and the ballot title stated, and the courts must clarify this inconsistency so the amendment applies only as voters truly intended.

Article Continues on page 5.....



During these tough economic times,  
it's nice to know the  
**Aurora Education Association**  
is there for its members.

These are extraordinary times in the economy, and the Aurora Education Association (AEA) is aware of the financial struggles members are experiencing. In an effort to help members meet their financial obligations, AEA encourages all members to familiarize themselves with the benefits they enjoy through NEA Member Benefits. Did you know that you have the following benefits:

- **NEA Sponsored Money Market Account:** features competitive rates with a bonus rate of 1% for the first 60 days. Allows up to six withdrawals per monthly statement.
- **NEA Sponsored CD:** flexible terms from 90 days to 120 months.
- **NEA Members Auto & Home Insurance Program:** offered through California Casualty. Members save an average of \$400 per year on auto insurance. Other benefits include, Identity Theft Resolution Services at no additional cost, deductible waiver for vandalism in a school parking lot or within 500 feet of a school or school event, and low rates with your NEA member discount. Call 1.800.877.7345 to receive your quote.
- **National Foundation for Credit Counseling:** provides one-on-one financial counseling, housing counseling, and bankruptcy counseling and education. Find a provider near you at [www.debtadvice.org/nea](http://www.debtadvice.org/nea) or by calling 1.866.479.NEA2.



- **Wells Fargo Home Financing:** with rates at historic lows, Wells Fargo offers premium customer service for first time home buyers and those looking to refinance. Call 1.800.NEA.4YOU for additional information.

• **Member Discounts:** in addition to the above benefits, NEA Members also enjoy benefits such as:

- \* Discounts on car rentals
- \* Discounts on magazine subscriptions
- \* H&R Block
- \* NEA Click & Save
- \* ID Theft Protection Program
- \* Rapid Resources
- \* SmileMakers (teacher supply store)
- \* And MANY MORE!

To learn more about your NEA Member Benefits, visit [www.neamb.com](http://www.neamb.com). To receive a weekly "Works-4-Me" e-mail with six teaching tips and an NEA Member Benefit of the week, send an e-mail to [smabey@neamb.com](mailto:smabey@neamb.com) with ADD in the subject line.

Brenna Isaacs, AEA President  
Vicki Reinhard, AEA Vice President  
Sue Pollak, AEA Secretary / Treasurer  
Frank O'Hara, UniServ Director  
2851 S. Parker Road, #1000  
Aurora, Colorado 80014  
303.696.6265

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[neamb.com](http://neamb.com)