



Special Insert:
See How Your Legislators
Voted on Key Education Issues

Published by the **TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**
January 2012 • Vol. 43, No. 5 • www.teateachers.org

2012

The Year to Fix the System

**More on Evaluation:
Administrators Report
Frustrations, Unmet Needs**

page 8

**Your Honor:
Some Locals Go to Court**

page 3

We Are Most Effective in Partnerships

During this time of dramatic change in public education, I think it's important to remember the unique community of the education profession. When we think of what we do each day, we don't think about our employer or our boss as much as we think about the people we serve: our students.

We don't think about the number of hours in a day as much as we focus on being prepared to meet our students' needs. People who work in schools don't use phrases like "my job" or "where I work". We don't say "I had to work late." We say things like "I stayed after school today to help some of my kids" or "we have PTO meeting at my school tonight." In talking with educators I notice the way we use the possessive and plural pronouns. It's a reflection of the commitment we have to our role in public education. We think of the school as a place where "we" and "our" students have a sense of belonging and can contribute to the stability of the community.

A successful school environment is one where teachers, support staff, administrators and parents have a vision of working together to provide what's best for students. To accomplish that goal we must remember that we are most effective when we work in partnerships. I may not have the same skills or experience as my colleagues, but in the right school climate I can ask a fellow educator for advice, borrow instructional materials from another, and get a quick tutorial on curriculum standards from a third. In exchange I'll be glad to share the exciting new techniques I learned at a

"If student assessments and teacher evaluations move us toward a culture of competition, the improvements we seek will not be realized."

recent workshop, or trade bus duty when needed.

Our culture is not competitive. It's inclusive and collaborative because we know it takes all of us supporting one another to create a great place for kids to learn. Within our schools, we know we have to function more like a family than a business. Teachers have always been willing to go the extra mile for their students when they know they are supported by peers, administrators and the school community. If student assessments and teacher evaluations move us toward a culture of competition, the improvements we seek will not be realized. Policymakers in Tennessee must recognize that to move forward we must all encourage a collaborative school culture.

Each of us can contribute on a daily basis to the cooperative environment we desire. We can each focus on doing well, practice reciprocity, share resources and encourage our peers. We can influence the environment in "our" schools, sustaining a climate of support and trusting our own best instincts when it comes to helping kids learn. Working together, we can create great public schools for every child.

TEA Makes Teachers' Voices Heard on Evaluation

The House Education K-12 Subcommittee and Education Committee often meet between legislative sessions to consider bills referred for summer study. The committees were scheduled to meet November 1 and 2 to study bills on vouchers and virtual schools. In the meantime, the new teacher evaluation system launched and most teachers had their first observations.

Teachers' experiences with the planning observation were overwhelmingly negative due to the fact that teachers were required to construct elaborate lesson plans running nine to 37 pages. We asked you to send your evaluation stories to legislators—and you did.

As a result of teacher and TEA emails, cards, letters and phone calls to legislators, teacher evaluation was added to the legislature's summer study meeting agenda. TEA President Gera Summerford testified about your experiences and frustrations with the new evaluation system.

A Middle Tennessee Director of Schools proposed that 2011-2012 be viewed as a practice year for the new system. Two principals from Rutherford County testified that the number of observation contacts they are required to have with teachers in their buildings is overwhelming and nearly impossible to complete. A Shelby County principal testified he is required to complete 472 observations and 1500 total contacts with teachers in his building this year.

In her testimony, President Summerford reminded legislators that TEA asked last spring that the new evaluation system not be used for human resource decisions (like the granting of tenure) until it was fully implemented and proven to be valid and reliable.

Most of those testifying said the new system was not ready to be used as the basis for high stakes human resource decisions. Several legislators said they believed this should be a "practice year" until the kinks are worked out of the system. All who testified agreed the system should be used to help teachers improve their teaching and not punish certain behavior, poor performance or someone who may be a thorn in an administrator's side.

Several lawmakers read from letters they received from teachers telling their evaluation stories.

When questioned on teacher complaints about the evaluation system, Education Commissioner Kevin Huffman responded that some people were circulating talking points about problems with the system. Rep. Jimmy Naifeh, speaker emeritus of the House, challenged the commissioner on this assertion.

Keep sharing your evaluation stories and ideas about improving the system with your legislators. They are making a difference. Because the State Board of Education needs to make many of the needed policy changes, you should also contact the state board member from your congressional district to share your ideas. You can find their contact information on the TEA website.

TEA continues to work tirelessly to change the new teacher and principal evaluation system into one that supports effective teaching and student learning. Stay informed and keep talking. Your experiences have the most convincing power.

You count.



teach (USPS 742-450, ISSN 15382907) is published monthly (except for June, July and December) by the Tennessee Education Association, 801 Second Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37201-1099. Periodical postage paid at Nashville, TN. The subscription price of \$3.65 is allocated from annual membership dues of \$25.40 for active members; \$127.00 for associate, education support and staff members; \$16.00 for retired members; and \$10.00 for student members. Member of State Education Editors Conference (SEE).

Postmaster: Send address changes to **teach**, 801 Second Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37201-1099. MANAGING EDITOR: **Alexei Smirnov** asmirnov@tea.nea.org PUBLISHER: **Alphonso C. Mance** MANAGER OF COMMUNICATIONS: **A.L. Hayes**

Tennessee Education Association
801 Second Avenue North
Nashville, TN 37201-1099
Telephone: (615)242-8392,
Toll Free: (800)342-8367, (800)342-8262
Fax: (615)259-4581
Website: www.teateachers.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT: **Gera Summerford*** (800)342-8367
VICE PRESIDENT: **Barbara Gray*** (901)353-8590
SECRETARY-TREASURER: **Alphonso C. Mance** (615)242-8392
DISTRICT 1 **Leisa Lusk** (423)928-6819
DISTRICT 2 **Melinda Reese** (423)587-2120
DISTRICT 3 **Karen Starr** (423)628-2701
DISTRICT 4 **Tanya Coats** (865)637-7494
DISTRICT 5 **Sandy Smith** (423)991-8856
DISTRICT 6 **Beth Brown*** (931)779-8016
DISTRICT 7 **Bonnie T. Dixon** (931)967-9949
DISTRICT 8 **Kawanda Braxton** (615)554-6286
DISTRICT 9 **Erick Huth** (615)973-5851
DISTRICT 10 **Guy Stanley** (615)384-2983
DISTRICT 11 **Melanie Buchanan*** (615)305-2214
DISTRICT 12 **Debbie D'Angelo** (731)247-3152
DISTRICT 13 **Ernestine King** (901)590-8188
DISTRICT 14 **Sarah Kennedy-Harper** (901)416-4582
DISTRICT 15 **Stephanie Fitzgerald** (901)872-4878
ADMINISTRATOR EAST **Johnny Henry** (865)509-4829
ADMINISTRATOR MIDDLE **Margaret Thompson** (615)643-7823
ADMINISTRATOR WEST **Charles Green** (901)624-6186
HIGHER EDUCATION **Vacancy**
BLACK CLASSROOM TEACHER EAST **Paula Hancock** (865)694-1691
BLACK CLASSROOM TEACHER MIDDLE **Alzenia Walls** (615)230-8144
BLACK CLASSROOM TEACHER WEST **LaVerne Dickerson*** (901)416-7122
STATE SPECIAL SCHOOLS **Derek Frisby** (615)898-5881
ESP **Christine Denton** (931)647-8962
TN NEA DIRECTOR **Stephen Henry*** (615)519-5691
TN NEA DIRECTOR **Diccie Smith** (901)482-0627
TN NEA DIRECTOR **Diane Lillard** (423)478-8827
STEAMEMBER **Caryce Gilmore** (865)640-6590
TN RETIRED **Gerald Lillard** (423)478-8827
NEW TEACHER **Candia Carlette** (615)506-3493
* Executive Committee

TEA HEADQUARTERS STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: **Alphonso C. Mance**; ASST. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AFFILIATE SERVICES: **Mitchell Johnson**; ASST. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PROGRAM SERVICES: **Carol K. Schmoock**; TEA GENERAL COUNSEL: **Vacancy**; MANAGER OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS: **Stephanie Faulkner**; INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & SYSTEMS MANAGER, **Colen Riggs**; MANAGER OF UNISERV & BARGAINING COORDINATOR: **Dorna Cotner**; STAFF ATTORNEYS: **Tina Rose Camba**, **Katherine Curlee**, **Virginia A. McCoy**; MANAGER OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS: **Jerry Winters**; GOVERNMENT RELATIONS ASSISTANTE: **Antoinette Lee**; MANAGER OF COMMUNICATIONS & GRAPHICS: **A.L. Hayes**; WEB MASTER & COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANTE: **Amanda Chaney**; MANAGING EDITOR & COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANTE: **Alexei Smirnov**; MANAGER OF RESEARCH & INFORMATION: **Melissa Brown**; RESEARCH & INFORMATION ASSISTANTS: **Susan Ogg**, **Vacancy**; MANAGER FOR INSTRUCTION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: **Terrance Gibson**; INSTRUCTION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATORS: **Susan Dalton**, **Nicki Fields**; COORDINATOR OF MEMBERSHIP & AFFILIATE RELATIONS: **Duran Williams**.

UniServ Staff contact information can be found on page 12.

Locals Allege Violation of First Amendment Rights

Following last year's hasty repeal of the Education Professional Negotiations Act (EPNA) by the Tennessee Legislature, several TEA affiliates have turned to courts in their quest for justice.

In its case against the Sumner County Board of Education, the **Sumner Co. Education Association** is seeking injunctive relief based on interference with First Amendment rights of freedom of association and freedom of speech as well as specific rights under the Professional Educators Collaborative Conferencing Act (PECCA), signed into law by Governor Bill Haslam last year. The Sumner Co. board maintains that the SCEA is a non-entity that acts as an agent for the TEA and that TEA and its employees have no legal basis for having dealings with the board. The board has denied that it has any duty to extend rights derived from PECCA to the SCEA. The U.S. Court for the Middle District of Tennessee, where the case is filed, issued an initial case management order last November, which declared a deadline of November 15, 2011, for the board to file its response to the application for a preliminary injunction. All discovery is to be completed by April 1, 2012. The trial is set to begin on October 23, 2012.

The case filed by the **Dickson Co. EA** asserts a violation of the existing collective bargaining agreement (CBA), alleging the local school board's failure and refusal to negotiate as well as various constitutional infirmities in the application of PECCA. As remedies, the lawsuit seeks a declaration that PECCA is unconstitutional, that the board is acting illegally and an order forcing the resumption of good faith bargaining. The court denied injunctive relief on the basis that there is no irreparable harm to the DCEA. The board and the DCEA are trying to schedule depositions that will resolve the status of the existing CBA as the board asserts that the agreement expired on June 30, 2011.

In Blount County, the **Blount Co. EA** filed an application in Chancery Court for injunctive relief seeking to stop the school board from refusing to negotiate and from unilaterally altering the terms and conditions of professional employment. BCEA argues that in the absence of injunctive relief, the board will continue to unlawfully refuse to recognize and negotiate with the BCEA.

BCEA asserts that the board has relied upon an unconstitutional retrospective application of PECCA to justify its refusal to negotiate in good faith, that the reliance on PECCA deprives the BCEA of its property interests without due process and that PECCA suffers from a severe and fatal constitutional infirmity.

"The body of the act as passed is broader than the caption of the bill—this alone would render the entire act invalid," said TEA General Counsel Bryan McCarty. "BCEA argues that the board's refusal to negotiate has and will continue to undermine the contractual rights of BCEA and professional employees."

BCEA also alleges that, prior to ceasing negotiations, the board engaged in a series of unlawful acts and a course of surface bargaining intending to prevent a new collective bargaining agreement.

BCEA has urged the court to examine carefully the board's excuses for not bargaining, which forces the court to scrutinize Tennessee constitutional provisions.

"PECCA's declaration that all collective bargaining should cease contravened the existing CBA by suspending negotiations that the existing CBA required," McCarty said. "BCEA argues that PECCA could not nullify or modify BCEA's existing period of recognition (two years). This case, like the others filed, is extremely important to the BCEA and other bargaining locals. If PECCA is ineffective, the EPNA remains in effect and governs the rights and obligations of the parties."

Let the Conferencing Begin, Say Teachers

By Amanda Chaney

Local associations across the state have been using the controversial new law which replaced professional negotiations to stand up for students' learning conditions and teachers' working conditions.

Following the 2011 legislative session, Governor Bill Haslam signed the Professional Educators Collaborative Conferencing Act (PECCA). The new law repealed the Education Professional Negotiations Act (EPNA), which had authorized collective bargaining for our local associations for more than 30 years.

Under PECCA, at least 15 percent of a district's professional employees must submit written requests to begin the collaborative conferencing process.

On October 18, 2011, Knox County became the first district to begin the new process when Knox Co. Education Association President Sherry Morgan presented the local board of education with nearly 2,500 written requests for collaborative conferencing, far exceeding the required 15-percent threshold.

"We refuse to allow legislators to silence the teachers of Knox County," said Morgan. "Now more

than ever, it is critical that our voices are heard. It is evident by the number of petitions received that our members have not given up this fight."

Following the initial petition, teachers must jump another hurdle—50 percent plus one of all professional employees in the district must vote in a poll to participate in collaborative conferencing. If the required number of 'yes' votes is not reached,

"We refuse to allow legislators to silence the teachers of Knox County... It is critical that our voices are heard."

the process ends and teachers must wait a year before trying again.

Despite the hurdles put in place to discourage educators, Tennessee's teachers are pushing back. At the time this issue went to press, 19 school districts had filed petitions to request collaborative conferencing. Eleven of those have already successfully passed the voting stage.

"It took a lot of hard work, but it will be worth every minute when our teachers are able to sit down at the table with the board and have say in the learning environment of their students and their own working conditions," said Morgan.

Teachers must also vote in the same poll for whom they want to represent them if collaborative conferencing receives enough votes. TEA's local affiliates have won all or a majority of seats in each district so far, winning every seat in Anderson, Coffee, Knox, Rutherford and Trenton counties.

"A big part of PECCA was designed to limit TEA's involvement in this process, but teachers are making it clear with their votes that they trust TEA and the local associations," said Morgan. "Teachers want the most qualified, experienced people to represent them and TEA local affiliates are the clear choice."

TEA and its local associations have the resources to help every district pursue collaborative conferencing.

To learn more about the process and how to get started, contact your local UniServ coordinator listed on page 12 of this issue and check www.teateachers.org for updates.



Lori Ann Wright with her students at the Unicoi Co. High School auditorium.

The Wright Approach to Drama

Lori Ann Wright's students aim for careers in the healthcare industry, audio engineering, music and teaching, and they don't mind spending up to 15 hours weekly in rehearsals for their drama class.

"Students want to be doers. When you give them an opportunity, they will learn," says Wright, who teaches English and theater at Unicoi County High School in Erwin. When Wright came here five years ago, she had 17 students in her advanced drama class. Today, all three levels of the class are maxed out at 35 students. Some students are discovering that they have a beautiful voice while others learn to master the new 32-slot sound board and the dizzying technical aspects of stage lighting for the 1,200-seat auditorium. Wright teaches them everything and inspires them to do more outside of their school curriculum.

"Every year we try to split our time into sections," says Wright, a member of Unicoi Co. EA who first joined the association as a student teacher. "We spend the same amount of time on the small community projects as we do on our four big productions." Earlier in October, Wright's students researched and discussed domestic violence with the local abuse shelter. They performed monologues about domestic violence, focusing on the strategies for avoiding violent situations and getting out of them when they do happen.

In addition to raising funds for the theater program, Wright's students produce one murder mystery a year in collaboration with a local restaurant to support Relay for Life. "We write our own script, create our own characters and costumes, and a local restaurant handles the food," says Wright. "We also work with children in the after-care program at our local YMCA, doing things like showing kids how to create a Halloween costume for under \$10."

With the professional auditorium and adjacent theater space under her command, Wright may have the largest classroom in the county. She says students gravitate to her classroom on lunch breaks to make music and unwind from their demanding academic schedules. But when it comes to rehearsing one of the four productions during

the year, it's no easy matter as Wright pushes students to venture into professional territory, such as Stephen Sondheim's "Into the Woods" or "The Outsiders" (based on the book by S.E. Hinton), which is slated for the spring.

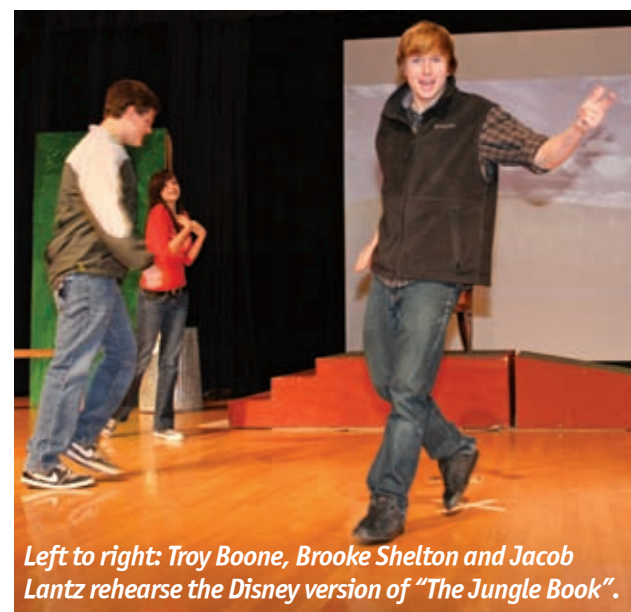
As we sit in front of the nearly finished "Jungle Book" set, Wright's students talk about their worries as they contemplate life after graduation. Jacob Lantz and Troy Boone say they wonder about being able to land the jobs they want under the current economic conditions. Becca Dover is nervous about all the coursework she has to complete to satisfy all her pre-med requirements.

Wright adds a few worries of her own, admitting that she was definitely more stressed during her scheduled evaluation this year.

Still, she prefers to start her day on the right note. "I have the best job in the world," says Wright. "It's rare that I come to work in a bad mood."

"Every time she does announcements, our first-period teacher says, 'I don't know how that woman is so happy,'" says Lantz.

The answer could be in Wright's drama-free approach to drama.



Left to right: Troy Boone, Brooke Shelton and Jacob Lantz rehearse the Disney version of "The Jungle Book".



TEA Scholarships Can Help With Rising Tuition Costs

Are you or someone you know wondering how to afford the rising cost of college tuition in these challenging economic times?

TEA offers up to eight Don Sahli-Kathy Woodall scholarships of \$500 or \$1,000 each year for students attending or planning to attend a Tennessee college and major in education. The application process is simple and straightforward, requiring little more than a short essay on why the applicant wants to be a teacher. Scholarship winners are selected on the basis of academic excellence, demonstrated leadership abilities, economic need and—for all but the graduate scholarship—demonstrated interest in becoming a teacher.

Scholarships are offered each year in the following categories: Student Tennessee Education Association, Sons and Daughters of a TEA Member, Future Teachers of America, Minority Student, Graduate Student. The application deadline for all scholarships but the Graduate Student scholarship is **March 1**. The deadline for the Graduate scholarship is **June 1**.

More information about the available scholarships, the legacy of Don Sahli and Kathy Woodall, and application forms for the scholarships are available on the TEA website at www.teateachers.org. From the home page, click on *Scholarships and Awards*.

Contributions to the Don Sahli-Kathy Woodall Scholarship Fund of the Tennessee Education Association are invited from TEA members, friends and local affiliates. Every contribution to the fund helps to grow a Tennessee teacher.

Sessions Listed for 2012 TEA Spring Symposium

If the holidays kept you from making plans to join your colleagues at the **16th Annual Spring Symposium on March 16-17** at the Park Vista Hotel in Gatlinburg, please make sure to register soon.

Sessions at this teaching and learning symposium will offer new information on common core state standards, student behavior strategies, best practices, distance and online learning, using technology in the classroom, universal design for learning, discipline and students with disabilities, among others.

For details, visit www.teateachers.org.

Feeling Post-Holiday Blues? A MAP Counselor Can Help



We can't always blame it on the weather or the per-capita income, but something must be wrong if Tennessee consistently ranks high on lists that track the U.S. population by state and incidence of depression.

According to the recent ranking compiled by *Health.com*, our state is the unhappiest in the union. Nearly 10 percent of Tennessee residents have experienced an episode of major depression in the previous year.

"Like Mississippi, Tennessee also has high rates of chronic diseases such as obesity and diabetes, the stress of which can worsen depression," according to the ranking compiled from federal data.

According to the report, as many as 70 percent of Tennesseans who see a primary care physician for obesity, diabetes, or hypertension meet the criteria for depression, anxiety, or other mental disorders, the state's mental health commissioner estimated.

While the report quipped that it may not be a coincidence that Memphis and Nashville are "famous for their blues and heartsick country music," something can be done to prevent or curb depression, especially during the winter months when help is often needed the most.

The TEA offers a free and completely confidential Member Assistance Program (MAP), which is available to TEA members and their immediate families. You can call the number below to speak with a caring and objective MAP counselor who will listen intently for as much time as needed and help provide assessment of the problem with guidance and direction.

MAP specialists say that there is always a spike in calls during the post-holiday season.

"Now that the holidays are becoming a distant memory, a collection of mere moments captured

in photos and video footage on the social networking sites, and our students are settled back in school, some of us begin to feel depressed, apathetic and lethargic," writes a member who has used the MAP service in the past. "The credit card bills start coming in, the adrenaline that fueled us during the holiday season is no longer there, and we may have gained a few unwanted pounds."

"In addition to the post-holiday blues, the lack of sunlight during short winter days causes many people to suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)," says MAP counselor Deena Whitt. "While some turn to new year's resolutions and proceed to beat themselves up when best laid plans fall short of expectations, others realize they need help for depression or other emotional problems."

Still others suffer in silence as they try to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. Some are suffering with the pain of living with a family member who needs help for substance abuse.

Whitt is happy to remind TEA members that they can call as many times as they wish. If additional help is needed or desired, MAP counselors help refer members to agencies or care providers who can meet their individual needs.

If you only have time for evening or Saturday appointments, that can be arranged. Need expertise with a particular problem or problems? No matter. We can help you find the nearest provider for your insurance plan and arrange for a timely appointment for a new patient.

We understand that teachers do not have time during the school day to research a list of providers and play phone tag with them.

Make a resolution to call us today at **1.800.707.8882** statewide or in Nashville at **615.386.0048** for the help you need.

The Johnella Martin / TEA Statewide Minority Affairs Conference

March 23-24, 2012



Empowering and Connecting Educators to Meet Challenges, Today and Tomorrow!

DoubleTree Hotel
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Deadline for Conference Registration – March 12, 2012
Staff contacts – A. L. Hayes / Iris Wray
alhayes@tea.nea.org / iwray@tea.nea.org
615.242.8392 / 800.342.8367 Ext. 116 or Ext. 121



Summer calling — Sumner Co. EA members made more than 1,000 contacts with potential members of their association during the Summer Co. phone bank at the end of October 2011. New members joined the association by credit card, check or automatic dues payment. Pictured above are Lois Finney, Sumner Co. EA membership chair, and Arthur Patterson, District 11 UniServ Coordinator.



What We Can Do

Last year, the challenges facing Tennessee educators reached an all-time high. Teachers routinely reported frustrations with the flawed evaluation system and demands from politicians for “accountability” for many issues beyond their control. Add to it the lack of parental support, and many teachers admit they are at a breaking point, wishing they could retire.

“With all of this occurring at a time when the very foundations of public education are under attack by calls for vouchers and privatization, it would be easy to declare the situation hopeless and throw up our hands in despair,” says TEA President Gera Summerford. “But Tennessee’s teachers face difficult situations every day and produce amazing results in spite of their enormous challenges.”

In this world of rapid change, President of Jefferson County Education Association Lisa Henry suggests finding those responsible for the problems faced by educators today.

“The answer inevitably comes back to politics,” says Henry, a lifelong Republican. “Whether we like it or not, political decisions impact our lives in so many ways. The conditions under which we work,

the size of our class, the curriculum we teach, the salaries we earn, and the system under which we are evaluated—it’s all spelled out in the decisions made by elected officials or their appointees.”

In order to bring about any change in these areas, member engagement in the political process appears to be the only answer. While this engagement can come in many forms, the ultimate goal is to bring about change in how elected officials vote on education issues or the kind of change that occurs on Election Day when politicians get their opportunity to be held accountable.

During last year’s “Hot Issues, Cool Treats” campaign conducted by TEA across the state, many teachers agreed that 2012 is the golden opportunity to focus their frustrations in order to affect the change deserved by all education employees, the students they teach and the communities they serve.

“With the Tennessee General Assembly reconvening on January 11, educators must communicate loudly and clearly that we, as professionals, demand to be heard as education policy is developed,” says Mark Orman, a

longtime member of Maury Co. EA. “The voice of practitioners which has been drowned out by many education “reformers” has to be heard by our legislators and those running for office.”

TEA Executive Director Al Mance says he could not agree more. “Educators from all sides of the political spectrum—Democrats, Republicans and Independents—must communicate with all legislators through every possible means, including personal visits, calls, letters, emails, and social media,” he says. “Tell the policymakers that you are a voting constituent and you insist on your voice being heard. If thousands of TEA members take the position that they will not be silenced, elected officials will ignore them at their own political risk. Commit now to pushing for positive change by engaging in the legislative process.”

Beginning with the legislative session and culminating with the 2012 November elections, a legion of engaged, informed and passionate teacher activists can make a profound impact on the political process.

“Our push for more realistic policies will positively impact the lives of education employees and the children we teach,” Orman says.

Tips For Teacher Activists

1. The most effective lobbyist is one who is well informed, honest, frank, and knowledgeable about the issues to be considered.
2. Know your legislator, his/her district, and the nature of his/her constituents.
3. Get down to business quickly. Don’t take up too much time. Legislators are busy people and may come to look upon you as a nuisance if you prolong the visit unnecessarily.
4. Each argument presented for your case should be accompanied by data and rationale to support your position.
5. Don’t bluff or hedge if you don’t know the answer to a particular question. Offer to get back in touch with the legislator as soon as possible with the requested information.
6. Persuasion is the key, but persuasion must be tempered by common sense and friendliness. Don’t threaten.
7. The important thing is to convey to the legislator a genuine interest on the part of teachers in seeing that his/her decisions are the right decisions for public education.
8. Remember, legislators are not educators by profession. Start where they are,

not where you are. Make your concern come alive by showing the impact on real people, and by giving examples to which the legislator can relate.

9. Basic human relations skills are important to lobbying. If you find yourself in disagreement with your legislator, a calm, reasonable attitude and well-prepared rationale will do more to change his/her mind than an irate lobbyist. You can disagree without being disagreeable.

10. Don’t belittle those who disagree with your issue or proposal; the next time around they may be on your side.

11. Don’t accept the standard noncommittal lines, such as: “I share your concern.” or “I’ll take a hard look at the issue.”

12. Don’t give up if you lose the first time. Continue to keep the legislator informed about the impact of an issue.

13. Don’t beg. Remember, you represent a proud and important profession. You should make no apologies for doing so.

14. Remember to say “thank you” when he/she helps you or honors a commitment.



Kathy Petrowski of Shelby Co. EA tells Tennessee Education Commissioner Kevin Huffman that elementary teachers are at their wit’s end. “Don’t you think it’ll get better?” asks Huffman.

Opinion/Commentary

Would Legislators Allow This to Happen to Themselves?

A meditation on the evaluation system

By Betty West

I had a daydream the other day about the members of the 107th General Assembly. I imagined them being evaluated this year and ranked according to a newly instituted rubric based solely on how their colleagues voted in the Tennessee Senate and House of Representatives.

That’s right, our lawmakers would not be graded based upon their choices, actions or results of their initiatives. Instead, their final grade would depend upon the performance of their fellow lawmakers. An arbitrary goal would be set for the data and an average grade of the legislature would be determined with a top-secret formula stored in a vault at an undisclosed location in the hills of Tennessee.

The above may sound ridiculous, but you and I know that this twisted fantasy

was inspired by the evaluation process for teachers in our state who do not teach tested subjects.

Through no fault of my Director of Schools Kenny Casteel or my Principal John Bush, I now have very little control over a major portion of my evaluation.

My situation is not unique in my district or the state. The new and improved evaluation process has become so cumbersome that students will undoubtedly be shortchanged in the end. Their teacher does not have enough time to delve deeply into one-on-one instruction or classroom discussion and is unable to capitalize on those cherished teachable moments. He or she must complete all of the sub-indicators listed on the evaluation rubric in the allotted amount of time. Administrators are pushed to their limits by inordinate amounts of paperwork and time spent conferencing or evaluating.

This process was implemented too quickly and without enough time to work out the bugs. Teachers don’t mind being evaluated, but where is the equity and honor in this process? The inaugural year of this new evaluation should be a pilot year.

Is anyone listening?

Betty West is a member of Coffee Co. EA with 24 years of teaching experience. She teaches at Coffee Co. Central High School.

“An average grade of our legislature would be determined with a top-secret formula stored in a vault...”

By Carol K. Schmooch

School administrators responsible for observing and evaluating teachers reported their experiences with the new evaluation system in a five-week online survey conducted by TEA this fall. Over 650 principals, assistant principals and other observers completed the survey, 95 percent of whom are implementing the state’s TEAM evaluation model. (Only 14 survey participants are implementing the COACH model in Hamilton County, 11 the Teacher Effectiveness Measure in Memphis, and seven the Tiger model. Due to the low number of respondents implementing the alternative models, conclusions that can be drawn about these models from the

“just right,” while 75 percent report there are too many indicators. Though only a small number of COACH evaluators responded to the survey, the higher numbers reported on Table 1 appear to indicate greater satisfaction among evaluators with the COACH rubric. “The rubric for the evaluation system is a strong rubric to improve teacher performance and student learning. The time required to complete an evaluation from pre-conference to post-conference is prohibitive,” notes one survey completer.

Time and Paperwork

Irrespective of the evaluation model used, evaluators report spending significant additional



Table 2 In which of the following areas do you need additional support and assistance?

Evaluation Model	TEAM	COACH*	TEM*	Tiger*
Number of survey completers	623	14	11	7
Evaluating counselors, librarians, and non-core subject teachers	66%	64%	36%	86%
Managing the number of observations	55%	29%	73%	14%
Managing recordkeeping and reports	34%	14%	46%	43%
Using rating system appropriately	33%	14%	36%	43%
None—I am adequately prepared for my role in teacher evaluation	11%	22%	9%	14%

*The small number of responses for the alternate models indicates this data may not be representative.

from the two domains I have observed and rated, I can see where many good teachers could be more effective; with teachers I had some concerns about the evidence shows there are true concerns. However, I believe the way the system was rushed through... was not the best way to implement such an awesome tool... I do believe we have a good tool in place to use, but the way it is used is not the best use of an administrator’s time.”

• “I like the new system. However, it takes up all my time in and out of school. It is difficult for me to do the other required functions as an administrator. I am exhausted by the end of the week.”

Carol K. Schmooch is TEA assistant executive director for program services.

Evaluators Report Frustrations, Unmet Needs

survey are limited.)

Training and Orientation

For both the TEAM and COACH evaluation models, 80 percent of administrators spent three-to-four days being trained to conduct evaluations, with the remainder reporting they spent over four days in training. Many administrators using the TEAM or Tiger models reported spending less time being trained to conduct evaluations, with 50 percent of TEAM evaluators and 43 percent of Tiger evaluators reporting their training lasted one-to-two days.

Almost all evaluators indicate teachers received orientation to the new evaluation system. In TEAM and COACH districts, most of this orientation occurred at the building level. TEAM evaluators reported that orientation to the new evaluation system for teachers generally took more than three hours, while 23 percent said it lasted two-to-three hours and 12 percent reported less.

Evaluation Rubrics

The survey asked three questions about the various evaluation rubrics. The data on these questions for each evaluation model are reported in Table 1.

Seventy percent of TEAM evaluators report the indicators in the rubric are clearly stated so teachers and observers know what’s expected; 72 percent feel the indicators identify the most important practices of effective teachers. However, only 24 percent of TEAM evaluators believe the number of indicators is

time completing all the required observations, related conferences and paperwork. Forty-six percent of evaluators report this takes an additional 10-or-more hours per week. Thirty-three percent report they are responsible for completing 40 to 80 observations over the course of the year.

While 73 percent of all survey completers report increased recordkeeping (paper or online) compared to the previous evaluation system, 64 percent of Project COACH evaluators report less paperwork with the new evaluation system.

Best Practices Portal

Districts using the TEAM model have a best-practices portal with video and other resources aligned with the TEAM rubric to assist teachers with

targeted professional development. While 80 percent of TEAM evaluators report they find the portal useful, only 68 percent of these evaluators indicate all teachers have access to the portal. (Another 18 percent don’t know, and 15 percent say all teachers do not have access to this resource.)

Many comments identified shortcomings of the best-practices portal:

- “I don’t need more professional development on the evaluation system; my faculty does. They need modeling in the areas of the rubric for which they are held accountable. The NIET portal does this poorly.”
- “I would like to see more GOOD lessons posted in grades K-3. The rubric has many places that are hard to hit with younger students.”
- “Teachers need more professional

development on what implementation looks like. The NIET website is not user-friendly, and there are not appropriate lessons for each subject at every grade level. Also, there are not enough short, small-group lessons.”

With all the concerns expressed by teachers early this school year about burdensome lesson plan requirements, the survey asked whether a specific lesson plan template had been designated for use by teachers. Fifty-six percent of respondents said this was the case while 44 percent reported it was not. When a particular lesson plan template was required, about 51 percent reported this decision was made at the district level in TEAM districts; districts using an alternate evaluation model said this decision was generally made at the school level.

Additional Support and Assistance

Of particular interest in the survey was what areas evaluators identified where they need additional support and assistance. This data is reported in Table 2 for all evaluation models.

The area of greatest need cited by TEAM, COACH and Tiger evaluators relates to evaluating counselors, librarians and non-core subject teachers. The second greatest need cited by TEAM evaluators—which was also the greatest need cited by TEAM evaluators—is managing the number of observations.

Among the four models, Project COACH evaluators indicated the lowest need for “managing recordkeeping and reports” and “using rating system appropriately.” Project COACH evaluators also

scored highest among all four models for needing no additional support as 22 percent reported being “adequately prepared for my role in teacher evaluation.”

The need for more information and support in evaluating counselors, librarians and non-core subject teachers was reinforced by a multitude of written comments, such as: “Need more training on non-core teachers, which were not covered in the four days of training... No training was provided on the alternate rubrics.” Comments also identified the need for more support in evaluating special education and pre-K teachers, as well as the need for training on the planning and environment rubrics.

Balancing Observation With Other Responsibilities

While they see value in the evaluation rubric and embrace their roles as observers and evaluators, many administrators report frustration with the time-consuming evaluation process and the sheer number of evaluation interactions required. The following comments capture this dilemma:

- “I really do like the new system even though the rubric is too much. I think it could be simplified. Too many observations are required, especially for professional-licensed teachers.”
- “The model will assist in promoting effective teaching. It must be modified and presented to teachers as a tool for improvement, not a tool for punishment.”
- “I do like the tool that is in place. Just

Table 1 Opinions on evaluation rubrics

Evaluation Model	TEAM	COACH*	TEM*	Tiger*
Number of survey completers	623	14	11	7
Indicators are clearly stated so teachers and observers know what’s expected	70%	93%	64%	43%
Indicators identify the most important practices of effective teachers	72%	100%	70%	43%
The number of indicators is				
a) too many	75%	43%	64%	86%
b) just right	24%	57%	27%	14%

*The small number of responses for the alternate models indicates this data may not be representative.

NEA Complimentary Life is the no-cost insurance benefit every member enjoys.

NEA Complimentary Life Insurance®

- Up to \$1,000 life insurance and \$5,000 accidental death and dismemberment coverage
- \$50,000 AD&D insurance for any covered accident that occurs while on the job or serving as an Association Leader
- \$150,000 life insurance for unlawful homicide while on the job

We're devoted to helping every member get adequate coverage affordably. Because it's so important that your family is financially secure, we provide this additional insurance benefit at no cost to all eligible members.

Register your beneficiary now at neamb.com/insurance

NEA Members Insurance Trust®

NEA Complimentary Life Insurance is provided at no cost to all Active, Staff, Reserve and Life members.

DT470112



Teacher Evaluation Survey Phase II

Jan. 1 - Feb. 18

Phase II of the Teacher Evaluation Survey is set to begin on January 1, 2012. TEA announced at the beginning of the school year its commitment to soliciting input from teachers across the state regarding the new evaluation process. To date, teachers and administrators have been surveyed.

Phase II of the teachers survey will continue to focus on experiences with the new evaluation process so that this information can continue to be shared with policymakers in order to make changes to the evaluation system to positively impact student's learning conditions and teachers' working conditions. The survey is available at www.teateachers.org.

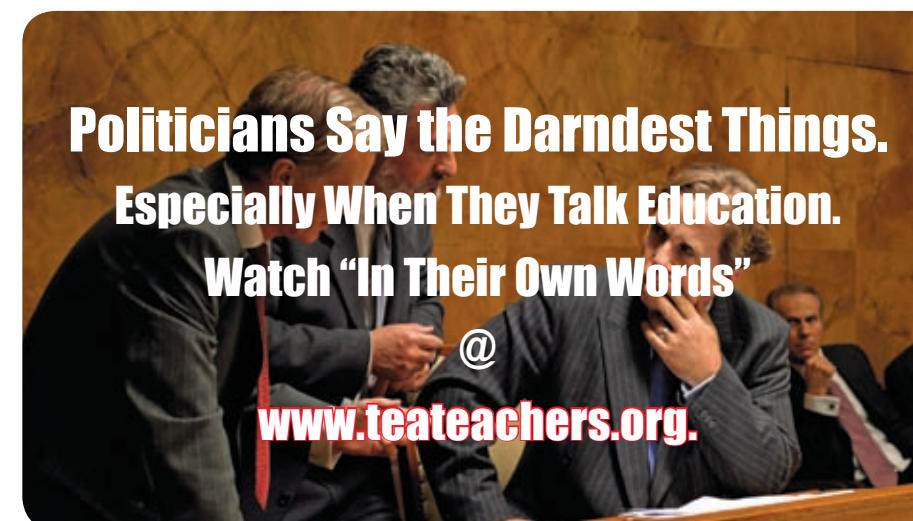
Tennessee Space Week Grant Winners Announced

TEA congratulates Tennessee Space Week learning grant winners Vicki Murtha of Shelby Co. EA and Janet Lou Burks of Robertson Co. EA.

"Murtha and Burks developed the most compelling projects which will help generate student interest and performance in science and mathematics," said TEA Communications Manager A.L. Hayes.

Titled "Space Exploration with Apps," Murtha's project is aimed at helping E.A. Harrold Elementary students gain a thorough grasp of the Universe with the help of iPad apps. Students will learn specific vocabulary, practice math in space-related applications and are expected to demonstrate their knowledge with drawings and podcasts.

Under project "Embrace Space," Burks plans to involve her entire school in inquiry-based activities. While only 5th-graders at Cheatham Park Elementary will work on the planetarium construction project, students from other grades and their parents are expected to participate in activities demonstrating how a rocket lifts off, identifying parts of a comet model, demonstrating why the moon's daytime temperature is so high and seeing how space exploration has changed life on earth.



Advocacy Conference Offers Strategies, Tools to Locals



Members of Clarksville-Montgomery Co. EA attend a breakout session.



TEA Executive Director Al Mance, President Gera Summerford and Vice President Barbara Gray welcome President of the Wisconsin Education Association Council Mary Bell who delivered the opening keynote address.



Barbara Gray delivers a door prize to Rosemary Winters of Memphis EA as TEA UniServ Manager Donna Cotner looks on.

Need information, services?

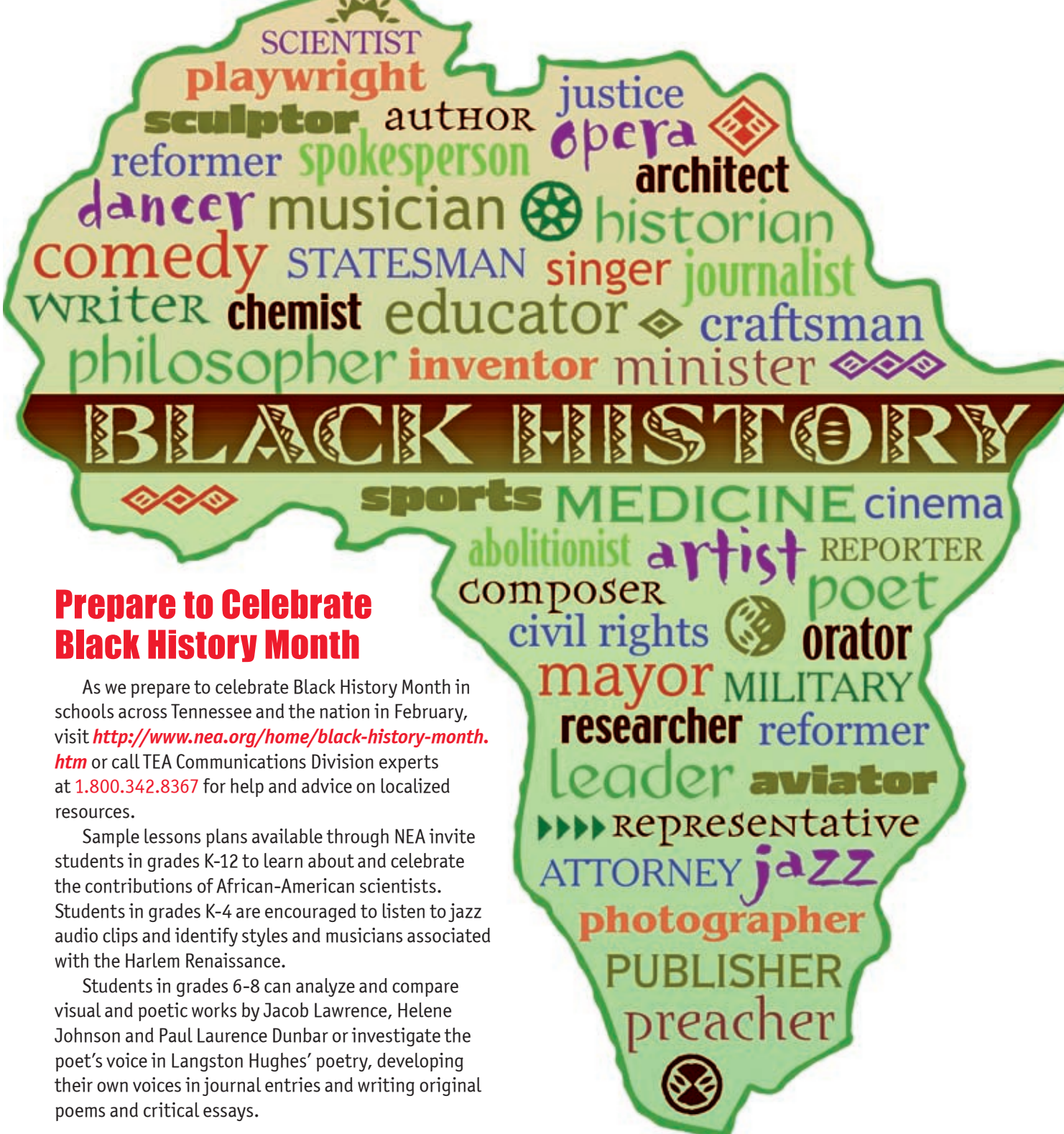
Mitchell Johnson
Assistant Executive Director for Affiliate Services

Donna Cotner
Managers of UniServ
Tennessee Education Association, 801 Second Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37201-1099
(615) 242-8392, (800) 342-8367, FAX (615) 259-4581

UniServ Coordinators

District 1 — Harry Farthing, P.O. Box 298, Elizabethton, TN 37644; phone: (423)262-8035, fax: (423)262-8053; Assns: Carter, Hancock, Hawkins, Rogersville, Johnson, Sullivan, Bristol, Kingsport, Northeast State C.C. **District 2 — Jennifer Gaby**, P.O. Box 70, Afton, TN 37616; (423)234-0700, fax: (423)234-0708; Assns: Cocke, Newport, Elizabethton, Greene, Greeneville, Unicoi, Washington, Johnson City, ETSU. **District 3 — Tina Parlier**, P.O. Box 74, Corryton, TN 37721; (865)688-1175, fax: (865)688-5188; Assns: Claiborne, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Sevier, Union, Walter State C.C. **District 4 — Jon White**, Knox County Education Association, 2411 Magnolia Ave., Knoxville, TN 37917-8289; (865)522-9793, fax: (865)522-9866; Assns: Knox, UT-Knoxville, Pellissippi State C.C., TSD. **District 5 — Jason White**, Assns: Anderson, Clinton, Oak Ridge, Campbell, Cumberland, Fentress, Morgan, Scott, Oneida, TSD, York Institute **District 6 — Reba Luttrell**, 503 Cardinal St., Maryville, TN 37803; phone/fax: (865)983-8640; Assns: Blount, Alcoa, Maryville, Monroe, Sweetwater, Loudon, Lenoir City, Roane, Roane State C.C. **District 7 — Jim Jordan**, P.O. Box 4878, Cleveland, TN 37320; phone/fax: (423)472-3315; Assns: Bledsoe, Bradley, Cleveland, McMinn, Athens, Etowah, Meigs, Polk, Rhea-Dayton, Cleveland State C.C. **District 8 — Theresa Turner**, 4655 Shallowford Rd., Chattanooga, TN 37411; (423)485-9535, fax: (423)485-9512; Assns: Hamilton County, Chattanooga State C.C., UT-Chattanooga, Department of Higher Ed. **District 9 — Jeff Garrett**, 801 Second Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37201; (615)242-8392, ext. 228, or (800)342-8367; Assns: Coffee, Manchester, Tullahoma, Franklin, Grundy, Marion, Sequatchie, Van Buren, White, Warren. **District 10 — Shannon Bain**, 1001 Rhett Place, Lebanon, TN 37087; phone: (615)547-7769, fax: (615)547-7879; Assns: Clay, DeKalb, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Trousdale, TTU. **District 11 — Arthur Patterson**, 101 Copperas Court, Murfreesboro, TN 37128; phone: (615)907-9912, fax: (615)907-5490; Assns: Cannon, Sumner, Wilson, Lebanon S.S.D., Volunteer State C.C. **District 12 — Susan Young**, P.O. Box 422, Madison, TN 37116-0422; phone/fax: (615)865-9700; Assns: Cheatham, Rutherford, Murfreesboro, MTSU, TSB, TN Department of Education **District 13 — Forestine Cole, Ralph Smith**, Metro Nashville, 531 Fairground Court, Nashville, TN 37211; (615)726-1499, fax: (615)726-2501; Assns: Metro Nashville, Nashville State C.C., TSU, Department of Higher Education **District 14 — Rhonda Thompson**, 801 Second Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37201; (615)242-8392, ext. 321, or (800)342-8367; Assns: Clarksville-Montgomery, Robertson, APSU **District 15 — Miley Durham**, P.O. Box 10, Lawrenceburg, TN 38464; phone/fax: (931)766-7874; Assns: Bedford, Giles, Lawrence, Lincoln, Fayetteville, Marshall, Moore, Motlow State C.C. **District 16 — Jackie Pope**, 2326 Valley Grove Dr., Murfreesboro, TN 37128; (615) 898-1060, fax: (615) 898-1099; Assns: Lewis, Maury, Williamson, Franklin S.S.D. **District 17 — Cheryl Richardson Bradley**, 801 Second Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37201; (615)242-8392, ext. 233, or (800)342-8367; Assns: Decatur, Dickson, Hardin, Hickman, Houston, Humphreys, Perry, Wayne **District 18 — Maria Uffelmann**, P.O. Box 99, Cumberland City, TN 37050; phone/fax: (931)827-3333; Assns: Benton, Carroll (West Carroll) Central, Clarksburg, Huntingdon, McKenzie, Gibson, Bradford, Humboldt, Milan, Trenton, Henry, Paris, Stewart, Weakley, UT-Martin, FTA **District 19 — Lorrrie Butler**, P.O. Box 387, Henderson, TN 38340; (731)989-4860, fax: (731)989-9254; Assns: Chester, Hardeman, Henderson, Lexington, Jackson-Madison, McNairy, Jackson State C.C. **District 20 — Karla Carpenter**, P.O. Box 177, Brunswick, TN 38014; (901)590-2543, fax: (901)382-1433; Assns: Crockett, Dyer, Dyersburg, Haywood, Lake, Lauderdale, Obion, Union City, Tipton, Dyersburg State C.C. **District 21 — Zandra Foster**, 3897 Homewood Cove, Memphis, TN 38128; phone/fax: (901)377-9472; Assns: Fayette, Shelby, Southwest Tenn. C.C., University of Memphis. **District 22/MEA — Ken Foster, Executive Director; MEA UniServ Directors: Marilyn Baker, Susanne Jackson, Terri Jones, Tom Marchand, Herman Sawyer**, MEA, 126 South Flicker Street, Memphis, TN 38104; (901)454-0966, fax: (901)454-9979; Assn: Memphis.

www.teateachers.org
www.nea.org



Prepare to Celebrate Black History Month

As we prepare to celebrate Black History Month in schools across Tennessee and the nation in February, visit <http://www.nea.org/home/black-history-month.htm> or call TEA Communications Division experts at 1.800.342.8367 for help and advice on localized resources.

Sample lessons plans available through NEA invite students in grades K-12 to learn about and celebrate the contributions of African-American scientists. Students in grades K-4 are encouraged to listen to jazz audio clips and identify styles and musicians associated with the Harlem Renaissance.

Students in grades 6-8 can analyze and compare visual and poetic works by Jacob Lawrence, Helene Johnson and Paul Laurence Dunbar or investigate the poet's voice in Langston Hughes' poetry, developing their own voices in journal entries and writing original poems and critical essays.

TEA Calendar of Events

February	Black History Month
February 15	Deadline for receiving nominations for Distinguished Educator Awards
February 15	Deadline for receiving nominations for Friend of Education Awards
February 15	Deadline for receiving nominations for TEA Human Relations Awards
February 15	Deadline for School Bell Awards entries
February 15	Deadline for receiving nominations for Susan B. Anthony Award
February 21	President's Day
February	Administrator Task Force Conference
February 25	New Teacher Conference, TEA Building
March 1	Deadline for submitting nominations for Sahli-Woodall Scholarships
March 2	Read Across America