

The CEA Voice

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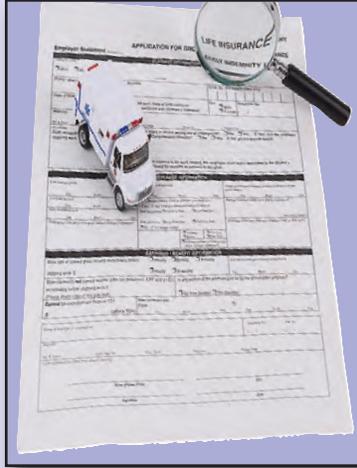
Columbus Education Association

September 14, 2009

Health benefits enrollment

The enrollment period for Columbus City Schools' benefits is Oct. 13–Nov. 6. New this year: Everyone must re-enroll to be eligible for health-care benefits. The process inconveniences us, but it is a requirement of the Ohio Auditor of State.

All eligible employees who want medical coverage must re-enroll in the Core Benefits program that packages medical, dental and vision coverage. The Traditional Choice (comprehensive major medical) plan will not be offered after the end of 2009.



This year, enrollment will be in person with an enrollment counselor at your school or work location. You must meet with the counselor even if you plan to waive coverage. If you have previously enrolled dependents and you have no changes, all you need is the first page of your 1040 tax return. If you are making changes or adding or re-enrolling dependents to your plan, please bring:

- ✦ A copy of the first page of your most recent Form 1040 tax return
- ✦ Applicable evidence, such as marriage certificates, birth certificates, adoption award letters, child-support orders and domestic-partner affidavits (if you have never enrolled dependents previously)

Note that several new voluntary benefits begin this school year: universal life insurance with long-term care benefits, short-term disability insurance, accident insurance, critical illness insurance, pet insurance and LegalEASE, providing legal coverage (for non-CEA members). CEA members already receive legal benefits as members of CEA/OEA through the Cloppert, Latanick, Sauter & Washburn law firm.

Check your e-mail and school mailbox for more information. For questions, call 365-6475.

OEA pans STRS Board's proposed changes

The State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) Board voted earlier this month to recommend proposed changes to the system's pension benefits. Proposed changes include:



- Increasing the amount of money contributed to STRS by teachers and districts a total of 5 percent by 2020
- Changing the eligibility requirements for full benefits from 30 years of service at any age to 35 years of serv-

ice at any age

- Increasing the early retirement age from 25 years of service at 55 years of age to 30 years of service at 60 years of age
- Eliminating the 35-year enhanced benefit formula for teachers
- Increasing members' final average salaries to the five highest years, an increase from the three highest years
- Changing the Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA) from 3 percent per year to 2 percent or 1.5 percent per year, depending on members' dates of retirement

STRS is not the only public pension system in the state to propose changes to its structure and benefits. All of Ohio's five public pension systems presented their proposed changes to the state as of press time. These potential modifications require a change in state law by the Ohio legislature to be implemented.

The Ohio Education Association (OEA) does not support the plan adopted by the STRS Board. These proposed changes would have a life-altering effect on hundreds of thousands of active and retired teachers. OEA believes that all STRS stakeholders, including employees, employers and retirees have a shared responsibility for improving the system's funding.

The severe economic downturn has hit all of the retirement systems hard. The STRS plan does address a very real problem. The STRS Board has wrestled mightily with these issues under an unreasonable timeline. OEA is committed to continue working with the STRS Board, stakeholders and the legislature to achieve a fair and equitable solution for maintaining the health of the pension system.

Set your stride to cure breast cancer

CEA is proud to once again sponsor the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk, scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 25. We want to show strong support for this event. Last year, you organized more than 20 teams to participate; and we raised more than \$8,000.



Form a team at your school, and join thousands of others to raise funds for a future without breast cancer. Your team members need not be district employees. Some schools encourage students and their parents to join their teams. This is a great opportunity to involve the community in your school's efforts.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. at COSI, 333 W. Broad Street. The walk begins at 10 a.m. Turn in monies raised upon registration at the CEA booth.

To register in advance, go to: <http://bit.ly/3QY7iE>; and be sure to list CEA as your team company.

Three Columbus charters will close

A total of sixteen underperforming Ohio charter schools will close by June 30, 2010, thanks to a recently strengthened state law. The tougher law will force Ohio's underperforming charters to close after receiving a failing grade two out of three years on the state report card. The previous state law mandated closure after failing three years in a row.

Three of the closing charter schools are located in Columbus—Montessori Renaissance Experience, ScholARTS Preparatory and Career Center and George Washington Carver Preparatory Academy. The three schools enrolled slightly less than 400 students last year, according to the most recent information from the Ohio Department of Education.

ScholARTS and George Washington Carver never made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) since both schools opened in 2004 and 1999, respectively. Montessori Renaissance Experience was only able to make AYP once, during the 2003–2004 school year.

Endorsements are coming

The TBS Screening Committee will interview prospective school board candidates and review candidate questionnaires for those running for city council, judges and other Columbus and county offices.

The CEA Board of Governors will make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly for CEA on Thursday, Sept. 17. The Faculty Representatives will have the proposed slate of candidates mailed to them by Monday, Sept. 14. The adopted recommendations will be printed in a future issue of *The CEA Voice*.

Know the contract: Office equipment use

Some principals have restricted teacher use of copiers, laminators and other office equipment. All teachers have the contractual right to access office equipment when working on classroom materials and accessing or entering student information.

Section 206.01 of your negotiated agreement specifies that photocopying machines and other, more technologically advanced equipment—including computers—shall be made available and properly maintained in teachers' workspaces, classrooms and teachers' lounges. This section also covers equipment such as laminators, fax machines and other such devices. If your principal has restricted the use of any office equipment, please call CEA.



Interfering in union business = ULP

There are many reasons to file an unfair labor practice (ULP). Most of the time, CEA files ULPs because of poor judgment on the part of the administrator. Usually, ULPs stem from administrative attempts to limit members' involvement in union affairs. If an administrator says you are not to call CEA, that's a ULP. If an administrator threatens members who call CEA, that's a ULP. If an administrator states, "I know who called CEA," that's a ULP. Or if an administrator retaliates with discriminatory treatment, that's a ULP.

You pay union dues and have the right to call CEA for any reason you deem appropriate. Even if the principal says you must go through your Senior Faculty Rep, that's a ULP. Any CEA member may call CEA directly.

We file ULPs in consultation with our attorneys who file

the practice complaint with the State Employment Relations Board (SERB). For more information about ULPs, see Section 4117.11 of the Ohio Revised Code. It spells out which acts are unfair labor practices. Report violations to CEA.

"Teacher Talk" available online

The Columbus Education Association is one of the only teachers' unions in the state that communicates with the general public through its own radio show.

"Teacher Talk" regularly showcases the innovations and the hard work of CEA members on WCBE 90.5 FM. The Board-chartered NPR affiliate has been the home of "Teacher Talk" for more than 22 years.

Hosted by Sue Misiak, a retired West HS English teacher, "Teacher Talk" explores the constantly changing educational landscape at the local, state and national levels. "Teacher Talk" has counted among its guests CEA President Rhonda Johnson, Vice-President Sally Oldham, Immediate Past President John Grossman, Superintendent Gene Harris and other notable local education figures.

"Teacher Talk" airs the first and third Tuesdays of each month, immediately before the broadcast of the Columbus Board of Education meetings. The past two years' episodes of "Teacher Talk" are now stored as podcasts on the CEA Web site. Members can listen to archived episodes through their Web browser. In addition, episodes can be downloaded onto any MP3-capable device from the CEA Web site. Go to the "Teacher Talk" archive at <http://tinyurl.com/c7zoez>.



Special notes

- ❑ **Attention Faculty Representatives:** The first CEA Legislative Assembly will be on **Thursday, Sept. 17 at 4:30 p.m.** at Confluence Park Restaurant. **RSVP to Judy Nelson**, 253-4731 or jnelson@ceaohio.org
- ❑ The **open enrollment** period to participate in the **Sick Leave Bank** is **now through Sept. 30**. Download a form from the CEA Web site at <http://bit.ly/3gPH2e>.
- ❑ **CEA's Annual Fall Fling** will be held Friday, Sept. 25, at the **Aladdin Shrine Center**. Please note that this is a change in venue. Watch for information in your e-mail and school mailboxes.
- ❑ **Save the date:** Friday, Oct. 16, is **Capital Day** to be held at the Hyatt Regency.
- ❑ The **PAR office** is **offering CEU classes** for teachers of all skills and grade levels. Join us on **Tuesdays from 4:30–6:30 p.m.** at AIMS (on the Ft. Hayes Campus) for **two hours** and earn **0.2 CEUs for each session**. Course offerings: **Sept. 15**—*Building an Effective Management System for the Elementary Classroom*; **Sept. 22**—*Building an Effective Management System for the Middle and High School Classroom*; **Sept. 29**—*Safe Learning Environments for All*; **Oct. 6**—*Student Assistance and Intervention for Learning (Success Works)*; **Oct. 20**—*Best Practices in the Classroom*; **Oct. 27**—*Culturally Relevant Teaching: Teaching the Urban Child*; **Nov. 3**—*Data-Based Decision Making*; **Nov. 10**—*Talking with Parents*. Register for classes online at: <https://columbus.schoolnet.com>.

CEA Pre-Paid Legal Services Plan OEA/NEA Attorney Referral Program

At Cloppert, Latanick, Sauter and Washburn, we have dedicated ourselves to teachers in and out of the classroom. Our experienced personal injury, divorce, dissolution, criminal, probate and real estate attorneys are available to you at moderate rates which are lower than we normally charge our private clients.

Please contact us today and allow our experience to work for you.
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