

The CEA Voice

www.ceahio.org

Volume XLIII, No. 5

Columbus Education Association

September 17, 2012

STRS update

On Wednesday, September 12, 2012, the Ohio House passed a number of bills that make changes to the benefits offered by the state retirement systems. The substance of each bill was based on the recommendations of the boards of the respective retirement systems with stakeholder support for each plan. The bills were passed on a bipartisan basis. Senate Bill 341, dealing with SERS, passed 93-0. Senate Bill 342, regarding changes to STRS, passed 92-1. Senate Bill 343 (OPERS) passed 93-0. Later in the day the Senate, which had initially passed the bills in May, voted to concur with the changes made in the House. The changes made in the House were largely technical in nature. These bills will now head to the Governor for his signature.



OEA supports the passage of SB 341, 342 and 343 and applauds the General Assembly for taking action this summer in a bipartisan manner. The benefits offered by the state retirement systems are vital to our members' economic security in retirement. The changes called for in this legislation are difficult but necessary to help secure long-term stability of the pension benefits on which our members rely, as well as access to meaningful health care coverage in retirement.

Below is a summary of the major provisions of the STRS pension reform (SB 342) passed by the legislature.

Retirement Eligibility: Retirement with full benefits at age 65 with at least 5 years of service is maintained. Otherwise, beginning in 2015, the years of service needed to retire with full benefits gradually increases from 30 to 35 years. After 2026, a member would need to have 35 years of service and be at least 60 years old for full benefits. For early retirements, members could retire at age 60 with 5 years of service or with 30 years of service at any age. However, members who choose to retire early would have their benefits actuarially reduced.

Contributions: Increase in member contributions by four percent of pay phased in one percent a year beginning July 1, 2013, through July 1, 2016.

Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA): The bill would lower the COLA rate for current retirees from 3 percent to 2 percent and have a freeze on increases for FY 2014. For future retirees (beginning August 2013), the COLA rate would also be 2 percent, but the first increase would come after 60 months of retirement.

Benefit Formula and Final Average Salary (FAS): Beginning in 2015, the formula would be 2.2 percent for each year of service and final average salary would be calculated on five years of salary rather than three. Those who are eligible to retire by July 1, 2015, but elect to continue working, could receive no less of a base benefit than current law allows.

Making strides toward a cure

Cancer touches more than just the people diagnosed. It has an impact on everyone around them. The American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk unites communities to celebrate people who have battled breast cancer, educates people about ways to reduce their risk and empowers communities to join the fight.



Every dollar you raise and every step you take will save lives by helping people stay well and get well by finding cures and by fighting back against breast cancer.

Since 1993, nearly 7 million walkers have raised more than \$400 million through participating in noncompetitive walking events. In 2010 alone, nearly 800,000 walkers across the country collected more than \$60 million to save lives from breast cancer.

Join CEA and thousands of others on Sunday, Oct. 28, in Making Strides Against Breast Cancer at COSI (333 W. Broad St.). Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. The walk begins at 10 a.m. CEA is a flagship sponsor, and we would like to show strong support for this event by having scores of teams registered. Form a team at your school. Your team members do not have to be CCS employees. Some schools encourage students and their parents to join their teams.

Go to <http://bit.ly/ceastrides12> to register. There is no fee to register. Be sure to add Columbus Education Association as your company. The first 30 people to register online can receive a free CEA Making Strides T-shirt. Sizes are limited, so register early.

For information, call Ezetta Murray at CEA (253-4731).

PLCs: Your opportunity to learn

This year begins the district-wide implementation of the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) initiative for all CCS staff. This professional development vehicle has the backing and support of your Association.

The over-arching principle of PLCs is that the path to improving student learning lies in providing continuous, team-based, job-embedded learning for educators. A 1998 study (Louis and Marks) found that when a school is organized into a professional community, the following occurs:

- Teachers set higher expectations for student achievement
- Students can count on the help of their teachers and peers in achieving ambitious learning goals
- The quality of classroom pedagogy instruction is considerably higher
- Achievement levels are significantly higher

Your PLC is a place where you and your colleagues can pose questions, examine data and solve problems. Your PLC is an opportunity to collaborate with colleagues to make teaching and learning come alive in your classroom. When

we work together, our students will learn more.

Collaborative PLC teams are generally comprised of five or six members who meet weekly. There is no wrong way for educators to organize themselves for on-going discussions about improving teaching and learning. A PLC team's membership could be based on a common grade level, department or subject area.

While we may be on different committees or work-groups, we are most effective when we are members of just one PLC. This allows you and your team to mount a singular focus on issues related to your teaching and learning.

Effective PLCs decide the topic of their work on a collaborative basis, using shared decision making to guide the group on their professional development journey.

Your principal can help nurture the growth of your PLC by providing time for your team to meet during the work day. In high schools and middle schools, the principal could allow your team to meet once a week in place of your assigned duties. In elementary schools, PLCs could be held during specials. Arranging the schedule this way would still provide for your contractually-guaranteed conference/planning time.

By now, every teacher and administrator should have received an email containing specific PLC information and a rubric to be used by each team member in defining and gauging the team's progress in an on-line quarterly review. The results of the review will be available to the facilitator for discussion with the PLC and analyzed by the district to organize continued support.

Each PLC will identify a facilitator who will enter the activity proposal and weekly attendance in CIMS PD Planner. Each facilitator should send a confirmation email to Kriston Crombie Stotik (kcrombiestotik@columbus.k12.oh.us) in Staff Development for next steps in the PD Planner process.

Need a lawyer?

You have until Sept. 28 to enroll through payroll deduction and until Oct. 31 to pay by cash to enroll in CEA's Legal Services Plan. This is a wonderful deal, provided to us by the law firm Cloppert, Latanick, Sauter and Washburn. The plan offers you reduced rates for those personal matters requiring a lawyer—such as developing estate plans, resolving domestic matters and dealing with traffic violations.



The concept has been so popular that it has become a model for other Associations.

Here's how it works: The Basic Plan (now known as the OEA/NEA Attorney Referral Program) is provided for every active member. When you become a CEA member, you automatically receive, at a reduced rate, legal assistance with matters in five areas: real estate, wills and estates, domestic relations, consumer protection and traffic violations.

The best thing is that your entire, immediate family is eligible. As a CEA member, you automatically receive four free half-hour meetings to discuss any legal matter except income tax preparation.

There is another plan available as well. The Comprehensive Plan costs more but provides more extensive coverage for matters such as personal injury at a predetermined, discounted rate. The plan allows you more time to discuss lengthier items, such as document reviews.

The Comprehensive Plan also entitles you to attorney time for services such as business dealings, bankruptcy or taxes, and defense in criminal matters; however, these matters do not qualify for the discounted rate.

For questions and consultation appointments, call the Cloppert Law Firm at 461-4455.

2012–13 Professional development days District Facilitators: Growing Our Own

Based on your feedback, this year's professional development days will capitalize on the expertise of the outstanding educators in the Columbus City Schools. Educators will continue to work within groups comprised of the schools in their feeder/cluster on the three district-wide PD days: Nov. 14, Dec. 12 and Feb. 13. Our professional staff will replace outside consultants for all sessions.

Professional Development Day Facilitators will be identified through a competitive application process. Those selected will work together to develop frameworks that will guide the learning during each PD day's interactive sessions. Key attributes for applicants include: willingness to be an active learner and leader, interest in collaborating with other educators and strong communication skills.

Selected facilitators will participate in five days of training organized by CCS Staff Development and Rich Smith from Solution Tree™. This training will serve as a mechanism to establish the framework for each of the PD day's learning sessions to ensure on-time matriculation and graduation for each of our students, the forum for sharing of ideas, the space for data analysis and an opportunity for feeder/cluster facilitator team collaboration time. The dates for this training are Oct. 10, second date TBA, Nov. 28, Jan. 30 and Mar. 20.

Facilitating will be a valuable professional growth opportunity involving teachers and principals. The Department of Staff Development is actively seeking educators (teachers, guidance counselors, CCITs, TOSAs, principals, assistant principals and all other certificated job categories) to apply to become 2012–2013 PD Day Facilitators. Find the application in your CCS email or on the Staff Development website at <http://www.columbus.k12.oh.us/staffdev>. Submit your application before 4 p.m. on Sept. 24.

Ingram Grant for teachers

The Ingram-White Castle Foundation has again provided funding for educational improvement grants for CCS teachers. These grants (from \$500 to \$1,000 each) offer teachers support for innovative ideas that lead to improvement of student academic achievement and social and emotional growth.

Applications for the Ingram Teacher Grant must be submitted online by Oct. 5 by 4 p.m. A CCS email account is required. Go to www.columbus.k12.oh.us/ingramgrant to submit your application.

Because this is a district-sponsored grant, applicants will not need to submit a Grant Approval Form to apply but will need the principal's or supervisor's approval and support.

Contact Andrea Richardson (365-8993) at Northgate Center if you have questions.

Special notes

- The **open enrollment period for joining the Sick Leave Bank ends Sept. 30**. You can **download a form** at <http://bit.ly/ceasl12>.
- The **CEA Members Scholarship Foundation** offers \$750 in tuition assistance for our members with a **qualifying senior in college**. The **deadline is Friday, Oct. 26, at 5 p.m.** Call **Cora Miller** at **253-4731**. Go to <http://bit.ly/Q3ShrZ> to download an application.

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.
(614) 461-4455 or www.cloppertlaw.com