

The CEA Voice

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Columbus Education Association

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Leaving a legacy

Gene Harris has accomplished so much since she took the job as Columbus City Schools Superintendent in 2001. She led the district to increase high school graduation rates, improve its state achievement ranking from an “F” to a “C” and revamp the condition of its school facilities with renovations or replacements of 45 buildings.



Gene T. Harris

When she retires in the summer of 2013, Dr. Harris will rank as one of the longest-serving urban school chiefs in the country.

“Dr. Harris is an exemplary superintendent who puts students at the center of her work,” said CEA President Rhonda Johnson. “She works tirelessly to focus all employees on providing a high-quality education for all students in Columbus.”

During her tenure, Harris has made community partnership her focus, asking business leaders and Mayor Michael Coleman for their input and putting community concerns at

the center of discussion. During the past 11 years, Harris has led several successful bids for increased property-tax dollars.

She has made teacher relations an important focus of her administration, setting a new standard for school employee labor relations. “She understands the true meaning of partnership and collaboration,” said Johnson.

Among our successful partnerships have been several CEA/CCS projects to more narrowly target the problems holding students back from higher achievement. Together, we have received several major federal grants to help in this endeavor, including funding from the Race to the Top program.

Dr. Harris has been closely involved with her community. She was born in Columbus and graduated from Linden-McKinley High School. She has worked for CCS for most of her career, teaching and leading in the classroom and central office. She worked in the administration of the Ohio Department of Education and brought that experience back home when she became CCS superintendent, succeeding Rosa Smith.

In 2012, Harris was named Ohio Superintendent of the Year by the Buckeye Association of School Administrators.

Mayor Coleman taking a leading role

Columbus isn’t one of those cities with mayoral control of the schools, and Mayor Michael Coleman doesn’t want to run CCS. But he still has a keen concern about the future of our young people.

“We are lucky to have a city leader who understands that education is a community issue,” said CEA President Rhonda Johnson. “We look forward to working more closely with the mayor and city council to help our families.”



Michael Coleman

Coleman recently said he is stepping up his efforts to ensure strong connections among local government, business and the community to give our children a brighter future. He and City Council President Andrew Ginther, who has also served on the Columbus Board of Education, have declared they will help explore ways to improve the odds for Columbus students. Coleman told news media he will look nationally for ideas, share them with CCS and provide whatever help he can to implement them. “Today I put a stake in the ground...every child in the city deserves the opportunity for a quality education and the chance to succeed.”

As Dr. Harris leaves her post, Mayor Coleman’s leadership will be a key to our effective work in CCS. Here are some of the programs the city already has developed:

- ◆ Capital City Kids afterschool program
- ◆ The APPS program, bringing young people off the streets and into our recreation centers

- ◆ Youth First program distributing grants to youth sports leagues around Columbus
- ◆ The City Readers program
- ◆ The summer youth employment initiatives providing paid internships for thousands of youth and young adults
- ◆ School safety infrastructure including new sidewalks, safety signals and crosswalks

Coleman has pledged to do more. “While all these efforts are important, much more needs my attention. Dr. Harris has now asked me to do more to put our kids first, to make sure they’re educated and prepared and ready to carry on the next generation of leadership in this community.”

Coleman said he will explore programs to help more students graduate from high school and prepare for life through higher education, the work force or the military. He said his conversations will include churches, civic groups, nonprofits and neighborhood groups.

2012 CCS United Way campaign

We begin our United Way campaign on Thursday, Oct. 4, at the Columbus Downtown HS. Principals, supervisors and faculty representatives should attend to learn how to run an effective campaign. CCS Supt. Gene Harris and Janet Jackson, President & CEO of United Way of Central Ohio, will join us. The business of the CEA Legislative Assembly will follow the kickoff.

If you are new to the district or have not had the chance



to lead a campaign, you will be swept up by the enthusiasm our members and administrators have for this important community effort. United Way of Central Ohio brings together the resources of our community, investing our collective time, money and efforts in effective, results-oriented programs. These programs are the building blocks for a good life: a quality education, a stable income, good health and secure housing. We all benefit when children and families succeed.

By focusing on the building blocks for a good life, we can create positive change, now and for the future. Be part of something big.

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER. LIVE UNITED.

Update on reorganization

The following is a verbatim message written by Human Resources regarding October reorganization:

**CEA and CCS agree to delay teacher reassignments until week of October 8 for CCS middle and high schools—
Building staff reductions to be determined by October 1.**

According to Article 301 of the CCS/CEA contract, by October 1 of each year the District is required to notify teachers of any change in assignments, as determined by validated student enrollment data. While the District and CEA understands that it's never an easy thing to do, the reassignment of teaching personnel is done to ensure that all CCS schools and classrooms are appropriately staffed for the number of students officially enrolled—and to ensure that schools and grade levels are within class size contractual requirements.

The District's Human Resources Department is in the process of notifying those school principals whose student enrollment data has been validated and indicates the need for teacher reorganization. However, because of the transition to the District's new student information system, Infinite Campus, the District has been unable to complete the enrollment validation process for all schools in time to provide sufficient notification to affected teachers with respect to reassignments by October 1. Therefore, the District and CEA have agreed to delay the notification of any additional schools requiring teacher reorganization until the week of October 8, following our official enrollment count week.

This agreed upon delay will enable the District to validate all school enrollment data in order to accurately report to the Ohio Department of Education and to have the data necessary to comply with contractual class-size requirements for all of our schools.

As is customary, staff members impacted by reassignment will be provided with a day to pack their personal belongings from their current location as well as a day to unpack at their new location.

Should you have questions or concerns about the reassignment or staff reduction process please consult with your building representative, principal, or the District's Human Resources staff.

The preceding information does not mean that the administration can violate the class-size provisions in Article 301 of the contract. Human Resources must provide substitutes as place holders until permanent teachers are hired. Principals should reorganize using the substitutes the district has provided for your school.

Reduce your taxes and pay health bills

These days, anything you can save before taxes is a bonus. Take full advantage and sign up for a Flexible Spending Account. This pre-tax benefit helps you pay for out-of-pocket medical expenses.

First, estimate how much you expect to spend on eligible health care expenses for the plan year (Jan. 1, 2013–Dec. 31, 2013). Consider medical, dental, vision and hearing expenses not covered by the benefit plans, as well as co-pays for office visits and prescription drugs and deductibles and other eligible expenses. Then determine the amount you want to have deducted from your pay for the year. Deductions are made in equal amounts based on your pay plan.

Once you enroll, you will receive a PayFlex Card that looks like a credit card and can be used anywhere MasterCard is accepted. You may begin using the card on Jan. 1, 2013, for the amount you have elected for the year. For example, if you elect to put \$500 in the FSA, \$500 is available right away on the first day, even though the deductions for the total amount have not yet been made. It's like an interest-free, pre-tax loan from you. The maximum contribution you may elect is \$2,500 per plan year. The minimum contribution is \$260 per plan year.

Your 2013 Employee Benefits Enrollment Guide provides detailed information about flexible spending accounts. Call CEA if you have questions.

Learning is Capital

Many OEA district associations have given up their professional development days, but we recognize the value of continued education for our members. We welcome you to enjoy Capital Day, Friday, Oct. 19, at the Columbus Convention Center (north end). Capital Day activities will begin at 8:30 a.m. with registration and continental breakfast at 7:30 a.m.

This annual opportunity for professional learning is an experience you don't want to miss. The day features morning and afternoon learning sessions and vendor exhibits.

Hear two acclaimed educators, Cornel West and Lavonna Roth, speak about the issues that matter to you. West is a professor of religion and African-American studies at Princeton University. Roth is a consultant, author, presenter and staff development designer.

You won't want to miss these speakers and exciting sessions focusing on core instruction, social and emotional learning and the new teacher evaluation process. Learn more about what you can do to be part of today's cutting-edge classroom.

Register on PD Planner at <http://columbus.schoolnet.com> from Friday, Oct. 5, through Monday, Oct. 15.

We hope to see everyone on Friday, Oct. 19. Lunch is free, but parking is not.

Register to vote and vote early

Absentee ballots and in-person early voting will begin Tuesday, Oct. 2. If you haven't registered or need to make changes to your address or other information, you may register or update your registration until Tuesday, Oct. 9.

Applications for absentee ballots were sent to each voter by the Ohio Secretary of State. If you did not receive an application, you have until Friday, Nov. 2, to make an in-person absentee ballot request at your local board of elections. Absentee ballots sent through U.S. mail must arrive at your county board of elections by noon on Saturday, Nov. 3. Go to <http://www.sos.state.oh.us> to get additional information.

Special notes

- The deadline is Friday, Oct. 5, at 4 p.m. for the **Ingram Teacher Grant** program. For details about the grant process, go to www.columbus.k12.oh.us/ingramgrant.
- Receive support for your college student from our **Members Scholarship Fund**. The student must be a **senior at a college or university** with a **2.0 GPA**. Applications are due by **Oct. 26**. Go to <http://bit.ly/Q3SbrZ>. If you have questions, contact **Cora Miller** at CEA (253-4731).

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