



WEST ALLIS-WEST MILWAUKEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

THE WORD

February 2007

From the President

Beth Ludeman

Have you ever had the experience that, despite your best efforts, you are completely misunderstood?

I've been vacillating for the last couple of weeks on exactly what I should address in my column this edition; there are so many issues of both interest and concern. But this morning in the Journal Sentinel, I noticed a response from a Cedarburg resident to a recent letter in the opinions section from WEAC President Stan Johnson on the problems with the Qualified Economic Offer, the Wisconsin law which singles out only public school teachers with essentially what amounts to a salary cap. If you didn't catch it the first time around, it appeared in the Jan. 21st issue. The reply was printed on Jan. 24th.

The response amounted to a condemnation of what the author believes is an unjust pay system for teachers in the state, but not for the same reasons as Johnson; he (or she; the name did not suggest the gender of the author) argued that merit pay would fix a broken public school system. For those unfamiliar with the term, merit pay is based on the notion that individual teachers should get paid according to their relative "worth". On surface, it sounds great: if you are a "good" teacher, you should get paid well; if you are a "bad" teacher, you should be compensated less.

I'd like to address two big problems with this argument. First, who determines what qualifies as meritorious? Actually, in the days before teachers' rights were protected by unions, merit pay was the standard, and it usually had an interesting gauge for awarding those higher rates. The quality and quantity of personal favors one did for one's administrator, how close one's classroom was to the principal's office, or the number of extracurriculars one supervised often determined how valued one was in the classroom. Merit was not linked to reliable measurements of impacting student success. It is no different with merit pay proposals now, and here's why:

The degree to which students succeed on the almighty standardized test (and that is

typically what proponents of merit pay want to link it to, "pay for performance") is influenced by any number of factors, some tangible and measurable, others not; some within the control of the individual teacher, others not; some malleable, others not. For example, studies suggest that the extent to which students are exposed to reading outside of school can be correlated to their achievement. Obviously this is a factor that teachers attempt to impact in any number of ways, but since we do not spend every waking moment with our young charges, it is impossible to regulate. As is the attendance of our students: is one to be penalized as a teacher for the truancy of a handful of students who are not rising to the level of proficiency as determined by "the test"?

It really takes all of us working together, students, teachers, parents, administrators, and the community, to support high student achievement. Done in isolation, it's a craps shoot at best. But should teachers (or any other kind of employee, for that matter) be rewarded or penalized for factors that are beyond their control? And what about supporting roles to the classroom experience? How then do we compensate librarians, media specialists, special education professionals, social workers, guidance counselors, psychologists, physical therapists, and all those who hold other critical support positions and have a necessarily different focus on serving students? In addition, what of the specialists in fine arts, business, technical, family/consumer, and physical education for (LUDEMAN cont. p2)

Dates to Remember

February 2007

- 5** West Suburban Council Board of Directors, UEP Bldg., 4:15pm
- 6** WSC Mentoring Workshop, UEP Bldg, 4:30 – 6:30 pm
- 7** WA-WMEA Executive Board, UEP Bldg., 4:00 pm
- 12** WA-WM Board of Education meeting, Ad. Bldg., 7 pm (Lincoln Elem., Sikich/Livingston)
- 14** WA-WMEA Representative Assembly, UEP Bldg., 4 pm
- HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!**
- 16-18** WEAC Board of Directors, Madison
- 19** WSC Coordinated Bargaining Council, UEP Bldg., 4:30 pm
- 26** WA-WM Board of Education meeting, Ad. Bldg., 7 pm (Central HS; Nienhuis)
- MID-WINTER BREAK! No school**

March 2007

- 2-4** WEAC Winter Conference, Milwaukee
- 7** WA-WMEA Executive Board, UEP Bldg., 4 pm
- 12** West Suburban Council Board of Directors, UEP Bldg., 4:15 pm
WA-WM Board of Education meeting, Ad. Bldg., 7 pm (Walker Elem; Bina)
- 13** WSC PDP Review Workshop
- 14** WA-WMEA Representative Assembly, UEP Bldg., 4 pm
- 16** WA-WMEA Local Elections – Ballot Boxes due (see Julie Stringer for location/time)
- 26** WA-WM Board of Education meeting, Ad Bldg., 7 pm (Nathan Hale HS; Daavettilla/Malloy)

Visit our website at WWW.WAWMEA.ORG

(LUDEMAN) whom there is no direct correlative portion of “the test”? Each one of us brings our own unique strengths to the profession and reaches different students in any number of ways.

Merit pay, plainly and simply, does one thing well: the job of dividing and conquering. It allows people to play the blame game about who is (ir)responsible for education. The salary schedule bargained into our contract, by contrast, is a skill-and-knowledge-based structure that recognizes professional growth and development by the individual educator, instead of pitting one member against another based solely on the abilities of the students each happened to be assigned in a given year.

The characterization that was most disappointing in the respondent’s letter to Stan Johnson was that our members “can’t put the kids’ education first”. Now, I have to believe when someone suggests something such as this, that the author does not know one single educator, and certainly none of us in West Allis-West Milwaukee. None of us went into this career for the cold, hard cash. To suggest that talented, college-educated professionals would go into this field rather than a more lucrative one and then think of themselves first is unconscionable. This profession is a calling; that’s how I know the author doesn’t personally know any educators. And as far as that merit pay idea about paying “good” teachers well and “bad” teachers less? We reject that idea entirely! As NEA Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen suggests, bad teachers shouldn’t be paid less; bad teachers should not be paid at all – they should not be in the profession. As professional organizations, NEA and WEAC have advocated for (and won) stringent standards for highly qualified educators and mandatory mentoring and professional development. The job we do is simply too important to be left to just anyone.

The only way to minimize these mistaken impressions that some members of the public have of public educators is for members of our association to make concerted efforts to engage the community in our schools. Invite community leaders and our neighbors into our classrooms; consider involving community members in activities you are planning for Read Across America Day in early March. Help them see the challenges we face and the incomparable ways we then, against all odds, prevail against those challenges. While we’re at it, let’s pay attention to what ideas are being floated about the reauthorization of ESEA/NCLB, and collectively lobby members of Congress to

fix and fully fund “No Child Left Behind”.

Thanks for all you do each day to provide every child with the basic right to a great public school. We can’t do it without you!



Professional Rights and Responsibilities

Peggy Oberbeck, Secondary Chairperson
Nancy Nienhuis, Elementary Chairperson

Teachers communicate all day long... with each other, with students, with administrators and parents. We’ve included some information about communication that is helpful for everyone to think about.

Four Principles of Interpersonal Communication

When it comes to messages, perceptions, and communication in general, studies suggest that it takes seven (yes 7!) encounters with a message to absorb it. These principles underlie the workings in real life of interpersonal communication.

Interpersonal communication is inescapable. We can’t not communicate. The very attempt not to communicate communicates something. Through not only words, but through the tone of voice and through gesture, posture, facial expression, etc., we constantly communicate to those around us. Remember, people are not mind readers...people judge you by your behavior, not your intent.

Interpersonal communication is irreversible. You can’t really take back something once it has been said. The effect must inevitably remain. A good rule is to wait before responding to an emotional situation.

Interpersonal communication is complicated. No form of communication is simple. Theorists note that whenever we communicate there are really at least six “people” involved:

1. who you think you are
2. who you think the other person is
3. who you think the other person thinks you are
4. who the other person thinks s/he is
5. who the other person thinks you are
6. who the other person thinks you/thinks he is

Interpersonal communication is contextual. Communication doesn’t happen in isolation. Communication varies with who you are, the relationship between you and the other person, where the interaction takes place, the environment (noise, time, furniture, etc) and cultural behaviors.

Legislative Update

Kathy Ceel, Legislative Chair

Going to the NEA Midwest Regional Convention last weekend was such an uplifting experience and it came at a perfect time for me. It reminded me why I wanted to become a teacher in the first place and also why it is necessary to continue being politically involved.

People often think I am so politically aware because I “like that stuff”. There is truth to that. I have always loved history and I think the way our government is organized was absolute brilliance. However, having said that, lately I have become extremely frustrated with politics on many levels. There have been so many positive changes due to the last election and yet, there are still so many road blocks.

This weekend, however, I was reminded of how much is at stake for education. If we don’t fight for our piece of the pie (and more), others are more than willing to grab it from us. It’s not a matter of being involved because I get “into this stuff”, it is a matter of getting and staying involved because by not doing it, things won’t get better. Being politically aware and involved is part of our job. It has to be!

ESEA is coming up for reauthorization this year. However, it probably won’t make it through the next session since it isn’t listed as one of the high priorities of the Congress at this time. Therefore, the law will stay as it is for now. An NEA lobbyist stated that NEA will continue to fight for complete funding of the law while also assertively educating the Congress of our ideas on how the law needs to be changed in the future. NEA has published *A Positive Agenda for the ESEA Reauthorization*. If you want to take a look at it, go to www.nea.org.

A couple things I have had clarified this weekend that I found interesting are:

1) Each state is required to have their standards and assessments approved by the U.S. Dept. of Education. However, Wisconsin hasn’t been approved yet because we are still working on analyzing our standards to the actual test questions on the WKCE for validity and reliability.

2) Secretary Spelling (DOE) has allowed Delaware to work on the “growth model” for determining their AYP. This model allows for a longitudinal measure of improvement in each student individually and gives points for each student showing progress against themselves rather than a standard fourth grader etc. While this sounds good, I was told that they are having a lot of discussion and disagreements about the (CEEL cont. p3)

(CEEL) details. Such as, how much progress do they have to make, if a student makes more progress one year than another, is the teacher responsible for that improvement or not, etc..

3) Congress, in December, 2006, approved \$99 million for a Teacher Incentive Fund merit pay program which NEA completely opposes. States that are involved in getting those grants are AK, CA, CO, DC, IL, NM, NC, OH, PA, SC, TN, and TX. These states say that they are in such dire need of the extra money, they are participating. Let me make it clear, just because it says it is a teacher incentive program, it doesn't mean all the money goes to the teacher, it may go to their classroom, the school, etc. However you cut it, it puts one teacher/school against another one.

It's obvious that NCLB has to change! NEA needs our help. They are asking us to send stories on how our teaching has been negatively changed due to the extensive testing and the lack of funding for this law. They came up with this idea because Wisconsin implemented it on a state level last year and it had a huge impact. Senator Herb Kohl, who was generally for NCLB changed his feelings about it after reading actual classroom stories. A lot of times Congress doesn't see how a law that they pass really affects daily lives. It had such a great influence on Sen. Kohl, they want to make a booklet with stories from the whole country and present it to the Congress before reauthorization. Please take the time to give one story about how NCLB has affected you and your students. Go to www.nea.org.esea/nclbstories. Imagine the impact this could have!

And finally, I spoke with an NEA lobbyist and asked if cyberlobbying the Congress really had much influence on their decisions. He stressed very directly and clearly that it is huge!! He stated that he will go into a senator's office and they will say something like "We have just been bombarded by thousands of e-mails from the teachers; we hear them loud and clear." He said it gives him power when he goes in to talk to them because it lets them know we are paying attention to what they do. PLEASE, keep up the cyberlobbying on a state and federal level!

As you can tell from this lengthy article, I have been rejuvenated! My eyes are back on the prize. Please join me. Write a story or cyberlobby because we really do make a difference when we work together. Don't let anyone or anything keep you from remembering the mission: Everyone Deserves a Great School.

A Legislative Cure for the Health-Care Cost Blues?

Sandy Nass

Health care costs are squeezing family budgets. As medical costs continue to rise, fewer employers offer health care insurance, and employees are left to explore the individual insurance market and its unaffordable options. Families with employer coverage face rising deductibles and increased cost-sharing. Health care often dominates collective bargaining negotiations, with our members sacrificing salary increases or accepting pay cuts just to maintain benefits.

With rising costs putting health care out of reach for many, the public is clamoring for a solution to the health care cost crisis. In the November 2006 election, Wisconsin voters in 11 communities overwhelmingly approved a non-binding health care referendum initiative calling for the Wisconsin Legislature to develop a plan to reduce health care costs and guarantee access to universal, affordable health care coverage for all Wisconsin residents. Will the Legislature heed the call?

Calling the skyrocketing cost of health care "the biggest threat to continued economic development and job creation," Senate Majority Leader Judy Robson (D-Beloit) has made increasing health care affordability and accessibility a top priority. The Senate Democrats plan to take a closer look at three plans that move the state closer to universal coverage. New incarnations of three health care reform bills from last session are expected to be introduced in the next few months and reviewed by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee chaired by Sen. Jon Erpenbach (D-Middleton).

The first proposal, the Wisconsin Health

Plan, would require companies to pay 3 percent to 12 percent of wages and employees to pay 2 percent into a purchasing pool. Wisconsin residents, using health savings accounts, would select from among three tiers of health plans offered by various insurers. Under another bill, referred to as the Wisconsin Health Care Partnership Plan, employers would be charged about \$340 per month per worker for a uniform plan that would cover all medically necessary care and would be developed by a Labor-Management Commission. Employees would also help fund the system with deductibles and co-payments. Unions would still be able to bargain for additional benefits. Finally, a third bill proposes a single-payer, state-run plan that would tax employers and individuals for health care.

Assembly Speaker Mike Huebsch (R-West Salem) says the Republican-controlled Assembly is also interested in health care reform; however, he envisions a very different approach. Rep. Huebsch rejects government-run health care initiatives and taxes on employers to fund reform. For him, the solution to the health care dilemma lies in consumer-based free market competition and health savings accounts.

Governor Doyle is also championing health care reform. In his January 3 inaugural address, Governor Doyle said the rising price of health care "is not only an economic crisis, it's a human crisis ... and it demands action now." He wants to expand BadgerCare to cover all children, create a small business insurance pool for catastrophic coverage and allow tax deductions for health insurance premiums.

Will the two houses of the Legislature and Governor Doyle be able to coalesce around a health care reform plan? Stay tuned.



FIVE GREAT REASONS TO BECOME ACTIVE IN YOUR UNION **IN 2007**

- Average Wisconsin teacher salaries have fallen 90.6% from 1994-95 to 2004-05, when adjusted for inflation.
- In 2004-05, Wisconsin's average teacher salary ranked 22nd in the nation at \$44,299, about 7.1% below the national average teacher salary of \$47,674.
- National average salaries are expected to decline in coming years as Baby Boomer educators retire and new teachers enter the profession at lower entry-level salaries.
- Experts estimate that 2 million new teachers will be needed over the next decade.
- The Qualified Economic Offer law, passed in 1993, will remain in place until we decide that enough is enough

Falsely Accused

It's the worst thing that can happen to an educator. So how do you avoid it?

Because the stakes are so high, the NEA Representative Assembly voted last year to produce a pamphlet specifically for new educators that provide common sense advice on how to avoid false allegations of inappropriate behavior with students.

Below are some highlights from the brochure entitled ***Teach But Don't Touch***.

- **If possible, never be alone with a student:** Not in a classroom or a house, and especially not in a car. Never give a student a ride home. If you can't avoid being alone with a student at school, keep the door open and stay in plain sight.
- **Always maintain a professional demeanor and distance:** That means no flirting, teasing, or joking about sex. Don't give gifts, unless you give one to every student, and don't single out any one student for special attention or flattery. Never send emails, text messages, or cards to students unrelated to school work, and don't ask students about their social lives or comment on their personal appearance.
- **Physical contact is a particularly tricky area:** Younger children seek out and need physical comfort from their teachers. In the early elementary grades, an occasional hug is probably okay. But as a general rule, it's best to avoid most forms of physical contact, especially kissing, hair stroking, tickling, and frontal hugging. And use common sense: a "high five" to acknowledge a job well done is fine; a slap on the bottom is not.
- **Nip crushes in the bud:** Never allow a student to obsess over you. While crushes can be flattering, they also can be fatal. An unfulfilled fantasy can result in a student acting out to gain attention or retaliating for being ignored.
- If a student expresses a love interest, **respond with an unambiguous "no."** Don't equivocate and certainly don't encourage the student by acting pleased by the attention. It's also advisable to share this information with another adult and your union representative. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to tell your supervisor and ask that the student be transferred.

But even if you follow this advice, there's no guarantee that you won't be a victim of unfounded charges. If the unthinkable happens, remember this: **Never give an oral or written statement to school officials without first consulting with your union representative.** Even innocent statements can be misconstrued.

Making Connections

Nancy Nicnhuis

There are times when I (and maybe you too) feel like nothing's working, and everything is more difficult than it needs to be. It can be hard to stay positive and not get stuck thinking about what's wrong. After attending the NEA Midwest Leadership Conference, I'm feeling pretty excited about my job. I was reminded of the power we have as teachers and the influence and impact we can have. I heard stories about kids who needed just one person at school to care enough to not let them slip by. I heard that significant relationships lead to significant learning. We talked about what happens to kids who don't believe anyone is there for them. We talked about how kids won't make it easy for us because they've been let down over and over again. We talked about not letting kids be victims or choose the easy path. I saw what can happen we make sure we reach out to every kid. I saw how successful a fair, firm, fun teacher can be. I found these messages rejuvenating as we start the second half of the year, I thought you might too.



10th Anniversary for Read Across America

Lynn Herbst

On March 2, 2007, the NEA celebrates Read Across America. It has been ten years since the NEA started this reading revolution. From a one-day celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday to a year-round literacy campaign reaching nearly every home, school, and community, NEA's Read Across America is building a nation of readers. There are many activities that you may want to consider planning with your students of all ages. Go to www.nea.org/readacross/10ways.html to find out how to bring the spirit of the Cat in the Hat into your classroom. At the NEA website, you can also access downloadable posters, bookmarks, certificates of participation, and logos. So get started planning special activities designed to put the spotlight on reading now!

While you are at the NEA website, you may want to participate in a survey about your favorite books. NEA's Read Across America is compiling an all-new

"Educators' 100 Favorite Books List" and is seeking your input in choosing the best books for children and teens. Polling ends on February 10, so visit soon.



Congratulations to Our Latest NBTS Recipient!

Lynn Herbst

Tom Mulligan, an English teacher at Hale High School since 2000, is our most recent Association member to achieve his National Boards. I invited him to comment on the process, as other colleagues consider whether or not they are interested in making the commitment of time and money in an attempt to earn their certification. I appreciate Tom's willingness to provide the information for this article, and the WA-WM Education Association congratulates him for his achievement.

There are many highly professional teachers at Hale and throughout the district that could achieve certification. The process is very arduous; I spent 250 to 300 hours preparing entries and studying for the tests while juggling a full class load and two young children. Obviously, my wife was a tremendous source of support. Some portfolio entries were actually enjoyable to work on; the videotaped discussion sessions were my favorites. It sure was weird to see what a nerd I looked like on tape.

I had a lot of help too. My colleagues--especially Jen Pennington and Erin Shaughnessey--generously gave up large chunks of prep time to help videotape, review entries, listen to my complaining, and provide encouragement. I also found the administration to be very supportive too. Chris Vento-Bente and Ron Simonis were very generous with their time as well, and Cathy MacDonald was a real ally. Without these people I would not have made it.

Perspective candidates can view all instructions and materials associated with the process at www.nbpts.org. The website makes the process transparent. They will also find that Wisconsin has a strong support network in place to aid candidates. WEAC is a great help; the workshops and writing retreats the union sponsors are invaluable.

Finally, although the process can be exhausting and emotional, it is by far the most rewarding (HERBST cont. p5)

(HERBST) professional experience I've had. I'm excited that Dave Clarke and Bob Pileggi have taken the plunge as candidates this year. I wish them all the best.



Getting to Know Our Members

Lynn Herbst

Throughout the West Allis-West Milwaukee School District, we have so many dedicated and talented educators that it would be impossible to give each of them the recognition that they are due. But if I were to pick one person who possesses all of the qualities that represent the best of what we have to offer the children of our district, it would be a third grade teacher from Hoover named Jeanne Ricci. Jeanne has been a teacher in our District since 1985. I first came to know of her through her work behind the scenes to support several important Association activities. Jeanne is the person who takes care of making sure that the Friends of Education recipients receive a gift to acknowledge their efforts. She coordinates the Association's Spring Recognition Party that is held each year to honor our retirees, guaranteeing that great food and beverages are available for all to enjoy. She also takes responsibility for the purchase of the special keepsake gifts which are presented to each retiree from the Association. One thing that is pretty clear about Jeanne is that she is not the type of person to ever seek out recognition, so to pay tribute to her hard

work I sought out some of her colleagues who know her the best.

Jeanne's principal, Chris Drobka, defines her as a master teacher in all aspects. He acknowledged the long hours that she spends each day preparing for her students and the lessons she presents to them. Drobka views her as a teacher leader at Hoover School for her participation on the building leadership team. He also recognizes her ability to help the staff understand the district initiatives by articulating how to implement them, as well as being able to model the best practices that help all students to achieve. He praised her amazing effort on behalf of the *Wishing Children Well* campaign, which acknowledges Child Abuse Prevention Month, at Hoover School. Hoover School has raised more than \$16,000 dollars over the last 16 years, which Drobka attributes to the dedication and passion that Jeanne brings to her daily teaching and the many district activities that she leads.

Kaleen Morkin, Director of Pupil Services, expanded on Jeanne's commitment to *Wishing Children Well*. She recognized Jeanne for her role as Chairperson of the Child Abuse/Neglect Prevention Committee since 1996. Morkin believes that Jeanne's amazing leadership has maintained the viability of the committee to be the most long-standing committee in the district. The *Wishing Children Well* campaign is the major event of this committee.

"Jeanne Ricci's dedication and commitment to the Child Abuse Prevention Committee and the *Wishing Children Well* Campaign is immeasurable," stated Morkin. "The

Wishing Children Well Campaign, which raises money through a variety of activities at the schools and culminates in a 5K Walk/Run, raises \$10,000 annually. This money is used for child abuse prevention activities and sustains the district's *Nurturing Parent Program*. The success of this event is attributed to Jeanne's incredible organizational skills, endless effort, and selfless hours of hard work. Jeanne attends to every last detail of the event from soliciting volunteers and contributions to securing the park and insuring the route, to arriving at 6:00 a.m. the morning of the event to insure that everything is perfect . . . and indeed everything is PERFECT!! I think the annual great weather even applauds all her skill and effort."

Morkin also acknowledged the long hours that Jeanne dedicates to the children in her classroom, stating that it would be difficult to fathom how there are hours left in the day. "Jeanne is truly one of the most creative, committed, and competent teachers I know. She provides her students with a most nurturing environment and an active learning curriculum. Her classroom management commands order, respect, and politeness, yet the "buzz" of learning is ever present. On the occasions I have had to be in Jeanne's classroom, I have found a room full of truly engaged learners and genuinely happy students. As a parent, perhaps the highest complement I could give Jeanne would be that I would be grateful to have my child in her classroom. When recognition comes her way, she most often extends accolades to another. It is so apparent that she does all this simply because of her genuine regard for and love of (MEMBERS cont. p6)

2007 FRIEND OF EDUCATION

Friend of Education awards will again be presented to individuals or groups at the annual District Employee Recognition Banquet at Nathan Hale High School on Wednesday, April 25, 2007 at 6:15 P.M. The award is given to community members who have made outstanding contributions to education in the school district of West Allis-West Milwaukee.

School volunteers, such as parents or community members, who have helped make your school a better place, should be considered when making nominations. The award is not given to current employees of the school district or someone paid to work in our schools. A person cannot receive the award more than once and **only 1 winner per school can be chosen.**

Please include in your nomination letter information such as: the number of years the person has volunteered; the number of hours a week, or month she/he volunteered; if the volunteer worked in more than one classroom in your school, or more than one school in the district.

Any member of the WA-WMEA may submit a nomination. **At least one representative from your building should attend the banquet to accompany the honoree.**

Nominations must be submitted by **March 1st** to LuAnn Livingston at Central High School.



The BuckStop

Greg Wall, Treasurer

WHAT DO I GET FROM MY UNION DUES?

(Modified from Capital Area Uniserv-North "Directions", October 2005)

Membership in a union is not a purchase. Dues are the member's share of the costs of:

1. Protecting your employment rights.
2. Supporting your economic welfare.
3. Promoting and safeguarding better teaching and working conditions.
4. Lobbying for legislative support of your schools.
5. Maintaining a public image and communicating with the membership.
6. Developing and advancing Association policy.

"What do I get from my union dues?" must be balanced against similar questions if they were to be raised in other parallel situations. For example:

Question: What do I get for my life insurance premiums?

Answer: An estate for my relatives when I die.

Question: What do I get for my home insurance premiums?

Answer: Nothing, unless my home burns down or if I suffer some other covered loss.

Question: What do I get for my automobile insurance?

Answer: Nothing, unless I have an accident.

Question: What do I get for my union dues?

Answer: Literally thousands of volunteers and professionals who work on my behalf at all levels of the government to protect my job, to increase my salary and benefits, to protect my retirement system, to make my views known at all levels, to make my job easier to do and more rewarding as an occupational choice. In short – CAREER INSURANCE.

(MEMBERS) children. I am proud to have her as a colleague."

Some of Jeanne's fellow colleagues at Hoover were also delighted to have the opportunity to recognize her efforts. Bob Mallon noted that Jeanne arrives each morning before 7:00am, and doesn't leave at the end of the day until the cleaning crew kicks her out. He said in addition to tutoring before school, during lunch, and after school, she also publishes a newsletter to parents and promotes constant home communication. Mallon described Jeanne as a special person who is dedicated beyond belief, helpful at any time to any person, and always has a smile on her face with a happy, positive attitude.

Lori Finch praised her friend and grade level partner. "Jeanne is so concerned about all of her students' achievement that she tutors each morning before school. She is on Hoover's Building Leadership Team, the Math Adoption Committee, and the Hoover Hearts and Minds Committee. Jeanne is an excellent grade level partner. She is fun to work with, flexible, and is always willing to listen and help with any problems or concerns. We could all learn a little something from a

dedicated teacher like Jeanne. She's the best!"

Hoover colleague Kay Caron also shared praise for Jeanne. "I have worked with Jeanne for 18 years at Hoover. She is one of the hardest working teachers I know. Jeanne is at school early every morning and stays late every night. Then she still takes papers and work home to do. Jeanne is very devoted to her job. Outside of the classroom, Jeanne organizes and checks out materials from our Science Room for the staff. Jeanne also is in charge of our Sunshine Funds. She never misses a get-well wish, sympathy card, or thank you gift for anyone. One of Jeanne's hidden talents is poetry writing. When a staff member retires or moves to another building, Jeanne writes a personalized poem for each person. She is incredibly thoughtful."

If you should be lucky enough to cross Jeanne's path, which is pretty likely considering the many activities that she is involved in, take the time to thank her. By setting the standard for what defines a top-shelf educator in our District, she leads the rest of us by her example. Jeanne, throughout all of your endeavors, we wish you well!

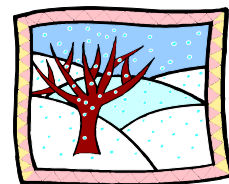
I hope everyone had a great Winter break and is ready for the stretch run. I would like to inform you of some information regarding your taxes for 2006:

1) If you were a full time teacher, the amount that you paid in **union dues for 2006 should be \$842.90**. This amount is above your actual annual dues of \$724 for the fiscal year because it is based on when dues was taken out of your check. Your total yearly dues for membership in the WAWMEA, WSC Uniserv, WEAC and NEA as a full time employee is still \$724. The cost for your local union is about 11% of this total. This total of \$824.90 can be found on the last paystub received from last year dated Dec. 28, 2006. If you were a part time employee for 2006, this number may be different than \$842.90; you will need to look at your check to confirm the exact amount.

2) The tax law that awards a teacher the right to **claim \$250 in deductions** is still in effect. **Please consult your tax advisor if you have questions concerning your return for 2006.**

3) Political action monies are part of your dues. If you wish to donate more or want some of the money returned to you, you will need to contact each individual union that is listed above to inquire how this procedure is done. All requests must be made in writing.

I am not a tax advisor so be sure to contact your tax consultant about any questions that you may have about your tax situation. Thanks and have a fine 2007.



From the Editor:

Comments, suggestions for improving this publication are always welcome.

Articles for the newsletter can be submitted to sandhill@centurytel.net or via interdepartmental mail to Irving School.

Deadline for the next newsletter is **March 15, 2007**.

Kathryn Popa