



Affiliated with NEA and KEA

ACTION

J E F F E R S O N C O U N T Y T E A C H E R S A S S O C I A T I O N

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

All meetings are at the JCTA office unless otherwise specified.

WED. APRIL 15:

⇒ Transfer Workshop, 4:30 P.M., **FULL**

THUR. APRIL 16:

⇒ Early Childhood Education meeting, 5:00 P.M.

MON. APRIL 20:

⇒ Professional Representatives Meeting, 4:30 P.M., **UAW Hall, Fern Valley Rd**

TRANSFER DEADLINE

Remember! The transfer deadline is this Saturday, April 18, 2009! All transfer requests must be submitted online by no later than 4:30 P.M. Remember when you fill out your form to obtain and retain your confirmation sheet! The remaining transfer workshop is **FULL**, so if you have questions, please refer to last week's ACTION or contact your UniServ Director.

NON-RENEWAL OF TEACHERS

If you are a non-tenured teacher member and have been notified by your principal through mid-year evaluation that your contract with JCPS is in danger of non-renewal, or if you have had significant disciplinary actions taken against you this year, please contact your UniServ Director immediately. This is especially important for non-tenured teachers in their 4th year of teaching. Contact JCTA if you have any questions.

CERTIFICATION RENEWAL

Teachers! Now is the time to check and see if your teaching certificate expires on June 30, 2009. If so, you should seek renewal immediately! If you are currently taking college credits for renewal, you should begin the renewal process immediately upon the end of the semester. For more information, please contact JCPS certification personnel at Jcps.certification@jefferson.kyschools.us.

DUES FOR TAX PURPOSES

JAN. - JUNE 2008 \$37.10 X 12 = \$445.20
SEPT. - DEC. 2008 \$41.00 X 8 = \$328.00
= \$773.20

*This DOES NOT include monies contributed to Better Schools Kentucky (BSK.) Money contributed to BSK is NOT deductible for tax purposes.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LANGUAGE AND FRAMING TO ACHIEVE BETTER EDUCATION

Below is another piece in my series that I've been sharing with you over the past few weeks. Its' focus, of course, is ESEA and other ways to improve upon public education, other than just high stakes testing. - Brent

If we are to shift the thinking of others in ways that will truly help us empower educators to empower students through better teaching and learning, we must be extremely thoughtful about the language we use as we discuss public education issues. There are several points to be made here...

School Improvement Public Policy versus Accountability: There seems to be an unquestioned acceptance today of the following formula: *School Improvement Public Policy = High-Stakes Accountability (based on cheap standardized tests)*. It is important to note that high-stakes accountability is only one approach to school improvement public policy, and not a very good one at that. A more accurate formula would read: *School Improvement Public Policy > High-Stakes Accountability*

Other countries that perform as well or better on international comparisons have national school improvement public policy that is supportive rather than punitive and is based on student engagement, instructional practice improvement, and professional development rather than high stakes accountability.

Demonstration versus Measurement: In our current high-stakes accountability environment, if it isn't measured on the high-stakes assessments, it isn't important. Thus, without giving it much thought, we have essentially created public policy that diminishes or eliminates all the purposes of public education that cannot be inexpensively measured numerically on an achievement test. Unfortunately, much of what we value cannot easily be measured, and much of what we measure is of little value. Demonstration is a more powerful term than measurement. Students can clearly demonstrate civic involvement, creativity, compassion, problem-solving, perseverance, dedication, and trust; but how can we begin to measure these valuable qualities numerically? We should not be willing to abandon these critical educational purposes for our public schools in the name of accountability. We need school improvement public policy that promotes teaching the whole child by empowering local districts and schools to develop improvement systems that are rich enough to embrace demonstration of all that we value rather than only measuring that which is easily reduced to a number. To continue the formula analogy above, we need to move from the current thinking which could be summarized as: *Assessment = Standardized Testing*. Instead we should recognize that: *Assessment > Standardized Testing*. And we should resolve that assessment must be greater than standardized testing if we are to fulfill the essential purposes of public education.

ESEA Reauthorization versus NCLB Reauthorization: We should not allow the debate to be framed around what parts of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) need to be adjusted. NCLB is really just the latest iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which has been reauthorized several times since its inception in the early 1960's. Reauthorization occurs because federal laws expire, which essentially wipes the slate clean and only those parts of a law that are explicitly rewritten carry forward. To facilitate movement to a better model, it would be desirable to reauthorize ESEA under a new name such as "The Schools Our Children Deserve Act," "The Great Public Schools for Every Child Act," "The Our Children, America's Future Act," or some other undeniably positive title.

Student Learning versus Student Achievement: "Student achievement" has come to mean test scores on cheap, primarily multiple-choice assessments that only attempt to measure the most basic knowledge and skills. Because these scores form the basis for judging schools in very high-stakes state accountability systems promoted by NCLB, these tests drive almost everything that occurs in schools. Since these cheap achievement tests only measure at the lowest level of understanding, they serve to drive instructional practice down, rather than elevate it toward deep conceptual learning. Thus NCLB's focus on student achievement has the effect of "dumbing down" instruction and is at odds with authentic student learning.

Brent

Sick Leave Bank

Please be advised that recently there have been several changes made to the JCTA Sick Leave Bank. The bank could no longer be sustained under the previous rules and guidelines, so necessary adjustments were made in order to protect the soundness of the Bank. First and foremost, we must reiterate that the bank was NEVER intended to provide “day for day” compensation to applicants. The Sick Leave Bank Committee will NOT grant 100% of the requested days indicated on the Sick Leave Bank application. Additionally, the purpose of the Bank is to provide assistance to a member in need of compensation during a catastrophic illness or following a catastrophic accident that requires extensive absence from work. It is not and cannot be used to cover ordinary maternity leave absences, days missed for colds, etc. The Bank has also limited the number of days which can be granted to a member making requests of the Bank during a school year to twenty (20) days per school year. The Committee has discretion to grant more days to a member in a given school year for extenuating circumstances. While we understand that some members may have multiple issues that arise over the years, the Bank has also set a limit of fifty (50) days as the number of days that can be granted to any member in a 5-year period. Finally, any member submitting an application to the Sick Leave Bank MUST include a statement from a licensed medical physician that clearly spells out the member’s illness or situation.

Over the years, the usage of the JCTA Sick Leave Bank has increased exponentially, and we feel a strong obligation to maintain its viability. We are confident that the changes made will go a long way in helping us to accomplish our goal.

JCTA Dues Freeze

Just a reminder that JCTA dues will be “frozen” at the 2008-09 rate for the 2009-10 school year. This does NOT affect rate increases for KEA or NEA! Contact JCTA if you have questions.

SBARC/IEP Conferences

We have had calls from a number of teachers who are concerned with the over-use of their planning time for SBARC’s and other IEP related conferences. Teachers in the elementary schools should NORMALLY be provided with two-hundred (200) minutes of planning per week. This means that your planning should ONLY be utilized by someone else for a purpose not designated by you if it is something that is out of the ordinary. For example, a SBARC scheduled during your planning once every “blue moon” because it’s the only time the parents can meet would not be a violation; having all of your SBARC’s scheduled during your planning for no real reason would be. If you find yourself losing planning time more often than not because of this, you should let your administrator know immediately that you do not agree with the loss of planning time. Most administrators will tell you that the meeting is “planning” because you’re “planning” for that student. We disagree because the majority of our teachers have more than one student and if you’re losing your planning to plan for one child, then your other students are missing out. If your administrator refuses to make appropriate changes, i.e., schedule the meetings for after school and pay you for your time, share with your principal that you will be making up your planning time after school. When you do, fill out the paperwork to be paid for that extra time. After all, your work day has been extended. When your principal does not approve your payment, you should file a grievance.

If you have any questions, please contact your UniServ Director at the JCTA office.

Recent Successful Arbitration

JCTA has won a significant Arbitration decision for one of our members. She had previously been enrolled in the state health insurance program, but for the New Year (plan year 2006); she decided to change to the Flexible Spending Account (FSA). During the open enrollment period held in October of 2005, she attempted to make the change on the state-operated website but was unable to do so. Frustrated, our member sought assistance from a designated employee at her school who regularly gave insurance information. With this assistance, our member completed the process waiving the state insurance coverage and enrolled in the FSA. A month later she received confirmation of the enrollment in the FSA. However, the following month, her paycheck indicated that she was not enrolled in the Flexible Spending Account. JCPS personnel told her she had not properly waived the state insurance. Our member unsuccessfully challenged the state regarding the denial of FSA benefits. State officials told her that she had not effectively waived state insurance coverage as well. JCTA filed a grievance on her behalf and took it to Arbitration.

The Arbitrator held that the district was responsible when the computer didn’t properly waive the state insurance ruling in favor of our member for a number of reasons: insurance information/literature was distributed by JCPS regarding the health insurance process, computers were made available by JCPS for the purpose of enrolling, and a district employee assisted our member. The Arbitrator ordered that she receive her out-of-pocket expenses. And most importantly for all JCTA members, the arbitrator said that in the JCTA/JCPS Contract a “grievance” is broadly defined as a violation, misinterpretation, or improper application of one or more specific provision of this agreement on any complaint alleging improper, arbitrary or discriminatory conduct. JCPS had claimed that this issue was not a violation of the bargaining agreement and that an arbitrator was not empowered to hear it or rule on it.

Our JCTA member had a problem, believed she was right, and sought the help of JCTA. She proved she was right because: (1) she had the fortitude and patience to not give up. (2) she had a strong union, JCTA, that backed her all the way, and (3) she had a good attorney, JCTA attorney, Everett Hoffman, who fought her case with determination before the Arbitrator. This teacher’s effort is a good lesson for all of us.

Speech Clinicians Caucus

Interested Speech Clinicians who are members of JCTA are invited to a meeting at the JCTA office on Wednesday, April 22nd at 4:30 P.M. The purpose of the meeting is to create an official caucus for Speech Clinicians. If you have any questions, please contact UniServ Director Liesa Daly (ldaly@jcta.org) at the JCTA office.

Teacher Transfer Selection Committee

Teachers! Your school **MUST** have a Teacher Transfer Selection Committee in place by April 25, 2009. The committee consists of the principal and three (3) teacher representatives. The election should be conducted by secret ballot by the JCTA PR and principal at a faculty meeting. This committee will be responsible for interviewing candidates and selecting (by a majority vote) the teacher(s) to fill the opening(s) in their building between April 25 and June 10, 2009. Call JCTA with questions.