

Voice

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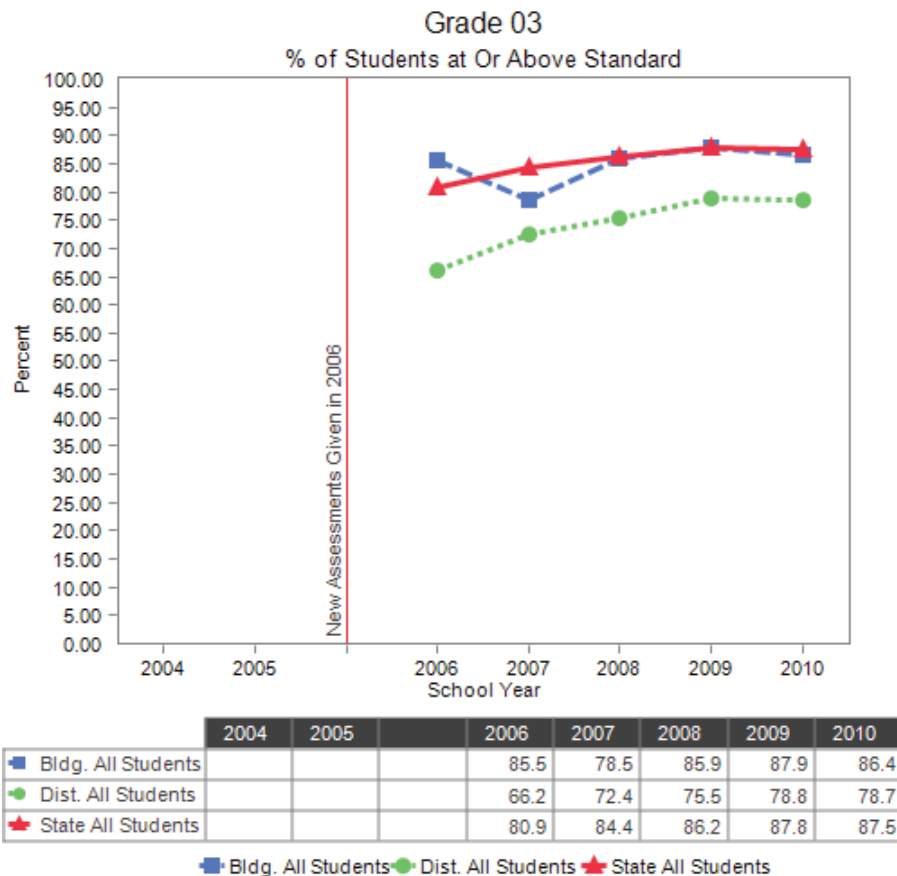
American Education Week

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Standard of Excellence

- Do you know which Wichita schools received the Standard of Excellence Award from the state? (See pages 4-5)
- How many schools received more than one award?

Graph below: Math scores at one of our schools! (79% of students are economically disadvantaged.)



The United Voice: Paper or Digital?

We have decided to try the digital only format during the months of October and November. Then we will assess the feedback we receive and decide whether we continue printing the Voice, or go digital.

Remember, the Voice is already available on our web site, and that will continue no matter what decision is made.

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The United Voice

Keith Welty, Editor

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Political Reality

Randy Mousley, UTW V.P. & C.O.P.E Chair

As many of you have suspected, the political outlook for public education in Kansas looks very bleak for the foreseeable future. Let me try to give you a brief summation of our new political reality.

The conservatives are now firmly in control of the Kansas House and the Governor's mansion. In the past, public education could depend on a coalition of moderate Republicans to work with Democrats to work to develop solutions that benefit our schools. That is not likely to happen in the near future. In the Kansas House, the best we can hope for now is 53 votes from the remnants of that coalition. It takes 63 votes for bills to pass out of the House. The Kansas Senate did not stand for election this year so it will remain basically the same with some changes due to Senators moving into other elected positions or retirement. The Senate Leadership has been relatively moderate over the past few years, but they will be under substantial pressure to follow the lead of the new governor.

There have already been a number of potential changes to the school finance formula proposed by legislators that would shift a great percentage of responsibility for funding from Topeka to the school districts in the form of increasing property taxes. This is the way funding was done years ago that lead to the reform that brought us to the current formula. It is inherently unfair to children and parents because it is based on community economic resources alone. Some permutation of this plan will likely be rolled out in the upcoming legislative session.

The second likely attack on education will undoubtedly be on teacher due-process rights. Many people inaccurately refer to this as "tenure". A teacher earning full due-process rights does not guarantee life time employment contrary to what some special interest groups might try to message. There was no research offered to support this change. To the contrary, states with strong due-process laws produce students who score significantly better on high stakes tests. Changing the length of time for teachers to obtain full due process rights is really a solution in search of a defined problem.

KPERS funding was an issue going into the 2010 session and no repair work was done at that time. The main fix that needs to occur is for the legislature to actually fund their share of the KPERS. The teachers and other public employees contribute their share through mandatory payroll deduction. The legislature just needs to contribute their share. Look for another attempt under the misguidance of Art Hall (the Koch funded KU Professor) for the legislature to push to change from the current defined benefit system to a "401k-like" defined contribution system. I don't know about you, but I haven't noticed that 401k accounts have done very well that past few years. Is that how we should treat professionals who devote their lives to public service?

Should we leave their retirement plans vulnerable to the ups and downs of the stock market?

It may appear that there is no hope.

To the contrary, there is always hope. Hope, in this situation, will require action on all of our parts. **First and foremost we must all become education activists.** I know there is a thought out there that "I pay my union dues for you to be an activist for me". That is just not going to be enough anymore.

There will be three main avenues for all educators to become more effective activists in the trying times ahead.

- Become better educated on education issues being deliberated in Topeka. Subscribe to the daily e-mail blast during the session, "Under the Dome": http://www.knea.org/legislative/under_the_dome/utdsubscribe.html
- Correspond with legislators about issues that will affect your students and your profession. This may be in the form of a telephone call, a letter/postcard or an e-mail (but never from your school computer or e-mail address). Once you have done this a time of two, it becomes much easier! Legislators need to hear how their actions will affect actual classrooms and your students.
- Be an advocate of public school issues with your friends, neighbors, church and social groups, etc. If we don't speak out in support of what we believe in, who will? The next few years will not be easy for public education. Conditions are likely to get worse before they get better. Working together though, we can affect change.

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Standard of Excellence

Some teachers insist this year is more stressful than any in recent memory. They say it is harder to get everything done, in part because there is more to get done. Make no mistake, though, things are getting done in Wichita.

Despite a poverty rate of over 70%, our schools are making great improvement. We still have a lot of work to do, but our students are making progress. In this week honoring American Education, we would like to highlight the Wichita schools who have been awarded the Standard of Excellence by the state of Kansas.

We all know that test scores are not the only judge of a good school. Teachers in all Wichita schools are working harder than ever to help our students. We wish all of you could get more recognition and respect for what you do!

In Wichita Public Schools, 70.9% of all students are economically disadvantaged. That is a lot of students with needs that teachers must address in order for those students to be successful in school.

The state gives out Standard of Excellence Awards for student achievement on state assessments. We cannot say that USD 259 is where we all want it to be, in terms of assessment scores. However, the progress is there, and many of our schools are doing great things with the students.

Here is a list of all of the district's SOE awards:

<i>Building Name</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<i>Elementary Schools</i>		
Adams	Math	4
Allen	Math	3
Allen	Math	4
Black	Math	4
Bryant	Math	4
Bryant	Math	5
Buckner	Math	3
Chisholm Trail	Math	4
Cleaveland	Math	5
College Hill	Reading	3

College Hill	Reading	5
College Hill	Math	3
Colvin	Math	5
Earhart	Reading	3
Earhart	Reading	Bldg.-Wide
Earhart	Math	3
Earhart	Math	4
Earhart	Math	5
Earhart	Math	Bldg.-Wide
Dodge	Reading	4
Dodge	Reading	Bldg.-Wide
Dodge	Math	3
Dodge	Math	4
Dodge	Math	5
Dodge	Math	Bldg.-Wide
Griffith	Math	3
Griffith	Math	Bldg.-Wide
Price-Harris	Reading	4
Price-Harris	Reading	5
Price-Harris	Reading	Bldg.-Wide
Price-Harris	Math	4
Price-Harris	Math	5
Price-Harris	Math	Bldg.-Wide
Hyde	Reading	3
Hyde	Reading	4
Hyde	Reading	5
Hyde	Reading	Bldg.-Wide
Hyde	Math	3
Hyde	Math	4
Hyde	Math	Bldg.-Wide
Isely	Reading	3
Isely	Reading	Bldg.-Wide
Isely	Math	3
Kelly	Math	5
Bostic	Reading	3
Bostic	Reading	4
Bostic	Reading	5
Bostic	Reading	Bldg.-Wide
Bostic	Math	3
Bostic	Math	4

Bostic	Math	5
Bostic	Math	Bldg.-Wide
Bostic	Science	Bldg.-Wide
McCollom	Reading	5
McCollom	Reading	Bldg.-Wide
McCollom	Math	3
McCollom	Math	4
McCollom	Math	5
McCollom	Math	Bldg.-Wide
McLean	Reading	3
McLean	Reading	5
McLean	Reading	Bldg.-Wide
McLean	Math	5
McLean	Math	Bldg.-Wide
McLean	Science	Bldg.-Wide
O K	Reading	3
O K	Reading	4
O K	Math	3
O K	Math	4
O K	Math	Bldg.-Wide
Park	Math	3
Payne	Math	3
Payne	Math	5
Payne	Math	Bldg.-Wide
Peterson	Math	3
Peterson	Math	4
Peterson	Math	Bldg.-Wide
Riverside	Reading	3
Riverside	Reading	5
Riverside	Reading	Bldg.-Wide
Riverside	Math	3
Riverside	Math	4
Riverside	Math	5
Riverside	Math	Bldg.-Wide
Seltzer	Math	5
Woodland	Reading	3
Woodland	Reading	5
Woodland	Math	5
Woodland	Math	Bldg.-Wide

Middle Schools

Allison	Reading	7
Allison	Reading	8

Allison	Reading	Bldg.-Wide
Allison	Math	8
Brooks	Reading	7
Brooks	Reading	8
Coleman	Reading	7
Maybeberry	Reading	7

K-8 Schools

Horace Mann	Reading	5
Horace Mann	Reading	7
Horace Mann	Reading	8
Horace Mann	Reading	Bldg.-Wide
Horace Mann	Math	3
Horace Mann	Math	4
Horace Mann	Math	5
Horace Mann	Math	7
Horace Mann	Math	8
Horace Mann	Math	Bldg.-Wide

High Schools

Northwest High	Reading	Bldg.-Wide
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Contract Corner

Can I Say No?

Sure, you can say no. That's not the real question, though. The real question is, "What happens if I say no?"

That is part of many conversations those of us in the UTW office have with teachers. A teacher can always say no. The important thing is know what the consequences are when you response in that fashion.

Example: If a teacher is given a directive by the principal to be in a specific spot during the 10 minutes before/after school, say, at a certain intersection of halls, can a teacher say no to this? Sure. Please understand that a no in that case would be considered insubordination and the teacher would probably be written up for refusing to follow a directive.

In this same example, the language in Article 7 of the contract becomes important. It says - *Section F: Compliance: Paragraph 1: Teachers shall not be required or compelled to take action or refrain from taking action when to do such would cause them physical harm or to be in violation of law or Board policy.*

Notice that it does not include contractual provisions in the list, just the law, BOE Policy, and

to avoid physical harm. That means you can refuse a directive to break up a fight, for fear of bodily harm. You cannot refuse to be at the designated spot without being considered insubordinate.

It seems like many concerns raised with us are not easily solved. Often, clear cut answers are not to be found. The reason? The best solution relies on the teacher communicating the concern to the principal.

That prospect scares many teachers. Perfectly understandable. There is a tendency among teachers to want to 'get along' with the principal, and that means not causing waves.

It is unfortunate that professional educators feel that asking questions and raising differing view points about what would make the school better would get them labeled as 'malcontents.'

Saying no is always an option. However, looking for other ways to solve the problem might lead teachers to engage administration in professional dialogue about the time effectiveness of current practices, or perhaps, simply the effectiveness of current practices. Have the courage to have those necessary, professional, respectful dialogues in your building.



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Speak Out!

When is enough – enough?

Every year that I can remember UTW has received calls, emails and heard comments from members and even some non-members about the stress, pressure, and frustration they are working under. Usually, these calls would start arriving in mid January- February as assessments approached, but then began reaching us earlier and earlier. This year the calls and comments began in early September! Many mentioned being overwhelmed. As I see it, this is a troubling development. A development that is making good teachers- both new and experienced- question remaining in the classroom.

MTSS, AIMSweb testing and recording, creating CHAMPS and ACHIEVE posters, T2 goals, dealing with discipline, conferencing, IEPs, differentiated instruction, PD, preparing lessons for Tier 1, 2, 3, keeping up with pacing guides, expanded reading lesson plans, progress monitoring, analyzing data, record keeping, grading, monitoring standards, mini PLCs, rating science, writing and social studies performance tests, tracking behavior and tardies, outside consultants adding things to do, calling parents, implementing Kagan strategies, doing report cards and midterm reports, committees, developing lesson plans, implementing technology, 'Gold Seal' lesson plans, numerous walkthroughs. Need I go on? Oh, I did forget something very important- TEACHING. All these and more without any increase in preparation time. When is enough – enough?

A few years ago, a guest speaker, Doug Reeves, spoke of "weeding our garden", implying that at some point things needed to 'go' in order for the flowers to grow. I don't believe our gardens have been weeded for quite some time. In fact, the weeds seem to be taking over, and the flowers are being choked. As professionals, we see the need for change and new implementations, but when will things be removed from the garden in order to make room for these new initiatives and programs? More and more is being asked of everyone

in the district but when is enough – enough?

Our teachers know that student achievement is important to them as instructors, and to the district. They are working at their highest level to help their students meet the standards. They know that time on task is needed in the classroom, but does every minute of their day- outside of the classroom time- need to be filled with more activities and assigned work to fill the time? I am sure that these teaching professionals can use this time wisely for preparation of classroom presentations or documentation without being assigned additional PD or extra things to do just because a few minutes are available above the negotiated planning time. If there are teachers abusing the 'extra time' then they should be talked to and invited to do a PD for other teachers on "How to get work done and still have free time". I know teachers were well aware of the fact that they would need to spend some time outside of school doing work, but when is enough-enough?

Another stressor we have been alerted to is the frequent reminder that test scores need to improve. I believe that there isn't an employee in the district that doesn't know that. So daily, weekly or monthly reminders are not needed, nor comments such as: "If this isn't where you want to be ..." or "If you are not willing to work hard...", "...then you need to go somewhere else." These statements don't make for successful teams and certainly don't help build a relationship of trust and connectedness. Our teachers are here because they want to teach, certainly not for the high salaries and respect! We have enough attackers of public education that we don't need to create dissention within. All of us are here for the same goal, providing a quality education to all students in USD 259. It shouldn't be a competition between schools. It is the district wide goal.

We must work together to achieve that goal, but we also must clear a few weeds in the process!



Larry Landwehr, UTW President

Change in Flex Spending Rule May Trigger Headaches

By LAURAN NEERGAARD, AP Medical Writer Lauran Neergaard, Washington

A headache awaits people who use those tax-free health spending accounts to pay for over-the-counter allergy relievers, heartburn blockers and other drugstore remedies. Starting next year, you'll need a prescription for the drugs to qualify. The change in so-called Flexible Spending Accounts is part of the new health care law, and doctors are bracing for patient confusion and annoyance as they decide how to handle prescription requests for products that people normally use on their own.

"A huge hassle," predicts Dr. Roland Goertz, president of the American Academy of Family Physicians. Flexible spending accounts, or FSAs, are pretax dollars that workers can set aside through their employers to pay out-of-pocket health care costs. That includes insurance copays and deductibles, treatments that an insurance plan may not cover, eyeglasses, dental work and, yes, nonprescription medications.

But the new health care law says over-the-counter drugs qualify for reimbursement through FSAs starting Jan. 1 only if the patient has a doctor's prescription. The only exception is for insulin bought without a prescription. (The new rule applies to similar Health Savings Accounts, too.)

Another change comes in 2013, when the new law will set a \$2,500 cap on how much can be set aside in an FSA. Many employers currently allow up to \$5,000 to be put into the accounts — reflecting that they tend to be used for pricier expenses than OTC drugs. Today's average set-aside is about \$1,500, says Rose Stanley of WorldatWork, a human resources association.

For now, what do savvy patients need to know in planning for over-the-counter purchases in next year's FSA?

- The estimated 35 million FSA users must spend all their set-aside money each year or lose it. People tend to use leftover dollars by stocking up on aspirin and other drugstore staples at year's end, and the prescription requirement may put a crimp in that spree next fall.
- According to the Internal Revenue Service, the prescription requirement is only for OTC medications, not other non-drug health supplies such as contact lens solutions, bandages, crutches and blood-sugar test kits. These will merely require a receipt for reimbursement, just like today.
- Next year the health care law also eliminates preventive service copays, such as for well-child visits,

mammograms and vaccinations, possibly altering how much people put into an FSA in the first place.

- Most affected by the OTC rule will be daily users of those drugs — like people who treat arthritis with ibuprofen, or gastric reflux with Prilosec OTC, or hay fever with Claritin. They will have to calculate if any extra doctor visits offset the pretax savings.

The change shouldn't cost extra if your doctor knows you've been taking OTC medicines routinely and thus has no trouble writing a prescription by phone or at your next regularly scheduled visit, says Dr. Gary Rogg, an internist with Montefiore Medical Center in New York. In that case, the change wouldn't cost anything extra. If you've never mentioned taking a particular OTC drug, the doctor may demand an office visit, with its copay, before pulling out the prescription pad.

"If a 20-year-old wants to buy Prevacid because of heartburn, odds are it's diet-related. If it's a 60-year-old, you really are obligated to do a 'workup'" in case the pain signals something worse, Rogg says. People who use high doses of OTC drugs might find a prescription-only version a better deal depending on their insurance copay rules, he adds, even if that's costlier for the health care system overall.

Increasing communication about OTC drug usage would be a good side effect of the rule change, says Dr. Joshua Freeman, family medicine chairman at the University of Kansas Hospital. "If you're taking something I think is bad for you, I'm glad I found out," he says. But Goertz says it's not clear exactly what's required for an OTC prescription. If he writes one for a 30-day supply of ibuprofen with 11 refills but the arthritis patient buys once in bulk, will the FSA provider honor that reimbursement?

And there's an added wrinkle for the millions who use special FSA debit cards to pay for purchases straight from their account. IRS guidelines say those debit cards can't be used for over-the-counter drugs under the new change, and will have to be reimbursed by turning over a copy of their receipt and prescription to their FSA provider.

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores has asked the IRS to reconsider, predicting customer anger if the debit card works for one kind of purchase but not another. Stay tuned: It's not clear if the IRS will alter its guidelines, which are open for public comment until Dec. 27.