

The United

Voice



Vol. XXXVI, no. 5; December 2010

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A Publication of

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Shoe giveaway warms feet, souls

BY SUZANNE PEREZ TOBIAS, The Wichita Eagle

Wichita - Kindergartner Nikki McKenzie looked at her new shoes — a pair of pink-and-silver sneakers, fresh out of the box — and pranced down the hallway. “I can jump in them and balance on them,” she said, smiling. “I think they’re nice.”

Every student at Colvin Elementary School got a new pair of shoes, socks, gloves and a hat Friday, thanks to an annual giveaway organized by the Boeing Employees Community Fund. Donors and volunteers continued the giveaway at Cooper and Oaklawn Elementaries in Derby. Students at Jardine Middle School received free sweatshirts. Children at Colvin, where 97 percent of students are economically disadvantaged, lined up by class just inside the school entrance Friday morning.

Local Boeing managers handed out boxes of shoes. Employees from Payless Shoe Source, who measured the children’s feet in October, helped each student try on new sneakers and exchange ones that didn’t fit correctly. Volunteers from Papa John’s and other sponsors handed out hats and gloves.

“I love it. I really do,” said Chelsey Isam, a Payless employee, as she helped Jesus Lucero lace up a new pair of shoes. The boy’s old shoes were a children’s size 9; his new ones are 10 1/2. “I know they’re quiet and everything,” Isam said of the children, “but you just know they’re so grateful.”

Six-year-old Skye Mayhugh admired her new pair of “Wizards of Waverly Place” sneakers, inspired by the Disney Channel show. She especially liked the glittery pink laces, she said. Deanna Joynes, a social worker at Colvin, said many families rely on charities or hand-me-downs for shoes. That means kids’ shoes often don’t fit well, if at all.

Recently, a pre-kindergartner came to school with shoes that were “at least three sizes too big,” Joynes said. The boy had a hard time walking and keeping up with his classmates, she said. “To them, this means something along the lines of a new car,” Joynes said of the shoe giveaway. “This is their primary mode of transportation. They walk to school in rain, snow, cold weather. ... We have students whose shoes are worn through, with holes on the bottom. To get a new pair just means the world to them.”

Chrissie Nixon, who helps administer employee giving programs for Boeing Wichita, said the shoe giveaway is “a great example of people working together to help those in need.” Joynes, the social worker, agreed. She said students started asking about “Shoe Day” weeks ago. “They were like, ‘When do we get shoes?’ They’ve been looking forward to this a long time,” she said. “It’s a big day.”

Kevin Bell, a senior operations manager at Boeing, wore a Santa hat as he handed out boxes of shoes marked with each student’s name. “It’s great to see the smiles on their faces,” he said. “I tell my own kids, ‘You guys think you don’t get things you want. You should spend some time down here.’”

“These shoes mean a lot to them, so it’s just great to be able to help out.”

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Kansas NEA Legislative Agenda for the 2011 Legislative Session

The legislative agenda of the Kansas National Education Association (KNEA) was adopted by the KNEA Board of Directors November 2010.

This document lays out the positions of KNEA for the 2011 legislative session and establishes our goals and priorities. KNEA intends to be involved in six broad areas:

- 1. School finance/funding,**
- 2. Tax policy,**
- 3. The rights of school employees,**
- 4. Retirement issues,**
- 5. Protecting our students and their families, and**
- 6. The future of public education.**

Education, it has been pointed out, consumes over half of the state's annual budget. Education also is the only state function required in the constitution. Our Legislators have the constitutional requirement to provide for public education. Article 6, Section 1 of our state constitution says, "The legislature shall provide for intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement by establishing and maintaining public schools..." In Section 6 of the same article the Legislature is further charged with funding those schools: "The legislature shall make suitable provision for finance of the educational interests of the state."

It is clear that the founders of our state thought of the future and considered "intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement" to be the single most important function of the government. After all, we have long lived in a state and nation where it is the desire of all parents that their children are "better off" than the generation before them.

But it is not simply that the founders of our state and the writers of our constitution considered education important. Today we know that the quality of education – and the workforce created by our education system – is a key ingredient in the economic development of our communities and our state.

A performance audit report released by the Legislative Division of Post Audit in August 2008 reported that tax incentives have very little impact on job creation or the decision of companies to locate in a particular place or expand. In fact, the study twice suggested that research would indicate that education was a more important factor.

"Literature suggests that economic development assistance (such as tax incentives) isn't a priority criterion for businesses when making decisions about where to locate their operations. One reason is that many communities offer similar types of tax incentives. According to research, the factors that businesses place more importance on include the following:
the availability of skilled labor..."

"A recent Kauffman Foundation study suggests that cities and states should look at other areas of government policy to promote economic growth. This study, which reviewed the importance of entrepreneurship in building and sustaining economic growth, pointed to the importance of dedicating public funds to areas other than typical economic development assistance as a means of supporting entrepreneurial activity. It suggested that government entities should emphasize providing communities where businesses will want to come, and not focus primarily on recruiting businesses to the area.

The specific areas the Kauffman study suggested for funding or improving are summarized below: education (direct funding of research, subsidies of student costs, and regulatory oversight)..."

It is our belief that education is not an expense, it is an investment. A top quality public education system from preschool through graduate school is Kansas' strongest engine of economic development.

Kansas has much to be proud of when promoting our state to outsiders. Our location in the heart of America gives us access to the whole nation. Our state infrastructure provides roads and highways that allow us to move goods quickly and safely. Our cost of living and family-friendly environs make Kansas attractive to others. Topping all that off is our system of excellent K-12 schools, community and technical colleges, and nationally-recognized universities.

The Legislature will convene within the context of a continuing recession. State aid to schools was cut significantly during the 2009 session although much of the state-wide cut was offset by increased – although temporary – federal aid increases and increases in local mill levies and student fees. Were it not for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and increased local effort, much of the gains in school funding that came as a result of the Montoy lawsuit would have been lost.

In the 2010 session, while education did not see any increased funding, further cuts were rendered unnecessary when a temporary sales tax increase was adopted.

While the recession appears to be coming to an end, the recovery has been slow. The state will likely be faced with continuing budget challenges.

An anti-government, anti-tax alliance fed by the Flint Hills Policy Center and Americans for Prosperity has launched an all-out war on state services, calling for large reductions in state funding for schools in particular. This alliance has the ear of the House Republican Leadership and committees dealing with the budget have been formed specifically to work the AFP agenda.

We believe however that the strength of Kansas is in the strength of its communities. We believe that as Kansans we take care of our schools, our roads, our children, our elderly and disabled citizens. This sense of community and caring is what makes Kansas a great place to live, work, run a business, and raise a family. With these thoughts in mind, this legislative agenda is intended to serve as a blueprint for what we believe will keep our schools, communities, and state strong.

* * * *

UTW encourages all members to keep informed about legislative action and Public Education. One of the best resources is KNEA's online newsletter about the legislature called, "Under The Dome." To subscribe to this excellent newsletter, go the UTW web site, www.utw-ks.org, and click on the icon at the bottom of the page for KNEA. On the KNEA home page, look on the left side for the link to "Under The Dome."

The UTW Committee on Political Education (COPE) meets monthly at the UTW office. This group is kept very well informed about the status of funding and other education issues. They also make plans for teachers to go to Topeka to talk with legislators about our schools. It always helpful for teachers to be able to talk face to face with our representatives in Topeka. The UTW COPE is open to all UTW members. We encourage you to become active and support public education with emails, phone calls, and visits with our state legislators.

Pupil Control: When can a teacher send a student to the office?

Let's start with the language in the contract. There is language in three spots in Article 8 that you need to be aware of:

Section A: Classroom Paragraph 1: General: The individual classroom teacher shall assume the major responsibility for classroom control and discipline, and his/her judgment in this regard will be relied on in the general course. The Board hereby recognizes its responsibility to give support and assistance to teachers in this endeavor and its policies will continue to reflect its position in this regard. Each school will have a discipline procedure setting forth the responsibility and authority for all professional personnel.

The last sentence of that paragraph (each school...) does not supersede the authority granted to the teacher in the first sentence. Nor does the last sentence negate the authority granted in the next example of language from this article:

Paragraph 4: Removal of Pupil from Classroom When, in the judgment of a teacher, a pupil is substantially disrupting the instructional program to the detriment of other pupils, the teacher may remove the pupil from his/her class. The teacher will instruct the pupil to report immediately to the appropriate supervisor or administrator. Following the decision to remove the pupil, the teacher will advise the principal of the action and will, as soon as possible, furnish full particulars. Appropriate written records of such removals shall be maintained by the principal and teacher and shall be available to the parties upon request.

Does this mean that a teacher must call a parent x number of times before the child can be sent to the office? No. Does it mean that a teacher must send a student to another teacher's room for time-out before the student may be sent to the office? No. Does this mean that a teacher may simply remove a kid anytime and not utilize proper and effective classroom management? No. Doing a good job with effective instructional and classroom management techniques will greatly reduce the number of student misbehavior incidents.

Paragraph 5: Readmittance of Pupil to Classroom A pupil shall not be readmitted into any class instructed by the teacher who removed the pupil during the half-day in which the pupil was removed unless there is mutual agreement between the teacher and the principal.

When you do have to remove a student from your room, this language grants you the authority to say no when an administrator wants to place the student back in your room too quickly.



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Speak Out!



Larry Landwehr, UTW President

Recently Superintendent Allison met with the District's Community Stakeholder Budget Committee which consists of parents, district staff (including 12 teachers) business and community members to discuss the budget process for the district and to get feedback. Not much good news was presented, if any. As Mr. Allison stated, "Last year was a difficult budget year, and this year and the next will be even more difficult." The \$30 million in cuts to the Wichita budget is a worst case scenario presented at the meeting based on information from the KSDE and fiscal predictions in order to balance the State's budget. The quote in the newspaper of that being 600 teaching positions was used as an example of how deep the cuts will be if the appropriate action isn't taken in Topeka.

The Governor and Legislature will determine how much to fund the educational system and if there will be more cuts or changes to the funding formula when they begin work in mid January. It is up to all of us to stay aware of the happenings in Topeka in relation to education funding and other issues. Needless to say, all of us education stakeholders must take an active role in making sure that our elected leaders do what is right for the students of Wichita and Kansas. We all know that times are difficult, but we cannot let education fall from a top priority of our Legislature.

I urge everyone to begin talking to family, friends and neighbors about your job and how you give daily to the future of our state. Tell them how additional cuts will make your job more difficult with larger class sizes and fewer services or programs to help those students that need additional support and assistance. Let them know that their support and action may also be needed in the upcoming Legislative session. UTW, KNEA and AFT-KS will keep you informed of developments as the session unfolds, but it is your participation that will make the difference.

As the first half of the school year approaches its end, I want to thank everyone for their hard work and dedication to the students of Wichita. Many changes have added to your stress level this year and hopefully, with time, the benefits of the changes will become evident. Over the break take time to rest, relax and rejuvenate! Use some of the days to focus just on you and to reenergize. The buildings will be closed over these days so leave the work at work and enjoy the time with family and friends.

May you and yours have a Merry Christmas and a New Year full of happiness, peace, good health and fun!



As we close out 2010, here are a few of our favorite cartoons from the past year.

