

UEA Action

November 2006 Edition

Front Page

[UEA president kicks off year two of 'No Excuses!' campaign](#)

Campbell encourages policymakers to stand up for children and public schools

Utah has the money to invest in public schools and members of the Utah Education Association say it's time to spend that money on things that work – quality educators in every classroom, smaller class sizes, and modern learning tools for students and teachers. “Today, the state of Utah is sitting on a \$275 million surplus – money that could change the face of public education in this state for years to come. And yet, as evidenced by the recent special session of the Legislature, many of our political leaders chose to invest in tax cuts rather than in our students – the future of this state,” UEA President Kim Campbell told Association members during a press conference on the opening day of the 2006 UEA Convention.

Quoting H.G. Wells, the British writer and political philosopher, Campbell said, “Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe. It is our job as educators and friends of public education to make sure that education wins.”

Campbell used the press conference to kick off year two of the Association's “*No Excuses! Invest in Public Schools*” campaign. For the past 12 months, UEA leaders and staff have been meeting with members of the public to educate them about the importance of investing in public schools. “In every corner of the state, we shared a simple message,” Campbell said, “that investing in public schools will grow the Utah economy for everyone.” As a result, more than 1,000 parents, grandparents, students, educators, politicians, business and community leaders joined the Association's Grass Roots Education Action Team – G.R.E.A.T.

“As we begin year two of the ‘*No Excuses! Invest in Public Schools*’ campaign, the Utah Education Association will emphasize the kinds of wise investments that will pay off for Utah's children and will pay off for Utah's future,” Campbell said. She then introduced four Utah educators who spoke about their “real life” experiences in the classroom.

Illustrating the importance of class size reduction, **Melinda Fatani** – a special education teacher at a West Jordan middle school – said, “Teachers in classrooms with fewer students are able to positively reinforce students and behavior problems decrease. They are also able to better gauge the emotions of their students. As a teacher in a classroom with fewer students, I can creatively solve problems that just seemed too enormous before.”

Valarie Pollard, a second-grade teacher in the Davis School District, talked about a discussion that occurred between her two daughters when they discovered that their science teacher had to work nights and weekends at a restaurant just to make ends meet. “I later heard my two high school daughters discussing why a teacher with a college degree would need to work another job,” Pollard said. “The discussion quickly turned to the opinion that neither one would become teachers. This was definitely not the career for them if you had to work two jobs to survive. Being an elementary teacher, I felt a sadness inside. My daughters would never

experience the satisfaction and thrill teaching can bring. Both would have made excellent math and science teachers.”

Kim Player talked about what an investment in public schools would mean to the students and teachers in rural Emery County. Player, who teaches speech and language skills, said a greater investment would allow her school district to replace teachers who are retiring in huge numbers. “We would be able to teach, rather than manage students,” Player said. “We would have a qualified, professional teacher in every classroom, including certified media specialists. We would have junior high Art teachers who are certified in secondary education and qualified to teach even ninth-graders. And we would have badly needed professionals teaching our English Language Learners.”

Ryan Anderson, an English and Art teacher at Grand County High School, shared some facts about the economic advantages of investing in public schools. “Great public schools create the kind of high-quality, productive workforce that good companies are looking for when it comes time to decide where to locate,” Anderson said. Unfortunately for Utah, businesses use class size and per pupil spending as the two most important factors in rating a public school system and Anderson said, “We rank dead last in both categories.” Public schools “take no profit,” Anderson said, “our investment flows back into the local and state economy and we all benefit.”

“Investing in public schools means investing in teachers, in smaller class sizes, and in modern tools and resources,” Campbell said. “We have the money. It is no longer a question of ability. It is a question of will. We must make sure that in the race between education and catastrophe, education wins.”

With less than a month before Election Day, Campbell said, “We need to elect those with the political will and courage to stand up for children and public education. Our students and our teachers deserve the best from the policymakers in this state.”

Governor says budget goals include ‘strong WPU’ and class size reduction

Saying he hopes to make “breakthroughs” in what Utah can do for children and educators, Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr. announced five budget goals he will pursue for the 2007-08 school year.

Speaking to a crowd of 400 educators attending the 2006 UEA Convention, Huntsman said his budget priorities will include:

1. A push for all-day kindergarten;
2. Funding for English Language Learner programs;
3. An emphasis on recruiting and retaining teachers;
4. A “strong” Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU); and
5. Class size reduction.

The governor said there are “too many dividing lines” in education, while most public school advocates simply want what is in the best interest of children. He thanked the Utah Education Association for its willingness to “share a common table” to discuss issues vital to public education.

During his keynote address, Huntsman praised several of his children's teachers and reminded UEA members they should never underestimate the power they have to mold the minds of children.

Huntsman said he wants to "achieve a strong WPU" because the money goes to teachers and "it goes to the classroom."

He also stressed the importance of reducing class sizes in kindergarten through third grade to 20 students per class. That suggestion prompted enthusiastic applause from the UEA audience.

"Thank you for being educators," Huntsman said. "You make a difference."

Thoughts & Opinions

It should be enough!

By UEA President Kim Campbell

It should be enough. It should be enough that we, Utah's educators, have some of the highest class loads and still have some of the highest student achievement scores and highest graduation rates in the nation.

It should be enough that we invest thousands of hours of our own time and thousands of dollars of our own money on professional development to hone our teaching skills and on materials for our students.

It should be enough that Utah's educators do an incredible job with scarce resources. (With the kind of results we get here in Utah, can you imagine what we could do with additional resources?)

With all that Utah's educators are doing and have to do, we shouldn't have to use our time making phone calls, writing letters, e-mails and advocating for a greater investment in public education. It should be enough – but it isn't. Not until we have more policymakers who are willing to act as champions for children. Until more heroes are willing stand up for children, it falls to educators to act on behalf of children and public schools. And, with Utah's economic boom and huge surplus, now is the time.

Poll after poll shows that the public wants a greater investment in public schools. Policymakers have the money. It is no longer a matter of ability; it is a matter of will.

So, on top of everything else we are doing, how do we create the collective will to provide for our students, our future? Here are a few simple things each of us can do:

- Tell your story. You are the most credible messenger for public schools and for your students. Tell your story to neighbors, friends, and policymakers. Talk about the current reality in your school and then tell the positive story of what a greater investment would mean to you. Here's an example I heard just the other day:

“I am a veteran teacher in Utah. I am concerned because in my school, many of the younger teachers are considering leaving. They are frustrated with class size because they want to reach every student and they are also frustrated by the lack of respect for the teachers. A greater investment in public schools would make it possible for our school to keep these talented teachers.”

■ Be an active part of our Association. First, thank you for being a member. That’s a great start. Every member makes our voice stronger. In addition, resolve to spend a few minutes a week engaged in Association work and keeping up to date: Check the website, respond to an e-mail from leaders, write a letter to a policymaker, post a “*No Excuses!*” lawn sign in your yard and talk to others in your building about what you are doing.

These may seem like small measures when there is so much at stake, but 18,000 educators all doing small things will add up to a huge change. It should be enough.

The Association connection

By UEA Vice President Ellen Thompson

There is something totally unique and marvelous about being part of our Association. You have a connection to a network of people who have the same passion as you – students and public education. It doesn’t matter in what state or at what level you teach, when you find another Association member you immediately know that you are both part of helping build the future for our profession and public education. This has really been brought home to me over the last few months as I have had an opportunity to examine some of those connections.

This past July, I had the opportunity to take a two-day drive through the largest UniServ in the state. Former High Desert UniServ President Esther Duncan and I drove through eight different counties on that trip. Though I had vacationed in the area and driven many of the same roads, it was a totally different experience driving it in two days. We talked about how far students were bused to school, how far Association Representatives had to travel to go to meetings, some of the struggles facing teachers under the “No Child Left Behind” Act, etc. It gave me a greater appreciation for the distances that UniServ Director Jim Porter has to travel as he helps teachers throughout his area. It was also great to know that no matter how remote a teacher’s locale, they have access to the Association. They have a connection.

The UEA Convention was another opportunity to enjoy the connection. It was great fun to see teachers who were so enthusiastic over the classes and new ideas they found at the Convention. I caught up with teachers I had taught with in the past, and had a chance to teach a session for new educators and student teachers who will be my colleagues in the future. That cycle of caring for students and public schools will go on because of our Association.

No matter where you are, whether you are bringing students from opposite ends of the state to the ballet, attending a conference or training, or in line at the grocery store, finding another Association member provides an immediate connection. Whether it is NEA President Reg Weaver, NEA Vice President Dennis VanRoekel, and NEA Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen in Washington, D.C., or the Association Representative in your building, everyone in the Association is working for you and your students. Thank you for connecting to the important work we do.

Thoughts from NEA Directors Jesse DeHay and Ryan Anderson

It is a classic square-peg-round-hole misperception. It is an attempt by state and federal politicians to force a square peg, market-driven business model into a circular educational system driven by compassionate, caring public educators. There are, of course, points of contact, but there are gaps between them. As educators, we are acutely aware of these gaps and responsible for rectifying them.

As your NEA directors, in our conversations with elected leaders, we have directly faced the challenge of bridging this perceptual gap and decided to bring an increased level of awareness about public education generally, and the NEA specifically. To meet that challenge, on September 25th we proudly presented our NEA Vision Statement, Mission Statement, and Core Values to each of our congressmen and senators. Each of them was impressed as they read the document and realized who we are as educators, what we believe as core values, and why the NEA, as an association, is focused on and guided by our common vision and mission. They are:

Our Vision: Our vision is a great public school for every student.

Our Mission: Our mission is to advocate for education professionals and to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.

Our Core Values: These principles guide our work and define our mission:

- **Equal Opportunity** — Public education is the gateway to opportunity.
- **A Just Society** — Public education is vital to the equality of every individual in our diverse society.
- **Democracy** — Public education is the cornerstone of our republic.
- **Professionalism** — The expertise and judgment of education professionals are critical to student success.
- **Partnership** — Partnerships with parents, families, communities, and other stakeholders are essential to quality public education and student success.
- **Collective Action** — Individuals are strengthened when they work together for the common good.

For the complete text of the NEA's Core Values as voted on during the 2006 RA, go to nea.org.

We need all of you to help get the message out. We need to help round off the edges of misperception our elected leaders have and fill in the gaps with our expertise. We need your classroom stories. We must change the business model perspective to include "investing" in our public schools.

- No Excuses-Invest in Public Schools-Our Economy Depends On It.
- No Excuses-Support Utah Teachers.
- No Excuses-Success for Every Child.

Great public schools are a basic right for every child. With each of us focused on our common vision and mission we can bring about a change of perception and reality.

Issues & Action

American Education Week: November 12-18

The National Education Association's 85th annual American Education Week — November 12-18, 2006 — presents all Americans with an opportunity to celebrate public education and honor individuals who are making a difference in ensuring every child receives a quality education. This year's theme, "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility," reflects NEA's vision of calling upon all Americans to do their part in making public schools great for every child so that they can grow and achieve in the 21st century.

The weeklong celebration will spotlight distinguished individuals who are critical in building great public schools for the nation's 50 million K-12 students. American Education Week's celebration days include:

- Sunday, November 12: Student Leaders Day. Hundreds of future teachers will convene in Denver, Colo., to participate in an American Education Week celebration event.
- Monday, November 13: National Kick-Off Celebration. From national commemorations to local community events such as American Education Week house parties, millions of Americans will celebrate public education nationwide.
- Tuesday, November 14: Invite Parents to School Day. Schools will invite parents into the classroom for a hands-on experience of what the day is like for their child.
- Wednesday, November 15: Education Support Professionals Day. Individuals who provide invaluable services to schools are recognized for their outstanding work.
- Thursday, November 16: Educator for a Day. Community leaders will be invited to serve as educators to get a glimpse at a day in the life of a school employee.
- Friday, November 17: Substitute Educators Day. This day honors the educators who are called upon to replace regularly employed teachers.

About Educator Resignations

By Michael T. McCoy, UEA General Counsel

Educators should know the nine most important things about resigning:

1. Educators requested or forced to resign will not lose their unemployment compensation because they resign rather than wait to be fired. To be eligible for unemployment, the educator need only show that he/she would have been fired had he/she not resigned. Unemployment benefits can be denied to an employee, whether s/he resigned or was fired, if the termination was due to the employee's conduct adverse to the employer's interest. If you involuntarily terminate with a school district, you should consult your UniServ director about your unemployment compensation rights.

2. Educators can resign their employment any time — even during the school year. However, monetary loss may be assessed. School district policy usually requires written notice of an employee's intent to resign and that the notice is given 30 days or more prior to the effective date of the resignation. If the minimum number of days' notice is not given, district policy often provides a loss of up to several hundred dollars deducted from the employee's last pay check. This practice may or may not be enforceable depending on how the policy is worded.

3. The Utah Professional Practices Advisory Commission (UPPAC) considers a resignation to be an unprofessional practice if the notice of resignation is not given in the manner required by district policy. Some educators have been disciplined by the UPPAC for resigning their employment under conditions not permitted by district policy, i.e., quitting with two days' notice when district policy requires 30 days' notice.

4. Educators do not lose their state retirement because they resign or are forced to resign, for whatever reason, from their employment.

5. Employment is a contract. Educators have a contract with the district to pay money for work performed. An employee may offer to resign. The district may or may not accept the resignation. If the employee simply notifies the district that s/he will cease working as of next Monday, the district has a cause of action against the employee for breach of contract. Because the district can usually replace the employee for less money, the district has no damage and such lawsuits are not worth much to the district.

6. Because an offer to resign must be accepted by the board of education, employees can withdraw an offer to resign at any time prior to its acceptance by the board of education. The notice of withdrawal must be in writing and given to the superintendent.

7. Educators do not have to sign a “release of claims” document to resign from their employment with a district. School employees should not sign a release of claims without consulting an attorney. A resignation is effective whether or not a release of claims form is signed and where the district has given the employee notice of its intent to terminate the employee, the employee may resign without complying with the notice required by district policy. If a district proposes to terminate an employee and agrees to accept a resignation only if a release of claims is included in the resignation, the employee should refuse to resign and instead request a hearing on the proposed termination. The employee has very little to lose and possibly something to gain by insisting on a hearing.

8. Quite often a school administrator will “confront” an educator about something the educator may or may not have done. The administrator will demand that the educator resign before the end of the day and threaten serious consequences to the educator if s/he does not resign. Don’t be intimidated. The administrators will be just as happy to receive the resignation the next day.

9. AND, MOST IMPORTANT, BEFORE ANY UEA MEMBER RESIGNS HIS/HER JOB, S/HE SHOULD CONSULT HIS/HER UNISERV DIRECTOR.

How well do you understand Utah’s school accountability systems?

***By: Julie Quinn, Accountability Specialist
Utah State Office of Education***

Utah schools are held accountable under two different systems, Utah’s Performance Assessment System for Students (U-PASS) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Public reports are available for each Utah school, for both systems. Differences between these two systems

sometimes produce situations where a school may be identified as needing improvement under one system, but not the other. Looking into each system helps to explain why this happens.

U-PASS is a compensatory model. This model mirrors classroom practice, bringing multiple assessments and indicators together to determine the achievement of a school. Schools are designated as “Achieved State Level of Performance” or “Needs Assistance” based on the proficiency (status) or progress of students. Math, language arts, and science criterion-referenced tests (CRT’s), in addition to the Direct Writing Assessment (DWA), Utah Basic Skills Competency Test (UBSCT), Utah’s Alternate Assessment (UAA), and the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment (UALPA), in addition to attendance for grades 3-12, are factored into U-PASS.

NCLB is a conjunctive model which holds each school and district accountable for the performance of each subgroup in each area – all 40 cells of the table much achieve the designated performance level, or the school/district does not make “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP). This calculation takes into consideration proficiency on the math and language arts tests, the UAA, and attendance for grades 3-8 and graduation rate for grades 9-12.

The philosophy of the two systems differs. U-PASS focuses on individual student improvement from year to year. In other words, the student’s performance in 3rd grade is compared with that same student’s performance in 4th grade. All students/groups are expected to be proficient or improving. NCLB focuses on group performance, this year’s 3rd grade performance compared to next year’s 3rd grade performance. NCLB also allows a school/district to meet AYP through safe harbor, or a ten percent reduction in the percentage of students not proficient from the previous year.

Under U-PASS, schools are designated as needing assistance. All schools focus on early intervention and students are allowed to attend the school of their choice, if transportation is provided by parents. Sanctions under NCLB apply only to Title I schools, ranging from school choice with paid transportation, to supplemental services from an outside agency, to the possibility of alternate governance.

For more information on U-PASS or NCLB, or to view the reports for schools under each system, see the Utah State Office of Education’s website at: <http://schools.utah.gov>.

Follow the money: UTCE and the AAE connection

Would you join a “professional educator” association if you knew their funding came from groups hostile to teachers and public education? Probably not.

That’s what is happening in Utah. A group calling itself the Utah Council of Educators – UTCE – has begun recruiting teachers in several Utah school districts. They are an affiliate of the Association of American Educators, or AAE.

The AAE receives substantial funding from several foundations which are:

- **Pro-voucher.**
- **Anti-public education.**
- **Anti-labor.**

Follow the Money

The AAE is supported by member dues, with a significant contribution to its operational expenses provided by the AAE Foundation. In recent years, up to half the (AAE) Foundation’s

revenue has come from the Walton and Hume foundations.¹ Here's what you need to know about these two organizations:

- **Walton Family Foundation.** This foundation contributed just over \$1 million total to the AAE Foundation from 2000 through 2004. The foundation is run by heirs to the Wal-Mart fortune and pumps millions of dollars into anti-public education efforts each year. The foundation took its giving cues from national voucher advocate and paycheck "protection" contributor John Walton, who until his death in 2005 had been a generous supporter of voucher and tuition tax credit legislation, advocacy, and political efforts. He gave more than \$2 million alone to the failed 2000 Michigan voucher initiative, and his legacy continues through his brother Jim Walton and the family foundation.²

- **Jaquelin Hume Foundation.** This California foundation gave AAE \$650,000 total from 2000 through 2004, and perhaps as much as \$200,000 more in 2005. Founded by former Ronald Reagan advisor Jaquelin Hume, the foundation is run by Hume family members, including William "Jerry" Hume, a former California board of education member who serves on the boards of several Far Right education groups. Hume is on the board of the new national voucher group Alliance for School Choice.²

Here are some other AAE contributors:

- **Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation.** This foundation contributed \$400,000 total to the AAE Foundation in 2004 and 2005. The foundation spent over 15 years promoting vouchers in Milwaukee.²

- **Fieldstead and Company.** The Fieldstead group, the philanthropic arm of Howard and Roberta Ahmanson, gave the AAE Foundation \$60,000 total in 2003 and 2004. The Ahmanson's have been big givers to past voucher and anti-labor ballot initiatives in California, including the 1998 Proposition 226 paycheck "protection" initiative and the state's failed 1993 voucher initiative. More recently, they have supported the All Children Matter PAC.² Through June 2006, the All Children Matter PAC had donated \$100,000 to Utah legislators who had previously voted for vouchers, or to legislative candidates who have gone on record as supporting vouchers.³

The Utah Education Association has prepared a booklet, "*Follow The Money*," outlining UTCE's connection to the AAE. Contact your UniServ director for a copy.

¹Form 990PF, Walton and Hume Foundations, 2001

²National Education Association. 2006. NEA's Toolkit to Advance Public Education: So-called "Professional Educator" Organizations.

³Utah. Lt. Governor's Office. Elections Office Report. September 2006.

UEA Convention

Ten outstanding educators, Rep. 'Lou' Shurtliff honored during UEA banquet

As a music teacher at Timpanogos High School in Orem, **Lance LeVar** looks for every opportunity to help his students achieve. He created a lunchtime performance series and is bringing in internationally renowned musicians to work with students. But perhaps his greatest accomplishment came last summer when he worked 600 hours to create the first marching band in the history of Timpanogos High School.

When a child in **Flossie Givens'** ninth-grade class at Orion Jr. High School, Harrisville, expressed an interest in tennis, the teacher went out of her way to provide articles on the sport and encourage the student to take lessons. When the same child was diagnosed with cancer, Givens

sent cards, tennis memorabilia, and phoned often to give the young girl support during her cancer treatments.

Once a student enters the magical world of history in **Rex Woodward's** class at White Pine Middle School, Richmond, anything can happen

. . . and often does. Woodward recites the stories of Iliad dressed as Homer and shows students how to read maps, dressed as "Map Dude," complete with tights, shorts, and a cape.

William and Pat Child and the Utah Education Association honored LeVar, Givens, and Woodward — along with seven other outstanding Utah educators — as recipients of the 2006 "*Excellence in Teaching*" Awards. Mr. Child — the founder and sponsor of the awards — is Chairman of the Board of R.C. Willey Home Furnishings.

"*Excellence in Teaching*" Award recipients are nominated by their peers and chosen based on their work with individual students or groups of students. This year's winners were recognized during the UEA's annual "*Superstars in Education*" Banquet, held Thursday, October 12, 2006 at the Salt Palace Convention Center, Salt Lake City. Each recipient received a crystal award and a check for \$1,500, courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Child.

The following are excerpts from nominations submitted for this year's winners:

A young girl — who couldn't read or write and barely knew her numbers — made her way into **Michelle Griner's** resource class at Willow Canyon Elementary School in Sandy. Griner worked with the child and her parents to develop a plan involving multiple strategies and a unique curriculum. In two-and-a-half years, the student learned to read, do basic math, construct good sentences, articulate ideas, and organize thoughts.

For years, **Jonette Wheeler** has been in charge of O.R.E.O. Night (which stands for Outrageous Reading at Every Opportunity) at Lewiston Elementary School in Lewiston. She and other teachers dress up to fit the stories they are going to read. More than 700 families attended the 2006 event. Every student received their own book, along with Oreo cookies and milk.

At Washington Terrace Elementary School, Ogden, **Lee Claycomb** has found a way to bring his love of music into his sixth-grade classroom. Not content to merely teach lyrics and tunes, Claycomb instructs his students in the art of two- and three-part harmonies, singing a cappella, and in foreign languages such as Latin and Italian.

Metta Godfrey uses music and art as effective tools in her classroom at West Point Elementary School, West Point. Students learn how to read music and play a ukulele. They construct scenery and fashion costumes for school plays. Books of student poetry are compiled and these, along with ukulele selections, are shared with parents each May.

At Salt Lake's Dilworth Elementary School, educator **Cathy Johnson** works hard to connect with and inspire her students. She frequently buys books for students who have expressed an interest in literature. While teaching about the Middle Ages, Johnson allows students to work in cooperative groups to build a three-dimensional castle. The unit ends with a day of celebration, including a medieval feast and a knighting ceremony.

Kenneth Tom, a teacher at Pleasant Grove Jr. High School, Pleasant Grove, was recently given the task of working with a student who was both autistic and a selective mute. The only thing Tom knew about this child was that he loved history and would not talk to anyone except his family. Tom made a quick connection with the student by asking him about the presidents of the United States and adding bits of Utah history trivia to keep his interest peaked. The child quickly made Tom his favorite teacher and would only talk to him at school.

Millcreek High School, an alternative high school in St. George, is known to the students who attend as the "Best Chance School," not the "Last Chance School" due to the efforts of principal **Terry Ogborn** who, for 20 years, has attempted to create a positive environment for learning. Ogborn opens her office, pops in to classrooms, and creates a supportive climate for the diverse needs of the students. One such program provides day care on campus for the babies of young student mothers — allowing them to attend school and graduate.

Rep. Shurtliff receives UEA Honor Roll Award

Utah state Representative LaWanna “Lou” Shurtliff (*D-Ogden*) received the Utah Education Association’s Honor Roll Award for outstanding service to education. Shurtliff (*shown right center with UEA President Kim Campbell and WEA President Marlene Irons*) was honored during the UEA’s annual “*Superstars in Education*” banquet.

Shurtliff has served in the Utah Legislature for the past eight years and was described as “one of education’s best friends” by Marlene Irons, president of the Weber Education Association. “As the only female legislator from Weber County, [Lou] brings her expertise and common sense to the House of Representatives,” Irons said. “As a member of the Education Standing Committee and in House floor debate, she is a strong advocate for public education. She is a problem solver who has proposed real solutions to our low funding, high class sizes, and limited teacher salaries.”

Shurtliff is a retired educator and served many years as a leader of the Ogden Education Association. She was also a member of the UEA and NEA boards of directors.

[UEA Convention keynoter talks about race, culture, and standards](#)

Closing the Achievement Gaps: Educators need to talk about definitions

Before educators can begin to close the Achievement Gaps prevalent in many schools, they need to have a conversation about definitions, according to Dr. Belinda Williams, a psychologist and keynote speaker at this year’s UEA Convention.

Breaking from tradition, Williams began her presentation by separating the convention hall audience into several groups and asking UEA members to share their definitions about what is normal, what is race and culture, and what are comprehensive plans and high expectations.

While race is often limited to physical characteristics, Williams said the cultural differences and experiences of children can have great power in the classroom.

On the subject of comprehensive plans, Williams said the focus should be on learning itself. How teachers learn is rarely a subject of conversation, she said. But there should be an understanding of what educators need to be current on.

Williams, the author of *Closing the Achievement Gap*, defined high expectations as teachers adjusting their instruction to meet the needs of learners.

“We need to have conversations about definitions in order to close the Achievement Gaps,” Williams told UEA members. “You cannot solve a problem unless you have clarified it.”

Williams said the goal for closing the Achievement Gaps should focus on accelerating learning for children who have traditionally not been successful in public schools. She noted that while school districts spend billions on new materials, “we may not be accelerating learning.”

Williams did not downplay the importance of standards in education. “We must have standards,” she said. “The issue is that standards, in and of themselves, will not allow us to close the Achievement Gaps.”

To read Williams’ PowerPoint presentation on closing the Achievement Gaps, visit the UEA website at:

<http://www.utea.org/newsEvents/ueaConvention/WilliamsKeynoteHandouts.pdf>

Eskelsen says educators must be ‘the voice of reason’ in the public debate

NEA Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen says she never apologizes for fighting to get what she needs to do her job. “And it’s a fight we’re in,” Eskelsen said during her keynote address at the UEA-sponsored “*Superstars in Education*” banquet.

“This is not easy work,” the Granite teacher and former UEA president told colleagues. “An Association leader today has to do more than worry about contracts and rising insurance co-pays and filing grievances. We’ve got to reach out into the communities where we live. We can’t just talk amongst ourselves.”

Eskelsen said educators must have the public’s support if they are to succeed. “The public is being fed a well-organized diet of privatization lies and half-truths by a well-coordinated coalition of affiliated C.A.V.E. groups . . . Citizens Against Virtually Everything,” she said. “So we have to be there on every level. To be the voice of reason in the public debate.”

The NEA leader said educators need to help the public, politicians, and parents “see through our eyes. They need to see the incredible things that happen in our classrooms that will never end up on a multiple-choice test.” Eskelsen said it is time to show off. “For every negative story that makes the paper, there are a thousand stories of success. Make sure the paper knows your success story.”

More than 12,000 books given away during UEA Convention literacy events

In 2000, the Utah Education Association launched a new student literacy event at the UEA Convention. It was called “*Book-A-Basket*.” For five years in a row, members and their children lobbed free throws and, if successful, won books for themselves and their school libraries. It wasn’t uncommon to see the line of participants for “*Book-A-Basket*” winding all the way around the Salt Palace Exhibit Hall.

When the Real Salt Lake soccer team took up residence in Utah, UEA leaders and business partners saw an opportunity to move from a basketball-related event to one in which participants could try their luck at kicking soccer balls. So began “*Get A Kick Out Of Reading*” (GAKOOR). The 2006 UEA Convention marked the second year for GAKOOR and coordinators report that more than 1,500 books were distributed to members, their children, and school libraries.

During the past seven years, more than 12,000 books have been given away during the “*Book-A-Basket*” and GAKOOR events.

Thanks to our GAKOOR sponsors: Barnes & Noble Booksellers; Horace Mann Insurance Companies; Real Salt Lake; Saturn/UAW; Staples; and Utah Idaho School Supply & Map World.

UEA People

Steps of Love: The luckiest person I know

By Nancy Pereira

UEA Office Manager

Me. I'm the luckiest person I know. I have the honor of working with the most talented, dedicated and compassionate people I've ever known. Since I began working at the Utah Education Association in 1997, I've known this to be true. My admiration and respect for the UEA staff, affiliate staff, and members has grown and grown. I continue to be amazed by the efforts and positive results the state and local affiliates deliver to members of the UEA. I have never lost sight of just how lucky I am to be a part of all that is the UEA. Here's an amazing example of just how lucky you all are to be associated with such a special group of people.

The day after Christmas, 2005, I had an emergency appendectomy. The pathology came back with a diagnosis of Appendiceal Adenocarcinoma, a type of cancer. Through all the surgeries, wound care and chemotherapy, my husband Wayne was with me. How lucky that we could be together for everything, every minute. We were showered with love and support from family and friends. People flew in from out of state to help out. We were never alone. And through it all, our UEA family (which clearly reaches far beyond Murray, Utah) was by our side every step of the way – literally.

Annually, staff members choose a fundraiser to participate in. In June, "Steps of Love" was chosen as this year's charity. Proceeds raised for this charity are donated to cancer research.

On June 8, dozens of people gathered at the Jordan River Parkway on 53rd South and walked to Winchester Park in Murray. Not only did staff from the UEA and affiliate offices participate, but staff members' spouses, partners, children (two-legged and four-legged), friends of friends, and some people I don't even know did, too. Educators Mutual Insurance donated pedometers for all the participants! When the walkers arrived at the park, they were met by dozens of others who came out to participate in the fundraiser. A picnic prepared by staff, friends, and family was enjoyed by all. For several weeks following the walk, donations kept coming in the mail.

For those of you who know me, it is impossible for me to "make a long story short," but to sum it up the Steps of Love fundraiser was "The Nancy Walk." I was the recipient of this year's charity. They did it all for me. I will never be able to express the overwhelming gratitude I feel. I carry it with me today and I know it will never leave me. I wish I could list every person by name to say thank you. There are so many. So please, on behalf of my husband Wayne and me, from the bottom of our hearts, thank you all so very much for being there every step of the way.

Recent tests I've had show no evidence of cancer and I'm back to full-time at the UEA! And, although there are years of follow-up tests in front of us, we know it'll all work out. We've got the UEA to back us up!

I just had to let you know how lucky you are to have such special people working for you, for teachers, for the cause of public education, and for Utah's kids.

Please, if you have a history of cancer in your family, talk to your physician about screening. No history? Ask about recommended preventative screening. If you don't do it for yourself, do it for your family and the other people in your life who love you. There was no history in my family. Now there is. My sisters were both tested and they are cancer-free. LUCKY!

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