

# The Springfield Teacher

The UNITY newsletter of the Springfield Education Association 1000 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01109  
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## S.E.A. Office Hours

Monday 9:30 - 5:00

Tuesday 9:30 - 5:00

Wednesday 9:30 - 5:00

Thursday 9:30 - 5:00

Friday 9:30 - 5:00

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**mta/nea**

helping teachers teach

## *President's Message*

Happy New Year to everyone! I hope all of you had a rejuvenating vacation. We certainly have our work cut out for us.

In December, the School Committee finally approved a Budget for the 2003 – 2004 school year. This Budget is balanced based on the premise that the School Committee will continue the implementation of State Statute 656. This Statute denies our movement on the salary schedule, i.e., step raises and column changes. This Budget is also balanced based on the assumption that the savings from the Canadian Drug Plan continues unimpeded by FDA intervention.

The only way to break the current log-jam in collective bargaining is to convince the new Mayor and School Committee to go over this Budget and make cuts in areas not directly affecting school services to children.

In the last two budget cycles, the vast majority of cuts have been in direct services to children. Unit A and para-professional positions topped the list of cuts. The administrative positions that have been eliminated were building based. During this same time period, the number of administrative positions at 195 State Street increased. The Budget continues to include significant amounts of money for consultants and other non-direct services.

These are very difficult financial times. There are not enough resources to give everyone what they need and deserve. However, if the School Committee makes children and the people who work directly with children their first priority and truly reflect this in the Budget, we can bring resolution to the collective bargaining crisis with a fair and just conclusion.

Your help is needed in convincing the new Mayor and School Committee to make children and the people who work directly with children the number one priority in this Budget. Teachers and other School Department employees are the only city workers who have been without contracts and raises for two years. The Springfield Public School system is having an increasingly difficult time attracting and retaining highly qualified, licensed teachers. Far too often, experienced, talented, and caring Springfield teachers are leaving our system when better opportunities present themselves elsewhere.

In December, Association Representatives from your building discussed with you a recommendation of the Crisis Committee (Executive Board Members are functioning as the Crisis Committee) for a job action to take place in February. By the January 15, 2004 Legislative Board meeting and the issuance of this newsletter, membership will have had a chance to discuss this action and a vote will have been taken at the Legislative Board meeting to implement the action.

If the SEA Legislative Board's vote is to take this action, it is imperative that all members participate. The history of the labor movement teaches us that it is only when working men and women stand together in unity and solidarity against what is unfair and unjust that they can bring a greater degree of justice to their lives.

Yours in unity,



## ROMNEY'S PENSION SCHEME

From: Tim Collins

As many of you may already know, the following sentence appeared on December 18, 2003 in a front page story in the *Boston Globe*. "Looking ahead, Romney said his 2005 budget will seek to scale back some pension benefits, including the one that bases payments on a state employee's three highest-paid years. Romney may seek to base pension benefits on the average pay the employee earned over the course of a career."

I am reprinting the President's Message on this subject written by my good friend Bill Kaylor, President of Fall River Education Association. Bill has captured my feelings to a tee.

"If you're still fuming over losing lifetime certification, then Governor Romney's latest proposal to change the teacher retirement system should make you apoplectic! Just when I really started to believe that things couldn't get any worse educationally, Romney has hatched a hair-brained scheme to fleece thousands of prospective retirees out of their anticipated retirements. Obviously, his experience as a corporate raider taught him to plunder the assets of companies at the expense of their employees. In lean economic times, Romney sees a cash cow in the billions of dollars invested in the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System.

Under the current formula for retirement, a teacher is entitled to receive a percentage of the highest three consecutive years. That percentage is based on a formula which combines the age factor of a member with the years of service. A 50 year old member has an age factor of 1.0. The factor increases by .1 for each succeeding year until a maximum factor of 2.5 is achieved at age 65. A member would multiply his years of service by his age factor to determine the percentage to which he is entitled. For example, a 62 year old teacher (2.2 factor) with 30 years of service ( $2.2 \times 30 = 66\%$ ) would receive 66% of his highest three consecutive years.

Four years ago, the legislature passed RetirementPlus for an enhanced retirement option. RetirementPlus requires an 11% contribution and a maximum of 30 years of service. That same 30 year teacher at age 62 would receive 80% under this option. I opted into the RetirementPlus and increased my contribution from 5% to 11% for my last five years of teaching. I anticipate working two more years and retiring at 80% which should give me a retirement income of approximately \$50,000. I've planned for retirement by saving, maximizing my 457 deferred compensation, buying the sailboat of my

dreams, and having other employment opportunities. Being lucky to marry a much younger teacher who will (hopefully) continue to receive salary increases should ease the pressure of future increases in our cost of living, but the Governor has other plans.

Governor Romney doesn't care that Bill Kaylor and thousands of other teachers have given 35 years or more of dedicated service to the children of Massachusetts. He doesn't care that financial security for retirement has been planned and based on a defined retirement system. Does he think that teachers are ripping off the public because Billy Bulger scammed the State for more than a million bucks? Doesn't he realize that Bulger was a career politician not an educator?

Romney wants to change the formula to the average salary a teacher has made throughout his career. In 1971, I made \$7,200 as a first year teacher. During my 33 year career, I've made \$919,715 teaching in Fall River. If I retire at the end of this year, my average career salary would be \$27,870! If I work another two years, my retirement income would jump to a whopping \$31,506! That's a big difference from the current system. Maybe \$19,000 less per year is not a big deal to a rich guy like Mitt, but it sure would put a damper on the plans I have to live out my life.

The real motivation for this change is this: in the future, the State would save hundreds of millions on funding the pension liability. Like his friends at Enron and Putnam, Mitt doesn't care about employees' retirement benefits. If this mitt-wit plan does not make every public employee in the State call their Representative or Senator, nothing will. I remember how hard teachers worked to get RetirementPlus Plan passed in the legislature. This issue is even more important to our survival. Don't let yourself be cheated out of what you've worked so long and so hard to achieve. **I can't recall any governor proposing such punitive legislation, but if this comes to pass, I would vote to recall Mitt!"**



## GRIEVANCE UPDATE

The Grievance Committee met on December 9, 2003. At that time we addressed the outstanding grievances. The following is the current status of those grievances.

### New Grievances

1. Defects in the HVAC system at an elementary school is causing numerous health problems for staff and students. (*Article 5, section B-1*)
2. An Adjustment Counselor had his office space taken and was relocated to an open space. Counselors require privacy for student or parental meetings. (*Appendix J*)
3. The Superintendent issued a directive increasing the duties of Guidance Counselors. Duties must be defined through the negotiation process. (*Article 5*)
4. The Superintendent issued a directive specifying dates for "double extended days." Extended day schedules are the responsibility of SCDM teams. (*Articles 5 & 6*)

### Pending Resolution

1. Principal re-assigned teachers away from scheduled team time. This is a unilateral change of master schedule. (*Article 32, section B-1*)
2. Flooding of the parking lot at high school creates both health and safety issues for the staff. (*Article 5, section B-5*)
3. Reassignment of high school teachers away from normal duty periods to become inclusion teachers. This is a unilateral change of the master schedule, which is a SCDM responsibility. (*Article 6, section B-1*)
4. Salary freeze for SEA members. This is still in court. The grievance will be resolved by the court's decision. (*Article 27, section E-1*)
5. Guidance counselor / student ratios are out of compliance. (*Article 8, section 3*)
6. Teacher denied access to workshop. (*Article 5, section L-2*)
7. Multiple, ongoing grievances regarding paraprofessional staffing compliance with SPED regulations. (*Article 8, section D-2*)

### Resolved

1. An ETL with a caseload in excess of 400 students. (*Article 8, section F*)
2. Teachers compensated for coverage of absent inclusion teacher. (*Article 5, section F-3*)
3. Payment of compensation for teachers who stayed beyond the end of the school day to cover students who were waiting for late busses. (*Article 5, section T-3*)
4. Two outstanding grievances were withdrawn because the teachers left the system.

# POP QU?Z

by

Peter Dupuis



- 1. I have some real problems with another teacher, I find her/him rude and bossy. I am fed up. Can I file a grievance against this annoying person?**

Generally, no. Since both parties involved are Unit A members, we are required by law to represent each person fully and equally. In plain language, the Association cannot side with one member against another. This applies to both dues paying members and those paying agency service fees.

Settlement of conflicts between members of a school staff is the responsibility of that school's administration. However, if one of those staff members creates a situation that violates the contractual rights of another member, a grievance against the Principal for not enforcing the Agreement can be filed.

- 2. If school opening is delayed because of weather conditions, when are teachers required to report to work?**

The "Policies and Procedures" Reference Manual states: "The Springfield Public Schools expects you to use **reasonable judgement and caution**, but to understand your employment responsibility in this matter." In other words, you are expected to be in your building as soon as it is **reasonably safe**. If you know you are going to be late, you are expected to call and let your principal know. You are not expected to endanger yourself.



**ARE YOU REQUIRED TO TAKE  
THE MASSACHUSETTS TESTS  
FOR EDUCATOR LICENSURE?  
HELP HAS ARRIVED!**

**What kind of help?**

Tutors will conduct help sessions to prepare you for the Communication and Literacy Skills portion of the test. The focus of the sessions will be on reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and dictation.

**Where?**

All of the tutorial sessions will be held at the Meline Kasparian Professional Development Center.

**When?**

See the schedule for 2003-2004 below. The sessions will run from 3:30-5:00. You may come in at any time during those hours.

**What is the cost?**

FREE!

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**SCHEDULE OF TUTORIAL  
SESSIONS 2003-2004**

**TEST: February 28 (Register by January 16 to avoid late fee.)**

Tutorial Sessions: February 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27

**TEST: May 15 (Register by April 2 to avoid late fee.)**

Tutorial Sessions: May 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

**TEST: July 24 (Register by June 11 to avoid fee.)**

Tutorial Sessions: June 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

Test Registration Bulletins are available at the Office of the Licensure Mentors located at the PD Center, area colleges, or can be sent to your home if you call (413) 256-2892. If you have any questions, please contact Mary Chamberlain or Linda Christofori (750-2148).

**PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

*Nancy S. Fitchin*

Happy New Year! I hope that everyone had a wonderful vacation and an enjoyable holiday season. I would also like to extend a hearty thanks to everyone who took the time to give us feedback regarding next year's Professional Development Program.

Please remember to send in your Professional Development paperwork for conferences and courses as stipulated in the guidelines. It helps to facilitate the reimbursement process when you submit your paperwork as outlined in the SEA instructions. For your convenience, the guidelines and applications for Professional Development funds are provided in this issue of *The Springfield Teacher*. They can also be found on our web site at [www.seateachers.com](http://www.seateachers.com).

The Professional Development Library has added another publication from ASCD. The book is *The First Amendment in Schools* by Haynes, Chaltain, Ferguson, Hudson, and Thomas. It is not intended to provide legal advice, but can provide its readers with background on the First Amendment and students' religious and free speech rights.

On February 10, 2004, Dr. Mike Mezzochi will present a workshop on "Smart Discipline for Better Learning" at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Worcester, MA. Principals may accompany a registered staff person tuition-free. Topics addressed will include: managing vs. changing behavior, the classroom environment, and resources. Please call 1-800-462-1478 or fax 1-800-337-9929.

Literacy expert, Donna Whyte, will present a workshop called "Building Blocks" on January 28, 2004 at the Crowne Plaza in Worcester. It is geared toward kindergarten teachers and provides a literacy framework. Please call or fax the numbers listed in the previous paragraph.



# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development Funds are still available to provide members with the opportunity to attend courses, conferences, and workshops. **The amount has increased from \$100.00 to \$150.00.** Money will continue to be distributed on a first come, first serve basis. **The Guidelines and Procedures listed below must be followed in order to receive your reimbursement. Please read and follow them carefully. No reminders will be sent out to applicants whose paperwork is incomplete.** Applications are now being taken. One has been provided in this newsletter for your convenience. It can be used any time during the year.

## GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

1. Each member is limited to apply for Professional Development funds once during the school year. **If a member is reimbursed during one school year, that member is ineligible for the next school year.** That member becomes eligible again for the third year. For example: If Joe Smith is reimbursed for the 2001 – 2002 school year, he is ineligible for the 2002 – 2003 school year and becomes eligible again for the 2003 – 2004 school year. **The maximum amount that can be applied for is \$150.00.**
2. The Professional Development Fund will be used to pay for Professional Development courses, conferences, and workshops. The SEA cannot be billed for courses, conferences, or workshops. Payment will be made only directly to members for expenses **incurred.**
3. Members will be reimbursed on a first come, first serve basis as long as there is money available for these purposes.
4. Expenses up to \$150.00 may be covered. This includes registration fee, lodging (conference distance of at least 50 miles), meals (\$10.00 cap on lunch, \$25.00 cap on dinner), gas mileage (.225 per mile) or special transportation. **Expenses not initially applied for or not accompanied by receipts will not be reimbursed.** Expenses must be reasonable and necessary.
5. **In the event you cannot use the funds for which you have been approved, please notify the SEA office at 782-8300. Failure to do so will result in ineligibility for the following school year.**

## REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

1. The **Application Form** must be completed and submitted with a syllabus, brochure, or conference write up attached. **This may be submitted before or after the course, conference, or workshop.** If submitted before, the member will receive a response indicating whether or not there is money available in the account to cover expenses. All known eligible expenses up to \$150.00 will then be guaranteed if there is money still available.
2. The **Request for Payment Form** ***WITH RECEIPT(S) SHOWING THE DOLLAR AMOUNT PAID*** must be submitted **within 30 days** after attending the course, conference, or workshop. **The form(s) and receipt(s) must be received one week prior to the last day of school or they will not be processed.**

***DO NOT USE INTEROFFICE MAIL.***

3. **In the event you cannot use the funds for which you have been approved, please notify the SEA office at 782-8300. Failure to do so will result in ineligibility for the following school year.**

Nancy Retchin  
Professional Development Chair

## APPLICATION FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

To insure funds are available, submit prior to attending course conference,  
or workshop with course description, syllabus, or conference brochure.

Applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Course or Conference \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Conference \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Group Sponsoring Course or Conference \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Fee \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate with a check mark any additional expenses you intend to seek reimbursement of and the amount if available.

\_\_\_\_\_ Meals \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Lodging \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Mileage \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(.225 x # of miles)

\_\_\_\_\_ Transportation Expenses \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL Reimbursement Requested from SEA  
(Maximum amount is \$150.00)

Course descriptions, syllabus, or conference brochure **MUST** be attached to this application form.  
Remember to **SAVE YOUR RECEIPTS**.

Please return to:

Professional Development Committee  
Springfield Education Association  
1000 Wilbraham Road  
Springfield, MA 01109

**DO NOT USE INTEROFFICE MAIL**

# REQUEST FOR PAYMENT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

Submit only after attending course, conference, or workshop with  
receipt(s) showing the dollar amount paid.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Course or Conference \_\_\_\_\_

Receipt Attached \_\_\_\_\_ Yes (**Do not submit without receipt(s) showing the dollar amount paid**)

## Evaluation of Course or Conference

Content Area: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Presentation: (Practicum, lecture, discussion, hand-on, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 – 5, rate the conference.

1   2   3   4   5  
Poor                      Excellent

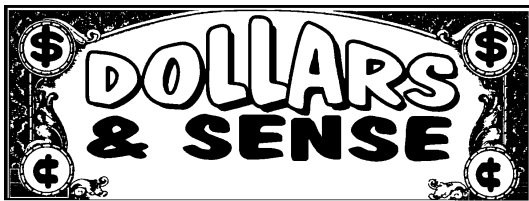
Would you recommend this course or conference to other educators? Why or why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you care to do so, an article about the conference for the *Springfield Teacher* would be appreciated.

Please return form(s) to: Professional Development Committee  
**DO NOT USE** Springfield Education Association  
**INTEROFFICE MAIL** 1000 Wilbraham Road  
Springfield, MA 01109

**DID YOU REMEMBER TO ATTACH YOUR RECEIPT(S)?  
A RECEIPT MUST SHOW THE DOLLAR AMOUNT PAID.  
A BROCHURE OR CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE IS NOT A RECEIPT.**

SAVE FOR FUTURE USE



### SEA/MTA/NEA - Dues for Year 2003

January – June      13 Pay Periods @ \$27.87 = \$362.31  
August – December   10 Pay Periods @ \$28.14 = \$281.40  
\$643.71

When comparing dues paid from previous years, please note that dues for August – December 2003 reflect ten pay periods (because of the Wednesday, December 31, 2003 payday) not the typical nine pay periods reflected in most yearly dues.

## PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

Proposed amendments to the bylaws shall be submitted in writing prior to 5:00 p.m. on March 15, 2004 to the Committee on Bylaws, SEA Office.

Proposed amendments to the bylaws, submitted by individual members, shall be reviewed, and, if necessary, combined and/or edited without substantive change by the Bylaws Committee and then submitted to the membership at the Annual Meeting.

The Bylaws Committee shall, within 30 days of taking action on a proposed amendment, issue a report of its action to the submitter of the amendment.

Prior to the March deadline, the committee will make reasonable effort to assist interested members in achieving their intent so that proposals are legally worded and are consistent with other sections of the bylaws.

The Bylaws Committee shall recommend to the Annual Meeting procedures for consideration of amendments to the bylaws.

All bylaws must be in accordance with MTA-NEA bylaws.

## REMINDER - EXTENDED DAYS

There is an extended day every week, even on weeks during which we work fewer than five days. The School Centered Decision Making Team in each school, after consulting with their staff, determines the day of the week on which the extended day will occur and also determines an alternative day in the event the extended day falls on a holiday or snow day.

## TIPS FOR TEACHERS

Below are some tips for the month taken from the MTA's published Teachers' Calendar/Planner.

### *Classroom Management:*

Good discipline depends upon much more than behavior management. It is the result of an organized and well-run classroom. Some hints are:

- Plan lessons thoroughly. Post an outline of what you will cover during a class and refer to it: always let students know what is next on the agenda.
- Have a limited number – perhaps five – of realistic, observable, and enforceable rules. Include students in formulating classroom rules and procedures to cover most situations. For instance:
  - Follow directions.
  - Hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
  - Be seated when the bell rings.
  - No interrupting or loud discussions.
  - No swearing or put-downs.
  - Post the rules. Apply them consistently and fairly. Make sure that parents have a copy of rules and policies.
  - Make positive statements and use students' names. "John, do the first six problems on the worksheet." Then thank the student.





## NEW ENGLAND CONSULTING SERVICE

### GRADUATE COURSES FOR EDUCATORS

*3 Graduate Credits*

*67.5 PDP's*

*4.5 CEU's in 5 classes*

### **Practical Solutions for Dealing with Social Problems**

Course number - 16.746

Instructor: *Maryanne Noone*

This course is appropriate for all K-12 Educators

#### FIVE SATURDAYS

March 6, 13, 20, 27

April 3, 2004

For information and registration call:

(239) 498-9451

or

(413) 596-3309



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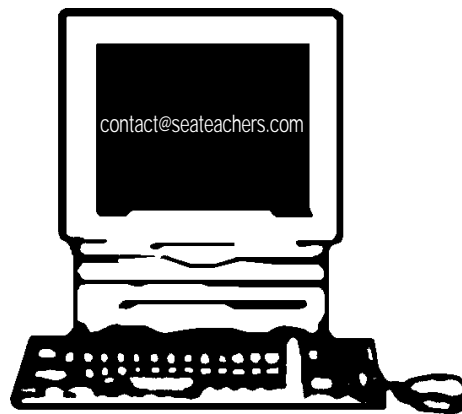
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**Email: [librooks@snet.net](mailto:librooks@snet.net)**



### **HAS YOUR ADDRESS CHANGED?**

If your address, telephone number, or e-mail address has changed, please e-mail the SEA office at [contact@seateachers.com](mailto:contact@seateachers.com) or call us at 782-8300. We will also inform the MTA and the NEA of the address change so you can receive the mailings from our affiliated associations (and your union card, which you should have received by now).

# NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Kudos to David Cruise for donating the \$ retirement gift he received from grateful teachers to the SEA's Meline Kasparian Scholarship Fund.
- The Pioneer Valley AFL-CIO is offering scholarship awards to the sons and daughters of local union members affiliated with them. If you are an affiliated member of the Pioneer Valley AFL-CIO, call them for more information at 732-7970.
- The "Idea of America" Essay Contest, with cash prizes totaling \$10,000 for original student essays, returns this month. For more information on deadlines and guidelines, visit *We the People* at [www.humanities.gov](http://www.humanities.gov) or call (800)-NEH-1121.
- Help bring a fair and just conclusion to our Collective Bargaining Crisis. Write letters to the editor, the School Committee Members, and the Mayor. Go to the SEA web site for talking points and sample letters.

Honorable Charles V. Ryan Jr.  
City Hall  
36 Court Street  
Springfield, MA 01103

Thomas Ashe  
45 Rencelau Street  
Springfield, MA 01118

Nicholas Fyntrilakis  
120 Bridle Path Road  
Springfield, MA 01118

Marjorie Hurst  
60 Brickett Street  
Springfield, MA 01109

Jennifer Dugan Murphy  
144 Washington Road  
Springfield, MA 01108

Antonette Pepe  
108 Kerry Drive  
Springfield, MA 01118

Kenneth Shea  
389 Trafton Road  
Springfield, MA 01108

Letters to the editor  
The Republican  
P.O. Box 2350  
Springfield, MA 01102

Letters to the editor  
The Valley Advocate  
116 Pleasant Street  
Suite 3350  
Easthampton, MA 01027

- The Teacher Tax Relief Act (H.R. 785/S. 695) would make the out-of-pocket classroom expense deduction permanent, increase the current \$250 maximum to \$400 or \$500 in the House and Senate, respectively, and include professional development for this tax year. Tell Congress at [www.nea.org/members](http://www.nea.org/members) to increase the deduction and make it permanent.
- NEA and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education developed a new manual, *IDEA and ESEA: Intersection of Access and Outcomes*, to clarify which ESEA provisions impact IDEA and special education students and IDEA reauthorization. The manual is available on-line at [www.org/specialed/ideaeseaintersection/htm](http://www.org/specialed/ideaeseaintersection/htm)
- Recent studies show that each class of high school dropouts costs the nation more than \$200 billion. A new Bill (H.R. 3085) seeks to reduce high school dropout rates by providing schools and districts with resources and interventions, such as adolescent literacy programs, to increase graduation rates. For details, go to [www.nea.org/newsreleases/2003/nr030917.html](http://www.nea.org/newsreleases/2003/nr030917.html).
- If you haven't looked at OWL.org lately, then it's time to check it out again. The site has a new look with more stories, features, and education resources than ever before, such as lesson plans and curriculum materials. Register at [www.OWL.org](http://www.OWL.org) to take advantage of discounts and discussion forums on topical issues and classroom advice. Use as a recruitment tool too.
- "Read Across America Initiatives" bring children and books together and raise awareness about importance, value, and fun of reading throughout the year. Let's celebrate the accomplishments of Dr. Seuss 365 days a year (366 days this year.) For more information about the year long tribute to Ted Geisel go to [www.nea.org/readacross](http://www.nea.org/readacross)