

# The Golden Rhea

*Educating Our Children, Engaging Our Parents, Empowering Our Schools*

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## Election 2008: Decisions, Decisions

*As the champion of public education, National Education Association members have a vital role to play in this very important election year. Please remember to vote.*

The Association is engaging in a comprehensive presidential recommendation process designed to ensure that NEA's candidate recommendation won't be based on personalities or partisanship. It won't be about who is more liberal or more conservative. It will be about what's best for students, what's best for educators and what's best for public education, our communities and our nation.

### NEA's recommendation process is fair, bipartisan and open.

A candidate's political party is never taken into consideration, and all presidential candidates, whether they are Republican or Democrat, are invited to participate. To be considered for an NEA recommendation, candidates, in addition to setting for an interview, must complete and support a majority of the positions in NEA's candidate questionnaire.

The candidates who completed our questionnaire and interview are:

- Senator Joe Biden (DE)
- Senator Hillary Clinton (NY)
- Senator Chris Dodd (CT)



- Former Senator John Edwards (NC)
- Former Governor Mike Huckabee (AR)
- Congressman Dennis Kucinich (OH)
- Senator Barack Obama (IL)
- Governor Bill Richardson (NM)



**The decision will come from the 9,000 Delegates attending the NEA-RA this summer in Washington, D.C.**

Attending an NEA-RA with 9,000 delegates is exciting any year, but the summer before a presidential election is even more special since those delegates attending have the responsibility of voting on who gets the NEA endorsement for president.

As a diverse family of educators -- 3.2 million teachers, education support professionals, college faculty, retired members, and students preparing to become teachers -- we all have an important decision to make next November. That decision will play a huge role in the issues we care about, such as No Child Left Behind, private school vouchers, affordable health care, and retirement security, to name a few. Remember.....**Go Vote!**

## Gateway Exams get the boot in Tennessee

*The State Board of Education creates tougher student standards starting in 2009-2010.*

The state Board of Education has approved new and tougher standards for Tennessee students and also did away with the Gateway exams, a series of tests required for students to get a diploma.

### Tougher standards increase requirements.

The tougher standards include math all four years of high school and taking chemistry or physics in addition to biology. These requirements will go into effect in the 2009-2010 school year and will affect current 7th grade students.



Other changes include aligning the K-12 language arts and math curriculums with SAT and ACT standards, and the National Assessment of Education Progress, also known as the Nation's Report Card.

"They are rigorous, but they are doable," said Gary Nixon, the state board's executive director. "What we want students to do is to develop their minds, and think critically...and to better assure that when our students graduate from high school, they are truly prepared."

The changes also will affect how teachers teach. State and local officials will follow up with professional development "almost immediately," said Rachel Woods, spokeswoman for the state Department of Education.

"To be successful, the teachers have to be on board and know what the requirements are," she said.

### The Gateway exams will be replaced.

The state board of education will replace the Gateway exams -- a series of three tests students need to get a diploma -- with statewide end-of-the-year course exams, which will account for 25 percent of a student's overall course grade. The goal is to have the exams in 10 courses --- English 1, 2, and 3; algebra 1 and 2, and geometry; U.S. history; biology, chemistry and physics. The exams have yet to be developed.

According to Nixon, the Gateway exams will be given this year and next year. Look for further developments in upcoming TEA and RDEA publications.





## from the President

Welcome back! I trust you enjoyed the holidays and have returned to school to begin the second half of the school year. There are two issues I'd like to bring to your attention this month.

First, due to the efforts of so many dedicated leaders and members across the state, TEA membership has increased for the 2007-2008 school year. Although most education employees are hired at the beginning of the school year, there are often mid-year retirements, terminations and vacancies in the schools creating the opportunity to recruit new members.

If you know of someone newly hired, talk with them and invite them to join RDEA, TEA and NEA. There are many excellent reasons to become a member of our united teaching profession. Rates do decrease for mid-year hires. See a building rep or e-mail me if you have any questions.

Second, even though the second half of the year has just started, planning has already begun by your Association leaders with regards to negotiating a contract with the Rhea County Board of Education for 2008-2009. All members should have already received a letter asking for your input for the upcoming negotiating sessions. These need to be returned to your building representative no later than Wednesday, February 6.

The negotiating team has already had one meeting with Jim Jordan, TEA UniServ, to discuss our salary schedule. Jim has a wonderful computer program provided by NEA in which he inputs our current salary schedule along with our Training & Experience grid and it's amazing all the different things he can have it do....literally thousands of different salary situations and calculations.

The team decided to have Jim work towards having our salary indexed to where there is a pattern as you move from year to year in the experience steps. Right now, there is no rhyme or reason to the increase in the amount of money as you go from step to step. In one example, the difference between a certain two steps is \$1082 while the very next step... it's only an increase of \$58.

Our next planning session will be on Thursday, February 21 - 4:00 PM in the art room at RCHS. If you are interested in attending, all are welcome. We are hoping to go to the table in March with our opening offer to the Board.

*Bryan Massengale*

**Bryan Massengale**  
RDEA President

## RDEA Officer Elections on the Horizon

The constitution and by-laws of the Rhea-Dayton Education Association calls for specific timelines in the election of officers.

One of the benefits of RDEA membership is being able to vote on who will lead your Association in the form of Officers. The following guidelines will be followed.

Month	Activity	Notes
February	Nominations taken for officers	Shall have been RDEA members for at least one year.
March	Elections committee reports nominations to RDEA.	Other nominations may come from the floor.
March	Active RDEA members shall vote.	Distribute and collect the ballots.
April	Elections committee reports results to RDEA.	The meeting will be on April 3rd.
May	New officers assume office on May 1.	Terms are for two years.

## Lesson Plans Online

With lessons that target staples of the season -- snow, skiing, snowstorms, and other winter wonders -- the coldness to be found outdoors can be countered with the warmth of great learning experiences indoors!

- ◆ **Let it Snow!** -- Make the most of the season's first snowfall with a snowflake study! (Grades PreK-5)
- ◆ **The Last Resort** -- Rescue the Desert Mountain resort by designing a travel brochure that will bring in the tourist. (Grades 3-12)
- ◆ **Power Problem** -- Calculate losses that innocent victim "Eun Plugd" incurred from a power outage caused by a snowstorm. (Grades 3-8)
- ◆ **Winter Expressions** -- Write a "shape poem." Display the unique poems on a classroom bulletin board. (Grades PreK-8)



You can find these lesson plans and more curriculum ideas at [www.nea.org/lessons/2003/tt031229.html](http://www.nea.org/lessons/2003/tt031229.html)

## Ding! Round 2 Goes to the Children!

Federal appeals court backs NEA challenge to NCLB.

The United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit delivered yet another major blow to the controversial No Child Left Behind law on January 7, 2008. The court found that U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings is violating the Spending Clause of the Constitution by requiring states and school districts to spend their own funds to comply with NCLB.



The ruling is a major victory for the National Education Association and other plaintiffs --- including nine school districts and nine NEA state affiliates --- that brought the lawsuit in April 2005 to oppose costly federal regulations that divert money from children and classrooms to paperwork and bureaucracy. The ruling by the appeals court reverses the lower court's November 2005 summary judgment dismissing the lawsuit.

The ruling adds fuel to the efforts by NEA and many others to overhaul the law. NEA maintains that a massive increase in federal funding is a badly needed investment in the nation's future -- but the money should go for smaller classes and other proven ways to improve children's education, not mandated high-stakes testing, which, according to national scores, is not helping.

## Executive Committee

2007-2008

**Bryan Massengale** — President  
**Debra Phillips** — President-Elect  
**Emmaly Fisher** — Past-President  
**Beverly Revis** — Secretary  
**Brandon Germany** — Treasurer  
**Jeff Fisher** — Member-at-Large  
**John McPherson** — Member-at-Large

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