

CEA conference addresses school climate and minority leadership issues

Over the course of two days in early June, more than 40 CEA members attended training sessions cosponsored by the CEA's Human and Civil Rights Commission and the Minority Affairs Commission. Participants elected to attend one of two tracks: *Minority Leadership Training: Making Your Voice Heard* and *Improving School Climate: Recognizing and Addressing Bullying in School*.

The primary goal of the first track was to assist minority members in becoming more involved as effective Association leaders by helping them develop their leadership skills. Consequently, teachers examined language as a medium for power and leadership in various settings. They also learned about the specific structure, process, and mechanism of participating in large,

orderly meetings, including the rules of parliamentary procedure. Throughout the training session, in addition to meeting other minority teachers from across the state, these teachers became more familiar with the internal workings of the state (CEA) and national (NEA) associations.

In the School Climate track, participants explored the implications of school climate in improving student achievement and the impact of bullying. They also were briefed on the results of a comprehensive national survey conducted by the Council of Urban Boards of Education that studied the essentials of a

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CEA members (from left to right) Foday Dumbuya, Ruth Hwang, Tracy Bass, and Jim Bradley discuss school climate issues.

A Message from the HCR Commission Chair

Dear Colleagues,

The 2007-08 school year is in full swing, and so is your CEA Human and Civil Rights Commission. We are happy to have a number of new commission members and many returning commission members.

After hosting two successful workshops last year, *Taking a Stand: Creating Safe Schools for All Students* in February and *Improving School Climate: Recognizing and Addressing Bullying in Schools* in June, we are hoping to host two more workshops this year. Currently, we are looking into a teacher-led workshop with outside speakers on the issue of cyber-bullying and the law and possibly a follow-up to *Safe Schools*. In addition, we are working on a potpourri of workshops for the Summer Leadership Conference in August.

In June HCR presented four awards to five outstanding teachers at our annual banquet. Congratulations to Iris Engel of South Windsor, Robert Nave of Plymouth, Daria Plummer and Susan Grenier of South Windsor, and Eunice McLean-Waller of New London. Thank you for your dedication and hard work. This year our awards banquet will be held on the first night of Summer Leadership in August. We are excited about this change and look forward to honoring more wonderful CEA teachers this year.

It is my pleasure and honor to be serving my second year as the chairperson of your Human and Civil Rights Commission. Peace to everyone.

Jennifer Jasenski



Human and Civil Rights

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2007 CEA HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS AWARDS RECIPIENTS

At the annual CEA Awards dinner banquet held on June 9, 2007, five CEA members were honored for their contributions in the area of human and civil rights.

Eunice McLean-Waller Honorary Human and Civil Rights Award

For a lifetime of outstanding service in the fields of education and human and civil rights

In her lifetime, Eunice McLean-Waller has been a role model to her students, her colleagues, and members of her community.

A North Carolina native, Eunice came to Connecticut in 1961 when her husband was appointed the first African American professor of chemistry at the United States Coast Guard Academy. Eunice served as an educator for over 40 years, retiring in 1993 as a mathematics teacher in Waterford. She graduated from Fayetteville State University in North Carolina, earned a master's degree at the University of Pennsylvania, and did further study at North Carolina University, Wayne State University, the University of Connecticut, and the University of Vermont as a National Science Foundation Scholar.

While an active teacher, Eunice served her local in many capacities—president, secretary, treasurer, and a member of the negotiating team. At the state level, she served on several commissions: Ethics, Legislative, Human Relations, and Personnel Policies. Eunice was the first to chair, along with Silvia Rodrigues, the Minority Involvement Program that later was given full commission status by CEA and is now known as the Minority Affairs Commission (MAC), a group dedicated to involving more minority teachers in their local, state, and national education associations.

In addition to her work within the Association, she dedicated her life to serving her local community. She was the mayor of New London and a member of the Lion's Club, the City of New London Ethics Committee, the Board of Trustees of St. Francis House, and the League of Women Voters. She was named Woman of the Year by the National Council of Negro Women and received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the NAACP.

Daria Plummer and **Susan Grenier** John Rogers Memorial Award

Daria Plummer and Susan Grenier, fourth- and second-grade teachers, respectively,

at Wapping Elementary School in South Windsor, were nominated by their colleague, Linda Gasta, for their work over the past seven years to educate their students, colleagues, and the community at large about



Susan Grenier



Daria Plummer

Kwanzaa, an African American holiday celebration.

Based on an interdisciplinary unit developed by Daria in 1994, these two teachers have worked to grow this joint program from a script in a single classroom to a large, schoolwide and community presentation that includes instrumental music and dance. Their program connects African American heritage to its African roots using Swahili as a universal African language. It also furthers an understanding and knowl-

edge of the symbolism, principles, and meaning of a celebration deeply rooted in history for African Americans. Fourth graders begin their study with a realistic fiction literature unit entitled *Have a Happy* by Mildred Pitts Walter. Second graders begin with a social studies unit on cultural holidays. Both grades also gather information from books, personal teacher resources, newspaper and magazine articles and later come together to share the information that they have collected about the principles of Kwanzaa. Students also work in pairs to construct *mkekas* (placemats) and *benderas* (flags), among other projects.

In the final two weeks of the program, the students rehearse a script that was written and edited by the teachers and adapted into a "readers' theater" format that allows participation from all students, including those with special needs. After many rehearsals, the program is presented in school and at the South Windsor Community Center where over 100 members of the public were in attendance.

In nominating them for this award, Linda Gasta, a music teacher, stated that "our school's student population, our staff, our parents, and members of the South Windsor community have been impacted positively by the hard work, dedication, sensitivity, and creativity of Sue Grenier and Daria Plummer."

Robert Nave Mahatma Gandhi – Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace Award

Robert Nave, a social studies teacher at Terryville High School, has worked diligently to promote the study of peace education, including the peaceful resolution of conflicts, in his school and community. At the core of his work are two documents, the universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations that has been central to his human rights activism and the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.



In 2004, Robert was able to engage two "Pudlin Scholars" from the University of Connecticut School of Law to serve as First Amendment rights mentors to the students in his United States history classes. For the entire spring semester in 2005, two law students came to his classes once a week and educated his students about First Amendment issues. The following fall, he arranged for an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union in Connecticut to speak at a schoolwide assembly focused on the Constitution, including the First Amendment.

Robert's work extends into the area of civic responsibility as well. Over the last three years, Robert worked with Connecticut's Jury Administration Outreach Program to educate students about the importance of jury service and their duties as potential jurors. Also, as the organizer of the voter registration drive in his school, Robert was able to get more than 90 percent of the graduating class to register to vote each year for the past ten years.

On the international human rights front, Robert organized the school's chapter of Amnesty International and remains its faculty advisor. This chapter has been involved with numerous benevolent activities such as organizing the 2004 Tsunami relief effort and the Katrina relief effort, organizing the school's first gay/straight alliance, collaborating in organizing Peace Day 2002, and assisting with many petition drives among students.

In the words of Linda Cox, a consumer science teacher in his school, "due to his involvement in his human rights work, [Robert] has been able to translate that to his classroom to give his students a unique perspective into social studies."

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Iris Engel

Helen Keller – Anne Sullivan Memorial Award

Iris Engel, a 33-year teaching veteran, is a special education teacher at Timothy Edwards Middle School in South Windsor. In the 2001-2002 school year, Iris worked with parents and staff to develop the Academic and Functional Learning Program for students on the autism spectrum. This program was implemented in the fall of 2002 and has been an overwhelming success, not only with autistic students, but also students with other disabilities such as Down syndrome and cerebral palsy. Iris has taught her students to use various forms of communication such as sign language, pictures, and a portable Vantage Augmentative Communication Device, all of which allow her students more direct access to the curriculum and to other students in the school.



Iris has worked diligently to allow her students to interact with nondisabled students

in a variety of settings. For example, she prepares her students to eat in the cafeteria by inviting typical students first to eat in her classroom. This allows these students to become comfortable with each other in a smaller, more relaxed setting. Her students also have worked on props, sets, and costumes for the annual school musical.

Iris has utilized field trips as yet another means of integrating her students with their typical peers. For example, her students regularly visit a horse farm where they learn about the necessary care for the animals and are allowed to ride the horses. They have visited supermarkets, cinemas, hairdressers, restaurants, malls, and miniature golf courses, all designed to improve their day-to-day life skills and expose the stores' employees and customers to individuals with disabilities. Many of these students previously were unable to go to these places with their family members but now, as result of Iris's program, they can.

Her nominator and colleague, Jennifer Jasenski, describes Iris as a promoter of human and civil rights for the disabled and one who truly epitomizes the teaching philosophy that if a child cannot learn the way we teach, we must teach the way the student learns.

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good school climate. A trainer from the Connecticut office of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) presented an overview of that organization's *Becoming an Ally: Interrupting Name Calling and Bullying* program in which teachers examine the presence of bullying in schools, effective means of intervening to stop bullying when it occurs, and the necessity of educating students on its harmful impact. Finally, they brainstormed ways of analyzing and improving the climate in their own individual school buildings.

These excerpts from the program evaluations demonstrate that these tracks provided timely and important information:

"This was one of the most powerful workshops I ever attended!"

"This hands-on event was moving."

"The information was very valuable. It will definitely make me be more active and able to get results."

"Everything was great!"

For more information on future human and civil rights training sessions sponsored by CEA, go to www.cea.org.



CEA members Jocelyne Jones (left) and Lynn Davis (right) participated in the Minority Leadership Training track.

The workshop that you have been waiting for!

As you already know, educating English language learners (ELL) has become more of a pressing issue with No Child Left Behind. It is difficult to accommodate all the languages now encompassed in a classroom. The answer to your problem has arrived—or at least to start you in the right direction in educating your staff on your ELL population. The Training for All Teachers Program through the Department of Foreign Language at Southern CT State University is a four module workshop that discusses making content comprehensible, how to engage the ELL and create opportunities for output and sheltered instruction. It is a truly hands-on approach that is developed to fit the needs of your school district. When high school teachers comment on how good and beneficial a workshop is you know it must be wonderful. One the best parts of this workshop? It is grant funded and the district/school is not charged for this outstanding training (if you want more than one training, there is a charge). For more information, call Marisa Ferraro-Wilhelm at (203) 392-5162

Submitted by: *Reina A. Costanzo, Ed.D., Guidance Counselor, Bethel Middle School*

The Puzzle of Autism, a recent publication of the National Education Association, addresses the challenges facing teachers educating students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The guide provides teachers with a general understanding of ASD, explains the characteristics exhibited by students with ASD, and suggests evidence-based effective strategies for students with ASD. For a free copy, send an e-mail to robnyk@cea.org.

Honor a colleague who is making a difference

Do you know a teacher who started a program beyond his or her classroom to teach students about human and civil rights? Perhaps this teacher has started a club or activity in your school to advance gender equity and the achievements of women. Maybe she teaches a special elective that promotes the study of peace education so students learn to solve problems without violence, or he works to further an understanding of African American history in a significant way in school. If so, nominate that teacher for one of CEA's Human and Civil Rights awards. Go to www.cea.org to download the HCR awards nomination forms. Or call Heidi Krutzky at 1-800-842-4316 for more information. The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2008.

Recommended Resources

What Is the Human and Civil Rights Commission?

The Human and Civil Rights (HCR) Commission is a standing committee of CEA that provides content and technical information to CEA members on human and civil rights issues such as affirmative action, cultural competence, student achievement, ESEA, IDEA, gender equity, diversity training, English-language learners, safe schools, and NCLB.

HCR takes an active leadership role in CEA by

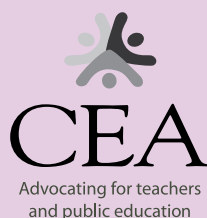
- Disseminating information through the *HCR Reporter*
- Planning the HCR banquet
- Maintaining the Web site and Listserv of pertinent HCR issues
- Recognizing and awarding members who work on behalf of civil rights

Human and Civil Rights Reporter is published biannually by the Connecticut Education Association (CEA) Human and Civil Rights Commission and CEA's Policy and Professional Practice Department. This newsletter is intended to provide CEA members with legal perspectives on various human and civil rights issues. Reader input is encouraged and appreciated as a vital means of addressing members' professional and educational needs in this arena. It is written and edited by Robyn Kaplan-Cho, Connecticut Education Association, Capitol Place, Suite 500, 21 Oak Street, Hartford, CT 06106-8001. Tel. 860-525-5641 or 1-800-842-4316. E-mail: robynk@cea.org.

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HCR Workshops

SECTION 504: AN EMERGING ISSUE FOR TEACHERS

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is receiving increased attention in schools. This workshop will provide an overview of the civil rights law, its procedural requirements (with an emphasis on the eligibility process) and relationship to IDEA, and its applicability to such timely issues as AD(H)D, field trips, allergies, and AIDS. A case-study method is utilized.

Length: 2+ hours (CEUs offered)
Presenter: Robyn Kaplan-Cho, CEA

MYTH BUSTERS: UNDERSTANDING YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESS

This workshop focuses on the laws of special education with a particular emphasis on regular and special education teachers' rights and responsibilities when participating in the special education process. Participants will learn what the law requires of them as well as what they can and cannot do in such areas as PPT meetings, drafting IEPs, and accommodating students in the regular education environment. The impact of special education laws on teachers' working conditions as well as changes to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will be integrated into the workshop.

Length: 2+ hours (CEUs offered)
Presenter: Robyn Kaplan-Cho, CEA

WALKING THE TALK: CLASSROOM RESOURCES FOR ADDRESSING BIAS

This advanced workshop for K-12 classroom instructors examines approaches to designing and integrating activities into the classroom that raise awareness of bias and empower students to advocate for change, especially around gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered (GLBT) bias.

Length: 90-120 minutes
Presenter: National Education Association (NEA)-Certified Trainers

BARGAINING SPECIAL EDUCATION LANGUAGE: WHERE STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND TEACHERS' RIGHTS INTERSECT

Your contract can serve as an important vehicle for protecting your rights and advancing your concerns as a teacher working with special education students. In this workshop, teachers will learn how to integrate special education issues into the collective bargaining process. Participants will study the pros and cons of negotiating contract provisions related to performing health procedures, teacher notification and scheduling of PPT meetings, professional development opportunities, class-size limitations, local dispute resolution procedures for special-education-related problems, placement decisions, and many more related topics. Model contract language will be provided. This workshop is ideal for negotiating committees and teachers with a particular interest in this area of the law.

Length: 2+ hours (CEUs offered)
Presenter: Robyn Kaplan-Cho, CEA

TAKING A STAND: CREATING SAFE SCHOOLS FOR ALL STUDENTS

This workshop is designed for all school personnel who are interested in addressing bias regarding sexual orientation and gender issues. It uses video clips and hands-on activities to examine the obvious and subtle ways that bias plays out in schools. It also offers resources for creating schools that are safe for all students, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Length: 90-120 minutes
Presenter: National Education Association (NEA)-Certified Trainers

Human and civil rights workshops are offered to CEA members free of charge. If you are interested in having your local Association host one of these workshops, contact your local Association president or CEA UniServ representative for more information. CEUs will be offered.

