

SUPPORT FOR EARLY-CAREER EDUCATORS

OMEGA CHAPTER, JOSEPHINE COUNTY, OREGON

Background: Several chapter members attended the International Convention in Spokane where the concept of support for early-career educators and for educational excellence was discussed. The idea resonated with us, as our districts have lost qualified staff who had barely gotten their feet wet; we also have teachers who are struggling to find their footing in education. New membership guidelines in the International Constitution (2010) allow chapters to initiate highly qualified new teachers, so it seems logical to offer support that could defray the nearly 50% attrition rate among teachers in their first five years—“ . . . and the best and brightest teachers are often the first to leave.”¹ “A conservative national estimate of the cost of replacing public school teachers who have dropped out of the profession is \$2.2 billion a year. If the cost of replacing public school teachers who transfer schools is added, the total reaches \$4.9 billion every year. . . . The Department of Labor conservatively estimates that attrition costs an employer 30 percent of the leaving employee’s salary.”²

One of our members, past-president Margaret “Peggy” Cowens³ is a new-teacher coach/mentor, so she was asked to research needs and options for the chapter.

¹ Robin R. Henke, Xianglei Chen, and Sonya Geis. (2000.) *Progress Through the Teacher Pipeline: 1992–93 College Graduate and Elementary/Secondary School Teaching as of 1997*. Statistical Analysis Report. National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, DC. Retrieved 22 October 2010 from <http://www.all4ed.org/files/archive/publications/TeacherAttrition.pdf>.

² Retrieved 22 October 2010 from <http://www.all4ed.org/files/archive/publications/TeacherAttrition.pdf>

³ Margaret “Peggy” Cowens, Omega Chapter president for 2008-2010, was selected as the southern Oregon representative for the Oregon Mentor Consortium. This group uses grant moneys to help develop and maintain a mentoring induction program for new teachers, staying with them for two years and helping them to learn the BIG ideas in teaching. The Professional Teaching Standards as developed by the New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz, California, will be the basis for the training during the second year of the program. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) works with chosen mentors in this statewide mentoring program where experienced teachers in the Mentor Academy teach new mentors who, in turn, assist new teachers.

ODE hired four facilitators to teach at the Mentor Academy. Peggy was 1 of the 4 selected from among 15 applicants. She is the only facilitator chosen from southern Oregon and is **the only Delta Kappa Gamma member among the group.**

In 2010-2011, Peggy is still a Three Rivers School District Coach-Facilitator in mathematics and now mentors new TRSD K-12 teachers in classroom management and student engagement.

Peggy shared a graph from the New Teacher Center showing the phases of a first year in teaching, from August to June which showed the curve from anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, reflection, and anticipation.

Progress: This fall, Peggy brought several ideas to the chapter for consideration.

Ideas for Supporting New Teachers

1. Dinner and a Movie Night

Offer new teachers an evening of professional development about classroom management. They would receive dinner hosted by Omega Chapter, watch a video from Harry Wong, and leave with having received additional management information that they can use the next day AND have networked with other [new and experienced] teachers.

Costs: The Harry Wong video series costs \$650, but there are some downloads that can be purchased and a district may allow us to borrow their classroom management video. Cost of food is determined by the membership.

Involvement: Members would need to commit to preparing or catering a dinner, secure a location, set up technology, and plan for activity and support materials.

Considerations:

- New teachers often need to develop procedures for classroom management and learning.

2. Differentiated Instruction Plan Book

Offer new teachers a plan book with an interactive CD for long- and short-term lesson planning. This Scholastic® plan book offers interactive tools, checklists, surveys, and outlines differentiation information including modalities and multiple intelligences.

Costs: The plan book costs \$15.99 and is easily available: *The Scholastic Differentiated Instruction Plan Book*, ISBN-13: 970-0-545-11263-5.

Involvement: Members would need to set up a time with the new teacher to present the gift and demonstrate how this tool can support their efforts in planning and organizing their teaching.

Considerations:

- Grants Pass (Oregon) School District #7 is soon to pilot an online version of lesson planning software.
- Peggy demonstrated the software. It offers the opportunity to:
 - E-mail colleagues for sharing
 - E-mail principals for compliance with requirement
 - Nice tools are provided to assist teachers with lesson planning.
 - On a side note, many Omega members said they wished they had had such a tool when they began teaching.

3. Gift Certificate to Support a Teacher's Needs

Offer new teachers a gift certificate from a local teachers' store, so they can purchase what they want to begin their year. The certificate could be from an agreed upon location or Web site.

Costs: A \$20 to \$25 certificate would be appropriate for a gift, although we may wish to set a different value.

Involvement: Members would need to have someone in charge of purchasing the gift cards. Others would be involved in meeting with the teacher and gifting him/her and discussing how our Society would like to support their efforts.

Considerations:

- If done in the early fall, this would offset the "piranha" effect where rooms are stripped by current teachers when someone leaves.

- Experienced DKG members could help them assess their greatest needs in the classroom.
- Beginning teachers have yet to be paid; this would help greatly.