



Crisis or Opportunity?

Secondary Small Learning Communities in Occupational Centers

Michael Novick

Organizing Coordinator, UTLA Adult and Occupational Education Committee

The school board recently passed a resolution amending one previously sunshined last October which addressed facilities needs of adult and occupational education. Board members, DACE administrators, and teachers considered it quite a coup - adult and occupational ed was finally on the district's radar screen. However, the resolution was amended, and now calls for Superintendent Romer to develop a master plan by the end of June for the development of secondary "small learning communities" (SLCs) at DACE occupational centers, skills centers, and other DACE sites. Simultaneously, the district's exploration of "small school learning communities" as a reform of L.A.'s massive and overcrowded secondary schools is adding pressure to facilities at campuses jointly used by secondary and adult schools.

Sometimes working in adult/occupational education is like a real-life action film in which new threats and challenges constantly arise. It's important that we turn this latest challenge to our and our students' advantage. We can help meet secondary students' needs, but to do so successfully, adult/occupational teachers must be in on planning from the ground floor.

Facing these challenges in the most immediate way are Abram Friedman Occupational Center and Central Adult High School (AFOC/CAHS), located at a ten-story high-rise site in downtown L.A. Plans are underway to remodel the ground floor into classrooms and offices to accommodate several hundred high school students. Current programs will be moved to other rooms in the building. Because the schools already serve hundreds of off-track secondary

See *Crisis?* page 3

Our Missing Diploma Plus Forums

Julie Carson

Secretary, UTLA Adult and Occupational Education Committee

I heard through the grapevine that "we" are developing an on-line Health course, that Bulletins 25, 28 & 30 governing high school graduation requirements and equivalencies are about to be finalized, Integrated Math 1, 2, 3 and 4 are being dumped June 30, 2004 with no alternatives lined up. Just who is this "we?"

Whoever "we" are, it's a group that doesn't include teachers.

There was a time when this kind of information about our academic program was shared among teachers in the field at our semi-annual Diploma Plus Forums. We gave feedback about policy issues, brought up concerns from our schools, and made sugges-

tions on how to improve our programs. Perhaps more significantly, as colleagues we got to gather together to feel like we were part of a larger picture. Teachers felt included in the process.

Not any longer. The spirit of collegiality and give and take that See *Missing*, page 2

Inside . . .

Check It Out!
AOEC has its own website
www.aeutla.net
See story, page 4

It's Not Just Taxes!
April 15 DEADLINE for
salary step advancement &
half-time leave
See story, page 4

Chapter Chair Profile

Like many of our AOEC colleagues, Ron Rapallo is a man with a fascinating background. Born, raised and educated near Boston, Massachusetts, Ron graduated with a degree in engineering, joined the Peace Corps and worked in Bangladesh in their Rural Public Works program. Upon return to the U. S., he joined the Navy and saw duty in Massachusetts, California, Vietnam, and Okinawa. Ron also has a degree in landscape architecture and a certificate in nursing.

Ron has made Los Angeles his home since 1979. However, he did a second tour with the Peace Corps in Lesotho, Africa from 1981-83, bringing water to its mountainous villages. Upon his return, he first taught high school,



Ron Rapallo,
Chapter Chair, Belmont CAS

then in 1988 moved into adult education at Belmont teaching ESL. Ron's had his own "second language" experiences himself with Bengali, Sesotho, and Spanish. Although this is Ron's rookie year as chapter chair at Belmont, he has been actively engaged in union activities for almost a decade. He's a regular participant at our monthly AOEC meetings (one thing we know about Ron from these meetings is his passion for veggies!), cheer-

fully volunteering whenever help is needed. He hopes to use his position to improve the quality of education for our students and to ensure teachers' rights. ❖

Missing

continued from page 1

previously prevailed has been destroyed it seems by insecurity, defensiveness, or laziness (or some combination of all three). At the last two forums, challenges to policy decisions were shut down. We were told in essence this wasn't a place to share ideas, but only a place for them to put new policies on exhibit. Any comments and questions expressed were characterized as "negative." As a result, our teacher "forums" have become an extinct species.

It seems we are expected to accept policy decisions at face value, without using any of the critical thinking skills we so fervently try to cultivate in our students. The absence of our forums, the haphazard system of new teacher training in place of a centrally organized one, new curriculum mailings that go out to administrators only, are evidence of a dismissive attitude towards the value of teacher input. We are the ones who actually deliver instruction. So—what contributions could we possibly make to curriculum and policy decisions?

Awakening the Sleeping Giant

Ron Rapallo
Chapter Chair, Belmont CAS

Belmont CAS is one of the largest adult schools in the nation with numerous sites and branches scattered over an extensive, heavily populated area of metropolitan Los Angeles. We have decided it's time to awaken this "sleeping giant" and bring its power to bear on numerous problems that encumber our mammoth and thriving school.

We have started to actually build a chapter, with the goal to coalesce, mobilize, and channel the power of our gigantic student body and the imagination and endurance of our talented teacher corps. We are developing a chapter constitution, a fundamental of any democratic representative body, to help focus our organizing efforts, address concerns and suggestions raised in our first survey, and open discussion on the subject of a Shared Decision-Making Council.

We held our first meeting November 21, 2003, at Roundtable Pizza in Silver Lake. It showed a heartening commitment on the part of Belmont teachers and our union officials: Linda Guthrie, Secondary VP; Mark Wutschke, Board of Directors; Ernest Kettenring, AOEC Chair; and John Horta, North Area Representative. All gave encouraging and energizing addresses to eager ears.

Two purposes of our chapter are to promote the welfare of education in general and at our school, and to speak with authority for the UTLA faculty members. Our chapter will unequivocally support the contractual rights of all Belmont teachers, striking balance between our passion for teachers' rights and our responsibility to deliver the best education possible.

Yes, when you open up the process and solicit opinions, it sometimes gets messy. It would be great if those in leadership positions could handle critique ("skillful judgment as to truth, merit, etc. on some problem or subject"). The top down, circle the wagons attitude currently displayed isolates people in the decision-making positions from the very individuals who have expertise and are the core of the program. The result is policy without purpose, implementation without direction, and programs that are poorly delivered.

Before thinking I'm in mourning for the "good old days", those "old days" weren't so great either in terms of collaborative decision making. However, there was more respect between teachers in the field and the leadership at Central Office. We want to know—and need to know—what changes are in the works, and more importantly, be a part of the process of developing better programs. Until that sinks in, we will all continue doing the best we can in endeavors that are programmed for failure from their inception. ❖

Organizing Your Chapter

UTLA officers, both from the committee and the larger union, are available to attend local meetings at your school. If you need help organizing or want an officer to attend your meeting, call us. And, any expenses (food, photocopies, etc.) associated with organizing efforts are reimbursable. Follow Belmont's and North Hollywood's example: Let's get organized!

Crisis?

continued from page 1

students in academic, ESL, and occupational classes, and because renovation will proceed while we're in session, teachers immediately expressed concern about what impact these changes would have on adult students and programs.

What We Are Doing and What You Can Do

The Adult & Occupational Education Committee (AOEC), reinforced by other UTLA officers and Board of Directors members, met with Assistant Superintendent Santiago Jackson to find out what's in the works. AOEC members have also met with school board members and staff to voice our concerns, and are also seeking to place adult/occupational teachers on Romer's master plan committee. Board President Jose Huizar's staff members will visit the site, and a meeting is planned with Huizar in March.

Besides meeting weekly with local administrators, AFOC and CAHS have held several joint chapter meetings and are getting our student council involved. The administration has responded favorably to a union initiative for working committees on planning facilities conversions, for developing an instructional plan for incorporating secondary students into occupational classes, and for planning an adult education-based "small learning community" proposal. The AOEC has been working within UTLA to give input into the small learning community process. At the last committee meeting, chapter chairs and activists were urged to plan meetings and site visits with school board members. Those we have talked with responded favorably to our identification of issues affecting our staff and students, such as lack of tenure for occupational teachers, salary schedule inequities, and the need for state legislative action on adult/occupational ADA reimbursement rates.

Woman of the Year

Kristina Kleinbauer, UTLA activist and newly-retired ESL teacher from Evans Adult School, was an honoree at the recent UTLA Women's Education Committee Awards Dinner at Taix Restaurant.

Kristina taught ESL at Evans for some 27 years. Long a union and Democratic Party activist, she exemplifies participation at the grassroots. Whether at the school chapter, the UTLA House of Reps, or conventions of the American Federation of Teachers, Kristina has been an example for many of what a single engaged individual can accomplish.

Lauded by UTLA president John Perez and past president Day Higuchi, she also received a presentation from school board member Jon Lauritzen. Perhaps most telling of her long association with Democratic Party politics was her presentation from Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg, a connection Kristina was never shy about accessing when she needed to move something through the political process.

Anyone who has been active in the AOEC these past twenty years knows well Kristina's contributions to moving the union's agenda forward. If not for her and others like her, we would all most likely be working for half our present salary and lacking many of our contractual protections.

Congratulations, Kris!

We need active chapters that can plan for the coming influx of secondary students. We have to start building community alliances with families, employers, and community groups who will stand up for the need for continued adult/occupational education, with adequate funding, facilities, and professional rights and remuneration. For more information about getting involved, contact:

Michael Novick, AOEC Organizing Coordinator

novickm@utla.net

310-495-0299



*Kristina Kleinbauer,
Evans CAS*

Self-Appointed Watchdog?

In response to suspicions of unethical conduct at North Hollywood CAS, one or more individuals called the district's Office of the Inspector-General, which investigates allegations of unethical and illegal conduct in the district, among other activities. Several months later Lupe Reyes, DACE administrator, made an unannounced visit to the school and "requested" to meet with the UTLA Chapter Chair. She proceeded to question him about the calls to the IG's office and what information he had on the issue. She ended her questioning by enquiring about his employment status, wanting to know if he was tenured.

We don't know if Ms. Reyes took this mission on her own initiative or not, but we are quite sure that it was not at the behest of the IG's office – we have reason to believe that Ms. Reyes has herself been an object of investigation in the past. What we do know is that it was most unprofessional, if not a violation of confidentiality, for Ms. Reyes to go out to a school under investigation for ethical misconduct and implicitly threaten the employment of the elected Chapter Chair because she believes he may have contacted the authorities.

If a district administrator questions you about your activities, ask to have a union representative present. Ms. Reyes' recent venture reminds us all that we need to be ever vigilant against abuse of administrative authority. We find they are much more circumspect if a UTLA representative is present. ❖

AOEC Meeting Dates

Unless otherwise notified, all meetings will be held on Fridays, at 6:30 PM, at UTLA headquarters, 3303 Wilshire Blvd.

2003	2004
September 19	January 23
October 17 4:30 PM (time change)	February 20
November 14*	March 26
	May 14*
	June 11 (time & place TBA [party?])

*date change

April 15 Deadline

It's not just taxes

Salary Step Advancement

Teachers who want to satisfy their 734 hour requirement for a raise over two years are required to notify DACE by April 15 of the first year. If you are: 1) not at Step 4 (\$45.56), and; 2) you have not worked 734 hours this year for automatic advancement, you must complete the Step Advancement Form. On the internet, go to www.adultinstruction.org/personnel/guides/stepadvanceforms.pdf. Print out page 12 "Application for Step Advancement," check option 2, filling in this year and next year for your two year option, sign and date the form, and send it by U. S. or school mail to Roberta Nathanson, LAUSD-DACE Personnel Office, 333 Beaudry Avenue 18th Floor, LA 90017.

Half-Time Leave

Tenured teachers are entitled to a partial leave. If you want to reduce your workload for the fall term, you must notify DACE in writing by April 15. Write the following – I want to take a half time leave in fall 2004" – and send it to the above address with your signature, school, and employee number.

For more information, visit www.aeutla.net

Get in Touch, Stay in Touch

The AOEC now has its own website at www.aeutla.net. The website will be used for a variety of communications, including a message board, posting of notices, a calendar of events, etc. We will gradually bring new features on-line as we build the site. In addition, all AOEC teachers will soon be able to get an e-mail address at no cost. The site is up and operating – log in and get in touch.

We no longer send out meeting notifications or other communications by mail. If you want to stay abreast of what's happening in adult ed, get on our e-mail list. Send an e-mail to UTLA-AdultEd@utla.net with "subscribe" as the subject. You will then begin to receive communications from the AOEC.

The CTA Adult Education Caucus has established a similar procedure. Write to CTA-AdultEd@utla.net with a "subscribe" subject, and you will also be added to their communications list. ❖

The Voice! is a publication of the Adult and Occupational Education Committee of UTLA.
Copyright 2004 by United Teachers Los Angeles. All rights reserved.