



WWW.OKEDRALLY.COM • FACEBOOK.COM/OKEDRALLY • TWITTER.COM/OKEDRALLY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 27, 2015

Contact: Serena Watson
Marketing, Communications & Conference Logistics Coordinator
Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration (CCOSA)
405.524.1191 or serena@ccosa.org

Brighter Future Rally to Bring Thousands to the Capitol

Thousands of Oklahoma parents, educators and other public education advocates will descend on the state Capitol on Monday, asking lawmakers to enact solutions to address the statewide teacher shortage and curb the amount of time and money spent on state mandated student testing.

“Oklahoma parents and educators want to partner with lawmakers to ensure every child is set up for academic success,” said Jeffery Corbett, president of Oklahoma PTA. “For that to happen, every child must be taught by a highly-qualified teacher who has the time and resources to meet the needs of individual students.”

Oklahoma PTA is sponsoring the Brighter Future education rally with the support of the Oklahoma Education Coalition (OEC). Members of the OEC include the Oklahoma Education Association, Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration, Oklahoma State School Boards Association, Organization of Rural Oklahoma Schools, Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association, United Suburban Schools Association, Oklahoma Association of Career and Technology Education, Tulsa Public Schools, and Oklahoma City Public Schools.

Rally organizers want lawmakers to adopt a long-term plan to improve teacher compensation and focus on policies that strengthen the teacher pipeline. Rally participants will meet with legislators in the morning.

A variety of speakers will address attendees on the south steps of the state Capitol beginning at 12:30 p.m. Confirmed speakers include Corbett; Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister; Mustang High School seniors Kiante Miles and Deborah Samkutty; Rep. Lee Denney, R-Cushing; Rep. Scott Inman, D-Oklahoma City; Sen. Randy Bass, D-Lawton; Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Jason Proctor, Tahlequah High School; and Tulsa Public Schools Superintendent Keith Ballard.

Oklahoma’s teachers consistently rank among the lowest paid in the nation – about \$3,200 less than the regional average. Oklahoma also was about 1,000 teachers short at the beginning of the school year. So far this year, the state Board of Education has approved 500 emergency teaching certificates.





WWW.OKEDRALLY.COM • FACEBOOK.COM/OKEDRALLY • TWITTER.COM/OKEDRALLY

The shortage has hit schools at a time of increasing enrollment. Oklahoma has about 40,000 more students than it did in 2008, and per-student spending has not kept pace. Oklahoma has cut per-student spending by 23.6 percent since 2008, more than any other state in the country, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Superintendent Hofmeister is promoting a five-year plan to increase teacher pay and time on instruction. Rally organizers hope lawmakers will support Hofmeister's plan and other potential solutions for the teacher shortage, including:

- Establishing policies/incentives to recruit students into colleges of education.
- Streamlining the certification process for out-of-state teachers who are highly qualified and want to teach in Oklahoma.
- Easing financial restrictions for retirees who want to return to the classroom.
- Establishing policies to support new educators in their first three years of teaching.

Oklahoma also could direct more resources to the classroom and increase instructional time if lawmakers would embrace a common-sense testing plan.

On testing, lawmakers should support legislation to:

- Replace end-of-instruction tests with the ACT.
- Reduce state-mandated testing to include only those tests the federal government requires.
- Improve the accountability system (A-F) to support schools, improve instruction and inform parents.
- Make permanent parent and teacher involvement in Reading Sufficiency Act retention decisions.
- Remove the state requirement that test scores be used as a factor in teacher evaluations until full implementation of TLE.

--30--