

UniServ Link

Why I Teach

...Jill Flamm, OEA Board Member



"I love going to graduation and sending another senior class out into the world."

Teaching is not an easy career choice. I don't need to tell you about the challenges we face every day. I don't need to tell you about low morale. I don't need to tell you that teachers are undervalued and over-criticized. I don't need to tell you that it is difficult for those not in the classroom to know or even recognize the efforts of those who are in the classroom. I don't need to tell you that teacher salaries don't always cover expenses. I don't need to tell you that No Child Left Behind has problems. I don't need to tell you that the last two years have been disheartening. I don't need to tell you that test scores are not always indicative of a school's success. I don't need to tell you about the unfairness inherent in comparing schools. I don't need to tell you that not all students are eager to learn. I don't need to tell you that politicians and those with a vested interest in diverting public funds to private concerns use teachers as whipping boys for their own ends. I'm ending the list here. I think I have given myself a number of reasons why I should retire, which is not my intent.

So what am I going to tell you? Why I am still teaching—especially in the Ogden School District—when I could have retired several years ago.

I teach because of what I can contribute to the lives of individual students. I love to explain a difficult concept of literature to a class and hear, "Oh, I get it!" I love to have discussions in class about the literature we are reading. I love to watch the excitement in Johnny's eyes as he discovers that working hard brings a sense of accomplishment. I love the banter that occurs as students realize that words are fun and that they can use them correctly with me, their classmates, and in their writing. I love the intellectual challenge of facing something new every day. Teaching is never dull! I love going to graduation and sending another senior class out into the world. Paydays often come in strange ways and at unexpected times.

One of these paydays came at a viewing of all places. A former student introduced me to his wife and told her how much he had learned in my 9th grade English class. He then named much of the literature we had read that year—*Romeo and Juliet*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. I was amazed that he had remembered, but even more amazed that he felt they had impacted his life. This from a boy who had convinced me to give up on field trips because he had successfully snuck in a bag of wine onto the bus and into the theater when I took them to Salt Lake City to see *Romeo*

and *Juliet*.

I teach because of the visits, letters, and emails I have received over the years from former students thanking me for preparing them to be successful in college and life or helping them to appreciate good literature. Sometimes I encounter former students who want to apologize for how they behaved in class, assuming I remember everything they had done. I enjoy telling them I only remember the good things they did—and for the most part, this is true. I teach because I can have a positive influence on students.

Am I successful with all of them? Of course not! We cannot expect to touch everyone in a positive way, but it is an exciting challenge to try.

I especially like the challenge of teaching in Ogden School District and Ben Lomond. Our students, in daunting numbers, face challenges. I know we make a difference in the lives of the students we see every day. I know many of my colleagues feel the same way. It is a privilege to work with such dedicated teachers.

We need to avoid becoming discouraged by some of the negative influences we face. The positives of teaching—especially in Ogden School Districts—outweigh these negatives. **And so tomorrow I will go to work!**

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Legislative Preview

...Rick Palmer, Ogden/Weber UniServ Executive Director

This year's legislative session will no doubt be an interesting one...like every other one since the dawn of man. Governor Gary Herbert's budget recommends spending \$111 million more on public education...the legislative leadership is already lowering expectations...we have heard that they would love to spend more on education, but they have a lot of other areas that are needy also.

The governor's budget asks for \$41 million more for the anticipated enrollment explosion of around 12,500 new students. The past few years growth has not been funded and the WPU has deteriorated as a result. The governor also asked for a

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1% increase in the WPU which usually would translate into a salary increase for employees that most have not seen for many years. That would cost \$21.5 million of the surplus.

Other allocations in the governor's budget include:
 ⇒ \$10 million for early inter-

vention programs
 ⇒ \$12 million for expanding student adaptive testing
 ⇒ \$2 million for charter school start-up funding

The business-led Prosperity 2020 coalition has urged the legislature to "make public and higher education the most urgent priority" for funding. They requested a strategic investment of \$127 million in new money for public and higher education.

The governor's office announced it expects a \$280 million increase in ongoing tax revenue for the next fiscal year, plus a one-time surplus of \$128 million.

There will be several agencies and programs in competition for those surplus dollars.

UEA's Position:
 ⇒ We will seek to fully fund student enrollment growth, to provide educators with classroom supply money, to preserve educator salary adjustments and to increase funding for the WPU.
 ⇒ Utah has added more than 35,000 new students in the past three years, but has funded less than a third of that growth. New student growth must be funded and not by shifting money from other lines in the education budget.
 ⇒ Utah's education funding is already compromised by lack of adequate funding.
 ⇒ Governor Herbert's proposed budget is encouraging and

strikes a balance between the needs of public education and other ongoing funding requirements.
 ⇒ The UEA supports investments in education reform measures that are grounded in research, not experiments that waste scarce taxpayer dollars.
 ⇒ Recent surveys suggest Utah taxpayers want tax dollars to fund education, and in fact would be willing to pay additional taxes if that money is dedicated to public school teacher salaries and reducing class size.
 ⇒ We need a long-term plan to fund public education and ensure a quality public school for every child.
 ⇒ Utah remains last in the nation in per-student public education investment. While Utah taxpayers once spent a high amount on public education relative to income, that is no longer true when compared to other states.

We will need all of you to be engaged in the legislative process by contacting your legislators and following the updates from our legislative team.

You can read the UniServ Blog at www.ogdenweber-uniserv.blogspot.com and also check the "Under the Dome" section of the UEA website at www.myuea.org to receive updates on legislation.

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