

HTA Newsletter

November 2011

Hesperia Teachers' Association

*Have a question?
Need some help?
Contact an HTA E-
board member!*

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November is American Indian Heritage Month

"Let us put our minds together, and see
what life we will make for our children." —
Tatanka Iotanka (Sitting Bull)

Dates to Remember:

***3rd Thursday of every month is an opportunity
for teachers in the high desert to gather and
discuss topics at the Hesperia Marriot***

Conference Opportunities: Thank you to everyone
who responded about the Math and Science conferences.
Keep your eyes open for more conference opportunities to
come in the future.

Film: 'American Teacher'

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

Films about teachers often tend to be stereotypical in nature. "Waiting for Superman" blamed "bad teachers" for being complacent and ineffective. Other movies — "Freedom Writers," "Stand and Deliver," "Dangerous Minds" — portray teachers as self-sacrificing saints eager to take a vow of poverty. "American Teacher" is more realistic. The film shows that the majority of teachers are smart, resourceful, hardworking, and doing the best they can in challenging

circumstances. Instead of playing the blame game, the film makes a strong case that our teachers — who are responsible for educating America’s future generations — deserve to be valued, supported, and paid what they are worth.

The documentary is based on the book “Teachers Have It Easy: The Big Sacrifices and Small Salaries of America’s Teachers” (New Press 2005) authored by journalist and teacher Daniel Moulthrop, writer Dave Eggers, and Ninive Calegari, a former teacher and co-founder of 826 National, a student writing center.

The film is narrated by actor and outspoken public school supporter Matt Damon and profiles several American teachers, including Jonathan Dearman of California. The teachers love what they do, but struggle financially. They teach different grade levels and subjects in various states, but wrestle with a common question: Can I afford to continue to teach?

Some live frugally while others make the gut-wrenching decision to leave the profession and take jobs they are not passionate about so they can earn a livable wage, which is devastating to their students. Others take secondary jobs in retail or elsewhere and suffer the effects of having too little time for their families.

The movie attributes low pay for teachers to the fact that teaching was one of the few careers available to women in past decades. While that is no longer the case, salary remains low. We also learn that the average starting salary is \$39,000 and grows to \$67,000 after 25 years in the profession, excluding educators from the housing market in many areas.

According to the film, a teacher’s starting salary is not that much lower than entry-level salaries in other professions. It’s the ending salary that is mostly to blame for the fact that 46 percent of teachers quit before their fifth year of teaching. And it’s difficult to attract talented college graduates to the profession with the promise of low pay, long hours, and little support. One of the teachers profiled, a Harvard graduate, is asked by friends and family why she would choose to go into a profession so lacking in money and prestige when she could have her pick of better-paying jobs.

The movie offers a realistic portrayal of teachers who work

long hours, buy supplies out of their own pockets, strive to do their best for students, and sometimes neglect themselves and their own families in the process. At times it's painful to watch such hardworking, idealistic, energetic individuals become increasingly worn down as pressure mounts to raise student achievement while money dwindles to provide even the basics in many classrooms. While depressing, it's also uplifting to see these teachers do so much with so little as they meet challenges that include pregnancy, raising children, and marital problems.

The 81-minute film, directed by award-winning filmmaker Vanessa Roth, was screened for media in New York and Los Angeles in September, and will soon be available for viewing in select theaters.

Need a Fresh Idea???

Did you know there's a Lesson Plan Share Center on the CTA website???

The lesson plans in CTA's Lesson Plan Share Center have been designed by educators, for educators, in order to improve student achievement in classrooms across the state and beyond. Click in the Grade Level block of interest or browse all the lesson plans for subjects or curriculum materials that you can use. CTA seeks to improve student learning by giving you this center for sharing and integrating web-based lessons into your instructional practice.

Visit <http://www.cta.org> and go to the professional development tab.

Contract Highlight: What is the first level of the grievance process?

The first level is the Informal Level. Any time that an action or omission occurs which might be construed as a "grievance," the grievant shall discuss the situation with the appropriate administrator, with the objective of resolving the matter informally. This meeting must take place within twenty (20) days after the act, event or omission, or within twenty (20) days after the grievant knew or reasonably should have known of such act, event or omission giving rise the grievance. If the grievant is not satisfied, the grievant may bring a representative of HTA for a subject conference.

If you have a special event, teaching story, announcement, or anything exciting happening at your site that you would like to share, please send it to hta.comschair@gmail.com.

