April 2, 2020

Dear OEA Member:

During this time, while OEA continues to aggressively advocate on behalf of Oregon students and educators, our organization is still focused on providing you with meaningful professional learning opportunities, ensuring sustainable funding for our schools, and providing you with critical financial wellness information.

As we continue to navigate the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, I hope you will find the resources below helpful.

**Register for Our Self-Care Webinar**

During this time of increased stress and uncertainty, educators are being asked to step into roles they are not prepared for. This can increase your own stress and decrease your effectiveness at a time when students need you more than ever. In addition, most educators are also providing support and care to family members and/or friends. Self-care in this time is of the utmost importance.

Join us for a Self-Care Webinar on Tuesday, April 7 at 4:00 p.m. with our partners at 321 Insight. We will discuss self-awareness, stress management, how to build a strong wellness foundation, regulating thought, and other ideas and strategies for taking care of ourselves. Part of our Trauma Informed Series, this webinar content has been adjusted to reflect the stresses that the COVID-19 pandemic is placing on our profession.

[Register here for the Self-Care Webinar](#)

Additionally, OEA would like to gather additional information on the support you need at this time to provide learning supports to students. Please respond to our short [two-question survey](#).

**Remember to Complete the 2020 Census**

The COVID-19 pandemic has radically altered our daily lives, removing a sense of normalcy and shifting our attention away from much of the work we had planned for March and for
April. While many of our former priorities can be put on the backburner for now, there is one thing that can't wait: the 2020 Census.

The 2020 Census will determine how much federal funding Oregon receives for the next decade, and our Census count will have a direct impact on the resources that are available for our students and for our communities.

NEA has great resources on how you can complete the 2020 Census by phone or online, along with additional information we can share with students and with families as we try to stay connected with them during the extended school closure. By encouraging folks who are able to complete the Census now, we can dedicate more of our time and resources to ensuring that individuals from historically undercounted and underrepresented communities are included.

Information Student Loans

You may have heard some discussion about temporary relief for student loan borrowers as part of the federal government's response to COVID-19. Below is some information, taken from Politico and from the Education Department, that may answer some questions you or your colleagues have had about this issue.

The Trump administration is planning to implement the roughly six-month pause on federal student loan payments included in the coronavirus economic stimulus law by April 10, according to people briefed on the Education Department’s guidance provided to loan servicing companies.

The stimulus law, H.R. 748 (116), signed last week by the President, requires the department to suspend all payments on federally held student loans without interest or penalties through Sept. 30. It also prohibits the department from garnishing wages, tax refunds or Social Security benefits to collect defaulted loans during that period.

Here are some of the parameters of how the program will work, according to the Education Department’s guidance:

Servicers will be required to suspend all payments, including turning off automatic payments for borrowers who have set up recurring ACH transfers from their bank accounts, by the end of next week. Borrowers can opt to continue to make payments if they choose.
The department has decided to make the student loan benefits in the stimulus law retroactive as of March 13, which is when Trump declared an emergency related to the coronavirus. Servicers will automatically apply any interest paid by borrowers after March 13 to their principal balance, but borrowers will also have the option of obtaining a full refund of payments that were made when they were not required.

For borrowers enrolled in income-driven repayment plans, the department has instructed servicers to automatically extend by six months the deadline for any borrower whose annual recertification of income becomes due during the period of suspended payments. Under the stimulus law, suspended payments will continue to count toward borrowers’ progress in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program and other federal loan forgiveness programs.

Will suspended payments count toward Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)?
If you have a Direct Loan, were on a qualifying repayment plan prior to the suspension, and work full-time for a qualifying employer during the suspension, then you will receive credit toward PSLF for the period of suspension as though you made on-time monthly payments.

Late on Wednesday evening, the Education Department posted an updated FAQ about the suspension on its website.

Please continue to reach out to me with your questions and concerns.

Thank you,
John Larson