April 7, 2020

Dear OEA Member:

As educators across the state continue the transition from traditional in-person instruction to distance learning, we have heard questions from members about the potential legal issues associated with teaching our students from a distance. In an effort to answer those questions, OEA’s Legal Counsel has put together a memo for members that identifies certain legal issues that might arise for K-12 educators as they engage in distance education, and advice for how educators can avoid situations that may lead to allegations of misconduct. You can read the full guidance memo here.

I wanted to remind you about the self-care webinar that OEA’s Center for Great Public Schools will be hosting tomorrow evening with our partners at 321 Insight. Starting at 4:00 p.m., 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.

I also wanted to share the great work being done right now by the OEA Foundation to help our students and their families during this unprecedented crisis. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the OEA Foundation has expanded its allowable grant funding guidelines so members can apply for grants to help students with food, rent and utility bills. OEA Aspiring Educators (college students studying to become educators) have also been invited to apply for Foundation assistance. Under the new program, 138 grants have been awarded to support our students and our Aspiring Educators.

Grant funding has been used to help students whose families have experienced job loss due to COVID business closures, for students who have undocumented family members who don’t qualify for federal relief funds, and for college students who were already struggling to make ends meet. To apply for an OEA Foundation grant, or to donate and support the Foundation’s efforts, please visit the OEA Foundation website.

OEAs advocating for Oregon’s students and educators during the COVID-19 school closure, and we will continue to communicate our concerns about ODE’s inequitable “Distance Learning for All” plan. We are in constant contact with elected officials and state agencies and are pushing for guidance that is fair to our students, respects the professional judgement of our educators, and keeps our members safe.

Thank you again for your continued service to your students and to your communities.

John Larson