

Empty  
classrooms,  
full hearts

To our  
WEA members,  
thank you.



# Finding our way...

**A**s we consider the effects of the global pandemic here in Washington state, my first wish is that you and your loved ones are safe and well. If you have been sick, have loved ones who are, or if you have lost someone close to you to in this pandemic, I send my most sincere sympathies. The toll of this disease is truly hard to comprehend.



Larry Delaney  
WEA President

At press time, we are all busy still trying to navigate the long-term COVID-19 closures and what they mean for our students, families and ourselves. I know it's been a whirlwind for everyone, and I hope people can settle into the rhythm of a new normal sometime soon. The ever-changing guidance and direction coming from the state has been a challenge, to say the least, as the scope of actions we need to take to fight the virus has become clearer. Thank you for all you are doing to navigate your work and family lives

during this difficult and stressful time.

*We all need to establish routines and parameters to separate our work lives from our home lives in order to keep the peace, for ourselves and those we love.*

Please make sure that you are taking time for your own wellness during this time of transition and uncertainty. I have found it all too easy to begin my workday as soon as I get out of bed and continue until I go to sleep. I've needed to be deliberate to break that pattern. We all need to establish routines and parameters to separate our work lives from our home lives in order to keep the peace, for ourselves and those we love.

Though COVID-19 is dominating every aspect of our lives, we made a deliberate decision to include other items in this issue of *We2.0*, as a reminder that there are other meaningful stories beyond what feels most immediate. So, I hope you take a moment, and take a look.

Be well, and forward together.

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# Coronavirus dominated 2020 legislative session, overshadowing progress for students and educators

When the legislature adjourned in mid-March, the coronavirus was just taking off in Washington state. What WEA thought was a legislative session worth celebrating quickly faded away as the scope and scale of the pandemic's health and economic toll became clearer.

Within a matter of weeks, the state projected a significant decrease in revenues. Gov. Jay Inslee, in consultation with lawmakers from both sides of the aisle, agreed that new funding approved by the Legislature would need to be vetoed to protect the long-term operation of essential government services. In all, the Governor vetoed 147 new items, saving \$235 million this year and \$210 million next.

One critical item that remained funded was the COLA for Plan 1 retirees, who have seen the spending power of their pensions go down for many years. Passing the long-overdue COLA means our senior citizens will be in a better position to weather these uncertain financial times.

Two other important items still funded include a

total of \$68 million for Local Effort Assistance and Pupil Transportation. These additions keep current year school district budgets intact.

Unfortunately, other programs weren't so fortunate. Efforts to add more than 300 counselors to high poverty schools and provide all four days of paraeducator training fell to the veto pen, as did a pilot project to investigate for student and staff housing at community and technical colleges. For a list of other items that were among WEA priorities and were vetoed, visit <https://www.washingtonea.org/ourvoice/>.

It is important for educators to know that the two-year budget that was passed in 2019 is still in effect. The funds that school districts and institutions have counted on are still there. There are no cuts to the state-funded positions that were in the budget last year. State-funded K-12 salary allocations for the next school year will increase by 1.6 percent over this school year levels. Visit our website at <https://www.washingtonea.org/ourvoice/> for a recap of the 2020 legislative session.



## See you next year, RA

One of the many coronavirus-related cancellations this year is the WEA Representative Assembly (RA), our annual meeting where more than 1,000 delegates come together to do the business of our Association. In a typical RA, delegates spend two to three days debating new or revisions to resolutions, the policies that guide our organization.

We introduce “new business items” (NBIs) calling for actions large and small that WEA can take to improve the professional and personal lives of our members and students. We elect officers. We also take time to celebrate the state Teacher and WEA ESP of the Year. We recognize our state recipient of the NEA Foundation's Awards for Teaching Excellence. And we can't forget the dancing and great music throughout the weekend.

Just as we miss our students, we also will miss the energy, exuberance and passion of the annual meeting. Yet, there are functions of the RA that must still be completed. Below is a rundown of how WEA will address them during this unusual season.

- **Constitution and by-laws** — Constitutional amendments and changes to by-laws and resolutions will be held and considered at the next Representative Assembly.
- **New Business Items** — A WEA leader will contact individuals who submitted NBIs in advance of RA this year and ask if they would like the WEA Board of Directors to consider them on behalf of the RA. If the maker of the item agrees, the NBI will be considered at an upcoming board meeting. If the maker doesn't like this option, the NBI will be considered at the next RA. Delegates who wished to turn in NBIs at the RA itself had until the same RA deadline to submit them for consideration.
- **Elections** — Delegates will participate in online elections for one NEA state director position and two ESP at-large positions for the WEA Board of Directors. This year, because so many candidates of color ran for board positions, with 19 of them winning, there is no need to offer a special election for people of color at-large board positions.
- **The WEA-PAC budget** — The budget will be sent electronically to WEA-PAC members.

# The spread of good deeds

*Members find ways to still support students during pandemic*

**A**s we begin establishing our new normal and our new routines, WEA members across the state continue to move quickly to assist students and families. Some of our members are already in the swim deep into teaching online classes. Others are just dipping their toes in the water to begin connecting with students and trying to stabilize their day. Stories of members going above and beyond to support students abound, from donating books to connecting individually with families and sending postcards. Teaching remotely is grueling, and our education support professionals are still supporting our schools and keeping them running. We share just a few of the inspiring anecdotes we've seen and heard.

"The only silver lining is that the union is the most important force for good for our students and members — and everyone is seeing that," Federal Way EA President Shannon McCann says. "Solidarity is who we are, and we are uniquely positioned to help society because solidarity is exactly how we'll get through this pandemic."

We are all part of the safety net, and even if things are far from perfect, what you are doing is "something" that would not be getting done if not for your hard work. Together we will continue to navigate these waters as a union family.

## Still together

Vancouver EA member, Mason Quiroz, a 6th-grade math teacher at Alki Middle School, is creating YouTube lessons for his students until they are all back in class together. "By this time of year, we have hopefully established strong relationships with our students. They are used to our voices, our faces. It's more than just academic learning.

It's letting our students know that even though we aren't in class, we are still together. We still care and to us you're more than a student," says Quiroz.



## Books and tools



Highline Education Association members Shawn Kelly and Shoshanna Cohen greeted students and families at White Center Heights Elementary to let kids choose books to take home from a little "makeshift" library they created. Kelly, a speech language pathologist, and Cohen, a K-5 STEAM specialist, also picked up building kit donations from Home Depot so their students could build their own binoculars at home. "I knew Shoshanna was thinking the same thing I was the day after schools closed in terms of how we are going to help these kids," Kelly says.

## Together we read



Seattle Education Association educator Erin Munavu and other colleagues are using their phones to create clips of themselves reading aloud. Munavu is doing this while caring for her own two elementary-aged children. "I wanted to send my students a connection to school and the classroom, since their daily lives have been completely uprooted. If I'm missing them, I'm guessing they are missing me (at least a little!). I'm hopeful that all students can access my video and I'm planning to reach out to those I haven't heard from yet to see if they need communication from me in a method that is not email."

She says they are taking the quarantine seriously because the faster everyone does that, the better the chances are for not overwhelming hospitals and for saving lives.

## A grand parade

Days before Gov. Jay Inslee's "stay-at-home" order, teachers and staff at Cedarhome Elementary in Stanwood wanted to reassure students they were thinking about them in these uncertain times. Taking a page from a



Facebook post of a “car parade” educators held in Texas, Cedarhome staff thought they could replicate the idea. PE teacher Trent Campbell created a route map, which was emailed to all staff at the school and car signs were made. No carpooling, of course. Teachers sent an email to their own classes to share the parade route with parents. Thirty-three cars with teachers and support staff drove by waving to students and families so they could connect and be a visible presence for the students. “We wanted to reassure them that we are thinking of them every day and that we will see them again,” says Jane Lenz, a first-grade teacher at Cedarhome and a Stanwood-Camano EA member. “One of the most wonderful parts, in my mind, was to see our own staff smiling, laughing, shedding a few tears. We all needed the pick-me-up, and we will do it again in some weeks.”



“I had heard of and seen the little community libraries where people can share books with others. I decided to just take that idea and use it with food,” he says. “The idea is simple; if you need food items, take them. If you can spare food items, drop them off.”



## Into the woods

Seattle Education Association school nurse Jessica Ravitsky took her fifth-grade son and several other neighborhood third- through sixth-grade students to a

rainy Lincoln Park two days after Seattle schools closed. The group spent hours finding, drawing and identifying plants.

## A family affair

Like some families who have made the decision to shelter together, Edmonds EA’s Jake Dalton left his home in South Everett to temporarily “hole up” with his parents, his two brothers and his oldest brother’s wife and their three boys.

“We can laugh, cry and make the best out of the situation together,” says Dalton, who teaches PE and health at Brier Terrace Middle School. “It can be hectic, but it is also wonderful and worth it for us all to be together.”

With nine under one roof, Dalton decided to build a community pantry to keep busy and to help his community. The pantry has become a hub of community pride in Brier, just south of Lynnwood.

Dalton enlisted his family’s help, from brother Joel, mom Eileen (who is a paraeducator at Brier Elementary and runs a before- and after-school childcare program), nephew River, and sister-in-law Elizabeth. They erected the Little Pantry outside his parents’ home on Brier Road, and he posted information on social media, not knowing what to expect. In two days, the pantry was stuffed, with shelves sagging from the weight of the donations.

“We had no idea it was going to be such a hit but that just shows how wonderful our community is and how much people are willing to help others,” he says. “Our shelves were not prepared for the amount of food we got.”

Not to worry, Dalton’s dad brought two metal shelves home from work to re-enforce the pantry and that allowed Dalton to complete the pantry “remodel.”

With shelves packed with food (and toilet paper, by the way), Dalton has reached out to counselors at his middle school and will work with them to make sure the food goes to families who need a little extra help. Any “extras” will possibly go to the local food bank.

“I am so proud to be a part of a community that is so eager to help others out. These things are just what people need in these tough times to make the world just a little bit better,” says Dalton, adding that he couldn’t have done the project without help from his entire family and “the amazing people of Brier for making this as successful as it is.”





*Jeremy Rouse, an achievement gap intervention specialist for Spokane schools, where more than 126 tribes are represented, looks for ways to celebrate and value students' culture. One example he points to is the First Foods Traditional Dinner open to Native and non-Native students, their families and the community. He often takes students out on field trips to gather food in preparation for the event. The dinner introduces foods indigenous to the continent. Rouse says the dinner also serves to break stereotypes and allows students to reconnect and reclaim their cultural identity.*

## Increasing visibility and voice of Native students

Spokane's Jeremy Rouse honored for providing cultural learning opportunities

Spokane Education Association member and Achievement Gap Intervention Specialist Jeremy Rouse became an education support professional accidentally. The NEA Foundation California Casualty 2020 Washington award recipient was seeking work where he could advocate for others, lead on issues of social justice and inclusion and raise marginalized voices, but he didn't see public education as a pathway when he first began working for the Title VI Indian Education Program in three of Spokane's schools in 2013.

It turns out he has found a good fit. With more than 2,000 Native students in Spokane schools, Rouse says a lot of the students with whom he has built relationships face tremendous barriers in achieving academic success.

"Nearly three quarters of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch, experience homelessness or housing instability at a rate twice that of our overall student body," Rouse says.

"He's a community resource and advocate. He's a connector in many ways," Indian Education Coordinator Bonnie St. Goddard says. "He's an educator for educators. He is a strong leader. He's an example for the young Native Americans in the system in providing that positive role for our students."

Rouse's job description includes providing "case management" for some 250 students between three schools by monitoring grades, attendance and discipline incidents. If a student appears "at-risk," he works with them to identify barriers and strategize possible solutions and resources that might help them overcome those obstacles.

But what makes Rouse unique is how he builds relationship and works with students outside of what is happening in the classroom. He created the Nk'wu Nation Native Student Leadership Organization, a group that means "One Nation," which elevates student voice, encourages leadership and involvement, increases visibility of Native students and provides them with cultural learning opportunities.

All students are invited to participate in a drumming circle. This creates an inclusive space where their identities are celebrated. The group performs both in the Native community and at other community events. Eastern Washington University undergrad Brianna Brockie credits Rouse with helping her connect with her culture and learn more about herself.

"He gave us a sense of identity. He let us know that we were being heard and not being left behind," Brockie says. "I know that he positively impacted my

classmates because we were so involved in our group and we felt powerful when we would drum.”

Rouse says one of the most profound parts of his work is that he has been challenged, inspired and motivated to examine his own identity more deeply. He says this work has forced him to explore and think deeply about his own identity formation.

“It has been a lot of personal growth,” he says. “I was 29 before I sat at the drum and I got to learn these songs so I could sing them with the kids. It’s giving them opportunities that I didn’t have and when they start to have access to opportunities like this in the school space, it’s meaningful and impactful.”

Rouse says he is also proud of the annual First Foods Traditional Dinner at Rogers High School because, “It celebrates the traditional indigenous foods that have sustained tribal people’s since time immemorial.” Before the dinner, he says, many of his students have difficulty naming their own traditional food.

“The First Foods dinner helps students connect with and reclaim knowledge about these foods and by extension, their own cultures,” Rouse says. “I try to know their tribes and sometimes I have to remind them what their tribe is and that’s part of the disconnection some of them have — they don’t know their tribe. I help to facilitate that reconnection.”

“We’re from Turtle Mountain Chippewa and whenever I come in, me and Jeremy talk about our tribes and our history and our culture,” says Elijah Belgarde, a junior at Rogers High School.

St. Goddard says, “An outside community member had talked about Jeremy not just being a mentor, but a MEN-tor which is more than an advocate — it’s an example for some of the young native boys in the system and providing that positive, empowering leadership role for them.”

“I see my position as trying to ‘indigenize’ this space. School is historically not a friendly space for indigenous students and we’re here to kind of disrupt the system. Am I making these students work better for the system or am I trying to make the system

work better for the students? I want to do the latter,” Rouse says.

While Rouse originally got involved with the union when Spokane EA was building up toward a strike a few years ago, he stayed involved for other reasons.

“My mother is in education and I kind of grew up being pro-union,” he says, “But I didn’t have a strong understanding about it and the racial justice and social justice component is part of what motivates me to be involved in the union.”

At last year’s RA, Rouse sponsored a New Business Item that requires recognition that we are guests on native homelands.

“It was a tangible way for me to be an advocate for students. It’s something that allows Native People to remain a part of the conversation when we do land acknowledgement — it’s the bare minimum but it’s a visibility piece that allows us to be seen, heard. It’s not the end, but a starting point.”

Rouse says one of the most important lessons he takes from

his work is to focus on creating authentic relationships because it is impossible to accurately identify the barriers faced by a student or their family without “keeping it real” with students, colleagues, families, community members and other stakeholders.

*‘He’s an educator for educators. He is a strong leader. He’s an example for the young Native Americans in the system in providing that positive role for our students.’*

— Bonnie St. Goddard  
Indian Education Coordinator  
Spokane Public Schools

Rouse is honored as Washington’s recipient of the California Casualty Outstanding Educator Award at the NEA Foundation’s awards gala on Feb. 7 in Washington, D.C.



# Collective Vision

## for Racial Justice and Social Justice

Racial equity and social justice are ideals WEA members have long endorsed, reaching back to at least 1985 when delegates at our annual Representative Assembly (RA) passed the first resolutions regarding the education rights of Native Americans and migrant children, among others. Since then, WEA member delegates have passed more than two dozen resolutions in support of a wide range of racial and social justice issues.

For the past several years, your Association has begun efforts to get our own house in order, one step at a time. Last fall, WEA President Larry Delaney and Vice President Janie White appointed a working group to develop a specific plan of action to advance racial and social justice in our union and Washington's public schools. Though getting to this point was the result of several years of effort, it is also the pivot point to a new phase of action.

"I think that we've talked a lot more than we've walked on the issue of fighting racism and pushing for social justice," noted WEA president Larry Delaney. "For more than three decades, our WEA RA has passed resolutions in support of this work, but now is the time to drive real action, on behalf of our full WEA membership, as well as our students. A healthy and strong union — and public education system — relies on making sure there is a place at the table for everyone."

The plan is built on the foundational principles that our country's systems and institutions have been established to maintain a concentration of wealth and power at the top for the benefit of the

economic elites. As educators, we have increasingly felt that the economic system has been rigged against us. People of color have felt that all along. As a result, a lot of racism and bias is something we all learn without even realizing it, because it is baked into the systems and structures of our daily lives. This makes racism insidious, and, like the proverbial fish in water, we don't even know it is there. These invisible structures are reinforced by a series of characteristics, referred to as White Supremacy Culture. See more details at <https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-culture.html>.

WEA plans to advance racial equity and social justice in our union and in our schools. Specifically, for WEA, racial equity means systematic treatment that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for people of all races, while eliminating/rejecting the behaviors and practices of White Supremacy Culture. And social justice means the disruption and elimination of social systems that maintain advantages and disadvantages based on social group membership in order to create and sustain opportunities rooted in equity.

This plan, which includes five strategic areas, has been introduced to our Board of Directors, and will be considered at a future meeting.

Each area is led by at least one WEA director, with governance leaders, staff and members participating to advance the plan. They will be working to add detail and make the vision a reality in the months and years ahead. Below is a high-level view of this work and desired outcomes. Specific strategies are behind each area.

### Sustaining/promoting student-centered schools

Schools are culturally responsive and empower students by being student-centered, engaging student and family voice, building relationships and adopting policies that eliminate barriers to success.

### Building community partnerships

WEA is actively involved in community outreach and working in partnership with allies on issues of racial and social justice.

### Engaging educators of color

More educators of color enter and remain in the profession, and more college/university students of color declare as education majors.

### Advancing public policy for equity

WEA actively supports diverse candidates and legislation that advances social and racial justice including actions that disrupt systems that perpetuate White Supremacy Culture.

### Enhancing organizational capacity/development

WEA provides resources and full funding for racial equity and social justice to benefit students, members and staff.

This work was developed over a period of three meetings of WEA leaders, members, staff and management. Thanks go to: Larry Delaney, Janie White, Adam Aguilera, Justin Fox-Bailey, Vallerie Fisher, Chris Fraser, Shelly Hurley, Glenn Jenkins, Gwendolyn Jimerson, Bill Lyne, Michael Peña, Jeremy Shay, Keith Swanson, Renee Verone, Pamela Wilson, Armand Tiberio, Manny Bosser, Nache Duncan, Shelby Hopkins, Mary Howes, AJ Hoyla, Ben Ibale, Aimee Iverson, Lisa Kodama, Shawn Lewis, Christina Martinez, Sally McNair, Linda Mullen, Randy Paddock, Arlyn Palomo, Rina Paul, Rebecca Powell and Donna Wesley.

WEA members and staff who want to participate in supporting any of the strategic areas will be invited and encouraged to do so at a later, post-pandemic date. Watch for more information.