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Washington Education Association
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Lyon's heart

Inside: Washington Teacher of the Year Lyon Terry has brains, heart and courage
Relevance, relationship and high expectations ahead in 2015

Climbing mountains

2015. It took me by surprise when a friend asked me what my New Year's resolution was — I mean the new year starts in the fall, doesn't it? That's what most of us in education consider the real New Year. But I can always come up with more ideas and am always working on my next goal. So January provides me the opportunity to reflect on the year gone by and look ahead to new hopes and fresh starts.

Last year was big, a reminder that dedication, commitment and teamwork yield results.



Two Team WEA participants, WEA President Kim Mead and her ecstatic husband, Lindsay, were among those who biked over three mountain passes in three days to raise money to help stop child abuse and negligence. Other team members were WEA Vice President Stephen Miller and WEA staffers Margaret Knight, Shawn Lewis and Rod Regan.

Personally, I rode in the Courage Classic bike ride — three mountain passes over three days, accompanied by Team WEA which included my husband Lindsay, and several WEA friends and colleagues. We trained together and on our own. As we rode up those mountains, legs burning and hearts pumping, it was amazing

how each of us took our turn leading and being led. Okay, on the uphill I may have drafted a bit more than some, but we were all supporting

each other. Sending words of encouragement to a teammate when one of us struggled, or, often as not, being the one to receive the kind words or a kick in the pants at just the right moment. We were united, Team WEA, and we achieved our goals of getting in shape and raising funds for Mary Bridge Children's Hospital. Did I mention that we are doing it again this year?

My second grandchild, another beautiful girl, arrived and my first grandchild started kindergarten. A big thank you to all of the wonderful educators committed to her education and care.

Professionally, we passed I-1351, which felt a lot like a bike ride over mountains, only it lasted a lot longer. This Team WEA was thousands strong, and took us over metaphorical mountains so that we can reduce class sizes and improve education for every child across the state.

Looking forward, I know that achieving all of our goals — better pay, smaller class sizes, enough funding — will take each and every one of us, as Team WEA. 2015 is the year of education funding in our state. We must work together, boldly, to ensure that our decision makers hear our voices, know our needs and step up to their responsibility to properly fund public education. It will take all of us, supporting each other to achieve contracts at the bargaining tables that we would be proud to ratify. That is the real Team WEA, and the power of union. I am proud to be a part of WEA. Join me.

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Earnest. Affable. Soft-spoken. Meet Seattle EA's Lyon Terry.

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- 7 The time is ripe for bargaining significant improvements in compensation. The WEA Board has approved a statewide bargaining goal of a 5 percent salary increase in each contract year.

Power. Persistence. Pay.

Yakima's paraeducators reach their living wage goal — but it took a fight.



Buffy Phillips
Yakima Association
of Paraeducators president

Early on, the stories were enough to break your heart. Career educators in a prosperous but low-paying district didn't have enough money for even the most basic of the basics. Many could not afford housing on their own. Some had to choose between food and heat. Others relied on food stamps, and had no electricity or running water.

"I had nothing," one educator recalled.

Now, after three cycles of contract negotiations, lots of local organizing and the willingness to confront Yakima district administrators head on, the situation is decidedly brighter than 2008 when base pay was \$11.86. This fall, the Yakima Association of Paraeducators' new contract topped their initial living wage goal of \$16.44. Pay for veteran paras has now reached \$16.51 an hour.

"It's just amazing," says chief bargainer and former YAP President Kristie Maxwell.

This is a story of YAP's hard work, gritty determination and dogged persistence — and the support offered by their local, regional, state and national unions.

"We had rallied our members together very strongly," recalls YAP President and bargainer Buffy Phillips. "But we also had to call on the WEA Crisis Team to come in and help ... in order to shake up the district and let them know that we mean business, and that we deserve this."

"There had been quite a few times we all had felt defeated," says Heidi Mann, chair of YAP's Living Wage Committee. But WEA and NEA would offer renewed support with workshops or training. Regional staff at the WEA MidState UniServ Council would offer ideas on new strategies and

tactics. Fellow support employees in Yakima's other local unions pledged their solidarity and support.

That was two years ago, and even after 16 months of protracted negotiations, the administration agreed to only modest improvements in pay. But administrators witnessed

YAP's resolve firsthand as the paras flooded the community with details about administrators' inflated salaries and questionable spending priorities. That helped create an entirely different climate for the negotiations that concluded this fall.

"This bargain started out wonderful," Maxwell recalls. "They didn't fight us."

The change wasn't just among administrators. YAP leaders say they and their members realize they've grown as individuals, too, moving from fear to knowledge to power.

"When I started out, I didn't even want to say anything bad," Maxwell recalls. "There's a lot to be said about organizing (and) training. Wow — it's great when you know what you're talking about!"

YAP members know more work lies ahead. Living near the poverty line, having just \$400 a month more in each month's paycheck makes a huge difference. But that's still not enough for luxuries like a newer car. And soon, inflation will begin to erode their salary gains.

"It's an honest, right thing we're after," Maxwell says. "I deserve my living wage. And the union helped me get it."

Online: Learn more about YAP's Living Wage gains at www.WashingtonEA.org/Yakima

**This is a story of YAP's
hard work, gritty
determination and
dogged persistence
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regional, state and
national unions.**



Seattle's Lyon Terry, the state Teacher of the Year, reminds us of what's right with educators and schools across our state in a changing era of education.

Teaching Matters

Teacher of the Year Lyon Terry has a simple message about our profession.

Lyon Terry, Washington's 2015 Teacher of the Year, knew early on that teaching was his future.

"The bug bit me as a sailing instructor," recalls Terry, a soft-spoken and affable fourth-grade teacher, pausing a moment in his Seattle classroom. "Fortunately for me, I grew up on the water in Maine and hung out in the local sailing club. And I became a sailing instructor. I suddenly had all these 11-, 12-year-old kids in front of me. ... And I could see them try out the things I talked about — and then fail. And I'd be like, OK, now I see: I need to break it down a little bit more for them. As a 16-year-old summer-job kid, I was learning — some kids are going to get it, and some aren't. You need to differentiate instruction."

Refining his craft continues to be a daily habit for Terry, who serves as a career ladder/mentor teacher at Lawton Elementary in Seattle's Magnolia neighborhood.

Teaching partner Renee Hafzalla, a first-year teacher, says Terry's willingness to acknowledge his own daily challenges has eased her stress as a newcomer who was paired with such a highly regarded partner.

"It's nice to know he's struggling with some of the same things I'm struggling with, even though there's so many years apart in our experience," Hafzalla says.

Terry has taught for 17 years, in Highline, New York City and

Community • Relationships • Rigor • Engagement

Seattle. It was working in Brooklyn, at Public School 321, where he connected with the teaching college's Writer's Workshop, which he says changed the way he taught, and made him who he is today. He also is a National Board Certified Teacher, and the building rep for his local union, the Seattle Education Association.

Chat for any time with Terry and you'll hear several words continually resurface: Community. Relationships. Rigor. Choice. Engagement. Terry says he plans to carry a message this year about great schools, and the essential role of engaged teachers and engaged students.

"I believe three things create student engagement," Terry says. "The first is relationships. The second is high expectations. And the third is relevance and choice" for students in the content they are learning.

He consciously builds community by inviting community members into his classroom to teach about their areas of interest. For students, he's adopted connecting activities such as the Walking School Bus Program, where caring community members walk to school with groups of students.

Terry says he'd briefly considered other careers, a lawyer or a cook, but knew he wanted to help children grow into smart, caring adults.

"There are very few jobs in society where you can really change the world," Terry says. "This is what teachers do. We don't just teach reading and writing and math. We actually change lives."



On a daily basis, Terry focuses on building relationships with students to help them want to learn, collegial relationships that enhance professional growth, and community through the union so that educators have a voice to preserve the flexibility and creativity that's essential for good teaching.

Online: Learn more about Teacher of the Year Lyon Terry, and see him in his classroom at Lawton Elementary. Watch the heartwarming video profile at www.WashingtonEA.org/TOY

Chat for any time with
Terry and you'll hear several
words continually resurface:
Community. Relationships.
Rigor. Choice.
Engagement.

2015 Regional Teachers of the Year

Washington's educational service districts and tribal schools each select a regional finalist. A state selection committee chooses one of these regional finalists as Teacher of the Year.

Linda Carney

Educational Service District 101
Spokane School District
Shadle Park High School

Spencer Martin

Educational Service District 105
Sunnyside School District
Sunnyside High School

Sharon Conditt

Educational Service District 112
Woodland School District
Woodland High School

Barbara Page

Educational Service District 113
Aberdeen School District
Aberdeen High School

Kimberly Witte

Educational Service District 114
Central Kitsap School District
PineCrest Elementary School

Glen Landrus

Educational Service District 123
Asotin-Anatone School District
Asotin High School

Lisa Snyder

North Central Educational Service District 171
Eastmont School District
Robert E. Lee Elementary School

Barney Peterson

Northwest Educational Service District 189
Everett School District
James Monroe Elementary School

• Choice • Expectations • Relevance

Compensation, school funding top WEA's priorities in Olympia

There are 147 men and women in the Washington Legislature. If you are a teacher, these legislators help decide how much money you make, how many students you have and how many tests you give. If you serve lunch, drive a bus or clean school buildings, their decisions influence your compensation, your workload and even your safety.

The good news: The Supreme Court has ordered these elected leaders to increase school funding, and voters have ordered them to fund smaller K-12 class sizes for all students, including additional support staff. And by law, the Legislature has to restore the voter-mandated cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for educators this year.

Even with the courts, the voters and the law on the side of kids and educators, we need to make sure our voice is heard when legislators and Gov. Jay Inslee pass laws that affect us. WEA represents 83,000 current and retired public school employees, and we're proud to be the strongest advocates for the needs of Washington's public schools and students, both K-12 and higher education. The elected WEA Board of Directors approved these legislative priorities for ensuring all students have the opportunity for success in school. Visit www.OurVoiceWashingtonEA.org for the latest news during the legislative session.

Washington Education Association 2015 Legislative Priorities

As public school educators in Washington, WEA members are committed to the success of every K-12 and college student. Here are the Washington Education Association's student-centered priorities for the 2015 legislative session.

Competitive Professional Compensation

All students deserve caring, qualified and committed teachers and education support professionals. WEA members support legislation to:

- Make measurable progress towards a professional salary for educators that is comparable with professions that require similar education and training
- Improve higher education faculty and staff salaries by authorizing community and technical colleges to bargain local funds for faculty salary increments
- Fully fund the educator cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) required by current law (voter-approved I-732)
- Increase funding for active and retired educators' health and pension benefits
- Explore innovative legislative options to increase total compensation in recognition of increased demands and expectations within the education profession

Reliable, Predictable and Sustainable School Funding

If we're serious about every child's future, let's get serious about doing what works. This means resourcing all schools so students have more one-one-one attention, inviting classrooms and a well-rounded curriculum. WEA members support legislation to:

- Provide full funding for a comprehensive basic education program that meets the needs of all students – including funding the staffing levels in voter-approved Initiative 1351 so children receive the one-on-one attention they need
- Support sustainable revenue sources that provide for the needs of all Washington citizens - with particular attention to our vulnerable populations - that are both less regressive and fairer to individuals and small businesses

Focus on Students

Every Washington student has the right to a high-quality public education that provides an opportunity for success. Good education inspires students' natural curiosity, imagination and desire to learn. Too much testing takes time from learning. WEA members support legislation to:

- Eliminate the high-stakes nature of state standardized tests, including using them as a graduation requirement, and reduce the number of standardized tests where possible
- Ensure students have more access to individual support and educational resources by providing manageable workloads and reduced class sizes
- Reduce child hunger and improve student achievement through convenient, high-quality, and stigma-free school meal programs

Protecting and Strengthening the Education Profession

Professional educators are best equipped to make school and classroom decisions to ensure student success, and they should be the primary voice in education policy decisions at every level. WEA members support legislation to:

- Protect the rights of public school workers to engage in union activities, including full rights to organize, bargain and advocate for public education in the political process
- Ensure teacher and principal evaluations use appropriate student growth data and that use of standardized tests is allowed but not mandated
- Provide consistent and stable funding to ensure every educator has development, resources and support

1.2.3.4.5

Goal: 5 percent salary raises each year

It's time to act.

After years of neglect by legislators who now stand in contempt of their constitutional duties, after years of outside do-gooders trying to narrow public education to fit their own interests, WEA members are beyond fed up.

With memories of the Great Recession now fading amid steady economic growth, schools in Washington are poised to once again pay professional wages to frontline educators. Reserves built up amid fear during the recession now sit wasting away, taken from taxpayers but never invested in helping our students. Statewide, local school administrators have now hoarded a billion — yes, *billion!* — dollars under their mattresses. State legislators approved nearly another billion new dollars for districts in the budget year ending this coming June, with another \$890 million expected to flow to districts under WEA's McCleary court case in the 2015-16 school year. Additionally, Initiative-732's annual cost-of-living salary increases, first launched by WEA in 2000, are scheduled to resume in the 2015-16 school year.

That's why WEA's regional leaders and staff are now sparking a renewed emphasis on local bargaining: after years of failure by state lawmakers to fund voter-required cost-of-living increases, it has been bargaining at the local level that has continued to push salaries forward for educators.

The new goal, approved in November by the WEA Board, is a 5 percent salary increase each year for the next three years in locals across Washington.

At first glance, the goal may seem ambitious. But with continuing inflation and higher health-care costs, school employees have felt family budgets squeezed, as have middle-

class workers across America. Each year that Washington's Legislature ignored the I-732 voter-approved cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA), school employees lost buying power. For the current school year, 2014-15, classified staff salaries are an average of \$3,844 less than they would have been had they been adjusted for inflation. For new certificated staff, that number is \$4,511 less, and for veteran certificated teachers and ESAs, the annual loss to inflation is now \$8,503.

While the 5 percent goal will impact locals statewide, WEA leaders recognize each district and local has unique circumstances. Some districts built up huge reserves that go beyond any realistic "sky-is-falling" financial scenario, others did not. Some locals continued to negotiate salary increases each year to keep pay moving forward, others did not. Other educators made conscious self-sacrifices during the recession, giving up requests for pay increases so that local tax money could be diverted to keeping class sizes small. While this fall's class size Initiative 1351 would fund about 14,000 teachers in basic education, the initiative also provides the flexibility to address districts where local salary money was already given up to hire teachers that should be paid for by the state.

WEA plans to address this rapidly evolving financial landscape in a statewide bargaining conference in early February. Register now for the conference, which will focus on training local bargaining teams and bargaining support teams, and will be geared toward preparing locals to meet the challenge of making significant gains in compensation and attaining the statewide bargaining goal of at least 5 percent per year. Tracks will include Bargaining I (basic skills), Bargaining II, and Organizing, to focus on tactics for more intensive member and community engagement. Register via WEA's website, www.WashingtonEA.org/bargaining, before Jan. 23.

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Dear Union,

Thank you. It's the least I can say, and the very least I can do. I've missed the sense of belonging and unity that you bring. I miss being "one" with my colleagues. I've been "separate" for too long, having to ask if my colleagues are members or potential members. I've missed the certainty and clarity which comes with a Master Agreement. An employee handbook just does not cut it, especially when it can be changed at will. You see, I'm from Wisconsin. I taught there for 18 years, and lived through the disastrous 2011 year. I led my local union, watched us bleed members, and tried to keep us afloat as best I could. I was ready to leave, but didn't exactly want to give up the fight. Until my family got an offer that we truly could not refuse. So I moved to Washington in January of this year.

Last week I sat in a new teacher's meeting and received a beautiful spiral-bound copy of the union's Master Agreement with the school district. I didn't expect to feel the way I did. But here's my reaction: I WAS RELIEVED. I felt this HUGE weight drop off my shoulders. As I paged through the agreement, my happiness continued to build. Prep Time: guaranteed. Class sizes: guaranteed. Stipends: guaranteed. Things we took for granted — things we lost in Wisconsin — were now guaranteed to me in this agreement. I couldn't believe my fortune. And I couldn't believe how I got used to not having those guarantees — though I never forgot, it was just a part of my teaching life then.

My heart is still with the local I belonged to and led in Wisconsin. I have MANY dear friends who are still there, who are still fighting the good fight. MANY who are still living it, in the district I came from and in other districts as well. I still see my local and state association bleeding members, and it makes me extremely sad.

Here is what I want to say to you on Labor Day 2014: **DON'T GIVE UP. IT'S WORTH IT.** YOU are worth the fight for guaranteed salary, prep time, class size, and anything else that makes your work environment tolerable. You might feel deflated, and you may get tired of fighting for these things. But **DON'T** stop.

VOTE. Do your homework. Learn about the candidates.

BECOME INVOLVED in YOUR local association. Stick with them — through the good times and **ESPECIALLY** during the bad times.

YOU need to be part of the solution. They don't call it a "YOU"nion for nothing.

Is it worth the extra money out of your pocket? **YES.**

DO IT. JOIN YOUR LOCAL and **DON'T** look back. Move **FORWARD** and help make your workplace better.

With much love
and respect,

Angela Bina

Angela Bina is a Spokane teacher. She moved to Washington a year ago. WEA is sharing her letter as part of the WE Are WEA campaign that celebrates and recognizes our work both individually and collectively.

Bina (pictured in red earmuffs) braves the cold in Wisconsin with a colleague.

