



we2.0

Washington Education Association
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Janie White
2017 WEA Education
Support
Professional
of the Year

The year ahead

Big changes coming to educator pay
and bargaining

School's out ... for some!

My husband and I have been empty nesters for a few years now. So, when the end of the school year arrives, it's much different than our old experience ... until this year.

This is how my nest became full.



All in the family: WEA President Kim Mead and family members were among the hundreds of thousands who participated in the Seattle Women's March last January.

My daughter has managed many projects over her professional career. It would just make sense that she has a slightly different perspective than others when it comes to the date provided by a contractor. She planned her family's move for the date given by the contractor for their new house to be completed and ready for occupancy. She was shocked to learn that weather may affect the completion date.

"Hey mom, you don't mind if we move in with you guys while we wait for the house to be done, do you?"

Empty nest plus four. Two of which are under the age of 9.

Our adult son has had one heck of a deal for an apartment well below a grand a month in Seattle. The owner sold the building. It is being torn down. He must be out by the end of the month.

Empty nest plus one more? My startled son stated his love for family and to preserve that love has found alternate accommodations until he can rent a new apartment.

Seeing an opportunity, my spouse checked to see if there was enough room for him as well. No such luck.

On Fathers' Day, one week before everyone moves in, they all came over for dinner. The almost 3-year-old brought a play house and furniture. She instructed me where she would be placing it during her stay. The 8-year-old went on a tour of "her" garden so she can take care of it. The parents brought wine ... I'm beginning to understand why.

As much as I love the empty nest ... I am beginning to look forward to having two school-age kids around. Change has been set aside for the ice cream truck. Water toys have been pulled out of storage. Library route pointed out for walks. Crayons and paper at the ready.

As all the adult children and grandchildren were getting into cars to go home that evening, my daughter said her family would move in next weekend.

What do you mean you move in the day before I leave for Boston? And move out the day I get back?

Well, the contractor said it would be ready.

Ha! I still have a chance for a couple more days.

For those who have a brief break, enjoy. And to all, you are the heroes of the state. Thank you for your work this year and the work you continue to provide, helping us achieve students' dreams. May you have change for ice cream, a water cannon with hot weather and time to read a book.

Handwritten signature of Kim Mead.

Kim Mead, WEA President

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This I believe ...

I believe in education. Even though it's not outlined in the math standards I believe in educating the "whole" child, and most importantly I believe in *all* of my students. I like the current Common Core State Standards. I think, as a nation, we've got this one right. We have a nice balance of content standards with practice standards (specifically in math) that if implemented correctly will develop stronger, deeper mathematical thinkers. The shifts I've made in my practice have brought more joy to my job than I ever thought possible. I have found myself closer to students because we've embraced that learning math is their journey — and I'm just along for the ride.

I'm concerned about the impact standardized testing is having on students and on instruction in the classroom. It's 3 p.m. May 26, and Smarter Balance testing is finally over. As I reflect about the week, all I can think about is the student who raised his hand during the test to ask me a question. When I walked over, he pointed to his screen saying, "I have no clue what this question is asking." Naturally, I read the question and it was imaginary roots asking for the b and c coefficients of the quadratic equation. (For you non math folks, I know I've lost you, but please stay with me.) Mathematically, not necessarily a tough question if the student has learned how to solve quadratics. In my head, I'm thinking, "work backwards by using the roots to make up the factors then multiply and you would have it." But all I could do is put my hand on the boy's shoulder and say, "just do the best you can." Reflecting on that moment, I ask myself why? Why that question? For what purpose? With all the emphasis on testing, I believe local and state representatives, stakeholders, and the powers above have lost sight of what's important when it comes to educating our kids. I'm all about having standards and high expectations but it has to be bundled with support. Support for students AND teachers, both which SBAC and its infrastructure is lacking. But aside all that, if we can't answer the most basic question, "why," then this mission is a failure.

As far as the students go, they feel beat up and defeated. My students busted their butts on this test because they want to do well. They value

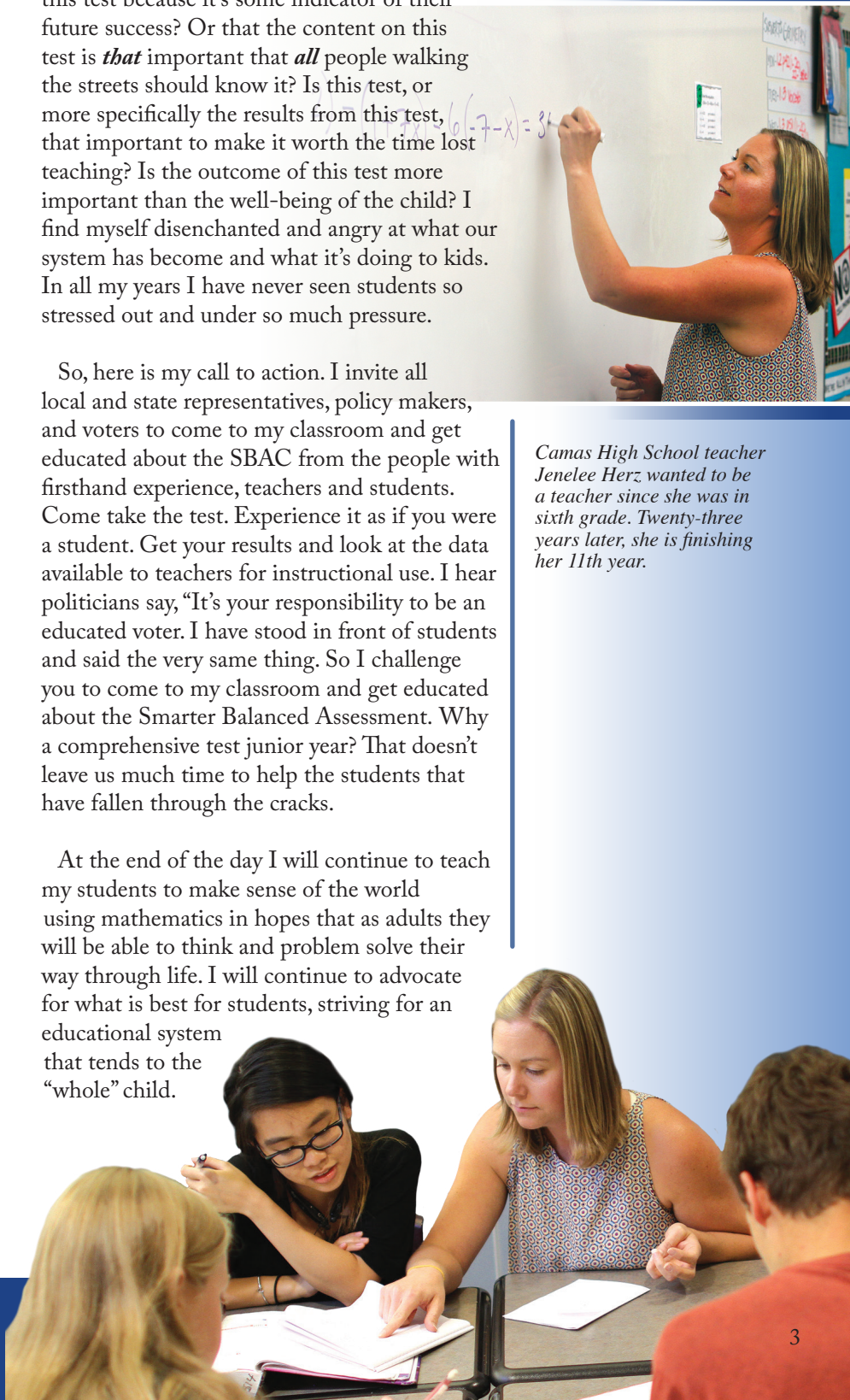
education and their families value education. Not to mention I've looked them in the eyes and said their test scores are a direct reflection of me. So, naturally, they wanted to make me proud. And I'm proud of them for persevering. But now that it is over I sit in my classroom wondering what is the message we are sending our kids. We spent all this time reviewing for this test because it's some indicator of their future success? Or that the content on this test is *that* important that *all* people walking the streets should know it? Is this test, or more specifically the results from this test, that important to make it worth the time lost teaching? Is the outcome of this test more important than the well-being of the child? I find myself disenchanted and angry at what our system has become and what it's doing to kids. In all my years I have never seen students so stressed out and under so much pressure.

So, here is my call to action. I invite all local and state representatives, policy makers, and voters to come to my classroom and get educated about the SBAC from the people with firsthand experience, teachers and students. Come take the test. Experience it as if you were a student. Get your results and look at the data available to teachers for instructional use. I hear politicians say, "It's your responsibility to be an educated voter. I have stood in front of students and said the very same thing. So I challenge you to come to my classroom and get educated about the Smarter Balanced Assessment. Why a comprehensive test junior year? That doesn't leave us much time to help the students that have fallen through the cracks.

At the end of the day I will continue to teach my students to make sense of the world using mathematics in hopes that as adults they will be able to think and problem solve their way through life. I will continue to advocate for what is best for students, striving for an educational system that tends to the "whole" child.

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I believe in
all of my
students.
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Camas High School teacher Jenelee Herz wanted to be a teacher since she was in sixth grade. Twenty-three years later, she is finishing her 11th year.



ROCKSTAR

MOM

in and out of school

*Congratulations
to Renton's
Janie White,
2017 WEA Education
Support Professional
of the Year*

2017
WEA Education
Support
Professional
of the Year

Most mothers are known for being good huggers and White is famous for her hugs and for the love she shares at Renton's Nelsen Middle School.

"She embraces everybody," seventh-grade counselor Andrea Lehwald says. "In her Christmas card I wrote she is the star on top of the Christmas tree because she lights up a room."



Educators are full of passion and purpose and we will continue to work together to make a difference in the lives of our students, White says.

White is the president of Renton Education Support Professionals, an active member of the Rainier Educators of Color Network, a WEA ESP Action Coordinating Team (ACT) member and a proud graduate of the NEA 2017 Leaders for Tomorrow program. But if you ask her about what makes her most proud, she talks about her students. She works with several office teaching assistants (TA) daily and she loves interacting with them.

"I want to grow up and be like her, in a way, because she is really inspiring so when you're feeling down or you need help with a situation she says, 'You go and do that, it's your deal, you can do what you need to do and this is how you're going to work it,' and she's really sarcastic and funny," student TA Mia Behnke says.

"They take power and control over it and they own the office so I am so proud of that," White says. She allows them

To reach policymakers, White stresses the importance of WEA members speaking in one voice on behalf of students.

"It is more important than ever for all of us to unite and support public education," she says. "We must all stand strong together, and let our elected leaders know what we need as educators to nurture successful students."

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I want to
grow up and
be like her ...
”

to make mistakes and gives them many opportunities to feel empowered.

"She makes people feel welcomed. She makes people feel important. She makes people feel valued," Rainier UniServ Council President Jeb Binns says.

"Ms. White taught me how to do things ... how to be nice and how to be respectful to others and how to greet people when they come in the door," TA Laila Thomas says.

When she's not working with students or advocating for WEA members, White says, she spends time with grandson Noah and other family members and friends. She loves jazz, reading and treats herself, once in a while, to a nice, hot bubble bath.





After years of relentless advocacy and perseverance on the part of WEA members and staff, Washington has a new paraprofessional training law.

A step toward standards and training for paraeducators

- Be at least 18 years of age and hold a high-school diploma or its equivalent; and have received a passing grade on the education testing service paraeducator assessment; OR
- Hold an associate of arts degree; OR
- Have earned 72 quarter credits or 48 semester credits at an institution of higher education; OR
- Have completed a registered apprenticeship program.

Paraeducators will soon have high quality professional development which will provide them the opportunity to continue learning and better meet the needs of their students.

Gov. Jay Inslee signed ESHB 1115 into law earlier this year. This new law sets employment standards, creates a Paraeducator Board which will develop paraeducator standards and training modules for various voluntary certificates, and, for the first time, defines paraeducators in law: “Paraeducator means a classified public school or school district employee who works under the supervision of a certificated or licensed staff member to support and assist in providing instructional and other services to students and their families.”

Beginning on Sept. 1, 2018, all paraeducators will be required to meet certain minimum employment standards that paraeducators in Title I schools must now meet. (*See sidebar*)

Then, after two years of development and piloting, the new professional development system will be ready to begin.

Only if state funding is provided, beginning on Sept. 1, 2019 school districts must offer four days of professional development annually, and ensure that all paraeducators in the district meet the requirements leading to a general paraeducator certificate by taking an initial 4-day course of study and an additional 10 days of general courses within the following three years. Thus, after four years, a paraeducator will receive a general paraeducator certificate that is transferable between school districts and does not need to be renewed.

Lastly, the legislation also provides for optional certificates in special education, ELL and one called an Advanced Paraeducator Certificate. These are voluntary, and the certificates will be defined by the Paraeducator Board.

The law is the culmination of relentless effort by many WEA paraeducators. Cathy Smith, a member of the Olympia Paraeducators Association and an ESP At-Large member on the WEA Board, was a leader in getting the bill passed. Smith, along with WEA lobbyist Lucinda Young and input from others, worked tirelessly for the bill’s passage by testifying before legislative committees and contacting legislators. While many of the requirements will not impact WEA members immediately, the professional growth opportunities for paraeducators will be a plus for all educators, says Smith, who works with students with Individualized Education Plans in reading, writing, and math in small group settings.

See PARAEDUCATOR, page 8



A new law now provides state-funded professional development for paraeducators who assist in the classroom. The law creates a state paraeducator board as well as a path for paraeducators to become full-time teachers.

Local collective bargaining more important than ever as state falls short on McCleary

The state's new four-year school funding plan makes major changes in how we negotiate salaries and health benefits — and despite what legislators say, it falls short of fully funding K-12 basic education as required by the Supreme Court's McCleary order.

The coming changes are huge — equivalent to the changes made in the 1980s, when the Legislature implemented the statewide salary allocation model (SAM) and TRI pay for certificated educators. Under the new plan, the SAM is going away in 2018-19, and the way we bargain TRI pay is going to change dramatically. Most of the \$7.3 billion in new state funding over the next four years is earmarked for educator compensation.

It's clear the role of the local union and collective bargaining will be crucial in determining how certificated staff and education support professionals are paid under the new law. Strong local unions will be essential.

It's unclear how many of the changes in school levies and bargaining will affect us, but the major changes don't take effect for more than a year. In coming months, we'll be working with state Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal, school districts and legislators to ensure the new policies are implemented in ways that benefit students by preserving local control and decision-making in our schools.

Based on initial review, here are some of the key education issues:

Educator pay

All certificated and classified staff are going to get large state-funded pay raises over the next four years. For 2017-18, the plan funds a 2.3 percent cost-of-living adjustment. In 2018-19, the existing salary allocation model for teachers will disappear. That means local unions and their school districts will have to negotiate new certificated salary schedules.

The budget also allows districts to pay higher salaries for "educational staff associates or teachers who are teaching in the subjects of science, technology, engineering, math or in the transitional bilingual instruction or special education programs."

It includes regional pay adjustments ranging from 6 to 18 percent in districts where housing costs are above the state median.

By the third year, state-funded base salaries will range from \$40,000 to \$90,000, in addition to locally negotiated pay, housing adjustments and other pay enhancements.

The new education law also changes how we negotiate TRI beyond state-funded base salaries, and it includes changes in how levy money can be spent. Through local collective bargaining, WEA members will decide what their local pay schedules look like.

WEA believes there's an immediate need for the state to fund competitive and professional base salaries for all school employees. Delaying the state-funded pay increases violates the Supreme Court's McCleary order to fully fund basic ed by Sept. 1, 2018.

Health care

The budget creates a new state-run health care system for school employees in 2020, eliminating local bargaining over health benefits. A coalition of school employee unions will negotiate health benefits with the governors' office. The state health care allocation for educators will increase to the same amount legislators and state employees receive.

Class sizes

The Legislature again delayed full funding for smaller class sizes and support staff as required by Initiative 1351. Instead, they funded smaller class sizes in career and technical programs and a few other specialized areas, and they created a new bureaucratic process to study the issue.

Washington voters and parents expect the Legislature to reduce class sizes for all students — our kids are packed into some of the most overcrowded classrooms in the country. WEA believes funding smaller class sizes and additional staff support for all students is a critical part of basic education — and the law.



WEA members worked hard, even after many legislators went home, to influence the Legislature's school funding plan.

Visit www.WashingtonEA.org/OurVoice/ for information about the final budget deal.

Changes coming to WEA Select health insurance

WEA Select is the union-sponsored health care and benefits plan that has served WEA members and school employees for over 50 years. It was created by union members to help small districts pool their resources so they could purchase health insurance and has grown to cover over 100,000 school employees and their families.

The plan has always been overseen by WEA members from across the state, with the idea that we can be more responsive to the needs of educators than others in the private market. About a year ago, WEA Select felt that the time was right to see if our members and plan participants were getting the best quality care at the right price. With so many changes in technology and health care, we were convinced we could take a strong program and make it better.

We wanted to offer two carriers, so that there would be incentives within WEA Select for insurance companies to compete for your business by improving care and value for service.



Here are some of the improvements being offered by the new carriers, Aetna and UnitedHealthcare.

- Concierge-style customer service, with real people who answer the phone when you call your insurance company and no more interminable wait times, just friendly customer service provided by people who understand what you need when you call.
- No pre-approval for licensed massage services. True! You no longer will need to jump through hoops to have massage doled out in small doses.
- Free opt-in access to wellness tools and programs.
- Free “telemedicine” with 24-hour access to talk with a doctor.

There is a lot of misinformation being spread by brokers representing other insurance companies who hope to make a quick sale. Remember that WEA Select exists for our members and school employees. You retain the same comprehensive benefit program you are accustomed to at the same or lower rates, alongside our member-driven claims appeal process and the strength of the largest insurance pool for educators in state. Tell your local and your school district you want to stay with WEA Select.

Check out our online FAQ at
www.WashingtonEA.org/wea-select
for more information.

From PARAEDUCATOR, page 6

“It creates a meaningful opportunity for advancements, including a pathway to becoming a teacher,” says Smith, who just finished her 20th year at Lincoln Options Elementary School. “Paraeducators who are in this program will be able to continue working in their school, giving direct instruction to students. It will be an important way to ‘grow our own’ in many communities where we currently have teacher shortages.”

Smith’s work on this effort began four years ago when a friend told her about a proposed measure that would create a statewide workgroup to examine and develop state standards for paraeducators. She attended the hearing, and later was appointed to serve on two subcommittees. The workgroups

spent hundreds of hours developing the recommendations that eventually made their way into the bill, sponsored by Rep. Steve Bergquist, a teacher from Renton, and the late Sen. Andy Hill. WEA’s work ensured that many of the benefits in the legislation are funded by the state and not individual paraeducators.

“Paraeducators are an important part of the education team,” Smith says. “We provide the majority of instruction in programs designed to reduce the opportunity gap.

“Some school districts can afford professional development, while some can’t,” she says. “This provides high-quality professional development. Paraeducators will now have more training to better meet the needs of their students.”